

Nationalism in a period of crisis

An analysis of the Dutch media coverage regarding the American approach to the AIDS crisis,
1981 – 1996.



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MA thesis – Governance of Migration and Diversity

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Word count: 18613

Date: 24-11-2020

¹ Front page of *De Gay Krant*, November 1987.

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Introduction

In March 2020 the world was struck by the first pandemic since the swine flu pandemic of 2009. As the enemy was a virus, and therefore invisible, countries tended to look at others to displace the blame from themselves. This pragmatic 'other', whether marginalized by race, religion or sexual preference, would be put down as the new national enemy.² This role of national enemy is often taken by foreigners who, by travelling, carry the virus around the world. Although these foreigners only make up a small part of human movements, they are particularly vulnerable to othering - a tendency that has once again been exposed by Covid-19.³

The tendency of countries to identify a specific group as the cause of a virus is not unfamiliar. During the first signs of another unknown virus in the beginning of the 1980s, each country took different preventative measures with the hope that their country would be spared.⁴ The most notorious measure was the border restriction placed on those with HIV/AIDS trying to enter the United States. This border restriction was introduced in 1988 and not lifted until January 2010.⁵ In many ways, the response to Covid-19 is similar to that of the AIDS crisis. Nationalistic tendencies arise all over the world, while global connections and alliances are abruptly broken to ensure the health of each nation.⁶ However, there are also major differences between the two, the most important being the disease's victims during the early stages of the AIDS outbreak. Initially, it seemed that almost all victims were homosexual men and it was concluded that the disease was therefore linked to homosexuality.

As a nation dedicated to the protection of gay rights, the Netherlands condemned America's domestic policies and the 22-year ban on immigration and travel for non-Americans with HIV/AIDS.⁷ The Netherlands was willing to openly criticize the United States' approach

² Mary Haour-Knipe and Richard Rector, *Crossing Borders: Migration, Ethnicity and AIDS* (London 1996).

³ 'Het coronavirus dient als welkom excuus voor racisme', *Het Parool*, 10-02-2020; 'Het haatvirus is vergelijkbaar met het coronavirus', *Trouw*, 02-04-2020; 'Trump: term Chinees-virus helemaal niet racistisch', *De Telegraaf*, 19-03-2020.

⁴ Theo Sandfort, *The Dutch Response To HIV: Pragmatism and Consensus* (London 1998).

⁵ Susanne E. Winston, 'The Impact of Removing the Immigration Ban on HIV-Infected Persons', *AIDS Patient Care and STDs* 25:12 (2011) 709-711, 709.

⁶ 'President Trump sluit grenzen voor reizigers uit Europa', *NRC Handelsblad*, 12-03-2020; 'Trump schort financiering WHO op: Zoveel doden door hun fouten', *Het Parool*, 15-05-2020; 'Het coronavirus wakkert nationalisme in Europese landen aan', *De Volkskrant*, 15-03-2020.

⁷ Winston, 'The Impact of Removing the Immigration Ban', 710.

because they considered AIDS and the United States' response a threat to the emancipated community of gay men.⁸ One way this criticism was expressed was through the media. Newspapers extensively covered the American approach to AIDS and positioned the two countries in opposition. The approach covered social and political decisions made by the American federal government but also by US society. Even though nationalistic tendencies shaped the American responses to AIDS, the coverage of the Dutch media towards these measures was also driven by Dutch ideals.

Given the current global environment, in which countries choose different approaches to battle Covid-19 and thereby openly criticize each other⁹, it is highly relevant to examine and learn from previous pandemics. Therefore, this thesis examines how and why the Dutch media was so interested in the US' AIDS approach. Through this insight into the development of media attention, the returning negative tones in the public and political debate will be explained and will help to shed light on the Dutch discourses since 1982. The media response to foreign policies during the AIDS pandemic remains understudied, as will be shown later in the historiography. Hence, this thesis aims to fill this academic gap by researching the media coverage of both the national Dutch media and media connected to the Dutch gay community during the period of 1981 to 1996. The following research question guides this thesis:

'Why did the American approach to the AIDS virus cause an extensive media reaction in the Netherlands, 1981-1996?'

The focus of this thesis lies primarily on the US gay community as it is the community which made up the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States at that time. The US gay community experienced the largest social, cultural, and political battles over recognizing the significance of AIDS and access to treatment and prevention.¹⁰ While describing this community, the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are used in this thesis because terms such as LGBTQ+ were not widely used at the time under study.

The introduction proceeds with a historiography and theoretical framework, based on literature on the AIDS crisis in the United States and the Netherlands and theories that help the analyses of the primary sources. The first chapter focuses on the social and political

⁸ Hans Goedkoop, 'Het begin van aids in Nederland', in *Andere Tijden* (01-12-2016), <https://www.anderetijden.nl/artikel/221/Het-begin-van-aids-in-Nederland>, consulted on 20-06-2020.

⁹ 'Trump pareert kritiek op zijn corona-aanpak met totale immigratiestop', *Trouw*, 21-04-2020; 'Leven in 'corona-bestaat-niet-land'', *De Volkskrant*, 19-04-2020.

¹⁰ *The Social Impact of AIDS in the United States*, National Research Council et al. (Washington D.C. 2000).

conditions during the emergence of the virus in both countries. The second chapter focuses on the response of Dutch media on the basis of six national newspapers. The final chapter explores the response of the Dutch gay media through analyzing *De Gay Krant* and an attachment *Aids Info*. Lastly, the conclusion definitively answers the research question.

Historiography

Despite the rise of minority and LGBTQ+ research in history¹¹, the historiography on the AIDS epidemic is still very narrow. This is incomprehensible considering that the epidemic, and those affected by it, heavily influenced public discussions on health, sexuality and race.¹² The reason behind this is a problem faced by numerous other contemporary historic events: many documents at that time were not seen as having historical value, and were therefore disposed of when they lost their practical use.¹³ Another explanation is the recent nature of the event, which for many survivors makes it too fresh in their memory to talk about. In recent years, this has begun to change, and interest in the topic is growing within academia and outside of the academic world.¹⁴ The historiography therefore touches upon two overarching topics: literature describing the AIDS-epidemic and homosexuality. These topics are discussed in both Dutch and American literature. The two topics give a comprehensive overview of earlier work.

In the beginning of the 1990s, scholars started describing this turbulent period by comparing country's specific AIDS policies, looking at the impact of the disease within minority groups, and linking the prevention of the disease to the strength of the gay communities.¹⁵ In the field of public history, AIDS has not received much attention from scholars in the Netherlands. The most notable work on the rise of AIDS in the Netherlands is the book *Geen Paniek* by historian Marjet Mooij. She described how the disease emerged,

¹¹ Gert Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland van 1730 tot de moderne tijd* (Amsterdam 2004).

¹² Jonathan Bell et al., 'HIV/AIDS and U.S. History', *The Journal of American History* 104:2 (2017) 431-460, 431.

¹³ Hugo Schalkwijk, When an epidemic becomes history. An Analysis of the Public History in AIDS in the Netherlands (MA thesis Public History University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam 2015).

¹⁴ Avram Finkelstein, *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images* (California 2018); *AIDS in Amsterdam, 1981-1996*, Amsterdam City Archive (Amsterdam 2018), <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/agenda/aids/>, consulted on 22-05-2020.

¹⁵ *Inventarisatie AIDS bestrijding onder allochtonen in Nederland*, AIDS Fonds Amsterdam (Utrecht 2002); O. Westerlaken and Maria de Bruyn, *HIV/AIDS in developing countries and among ethnic minorities in The Netherlands: an inventory of social scientific research* (Amsterdam 1995); Jan Willem Duyvendank and Ruud Koopmans, 'Weerstand bieden aan aids: de invloed van de homobeweging op aids-preventie', *Mens en Maatschappij* 18:5 (1991) 237-245.

how it was seen within Dutch society, and how politicians struggled to come up with an appropriate response.¹⁶ Where Mooij gave a broad overview of the first years of the epidemic, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Ruud Koopmans nuanced their research by examining several gay movements in different European countries and looking at their influence on the preventative measures. They concluded that having a strong gay community, such as in the Netherlands, did not necessarily contribute to more effective preventative campaigns and policies. Germany and France showed the opposite; lacking a strong gay community does not have to be a weakness, as long as fast and open information channels exist within the current communities.¹⁷ Theo Sandfort specified his research to different angles of Dutch policies in his work *The Dutch Response To HIV: Pragmatism and Consensus*, but used a dominant top-down approach in his research.¹⁸

While the history of AIDS in the Netherlands is still under-explored, homosexuality in Dutch history has been researched. Since the 1980s, Theo van der Meer has been researching homosexuality in the Netherlands. He has published multiple titles concerning the persecution of Sodomites in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century¹⁹ and the relation of homosexuality and criminal law, together with Gert Hekma.²⁰ Hekma, specializing in gay and gender studies, published an extensive history of homosexuality in the Netherlands from 1730 till modern days.²¹ The gay emancipation movements in the Netherlands during the 1960s and 1970s play an important role in contemporary research. Hekma and Duyvendak wrote how the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s drastically changed Dutch society. It transformed from a conservative Christian society to a nation where erotic freedoms could be enjoyed by locals and foreigners.²² Andrew Shield analyzed the development of homo-nationalism during this period and included the role of migrants in his research.²³ The link

¹⁶ Annet Mooij, *Geen Paniek. AIDS in Nederland 1982-2004* (Houten 2004) 171.

¹⁷ Duyvendak and Koopmans, 'Weerstand bieden aan AIDS', 237.

¹⁸ Sandfort, *The Dutch Response To HIV*, 3.

¹⁹ Theo van der Meer, *De weselijke sonde van sodomie en andere vuyligheden. Sodomietenvervolgingen in Amsterdam 1730-1811* (Amsterdam 1984).

²⁰ Theo van der Meer and Gert Hekma, *'Bewaar me voor de waanzin van het recht': homoseksualiteit en strafrecht in Nederland* (Diemen 2011).

²¹ Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 5.

²² Gert Hekma and Jan Willem Duyvendak, 'Queer Netherlands. A puzzling example', *Sexualities* 14:6 (2011) 625-631.

²³ Andrew Shield, 'Suriname – Seeking a lonely, lesbian friend for correspondence'. Immigration and homo-emancipation in the Netherlands, 1965-79', *History Workshop Journal* 78:1 (2014) 246-264; Andrew Shield, *Immigrants in the sexual revolution. Perceptions and participation in Northwest Europe* (Cham 2017).

with migrants is reinforced by the fact that the Netherlands was the first country to grant refugee status to homosexuals in 1981.²⁴ Jon Binnie used the twinning links of the city of Leiden to contribute to a wider study of transnational LGBTQ+ activism in Europe. Part of his focus was researching how twinning links between cities are used to forge sustainable solidarities across national boundaries.²⁵ Stefan Dudink and Alexandre Jaunait connected the idea that homosexuality is key to the Dutch nation.²⁶ They stated homosexuality has always been part of the discursive field from which the modern nation has emerged. Homosexuality is not independent from nationalism and therefore cannot be seen as an untouchable moral and political premise for critique.²⁷ Moreover, Éric Fassin and Manuela Salcedo argued how the category of 'the homosexual', now seen as a positive value in the West as it can be invoked to justify asylum, can harm one's identity as one can be caught up in a transnational process of identification.²⁸

Much of the US literature on AIDS was written in the 1990s, during the epidemic, but in the last few years, interest in the topic has been renewed.²⁹ The social, physical and emotional consequences of the disease were captured in interviews, predominantly with gay men, in the book *The AIDS Generation: Stories of Survival and Resilience* by Perry N. Halkitis. By collecting first-hand data, the pandemic was documented through a bottom-up approach, showing how individuals coped with the chronic and life-threatening disease.³⁰ In *AIDS and American Apocalypticism; The Cultural Semiotics of an Epidemic*, Thomas L. Long examined the ways in which apocalyptic language was used to describe the AIDS crisis by both anti-gay groups and gay activists. Gay and AIDS activists appropriated this apocalyptic rhetoric in order to focus attention on the medical crisis, prevent the spread of the disease, and treat the HIV-

²⁴ Pieter Koenders, *Tussen christelijk réveil en seksuele revolutie. Bestrijding van zedeloosheid in Nederland, met nadruk op de repressie van homoseksualiteit* (Amsterdam 1996); Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 5; Marlou Schrover and Frerik Kampman, 'Charter Flights Full of Homosexuals. The Changing Rights of Homosexual Immigrants in the Netherlands, 1945-1992', *TSEG* 16:3 (2019) 5-46, 6.

²⁵ Jon Binnie, 'Relational Comparison and LGBTQ Activism in European Cities', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38:3 (2014) 951-966.

²⁶ Alexandre Jaunait and Stefan Dudink, 'Sexual nationalisms and the racial history of homosexuality', *Raisons Politiques* 49:1 (2013) 43-54.

²⁷ Ibidem, 54.

²⁸ Éric Fassin and Manuela Salcedo, 'Becoming Gay? Immigration Policies and the Truth of Sexual Identity', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 44:5 (2015) 1117-1125; Carl Stychin, 'Same-sex sexualities and the globalization of human rights discourse', *McGill Law Journal* 49:4 (2004) 951-986.

²⁹ *The social impact of AIDS in the United States*, American Research Council; Avram Finkelstein, *After silence: a history of AIDS through its images* (California 2018); Thurka Sangaramoorthy, *Treating AIDS Politics of Difference, Paradox of Prevention* (New Jersey 2014).

³⁰ Perry N. Halkitis, *The AIDS Generation: Stories of Survival and Resilience* (New York 2014).

infected.³¹ Long concluded that using this kind of language might have been useful initially, but could become dangerous in the long run. Binnie used a global approach when critiquing the lack of attention paid to the connection of homosexuality, globalization and social theory. In his research Binnie included the concepts of nationhood, queer mobility and sexual citizenship, making it a valuable source for this thesis.³²

Focusing on the United States, scholars looked into the way in which ideas regarding homosexuality influenced restrictions in the regulation of migration.³³ Connie Oxford analyzed policies towards homosexual immigrants in the United States.³⁴ As a response to the immigration restrictions, homosexuals were encouraged to organize and stand up for more liberal immigration policies. The Mattachine Foundation attempted to mobilize such a group, but in the end they mostly campaigned for those already living in the United States.³⁵

This thesis adds to the literature on the AIDS epidemic in the Netherlands by examining the Dutch response to the United States approach, thereby increasing the understanding of why and how the Netherlands decided their national approach to the disease. Moreover, the thesis contributes to understanding the role of homosexuality and nationalism in the debate on AIDS and the solidarities that arose across national boundaries. It adds to the renewed academic interest in both the AIDS crisis and LGBTQ+ history. It is imperative to recognize the mistakes made during the AIDS crisis, in order to prevent their being repeated in current and future debates and legislation.

Theoretical framework

Based on the literature, three factors may explain the Dutch response to the US approach to AIDS.

Firstly, Binnie has argued that AIDS was a global pandemic, which impacted regions and states unevenly. He stressed that AIDS reinforced the importance of the nation-state. The threat AIDS posed to the national polity led to distinctive national responses.³⁶ This is relevant

³¹ Thomas L. Long, *AIDS and American Apocalypticism: The Cultural Semiotics of an Epidemic* (New York 2005).

³² Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London 2004).

³³ Schrover and Kampman, 'Charter Flights Full of Homosexuals', 9,

³⁴ Connie Oxford, 'Queer asylum. US policies and responses to sexual orientation and transgendered persecution', in: M. Schrover and D.M. Moloney eds., *Gender, migration and categorization. Making distinctions between migrants in Western countries, 1945-2010* (Amsterdam 2013) 127-148.

³⁵ Martin Meeker, 'Behind the mask of respectability. Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and male homophile practice, 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10:1 (2001) 78-116.

³⁶ Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 117.

because both the Netherlands and the United States were in an economic crisis at the time, which effected their decision-making process regarding government support.³⁷ However, the United States was more heavily affected by the AIDS virus than the Netherlands in terms of public impact, due to the high death rate which led to a high visibility of the disease. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly argued it was clear that each national polity had a different and distinctive 'discursive constitution', dependent on the symbolic and actual fear of AIDS in that country.³⁸ Duyvendak stated the Dutch response to AIDS was determined by a significant and conscious comparison to responses from other countries. Hereby, the responses constituted and reconstructed Dutch nationalism, which Duyvendak argued was a specific reproduction of Dutch nationhood. Therefore, AIDS did not lead to the destruction of national borders or consciousness, but instead reinforced them. In this sense, the threat posed by AIDS offered an opportunity for the production of nationalism.³⁹ Dudink and Jaunait supported this claim, arguing that homosexuality is used as a category which can be nationally mobilized to give meaning to different topics, but can simultaneously be used as an excuse to support certain statements and perspectives. Countries use homosexuality as cultural construction which allows homosexuality to function as a 'quilting point' in contemporary nationalism.⁴⁰ In the United States, the gay community had a different social position than in the Netherlands. The US gay community was outspoken and fought their AIDS battles in the public space. But during these battles, the gay community suffered a high mortality rate among its followers and its leaders. In the Netherlands, the gay community had already reached most of its emancipatory goals in the 1980s and was less radically outspoken, as will be described later. The high death rate and the high visibility of the US gay community might explain the bigger fear of AIDS and homosexuality in the United States and the different approach towards the virus. At the same time, it can also explain why the Dutch media had little understanding for the US approach. In their coverage, the media did not take into account the fact that the two countries were unevenly impacted by the disease. Moreover, the Dutch media condemned

³⁷ Jih-Feh Cheng et al., *AIDS and the Distribution of Crises* (London 2020).

³⁸ Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly, *Sites of desire, economies of pleasure in Asia and the Pacific* (Chicago 1997) 19.

³⁹ Jan Willem Duyvendak, 'The depoliticisation of Dutch gay identity, or why Dutch gays aren't queer', in: Steven Seidman ed., *Queer Theory/Sociology* (New Jersey 1996) 421-438.

⁴⁰ Jaunait and Dudink, 'Sexual nationalisms and the racial history of homosexuality', 21.

the lacking federal protection of homosexuals in the US while they would not acknowledge gay rights were not a common good, even in the Western world.

Secondly, the Dutch response to the AIDS crisis is an example of the 'poldermodel': a political model that is always looking for consensus. It was pragmatic, controlled, and aimed at reaching consensus and avoiding panic at all times.⁴¹ The Dutch government was actively involved in fighting the virus and their approach sought to prevent the further spread HIV, to treat patients, and to stimulate research. It was equally important to restrict social responses to the disease by counteracting fear, panic, discrimination, stigmatization of risk groups, and by avoiding moralizing opinions.⁴² The Netherlands was considered a precursor in the field of gay rights, and it was determined that the arrival of AIDS would not change this. The US government chose initially to ignore the emergence and the severity of the virus. Moreover, the fragile position of the gay population during the crisis was not acknowledged. These American choices were at odds with the Dutch government and their poldermodel and can be used to explain why the Dutch media condemned the American approach.

Lastly, the social position of the Dutch gay community in the 1980s can explain their response to the American approach to AIDS. Marlou Schrover and Frerik Kampman stated that in the 1980s, the domestic goals of the Dutch gay emancipation were largely achieved. In 1971, Article 248*bis* of the Dutch Criminal Code was abolished. The article punished homosexual contacts under the age of 21. The abolition of Article 248*bis* was due to protests from the Dutch gay community. Afterwards, the community looked for other injustices against homosexuals that they could combat. Their attention was directed at the persecutions of homosexuals in Iran after the Revolution in 1979 and anti-gay campaigns in the United States.⁴³ After the Iranian Revolution, the position of homosexuals in Iran quickly deteriorated. Both the Dutch media and the Dutch gay movement condemned this development. The reports about Iran emphasized that Islamization meant reversing gay emancipation.⁴⁴ Schrover argued that this created 'homonationalism' in the Netherlands, whereby the discourse on gay rights was appropriated by right-wing parties. Schrover and Kampman concluded that the persecution of homosexuals in Iran and the anti-gay campaigns

⁴¹ Sandfort, *The Dutch Response To HIV*, 2.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Schrover and Kampman, 'Charter Flights Full of Homosexuals', 33.

⁴⁴ Marlou Schrover, 'Feminationisme en hoe vrouwen belangrijk worden in het maatschappelijk debat over migratie en integratie', *TSEG/ Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 17:1 (2020) 97-122, 111.

in the United States gave the Netherlands the opportunity to position itself as a gay-friendly country.⁴⁵ The Dutch media condemned the position of homosexuals in the two countries to portray the Netherlands as a liberal country.⁴⁶ Since the Dutch media argued that their own emancipation goals were achieved, they were eager to take a critical look at the US approach.

Methodology

This thesis starts in 1981, with the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, and ends in 1996 when the first 'drug cocktail' became available to AIDS patients. For this thesis, three types of sources were used: (1) newspapers articles (see Table 1), (2) an interview initiated by the website *Grenzeloos* with Peter Drucker and Theo van der Meer, and (3) images and cartoons. The sources are discussed below in order to provide a good understanding of the topic and to construct a complete answer to the research question.

(1) This study is predominantly based on a qualitative analysis of Dutch national newspapers which all have different socio-political characteristics. The newspapers and their socio-political characteristics are shown in table 1. Each newspaper has a different socio-political vision, which makes the analysis of the articles less biased. Only national newspapers were consulted as the study focuses on a national media response towards another country. The newspapers *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*, *Algemeen Dagblad (AD)*, *Trouw* and *NRC Handelsblad (NRC)* were chosen as they are the largest national newspapers in the Netherlands in terms of circulation. Very little used, but mentioned a few times is communist newspaper *De Waarheid*. *De Gay Krant* and *Aids Info* were added to this list to represent the meaning of the gay media. *De Gay Krant*, the national gay magazine, was a monthly paper which was first published in 1980 and at its peak had 30,000 subscriptions. *De Gay Krant* was chosen as newspaper to cover the opinion of the Dutch gay media as it was an independent publication, minimally influenced by other actors and therefore less biased. In November 1985, an attachment was added to every issue of the *De Gay Krant* called *Aids Info*. This was a monthly edition of the *Aids Info Foundation* and received its subsidy from the Ministry of Health, Wellbeing and Sports (WVC). However, they claimed to be an independent paper providing factual information about national and international developments of AIDS to men with homosexual contacts. The paper was independent from *De Gay Krant*. In 1990, *Aids Info*

⁴⁵ Schrover and Kampman, 'Charter Flights Full of Homosexuals', 34.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 12.

had a circulation of 65,000 copies per month. Although *De Gay Krant* and *Aids Info* cannot solely represent the views of the gay media in the Netherlands, the papers still give a good indication on their viewpoints. The readers that sent in stories and questions belonged to the more emancipated group amongst the Dutch gay community. They openly participated in the AIDS discussion and were therefore highly informed on the disease.

From these eight newspapers, 162 articles were qualitatively analyzed and thematically divided. The articles in these general national newspapers (78) were found through *Delpher*, a digitized database that contains millions of digitized texts from Dutch newspapers, books and magazines.⁴⁷ The articles from *De Gay Krant* (71) and *Aids Info* (13) were found in De Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague and through the online Archives of Sexuality and Gender by *Gale*, a digital archive of primary sources, research databases, reference books and more.⁴⁸ From the several thousand hits in *Delpher* and the archives of *Gale*, articles were selected that focused on the social and political consequences of the American AIDS approach for homosexuals. Moreover, articles were selected that focused on the American immigration-ban. The articles went beyond the presentation of only facts and figures as emphasis was put on articles that expressed opinion. Furthermore, articles by relevant writers from *De Gay Krant* and *Aids Info* were emphasized in this research. These authors, Henk Krol, Rob Tielman and Jan van Wijngaarden, focused on AIDS in both the Netherlands and the United States due to personal experience or interest. They are further examined later in this thesis. Articles that covered the medical aspects of the disease, like medical conferences, the development of a drug and the disease pattern were not used. The medical articles mainly focused on the drug AZT; a drug that was being developed in the United States. The development of the drug was widely covered and so were the AIDS conferences, predominantly held in the United States, where the progress of the drug was presented. These medical articles accounted for about 80 percent of all found articles. Also not used were the articles that focused on AIDS in other Western and non-Western countries. In these articles, the Netherlands and the United States were mentioned in passing, but they were not relevant to the subject of the articles. These articles accounted for another 15

⁴⁷ <https://www.delpher.nl/>. The website contains 11 million digitized newspaper pages. Most Dutch newspapers have been digitized. The site stops in 1995, but does not possess the year 1995 of *De Telegraaf*. Search terms were aids, hiv, Amerika, Verenigde Staten, homosexualiteit, gay.

⁴⁸ 'Archives of Sexuality and Gender', <https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender>.

percent. Since opinions were analyzed from all political and social corners, the body of articles offer a balanced insight into the media debate. However, the newspapers and the articles that were used for this analysis are not exhaustive. Due to the selection of search terms not all relevant articles might have surfaced. Moreover, smaller or local newspaper might have held a different view of the matter.

The value of qualitative research is highlighted by several authors⁴⁹ who have stated that, while analyzing the meaning of articles, news studies must probe deeper and provide systematic semantic analyses, especially when subtle semantic processes are involved in the portrayal of minority groups.⁵⁰ For this study of news discourses, it is relevant to focus both on micro and macro-level analyses. Micro-level, or the level of the word, help to recognize social presuppositions and other implications that may highlight underlying ideologies. In this thesis, the micro-level analyses focused on the used words to describe homosexuals, AIDS, AIDS victims and US officials.

Macro-level analyses focus more on the overall meaning of articles and large fragments of articles. The focus is on topics, themes and perspectives. This method was used while analyzing the articles in order to recognize underlying ideologies of newspapers and/or authors and to critically reflect whether the media tends to reproduce a dominant consensus.⁵¹ While using macro-level analyses, I focused on several tendencies in the articles. Firstly, the focus was on articles that made comparisons between the situation in the Netherlands and the United States. Secondly, the articles were analyzed on panic rhetoric. Especially on the combination of future doomsday scenarios and high mortality rates in themes and headlines. To justify their claims, newspapers tend to cite authority figures in their articles. I analyzed these authority figures in the articles, who they were and what their influence was on the content of the article. Furthermore, in the analyses of the articles, I focused on humanitarian and economic factors that influenced the media reports. Humanitarian factors included the coverage of the high American death rate, including the high death rate among leadership figures of the American gay scene. Finally, I focused on the

⁴⁹ Marlou Schrover and Willem Schinkel, 'Introduction: the language of inclusion and exclusion in the context of immigration and integration', *Ethnic and Racial studies* 36:7 (2013) 1123-1141.

⁵⁰ Teun van Dijk, 'Semantics of a Press Panic: The Tamil 'Invasion'', *European Journal of Communication* 3:2 (1988) 167-187.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 170.

‘problem definition’. Within the articles I analyzed who the Dutch media tended to blame for the disease and who they held accountable to cure AIDS victims.

Beside the micro and macro-level analyses, every newspaper showed a specific profile in the coverage of AIDS in the United States. *De Telegraaf*, *Trouw*, *De Waarheid* and *AD* focused on a humanitarian approach. The newspapers predominantly covered the social impact the disease had on the American gay population. The articles in these newspapers expressed the most opinion and had the most critical and dominant headlines and themes. *De Volkskrant* and *NRC* mainly presented facts and copied messages from the General Dutch Press Agency (ANP). These specific profiles were the last factor I focused on during the analyses of the newspaper articles.

(2) An interview was used with Peter Drucker, an ACT-UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) activist and first-hand witness of the AIDS crisis in the United States, and Theo van der Meer, a historian whose work was earlier discussed in the historiography. Both Drucker and Van der Meer have first-hand experienced the AIDS crisis in the Netherlands and the United States but have also published multiple works on the topic. This means the interview is a combination of experiences and research. While analyzing the answers to the interview questions, a distinction must be made between memories and research, as these two can overlap. However, the fact that Van der Meer and Drucker are claim makers in both the literature and the interview, makes them an interesting contribution to this thesis. The interview was initiated by the website *Grenzeloos*, a left-winged website. *Grenzeloos* is operated by socialists who are or have been active in different unions and movements.⁵² This left-wing activism should be taken into account when analyzing the interview questions and answers. The interview was part of a series of freely accessible, online public conversations, held every month on a specific topic. This conversation compared the fights against AIDS and Covid-19. The interview was led by Paul Mepschen, a social anthropologist specializing in racism, nationality and sexuality.⁵³ In this source Mepschen played the role of interviewer and editor. It is therefore important to remain critical not only towards the outcome of the questions, but also the questions themselves. However, since it was live, my own notes and

⁵² ‘Over ons’, <https://www.grenzeloos.org/node/1280?language=nl>, consulted on 24-06-2020.

⁵³ ‘Profile Paul Mepschen’, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Paul_Mepschen, consulted on 24-06-2020.

transcriptions of the questions and answers were used, which makes the influence of Mepschen as editor limited.

(3) In addition to the interview and articles, seven images and cartoons from the newspapers were used as illustrations of arguments made in corresponding articles. The images and cartoons are briefly discussed in the text but do not present new arguments in this research.

Newspaper title	Sub-grouping	Number of articles
<i>Algemeen Dagblad</i>	Liberal, right-wing newspaper	13
<i>De Volkskrant</i>	Originally catholic, center-left newspaper	20
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	Right-wing, populist newspaper	16
<i>Trouw</i>	Originally Dutch orthodox-Protestant resistance newspaper	17
<i>NRC Handelsblad</i>	Liberal newspaper	9
<i>De Waarheid</i>	Communist newspaper, existed till 1991	3
<i>De Gay Krant</i>	The national gay magazine	71
<i>Aids Info</i>	Monthly edition of the Aids Info Foundation. Independent addition to <i>De Gay Krant</i>	13
Total		162

Table 1: Information on the sub-grouping of the newspapers and the number of articles per newspaper

Chapter 1: The development of the AIDS virus in the United States and the Netherlands

This chapter provides an overview of the emergence of AIDS in the United States and the Netherlands. It will become clear why the two countries were in essence handling the pandemic very differently. This chapter is predominantly descriptive but is supported by information from the outlined sources. It covers the three leading events for this research: the impact of AIDS in the United States and the Netherlands, the strong gay communities in the countries which emerged following the sexual revolution in the 1960-70s, and the AIDS policy response of the governments and other non-state actors. It will become clear how AIDS was initially seen as a 'gay disease' and how gay communities and governments struggled to refute this.

1.1 From GRID to AIDS

In the summer of 1981, an unfamiliar disease was detected in American hospitals. The disease came with different kinds of infections, tumors and mental issues which were all related to a disturbed immune system. Initially, the only pattern doctors could find was that all victims were homosexual men, who had been very active in different sexual circuits.

The two characteristics of a failing immune system and the link to the gay community gave the disease its first name, Gay Related Immune Deficiency or GRID.⁵⁴ American doctors came up with three possible theories for the cause: the first theory was based on a sexually transferable micro-disease or a virus, and the second one focused on a popular drug in the gay scene called poppers, which might include toxic substances. Thirdly, the disease could be a consequence of an exhausted immune system caused by extensive drug use and extreme promiscuity.⁵⁵ Mooij noticed how two of these hypotheses were clearly inspired by a moral rejection of the homosexual lifestyle. These moral theories were soon proven false, as in the course of 1982, heterosexual men and women were diagnosed with the same symptoms.⁵⁶ Within six months, the new virus claimed 160 victims, 60 deaths and an average of 5 new

⁵⁴ Matthew B. Platt and Manu O. Platt, 'From GRID to gridlock: the relationship between scientific biomedical breakthroughs and HIV/AIDS policy in the US Congress', *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 16:18446 (2013) 1-11, 1.

⁵⁵ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 4.

⁵⁶ Patrick Bindels, *Surveillance and survival studies on HIV/AIDS in Amsterdam* (Dissertation University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam 1996).

cases each week in the United States.⁵⁷ The media called the disease an assassin, who quietly and slowly destroyed the immune system.⁵⁸

In the summer of 1982, the medical world discovered that the disease was not gay-related as other at-risk groups including immigrants, drug addicts, hemophilia patients and people who had received an infected blood transfusion also became ill.⁵⁹ Homosexual men remained by far the majority of the patients, but it was clear that it was not a 'gay disease'. The disease was therefore renamed: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or shortly AIDS.⁶⁰

1.2 AIDS and homosexuality in the United States

By the end of the 1970s, the United States postwar golden age of economic growth and stability had come to an end. The mass upward mobility stagnated, and many of the US leading industries were taken over by superpowers such as Japan and West-Germany. In addition, Americans were still recovering from the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War.⁶¹ Against this backdrop Ronald Reagan was elected 40th President of the United States in 1981. Reagan promised new political and economic initiatives, meaning taxes were lowered and government regulations decreased. An important consequence of this neoliberalism was the privatization of American healthcare, making it a luxury instead of a right.

In the same year that Reagan took office, the AIDS crisis began to unfold. The 1970s had seen revolutionary growth of freedom and self-expression in the gay community.⁶² At the same time, homosexual civil rights movements arose in the late 1960s following the Stonewall Riots. In September 1984, Dr. Rob Tielman, a sociologist specializing in gay and humanist emancipation and co-founder of the journal *Homologie*, wrote an article in *De Gay Krant* on being gay in the United States and how much that differed from being gay in the Netherlands. He had three main findings: to be openly gay in the United States you had to live in the 'gay ghettos' in one of the big cities. Secondly, the gay subculture in the United States was much

⁵⁷ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 2.

⁵⁸ 'Aids, een epidemie vol raadsels', *Trouw*, 23-07-1983; 'Aids, de sluipmoordenaar die de tijd neemt', *De Telegraaf*, 07-05-1983; 'Alles over Aids', *De Gay Krant*, June 1983.

⁵⁹ E.L.M. Op de Coul et al., 'HIV-infecties en AIDS in Nederland: prevalentie en incidentie, 1987-2002', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 147:22 (2003) 1-9, 4.

⁶⁰ Platt and Platt, 'From GRID to gridlock', 1.

⁶¹ Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (2007) 11.

⁶² 'Plattelandclubs, een nieuwe rage in Amerika', *De Gay krant*, August 1983.

more commercial, as it was focused on bars and clubs instead of central gay organizations. Lastly, Tielman emphasized how American homosexuals were more individualistic and more dependent on superficial contacts.⁶³ By the end of the 1970s, many American homosexuals believed that the 1980s would bring more sexual freedom and political empowerment and that these two would go hand in hand. However, in 1979, the first symptoms of AIDS had already appeared in hospitals in San Francisco. As a warning, gay men were advised to restrict the number of their sexual partners, to avoid drugs and to be careful regarding Sexual Transmittable Diseases (STDs). Despite this, a growing number of previously healthy young men started dying from unusual diseases. The symptoms emerged in medical reports of the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC),⁶⁴ and in June 1981, the CDC warned doctors nationwide against the developments of a new disease. *The New York Times* published the first media-based mention of the disease on the 3rd of July 1981. The head of the short article stated: 'Rare cancer seen in 41 homosexuals.'⁶⁵ In March 1983, the CDC reported the groups most at risk were homosexuals, hemophiliacs, intravenous drug users, and Haitians. As the 1980s progressed, it became clear how deadly AIDS was. Larry Kramer, writer, gay-activist and one of the founders of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, an organization that offered help and support to AIDS victims and raised money for AIDS research, stated how he had lost 21 acquaintances in the past months and had 30 others that were seriously ill. He described the situation as a tragedy.⁶⁶ In 1984 *De Gay Krant* reported that the AIDS numbers were developing explosively in the United States. US government officials suspected the number of people unknowingly infected with the AIDS virus in America was around 300,000.⁶⁷ In 1991 the CDC reported one million American were infected and over 150,000 people had died of the HIV/AIDS virus.⁶⁸ Homosexuals made up the majority of victims. The peak year of the epidemic, 1992, showed twice as many AIDS cases among homosexuals as among injected drug users, and five times as many compared to people exposed through heterosexual contact.⁶⁹ In 1993, *NRC* reported: 'it is becoming clear what disaster is taking place in the

⁶³ 'Hoe word je homo in Amerika?', *De Gay Krant*, October 1984.

⁶⁴ Collins, *Transforming America*, 11.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ 'Aids, de sluipmoordenaar die de tijd neemt', *De Telegraaf*, 07-05-1983.

⁶⁷ 'Cijfers ontwikkelen zich explosief', *De Gay Krant*, December 1984.

⁶⁸ *HIV and AIDS --- United States, 1981—2000*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5021a2.htm>, consulted on 05-07-2020.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

United States. AIDS is now the leading cause of death for American men between the ages of 25 and 44.⁷⁰

Responses to the epidemic varied widely. Within the gay community, the new disease was perceived as a threat to their progress in terms of sexual liberation. Opposite to this was the right-wing idea that AIDS was a biblical payback for homosexual immorality, a recurring argument also used during the emergence of the Herpes virus.⁷¹ Reagan's government shared this opinion, partly from obligation, because it was the opinion of the majority of its supporters. In December 1984, Dr. Edward Brandt, the assistant Minister of Health, resigned after severe criticism from New Christian Right groups. The groups blamed him for focusing too little on pro-family politics and designating too much funding to AIDS research.⁷²



Image 1: A cartoon in *De Gay Krant* portraying the ironic fact that most of the new AIDS victims were heterosexual men from Southern states who had previously labelled AIDS a gay disease. 'Gebrekkige bloedtest geeft vals-positieve resultaten', *De Gay Krant*, August 1985.

⁷⁰ 'Wereld Aids dag: doe wat je kunt', *NRC Handelsblad*, 01-12-1993; 'Aids geen straf', *Trouw*, 14-12-1989.

⁷¹ 'In Amerika word je met Herpes doodgegooid', *De Gay Krant*, September 1982.

⁷² 'Assistent minister neemt ontslag', *De Gay Krant*, December 1984.

The disease was long labeled as a gay problem, despite evidence that it could affect any individual regardless of sexuality.⁷³ *Trouw* stated the general belief was only blacks and gays could catch the HIV virus, and that being white and straight was seen as enough protection against the virus.⁷⁴ Image 1 shows a cartoon from *De Gay Krant* in which a truck driver visits a prostitute while on the road with his 'United Stoids Lines'. The image was used to portray the high number of infections among heterosexuals in American rural towns. The percentage of infections in rural areas was much higher than in 'gay' cities like San Francisco and New York.⁷⁵ The image also portrays the ignorance of the American population, as the name of the truck indicates that the driver has AIDS and still visits prostitutes. The cactus and the chimney have the shape of a penis, as a warning of the dangerous situation. The image was created for the readers of *De Gay Krant* and was intended as a visual example of the argument made in the article.

In 1985, 'masculine' Hollywood star Rock Hudson's death from AIDS changed the attitude for millions of Americans, as they were confronted with the reality of the disease.⁷⁶ As an explanation, *Trouw* stated that the disease did not only affect the infected, but also friends and family. Dying from AIDS was perceived differently from dying from cancer. AIDS confronted those involved with all kinds of taboos like sexuality and intravenous drug use. *Trouw* stated AIDS was 'a disease of which you yourself were guilty,' and that effected the attitude of society towards people with an HIV infection.⁷⁷

Although the public's opinion on the disease was slowly changing, the Reagan administration ignored the growing AIDS crisis. They refused to use the word 'AIDS', and repeatedly denied the CDC's requests for extra funding. The government did take other measures to protect American citizens from outside 'threats.' In 1987 HIV/AIDS was added to the list of medical conditions that restricted entrance to the US. This list was created in 1952 and consisted of 'communicable disease[s] of public health significance.'⁷⁸ However, Winston et al. argued that it was not only the discovery of HIV/AIDS that led to the travel ban, but also the economic and political climate of the 1980s discussed above. The economic recession of

⁷³ 'Hetero stijging', *De Gay Krant*, February 1986.

⁷⁴ 'Ik begrijp die afkeer van de aidstest niet', *Trouw*, 23-06-1990.

⁷⁵ 'Gebrekkige bloedtest geeft vals-positieve resultaten', *De Gay Krant*, August 1985.

⁷⁶ Collins, *Transforming America*, 136.

⁷⁷ 'Levens bepaald door de vier letters: aids', *Trouw*, 29-03-1989.

⁷⁸ Winston, 'The Impact of Removing the Immigration Ban', 709.

the early 1980s and a large influx of immigrants fueled fear amongst Americans that immigrants would take American jobs and burden the welfare system. Within that same period, AIDS had become a national crisis. The combination of public fear and a national misunderstanding of the disease created a growing panic towards foreigners. This culminated in the environment that led the government to add AIDS/HIV to the list of dangerous diseases.⁷⁹

When asked how AIDS activism originated in the US and how the battle was fought, Drucker argued that unrest among homosexuals increased during the epidemic and they became more radical to make their voices heard.⁸⁰ Drucker's statement is supported by a 1983 *De Gay Krant* article, which reported AIDS research could not count on government support, so gay movements took the initiative to raise money, knowledge and awareness.⁸¹ In 1986-87, when the AIDS crisis began to explode in the United States⁸², many from the gay and lesbian community concluded that confrontational and direct action was needed and they united in various activist groups. The most notable was the organization ACT-UP. ACT-UP was formed in 1987 in New York and soon had a settlement in every major city in the country.⁸³ Through ACT-UP people became activists, even when the majority had never been politically active before. Drucker argued ACT-UP believed they and the people around them were dying because of Reagan's neoliberal model.⁸⁴ An argument that is politically charged, given that the supporters of ACT-UP had a different political preference. Their actions consisted of demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, social disruptions and meetings with government and other officials.⁸⁵ ACT-UP stated their needs and messages would not get across with the normal procedures of democracy, making immediate action necessary. Followers of the movement were willing to use civil disobedience and to risk arrest.

For gay men, these direct actions were a radical change from the past: homosexuals had almost never been openly activist in the United States. A group of artists, writers and actors began to emerge within ACT-UP leadership. Next to the 'general' activists, these prominent

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Peter Drucker, *Grenzeloos* interview, 24-05-2020, <https://www.grenzeloos.org/content/grenzeloos-gesprek-6-de-strijd-tegen-aids-covid-19-naar-een-radicaal-activistisch-antwoord>.

⁸¹ 'AIDS', *De Gay Krant*, May 1983.

⁸² 'Nieuwe Aids-explosie in VS voorspeld', *Aids Info*, issue 14 December 1986.

⁸³ Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT-UP's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago 2009) 4.

⁸⁴ Peter Drucker, *Grenzeloos* interview.

⁸⁵ Gould, *Moving Politics Emotion*, 5.

figures made ACT-UP's voice even louder. Many of these prominent figures were also the first to die from AIDS. This increased the visibility of both the disease and the activists' movements. During the American AIDS crisis, ACT-UP intervened in every aspect of the epidemic and booked major successes. The movement was responsible for the acceleration of the drug-approval process by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Moreover, they pressured the FDA to adapt existing policies making it possible for people with life-threatening illnesses caused by AIDS to be given experimental drugs prior to official approval.⁸⁶ The movement achieved more scientific research by including people with HIV/AIDS in government and corporate bodies who were responsible for decisions concerning the AIDS epidemic. Drucker and Van der Meer argued that the AIDS activists criticized the state system of neoliberalism and demanded solidarity and cooperation, making the American people aware that they were all responsible for the high death rate. This argument is clearly left-wing and politically charged, and confirmed by Drucker and Van der Meer's beliefs that the normal democracy procedures did not work at that time.

When asked about the relationship between the AIDS crisis and the Covid-19 crisis, however, Drucker admits that the improvement of the AIDS situation was mainly the case for white (homosexual) men and women, ultimately a small group that had been hit by the AIDS crisis. For other minorities, like blacks and Hispanics, the risk of infection and mortality was and is still very present. In 1986, *Aids Info* wrote how black people had poor access to education and blamed this on local black leaders, who took a long time to recognize that AIDS was not solely a danger to white middle-class men who had homosexual contacts.⁸⁷ Infection rates among racial minority groups were alarmingly high in many disadvantaged neighborhoods. 'It is frightening to think that cuts are still being made in the fight against venereal diseases in the US', *Trouw* expressed as a response.⁸⁸ In 1990, *NRC* reported high rates of infection in black and Spanish speaking women in the United States. *Trouw* reported a similar statement, citing feminist theologian Mary Hunt: 'AIDS is more a result of poverty than of sexual behavior. Most of the AIDS victims in America are black or Hispanic women whose husbands have run away and who live in poverty'.⁸⁹ *NRC* added that poor access to

⁸⁶ Ibidem, 4.

⁸⁷ 'Negers slecht bereikt door voorlichting', *Aids Info*, issue 11 September 1986.

⁸⁸ 'Een wondermiddel tegen Aids komt nooit', *Trouw*, 09-06-1989.

⁸⁹ 'Armoede en Aids', *Trouw*, 15-09-1989.

information, health care and the position of women in society were the main factors overlooked in recent years in prevention programs.⁹⁰

1.3 AIDS and homosexuality in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, American reports on a new 'homo cancer' in the early 1980s were initially ignored by the public. However, the media continuously observed developments in the United States.⁹¹ In February 1982, *De Gay Krant* published the first signs of a new disease. A small news article on page 11 stated how several months earlier, the first signs of a curious disease were identified in the United States spreading among homosexual men. The article concluded the CDC had agreed to keep *De Gay Krant* informed about the development of the disease.⁹² In that same month, *De Waarheid* reported how the disease puzzled doctors on both sides of the Atlantic. The newspaper was the first Dutch publication to label the disease an epidemic and gave the disease the Dutch name, 'Verkregen Verhoogde Vatbaarheid' (VVV-syndrom),⁹³ referring to the increased susceptibility to other diseases caused by AIDS. In March 1983, the first Dutch victim was hospitalized in Amsterdam. The homosexual man had had American partners and exhibited all the symptoms of the new gay disease. By the end of April, five cases had been reported the Netherlands. From these five cases, contact with the United States was known or very likely.⁹⁴ In the Dutch gay scene, most active in Amsterdam, the threatening discoveries around AIDS were no reason to panic.⁹⁵ When it became clear that homosexuals were the main risk group of the new disease, there was still minimal worry.⁹⁶ STDs had always existed in the gay community and were usually easily cured with the necessary drugs free of charge. To guarantee the wellbeing of the gay community, a small network of state and non-state organizations like the COC, the Dutch Association for the Integration of Homosexuality, and the municipal health service the GG&GD, had joined forces already.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ 'Aids in steden belangrijkste doodsoorzaak', *NRC Handelsblad*, 27-11-1990.

⁹¹ 'Oorzaak nieuwe ziekte een raadsel', *NRC Handelsblad*, 28-04-1983; 'Verhoogde vatbaarheid stelt artsen voor raadsel', *De Waarheid*, 19-02-1982; 'Aids', *NRC Handelsblad*, 23-05-1992.

⁹² 'Epidemie', *De Gay Krant*, 1982.

⁹³ 'Verhoogde vatbaarheid stelt artsen voor raadsel', *De Waarheid*, 19-02-1982.

⁹⁴ 'Oorzaak nieuwe ziekte een raadsel', *NRC Handelsblad*, 28-04-1983.

⁹⁵ 'Ontwikkeling AIDS lijkt af te zwakken', *De Gay Krant*, August 1982.

⁹⁶ Bindels, Surveillance and survival studies, 4.

⁹⁷ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 6.

The COC was founded in 1946, making it the oldest surviving LGBTQ+ organization in the world. The organization currently focuses on the interest of lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals, trans and intersex persons in the Netherlands and abroad. The COC played an important role in the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the abolishment of 248*bis* and making issues of sexual morality open to discussion.⁹⁸ In the 1980s, the COC provided support from the inside-out, meaning that political or social change had to be brought from within the political system.⁹⁹ When AIDS arrived, this meant that the COC was encouraged to contribute to the national response. In 1984, *De Gay Krant* argued that the cooperation between the parties was of great importance as it was the only way to prevent gays from being perceived as a threat to the healthcare system. The newspaper believed this was the only way to stay ahead of the disease, both in individual behavior and in joint approach.¹⁰⁰

The carefree attitude within the gay community concerning STDs was a result of gay emancipation, from which various organizations and a flourishing, internationally-oriented subculture had emerged.¹⁰¹ When it became clear that AIDS had infiltrated the Dutch gay scene, a coordination team was installed in Amsterdam. However, many homosexuals initially saw the response to the disease as an act of homophobia and rejected any form of – what they saw as – social oppression.¹⁰² The coordination team witnessed how keeping patients out of the debate in the United States contributed to the spread of the disease among homosexuals, and they were determined not to let this happen in the Netherlands.¹⁰³ This is a key example of Duyvendak's argument that the Dutch response was a conscious comparison to responses elsewhere.¹⁰⁴

In 1986 it became clear the coordination team could not handle the size of the AIDS crisis. The Ministry of Health, Wellbeing and Sports (WVC) stepped in. In the summer of 1987, the 'Nota inzake het AIDS beleid' was issued and the 'Nationale Commissie AIDS-Bestrijding' (NCAB) was appointed.¹⁰⁵ It became clear that this new commission was not part of the

⁹⁸ Hekma and Duyvendak, 'Queer Netherlands', 325.

⁹⁹ Hans Warmerdam and Pieter Koenders, *Cultuur en ontspanning. Het COC 1946- 1966* (Utrecht 1987).

¹⁰⁰ 'Wat kunnen wij van Amerika leren?', *De Gay Krant*, September 1984.

¹⁰¹ Petra E. Schelder, *Buitenstaanders Binnenshuis. Vrouwen en homo's in organisaties* (Leiden 1992) 81-83.

¹⁰² Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 5.

¹⁰³ Richard McKay, 'Patient Zero: The Absence of a Patient's View of the Early North American AIDS Epidemic', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 88:1 (2014) 161-194, 193; 'AIDS-team krijgt spil-functie in landelijk beleid', *De Gay Krant*, nr.6 6th issue 1985; 'Zonder ons heeft praten geen zin', *De Gay Krant*, nr.147 20-01-1990.

¹⁰⁴ Duyvendak, 'The depoliticisation of Dutch gay identity', 428.

¹⁰⁵ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 49.

political system of the central government, but would remain an independent and local initiative in Amsterdam. The commission would continue to carry out the policy of the coordination team as much as possible, advising on and implementing policies.

The Dutch response to the epidemic is an example of the poldermodel, as mentioned before. In the aforementioned interview, when asked about the difference between activism in the United States and the Netherlands, and why ACT-UP in the Netherlands remained small, Van der Meer and Drucker argued that this was due to the strategy of actively involving the gay community in the policy-making process, called 'encapsulating'.¹⁰⁶ The strategy was to protect the minority group but also, in their opinion, to create more political influence within the community. One of the phenomena of encapsulation was authorities attempting to curb excesses in exuberant sexual habits. In the central public campaign, the 'Safe Sex Campaign', homosexuals were advised to avoid anogenital contact. Even with a condom this was perceived as unsafe and intrinsically bad.¹⁰⁷ This suggestion is supported by the fact that the public campaign deliberately refrained from recommending seropositivity testing by homosexuals, as this was considered ineffective and an unnecessary source of individual suffering among those who were HIV positive.¹⁰⁸ Duyvendak and Koopmans showed that the public campaign messages were not as effective as hoped, while Mooij showed how the ambiguity around seropositivity testing led to discrimination in multiple sectors.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the Dutch approach to AIDS received significant foreign praise.¹¹⁰ It soon emerged, however, that this lack of clear measures also had its downsides. Every serious debate was avoided, and a huge fear of discrimination meant effective and targeted measures were not discussed. Although it appeared the Dutch gay community played a big part in the AIDS policy, the lack of steadfastness actually led to minimal involvement from the majority of gay community.¹¹¹ Dutch politicians did not consider any specific measures to prevent AIDS within certain groups.¹¹² This lack of steadfastness in combination with the ineffective public

¹⁰⁶ Drucker, *Grenzeloos* interview.

¹⁰⁷ Van der Meer, *Grenzeloos* interview, 24-05-2020, <https://www.grenzeloos.org/content/grenzeloos-gesprek-6-de-strijd-tegen-aids-covid-19-naar-een-radicaal-activistisch-antwoord>.

¹⁰⁸ Duyvendak and Koopmans, 'Weerstand bieden aan aids', 239.

¹⁰⁹ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 53.

¹¹⁰ 'WHO Europese leden tegen het opleggen van maatregelen', *Aids Info*, issue 8 June 1986; 'Praktijk minder mooi dan theorie', *Trouw*, 22-07-1992.

¹¹¹ Hekma, *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland*, 131-137; 'AIDS-voorlichting vraagt meer geld', *De GAY Krant*, nr.3 6th issue 1985.

¹¹² Winston, 'The Impact of Removing the Immigration Ban' 709.

campaigns meant that despite the inclusion and participation of the Dutch gay movement in formulating prevention policies, these policies proved not to be more successful than those of neighboring countries where the gay movement was excluded.¹¹³

Due to the inclusive Dutch AIDS policy and the absence of a significant AIDS epidemic in the Netherlands, there was less need for pro-active movements such as ACT-UP.¹¹⁴ The small branches of ACT-UP in the Netherlands did not receive much attention or support. Moreover, unlike in the United States, AIDS activism was not directly connected to left wing activism. In the 1970s, the sexual revolutions and the rise of Dutch gay movements had mainly taken place in the university cities. By the end of the 1970s, besides the COC, several Dutch political parties developed gay rights-organizations within the parties. The idea that as a gay man or woman you had to vote left to represent your interests was abandoned in the late 1960s. Openness to this political power was linked to a change of strategy by the Dutch gay movements. In the 1980s a change occurred in which the defensive strategy was exchanged for a more combative one. In the late 1970s, the emphasis was on maintaining difference from the heterosexual community and gaining mainstream society's understanding. In the early 1990s, that defensive attitude was exchanged for pride and self-awareness.¹¹⁵ Homosexuals had opened up to society and had cast their wishes in a form that was translated into parliament. A fanatical pursuit of equal rights arose, but in all areas of society.¹¹⁶ Research by Duyvendak and Tielman showed that 90 percent of the Dutch population saw discrimination on the grounds of homosexuality as an absolute taboo.¹¹⁷ These numbers are supported by Henk Krol, founder and editor-in-chief of *De Gay Krant*, the first Dutch journalist who wrote about AIDS and a key figure in the AIDS debate. Krol told AD: 'The time for us to beg for equal rights is over. We can enforce it now, that is the power of numbers. The sadness is gone, homosexuals should radiate pride.'¹¹⁸ Mooij stated that the strong beliefs of consultation and consensus around AIDS stopped ideas of activism.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 117.

¹¹⁴ 'Grootscheeps onderzoek naar AIDS op komst', *De Volkskrant*, 21-01-1984; 'Nederlandse test blijkt belangrijk', *De Telegraaf*, 24-01-1987.

¹¹⁵ 'Homo doe je rolschaatsen uit', *De Volkskrant*, 14-09-1985.

¹¹⁶ 'Homo's zijn de schaamte voorbij', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-09-1990; 'DAM-Diner voor AIDS fonds', *De Telegraaf*, 06-07-1993.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹¹⁹ Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 127.

As a result of domestic satisfaction amongst the Dutch gay community, moral concerns arose with the epidemic beyond borders. The small Dutch chapter of ACT-UP mainly created their campaigns for an international dimension. Duyvendak noted the criticized political authorities were mainly abroad.¹²⁰ Image 2 shows an affiche created by Jasper Wiedeman for the Dutch ACT-UP. The affiche criticizes discrimination and entry bans and calls for demonstration, as an angry man crossing his fingers. The affiche was made for Dutch ACT-UP supporters and was aimed at foreign policies, as part of the text is in English, with the title saying, 'People with AIDS do it everywhere'. The international dimension to AIDS activism in the Netherlands is in line with the feeling that emancipation goals were completed in the Netherlands in the 1980s.¹²¹

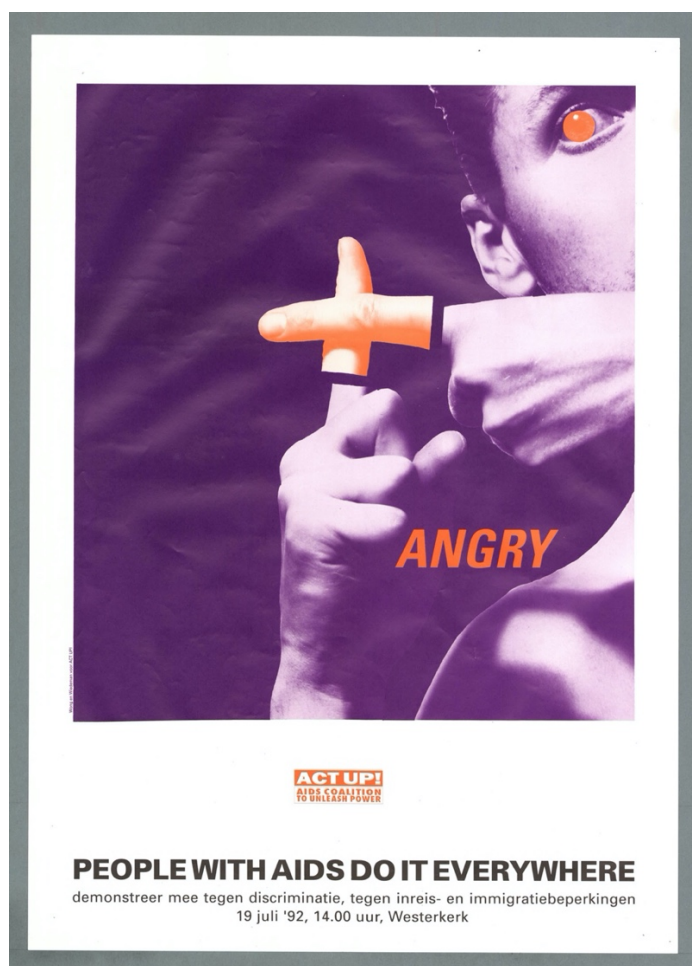


Image 2: 'People with AIDS do it everywhere'; 'Affiche ACT-UP', Nederlandse Affiches, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, <https://geheugen.delpher.nl/nl/geheugen/view/people-with-aids-do-it-everywhere-wiedeman-jasper?query=&facets%5Bsubject%5D%5B%5D=AIDS&page=2&maxperpage=36&coll=ngvn&identifier=NAG002%3AIIISG-30051000679644>, consulted on 02-07-2020 .

¹²⁰ Duyvendak, 'The depoliticisation of Dutch gay identity', 428.

¹²¹ Schrover and Kampman, 'Charter Flights Full of Homosexuals', 34.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the rise of and response to the AIDS virus in the United States and the Netherlands. It has shown the differences and similarities between the two countries. In the United States, the 1980s political and economic situation was characterized as neoliberal. The central government was reluctant to intervene in the AIDS crisis and instead activist groups like ACT-UP took measures into their own hands. In the Netherlands, the Dutch political model of inclusion and accommodation explained the paucity of this activism. The gay communities felt they had influence within the coordination team and later the NCAB. The activism was therefore focused on various situations abroad, and mainly on the United States.

Chapter 2: National media coverage of the US' AIDS approach

A 1992 *De Telegraaf* headline in large letters read: 'Example of tolerance and solidarity. AIDS conference praises the attitude of the Netherlands'. Later, the newspaper stated the Netherlands and the United States were opposed during the eighth AIDS World Congress in the Amsterdam RAI, as two extremes of tolerance and solidarity in the global fight against the deadly disease.¹²² This chapter provides an overview of the media's coverage of the American AIDS approach. The chapter is broken down into three sections reflecting the most frequently occurring topics in the analyzed articles: the social consequences of AIDS in the United States, the political consequences, and lastly the view on the varying forms of activism.

2.1 The social consequences

June 1983, *Trouw* headlined an article: 'Aids, an epidemic full of mysteries'. According to the article, the fear of infection had grown into a phobia in the United States: 'from nurse to gravedigger, from firefighter to acquaintance-of-homosexual: they were all terrified of contamination'. But no one had ever become infected 'just like that' and therefore, the article argued, AIDS patients should receive the same treatment as people who suffer from other contagious diseases.¹²³ In those early stages of AIDS, three articles from three different newspapers stated there was no reason to panic over the mysterious disease in the Netherlands.¹²⁴ In 1983, Dr. H. Bijkerk, head of the infectious diseases department of the chief medical inspectorate of public health at the Ministry of WVC, stated the Ministry was monitoring the rising number of US cases but a lot was still unclear about the disease. He did confirm, however, the disease had nothing to do with being homosexual but rather with the behavior of some homosexuals.¹²⁵ *De Waarheid* agreed as it argued the risk of infection did not lie in being homosexual. The decisive factor was the large number of sexual contacts with different partners homosexuals had.¹²⁶ Interestingly, a parallel argument was used in the United States by a conservative member of the Republican Party that same year. The member

¹²² 'Voorbeeld van tolerantie en solidariteit. Aids-congres looft houding Nederland', *De Telegraaf*, 20-07-1992.

¹²³ 'Aids, een epidemie vol raadsels', *Trouw*, 23-07-1983.

¹²⁴ 'Geen paniek hier over geheimzinnige ziekte', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-06-1983; 'The medium is AIDS en sex een roulette', *De Volkskrant*, 20-08-1983; 'Buitenland Wereld Gezondheids Organisatie: Geen reden voor ADS-psychose', *De Telegraaf*, 27-09-1985.

¹²⁵ 'Geen paniek hier over geheimzinnige ziekte', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-06-1983.

¹²⁶ 'Verhoogde vatbaarheid stelt artsen voor raadsel', *De Waarheid*, 19-02-1982.

pointed out that it was not the disease that was dangerous but the homosexual lifestyle.¹²⁷ The number of US casualties increased rapidly, with well over 1640 cases in 1983. The cases were predominantly reported in gay circles in New York and San Francisco.¹²⁸ Because of the uncertain origin of the disease and the high number of casualties within 'unpopular and little-known minority groups', the groups started pointing fingers at each other. American gay magazines were remarkably keen on the theory that AIDS could be the result of some type of swine fever originating in Haiti. If AIDS turned out to be an imported disease from an underdeveloped and poor country, the spread would not be the fault of homosexuals. Conversely, according to Haitian organizations, AIDS was not exported from Haiti to the United States, but it was spread by American homosexuals in Haiti during contacts with male prostitutes.¹²⁹ Four years later, the theory of Haitian swine fever was still dominant in the United States. *NRC* disagreed with it and stated a recent discovery showed the AIDS virus had been present in the United States for a decade longer than previously thought.¹³⁰ *De Volkskrant* argued that attempts by the various groups of victims to blame each other seemed very poor, but was understandable given that fear of AIDS had caused visible panic and discrimination towards these minority groups throughout US society. *De Waarheid* reported a completely different theory of the Cuban government which stated AIDS had been developed in an American laboratory. The CIA had brought the disease to Cuba as part of the American bacteria war against the new communist state.¹³¹ In the article *De Waarheid* does not comment on the credibility of the accusation, but does extensively describe the proof of the accusation Cuba had.

Before the AIDS crisis, the American gay community had fought for acceptance in a small circle. However, the crisis drove the community into the public and political battleground.¹³² Initially, the main reason to unite was medical necessity, but later gay movements became more prominent in other debates.¹³³ The unification of the gay community into public movements did not go unnoticed. In 1983 *De Telegraaf* stated how fear of homosexuals spread much faster than the AIDS virus itself via US newspapers,

¹²⁷ 'De stand rondom AIDS', *De Gay Krant*, July 1983.

¹²⁸ Ibidem.

¹²⁹ 'The medium is AIDS en sex een roulette', *De Volkskrant*, 20-08-1983.

¹³⁰ 'Aidsvirus tien jaar eerder in VS dan aangenomen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 26-10-1987.

¹³¹ 'Cuba: Aids is onderdeel Amerikaanse bacterieoorlog', *De Waarheid*, 02-12-1987.

¹³² 'Homo's VS staan aan het begin van een lange strijd', *De Volkskrant*, 26-11-1992.

¹³³ Ibidem.

television and other media. This led to panic-like reactions and forms of public and media hysteria.¹³⁴ *De Telegraaf* published an article that substantiated this statement by summing up several examples of hysteria: in Denver, a woman hired a fumigation service when she moved into the house of a recently deceased gay man. A pilot refused to take off as long as a seriously ill AIDS patient was on board. In Texas, preachers advocated the closure of gay bars and bathhouses. This occurred in other states as well, with arguments that these facilities were hotspots for the spread of AIDS.¹³⁵ The article concluded that Americans who struggled with the increasing equalization of homosexuals in society were beginning to retaliate. The Dutch media argued American society's response to AIDS was a result of authorities failing gay communities. *De Telegraaf* quoted a frequently used argument among gay communities to support this claim: 'If the disease had affected non-homosexuals, action would have been taken a long time ago.'¹³⁶

The tone and the content of the article is very critical but not uncommon. *De Volkskrant* published a similar article with a provocative title and an even more provocative message, citing a documentary made on the 1980s: 'A dream from the right has come true: homosexuals and drug addicts are being wiped out.'¹³⁷ This article, which is similar to the *De Telegraaf* article focused on the position of the homosexual AIDS victim, sketched the consequences of the ever-changing government position on the treatment of AIDS patients and showed how hysteria also reached local and federal politics.¹³⁸ On the federal level, the Republican Senator Jesse Helms passed a law in Congress which, among other things, limited government funding to art of an 'obscene nature.' Helms had previously stated that he believed 'homoerotic artists who produced bastards and engaged in perverted practices undermined American values.'¹³⁹ He was supported by Republican Representative William E. Dannemeyer, who himself stated in a book that homosexuality is a curable disease. The examples are an indication of the politics pursued. Although the article was based on an interview, the author made some interesting choices to highlight her own opinion on the matter: for example, the decision to use as the title the sentence 'I wake up every morning in

¹³⁴ 'Angst voor homoseksuelen', *De Telegraaf*, 21-06-1983; 'Bal voor boycotters Aids conferentie', *Trouw*, 21-06-1990.

¹³⁵ 'San-Francisco sluit badhuizen', *De Gay Krant*, December 1984.

¹³⁶ 'Angst voor homoseksuelen', *De Telegraaf*, 21-06-1983.

¹³⁷ 'Ik word elke morgen wakker in de moordmachine die Amerika heet', *De Volkskrant*, 17-02-1990.

¹³⁸ Ibidem.

¹³⁹ Ibidem.

the killing machine called America', and the anecdote chosen to end the article: '[...] bystanders laugh at the Gay Parade: next year we will not see you again. You get AIDS anyway.' Image 3 was published by *De Volkskrant* and was copied from the American right-wing conservative magazine *Moral Majority Report*. The picture was made for American families to warn them that the gay disease AIDS could start to threaten their families. It contains a classic family image of a couple with two small children, all protected from the virus by a facemask. The image conveys the wrong prevention message, as it was already clear in 1983 that AIDS was not transmitted through the air. *De Volkskrant* reproduced the image to demonstrate that the American media purposely sowed fear among the population.



Image 3: *De Volkskrant* used this photo in one of their articles on AIDS hysteria in the US. The photo is copied from American magazine *Moral Majority Report* that warned with this masked photo: 'gay diseases threaten American families.' 'The medium is AIDS en sex een roulette', *De Volkskrant*, 20-08-1983.

The public and political hysteria surrounding AIDS not only fueled indirect and personal discrimination against homosexuals, it also made their accessibility to basic needs

more complicated.¹⁴⁰ AIDS patients could be taken out of health insurance by insurance companies.¹⁴¹ Although this was not possible in the Netherlands, some AIDS patients were refused life insurance.¹⁴² Life insurance could be a condition for receiving a mortgage or buying other property, but the issue was ignored overall by the Dutch government.¹⁴³ In the United States, AIDS caused many homosexuals to lose their jobs. In 1986 the Washington Department of Justice said AIDS was a legitimate reason to fire employees; it did not matter whether the disease itself was detected, just a fear of infection was enough to fire someone.¹⁴⁴ Previously, the only way to challenge discriminatory dismissals was to take every single case to high court.¹⁴⁵ The word frequently used by newspapers to describe the position of homosexuals in U.S. society was 'pariah'.¹⁴⁶ *NRC* did not simply condemn the American approach, but warned that measures accepted in the United States would provide legitimacy for such measures elsewhere in the Western world.

The newspapers noticed how signs of unnecessarily panic towards AIDS and its' patients were also visible in the Netherlands. This panic was visible in headlines such as 'One hundred million will be infected with AIDS in the coming five years' and 'AIDS epidemic much more tragic in ten years' time'.¹⁴⁷ Simon Watney, the author of *Policing Desire*, a book on pornography, AIDS and the role of media, stated in an interview with *Trouw* how the media was using AIDS to maintain accepted standards of attractiveness, health, and societies. According to him, this also applied to the Dutch media. In the Netherlands the newspapers used AIDS as a tool to keep homosexual fellow human beings in their position of 'the other'. He argued that instead AIDS should raise questions on democracy, privacy, and legal protection.¹⁴⁸ Dr. Roel Coutinho, head of the public health and environment department of the Amsterdam GG&GD, stated in an interview with *NRC* this fear could be prevented by adding members of the risk-groups into Dutch AIDS committees. However, he stressed those

¹⁴⁰ 'Volgens Amerikaanse onderzoeken', *De Telegraaf*, 22-08-1987.

¹⁴¹ 'Aids erger dan de pest', *De Telegraaf*, 24-01-1987.

¹⁴² Mooij, *Geen Paniek*, 53.

¹⁴³ 'Artsen weigeren testen bij arbeidsongeschiktheid', *Aids Info*, 18-04-1989.

¹⁴⁴ 'Amerika draait de klok terug', *De Gay Krant*, October 1984.

¹⁴⁵ 'Aids-patiënten zijn in veel landen paria's', *De Telegraaf*, 08-06-1989.

¹⁴⁶ 'Homofiele dupe Britse AIDS-paniek', *De Telegraaf*, 28-02-1985; 'Aids-patiënten zijn in veel landen paria's', *De Telegraaf*, 08-06-1989; 'HIV-drager een paria', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02-12-1991; 'Amerikanen doen het puriteins', *De Volkskrant*, 24-01-1987.

¹⁴⁷ 'Komende vijf jaren honderd miljoen besmet met AIDS', *Trouw*, 11-12-1986; 'Aids-epidemie over tien jaar vele malen tragischer', *Trouw*, 06-06-1989.

¹⁴⁸ 'Bal voor boycotters van aids-conferentie', *Trouw*, 21-06-1990.

members should only be 'people who can speak with some authority and not action group representatives.'¹⁴⁹

2.2 The political consequences

In December 1986, *NRC* reported how 15,000 deaths lead to serious political approach to AIDS in the United States. As it became clear that AIDS was not only a disease that threatened marginal groups, the federal government felt more responsibility to act.¹⁵⁰ The choices made by the federal government regarding AIDS legislation were closely followed by the Dutch media.

Anger within the US gay movement about the apathetic attitude of the federal government grew. The gay community was convinced they could expect nothing from the White House in terms of AIDS prevention and therefore threw themselves into the political arena.¹⁵¹ For the first time in history, the gay community collectively rallied behind one Presidential candidate: Bill Clinton. The gay community used experiences gained from the AIDS movements to raise money and mobilize voters on a large scale. They formed a powerful force to be reckoned with during the election year of 1992.¹⁵²

Clinton had made an election promises to stand up for gay rights and lift the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces.¹⁵³ Partly caused by the fear of AIDS, the US military had fired 1500 gays every year during the second half of the 1980s.¹⁵⁴ *AD* estimated that between 1980 and 1990 the government spent half a billion dollars replacing homosexuals.¹⁵⁵ Their sexual orientation was considered to be the main reason for their release from military service. These 'gay-razzia's' went so far that American soldiers stationed in the Netherlands were watched by the US military police for signs of illicit homosexual behavior. *De Telegraaf* stated with incomprehension that the Dutch *Marechaussee* had provided assistance in investigating Americans suspected of homosexuality in at least one case.¹⁵⁶ In that instance, the *Marechaussee* had assisted the US military by making a visit to an alleged Dutch friend of

¹⁴⁹ 'Veel indrukken maar weinig nieuws op congres over aids', *NRC Handelsblad*, 06-06-1987.

¹⁵⁰ 'Aids voorlichting VS niet meer taboe', *NRC Handelsblad*, 20-12-1986.

¹⁵¹ 'UITSPRAAK HOOGGERECHTSHOF VS WEKT ONRUST BIJ HOMOFIELEN', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02-07-1986.

¹⁵² 'Homo's VS staan aan het begin van een lange strijd', *De Volkskrant*, 26-11-1992.

¹⁵³ 'Aanval Amerikaanse mariniers op homo', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02-02-1993.

¹⁵⁴ 'VS jaagt op homo's', *De Telegraaf*, 06-06-1987.

¹⁵⁵ 'VS-leger ontslaat jaarlijks 1500 homo's', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 20-06-1992.

¹⁵⁶ 'VS jaagt op homo's', *De Telegraaf*, 06-06-1987.

an American soldier, in order to question him about the sexuality of the soldier. The American soldier was later fired on the basis of his sexual preferences. *De Gay Krant* published a full-page article entitled 'Dutch authorities help Americans hunt for gays'. The article condemned the Dutch cooperation and argued this was not the first time authorities had cooperated.¹⁵⁷

The US Ministry of Defense defended their policy by claiming homosexuality to be incompatible with military service and the maintenance of good order, morality and discipline.¹⁵⁸ According to the General Accounting Office however, this view is refuted by investigations and experts. It is therefore unsurprising that both *De Telegraaf* and *AD* wrote opinion articles on the topic once it became clear that President Clinton had postponed his plan to openly admit homosexuals to the armed forces, seven months later. The President had changed his mind to avoid a showdown with the American Congress and the top of the US military, and to limit more domestic unrest.¹⁵⁹ Instead he unveiled, almost a year after his election, a deeply watered-down 'tolerance policy' that allowed gays to participate in the military as long as they concealed their sexual preference and dropped intimacies inside and outside the barracks.¹⁶⁰ *De Telegraaf* lashed out at Clinton, stating that 'American homosexuals are made happy about nothing', and that by finally recognizing the problem but not acting on it, the government involvement was a confirmation of the discriminatory policy.¹⁶¹ The *AD* article asked how the same situation was regulated in the Dutch armed forces and immediately concluded 'luckily a lot better'. In the Netherlands, the grounds for rejection of sexuality was removed in 1974 and the position of gay men and women in the Dutch army began to change. In 1987, the Homosexuality and Armed Forces Foundation was established to represent the interests of gay men and women in the military. The writer identified this as a global first. Moreover, he added that even in 1993, the Netherlands remained the only country in the world with such an organization. Although the NISSO (National Institute for Social Sexual Research) conducted a scientific study showing that two thirds of the Dutch armed forces tended to exclude gays from normal social life, the method of actively changing soldiers' mentality was effective. All things considered, the article's

¹⁵⁷ 'Nederlandse autoriteiten helpen Amerikanen bij jacht op homo's', *De Gay Krant*, July 1987.

¹⁵⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁹ 'Aanval Amerikaanse mariniers op homo', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 02-02-1993.; 'Homoseksuele militairen juist zeer gemotiveerd', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29-01-1993.

¹⁶⁰ 'Compromis Clinton lost vrijwel niets op. Homo's in VS-leger blijft heet hangijzer', *De Telegraaf*, 23-07-1993.

¹⁶¹ Ibidem.

author praised the Dutch gay emancipation policy. The article, like *De Telegraaf*, also especially supported the gay men and women in the US armed forces. Lastly, the author remarked upon the large contrast with the United States. He recommended the United States to look at and take example from other countries that show no reason to keep homosexuals out of the armed forces. The article finally stated that it goes without saying that 'we' hope that, despite the opposition he was experiencing, President Clinton would be able to fulfill his election promise in this regard.¹⁶²

Another topic of interest was the migration ban preventing visitors with AIDS or suspected of having AIDS from staying or settling in the United States.¹⁶³ *De Telegraaf* quoted Professor William Curran from Harvard University on the Fifth World Congress on AIDS, who argued with regard to the migration ban that 'people are completely stripped of their human rights and dignity'.¹⁶⁴ Although not formally admitted, the United States border measures for AIDS patients were an additional difficulty exacerbating the already existing border measures for homosexuals.¹⁶⁵ Under the United States Immigration Act of 1919, foreign homosexuals could be denied entry to the United States if they admitted to being homosexuals upon request.¹⁶⁶ The legal concept that was included in the US immigration law and justified this law was called moral turpitude. The argument of moral turpitude was used against lesbians or gay men, stating that if they were convicted of sodomy or public immorality, they could be deported on the grounds of this legal concept.¹⁶⁷ The COC, together with Dutch parliamentarians, sent a letter of protest to the United States Congress regarding this regulation in 1980.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, AIDS was added to the list of infectious diseases that could be ground to deny entry to the United States. *AD* condemned the American response of blaming minorities and migrants, using the quote: 'A country that appoints guilty parties to create scapegoats is guilty itself.'¹⁶⁹

Besides opposition from Dutch organizations, politicians, and media on the US border policy, Dutch citizens had a history of refusing to obey American legislation. The most covered

¹⁶² 'Homoseksuele militairen juist zeer gemotiveerd', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29-01-1993.

¹⁶³ 'Aids-patiënten zijn in veel landen paria's', *De Telegraaf*, 08-06-1989.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁵ 'Amerikaans toelatingsbeleid', *De Gay Krant*, October 1985.

¹⁶⁶ 'Rechter in VS: weren homo's ontoelaatbaar', *De Volkskrant*, 27-06-1981.

¹⁶⁷ Kevin Johnson, *The Huddled Masses Myth: Immigration and Civil Rights* (Philadelphia 2004) 149.

¹⁶⁸ 'Hoorzitting over uitwijzing Nederlandse homo's onderschept in VS', *De Volkskrant*, 02-04-1981.

¹⁶⁹ 'Weldenkend', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 09-05-1988.

case concerned AIDS-patient Hans Paul Verhoef, who tried to enter the United States to attend the 1989 international gay and lesbian conference on AIDS in San Francisco, but was denied access to the country. Verhoef refused to leave the country upon arrival and was therefore detained in an American prison.¹⁷⁰ Verhoef stated that prior to his departure, his doctor had inquired at the US Consulate whether he was obliged to report AIDS when applying for a visa. The doctor was told that formally there was a duty to report infectious diseases, but that no one had done so in the last five years.¹⁷¹ The event sparked debates in the public sphere and the media, but also found its way into politics.

In San Francisco, AIDS activists gathered and called the refusal a threat to the freedom of travel for people with AIDS. San Francisco Democratic Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi requested permission from the United States Secretary of Justice to allow Verhoef to continue his journey. According to Pelosi, the provision of the American Immigration Act under which Verhoef was arrested only applied to tourists.¹⁷² Meanwhile in the Netherlands, all parties in the House of Representatives (with the exception of the small right-wing parties) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek of the Christian-democratic party CDA to urge his American counterpart to allow Verhoef entry to the United States. The parties also wanted the issue to be raised in the United Nations General Assembly. According to the House of Representatives, a response to the US discriminatory policy at a European level was urgently needed. The debate became so heated that all parties accused Minister Elco Brinkman of WVC, the minister who was responsible for the coordinating of gay policies, of having no vision on homosexuality and the causes of discrimination. Brinkman, on his part, was not keen to make an international case for the free movement of homosexual persons, as he argued that this would be a mainly symbolic action. *De Volkskrant* stated Brinkman did appear concerned about the extent to which COC, the largest gay advocacy organization, was representative of the views of homosexuals and how a work plan must provide insight into the subsidy flow of the organization.¹⁷³ The article provided an interesting insight into the relationship between politics and the COC. Moreover, the heated debate between the Minister and the political parties demonstrated the importance of gay rights in politics. The

¹⁷⁰ 'Aidspatiënt levert kritiek op VS', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10-04-1989.

¹⁷¹ 'Verhoef verzweg AIDS bij visumaanvraag', *De Volkskrant*, 06-04-1989.

¹⁷² 'VS boos vanwege aanhouding van seropositieve Nederlander', *De Volkskrant*, 06-04-1989.

¹⁷³ 'Minister wijst symbolische actie af. Kamer vraagt Brinkman visie op homoseksualiteit', *De Volkskrant*, 11-04-1989.

lax attitude of Brinkman and his distrust of the COC nonetheless seemed to suggest the understanding that homosexuality was already fully accepted, and discrimination no longer existed in the Netherlands.

De Volkskrant who extensively followed and reported the case, recounted how the arrest of Verhoef aroused anger from the COC and the NCAB. In a petition to the American embassy, several interest groups for homosexuals pointed to U.N. international agreements to prevent discrimination against HIV-positive people and AIDS patients.¹⁷⁴ The US decision to detain Verhoef was 'at odds' with these arrangements, the organizations stated.¹⁷⁵ Eventually Verhoef was released from detention and allowed to visit the conference. Verhoef used his acquired status as a well-known person to bombard politicians and the media with the message that the only weapon against AIDS is correct information: 'You don't stop a virus by stopping people at the border', he concluded.¹⁷⁶ In the report on his death, a year later, *Trouw* praised Verhoef on educating the American people on how to prevent and control infection. At the same time, the newspaper emphasized how disappointed Verhoef had been in the Dutch government for not raising the issue with the American government.¹⁷⁷ *Trouw* argued the Netherlands assumed their pioneering role on the world stage a little too easily. The government did not have to organize much on AIDS prevention because most was already managed by gay emancipation groups and other non-state organizations. With that, the newspapers stated the principles of the two governments were totally different, but argued the Netherlands owed it to its citizens to resume the international pioneering role in AIDS and gay emancipation.¹⁷⁸

2.3 The varying forms of activism

Another frequent topic in the newspapers was American gay activism. Although activism at first seems related to politics, this section argues that activism consisted of more than solely political influence. The size, frequency and intensity of American activism for the

¹⁷⁴ 'Aanhouding Nederlander in VS wekt boosheid COC', *De Volkskrant*, 05-04-1989.

¹⁷⁵ 'Verhoef verzwegen AIDS bij visumaanvraag', *De Volkskrant*, 06-04-1989.

¹⁷⁶ 'Aidspatiënt levert kritiek op VS', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10-04-1989; 'Aids patiënt Verhoef miste Den Haag' *Trouw*, 02-05-1989.

¹⁷⁷ 'Verhoef vecht voor aanvaarding seropositieven', *Trouw*, 25-07-1990.

¹⁷⁸ 'Nederland moet weer voorttrekkersrol in Aidsbeleid oppakken', *Trouw*, 02-12-1991; 'Nederland moet protesteren', *Trouw*, 21-04-1989.

improvement of gay rights in this period was unknown to Dutch society and therefore largely covered by the media.

Although many American homosexuals still preferred anonymity, for fear of being ridiculed or losing their jobs, there was a trend towards the public stage. The percentage of Americans who said they knew a homosexual had doubled in seven years to 43 percent by the end of the 1980s.¹⁷⁹ In other words, fewer homosexuals were willing to keep up appearances. Instead of effecting political decisions from the inside-out, as was done by the Dutch gay movements, the US gay movements tried to put pressure on local and federal government from the outside in forms of activism. Although most articles on the activism were descriptive, the opinionated articles were generally supportive of the activists and their protests and boycotts.¹⁸⁰ *De Volkskrant* wrote how, during a protest in Washington in 1987, an impressive patchwork was spread out across a section of The Mall, the long grassy plains of downtown Washington. The blanket covered an area of about 50 by 150 meters and consisted of almost two thousand knotted panels, with the names and some personal belongings of AIDS victims.¹⁸¹ In New York, the annual ten-kilometer AIDS Walk attracted tens of thousands of people. Coverage of the event particularly praised the diversity of the attendees and the kindness and solidarity they radiated. This painted the event as one big advertisement for the old ideal of New York as a melting pot of all races and classes.¹⁸² It strikes that the newspapers' support was dependent on the tone of the protest. According to *AD*, the 'gay march' in Washington in 1993 was attended by at least half a million people and had a sixties-like character. This was due to the march's 'light' agenda: to draw attention in a mild manner to the continued discrimination against homosexuals, and to promote AIDS research. The article stated this was a break from previous marches and protests, in which hard demands and long dramatic speeches were made.¹⁸³ *AD* concluded this new light agenda made the march successful, as it was more modest and practical. The protests that had a more aggressive tone were generally considered with less understanding.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ 'Homo's VS staan aan het begin van een lange strijd', *De Volkskrant*, 26-11-1992.

¹⁸⁰ 'Bal voor boycotters aids conferentie', *Trouw*, 21-06-1990; 'Liever aidsgala zonder franje', *Trouw*, 28-09-1991; 'Boycotten, een nieuwe strategie', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-09-1990.

¹⁸¹ 'Homo's betogen massaal in Washington', *De Volkskrant*, 13-10-1987.

¹⁸² 'Over de grens: Aids walk', *De Volkskrant*, 25-05-1991.

¹⁸³ 'Homomars in jaren zestig-sfeer', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26-04-1993.

¹⁸⁴ 'Hard optreden politie tegen aids-activisten', *De Telegraaf*, 20-06-1990.

Briefly touched upon but important to highlight is the fact that US gay movements were centered on famous figures who were presented as leaders of the movement. This was in contrast to the Netherlands, where, according to an article in *AD*, coming out was no longer a reason for fear as the country was ready for the 'home, garden and kitchen lifestyle' of gay men and women.¹⁸⁵ In the United States many famous names were connected to the gay movements. If one died from the virus, he was seen as a martyr by the movement.¹⁸⁶ After Keith Haring, an artist who used sexual images to advocate for AIDS awareness, died from AIDS, hundreds of his T-shirts were sold and worn during protests and marches.¹⁸⁷ The US' cultural sector was hit hard by the AIDS virus. The virus had completely destroyed the 'homosexual intelligentsia' that was being created in the United States. Gay communities had engaged in interesting innovations of science, literature and the visual arts, but the virus ended all great expectations.¹⁸⁸ This made the disease very visible, and that visibility was again used to create awareness by activists, artists and celebrities. *Trouw* stated how American AIDS patients had a 'geuzen' mentality, meaning they showed their teeth, a reference to the Dutch honorary title 'geus'. The newspapers argued it made sense that the rest of society tried to silence them because of it.¹⁸⁹

In the early stages of the AIDS crisis, mainly gay activists cultivated discussion by creating art expositions and/or movie and theater pieces on the crisis.¹⁹⁰ Later on, in the early 1990s, Hollywood dared to bring the disease to cinema and television. The movies mainly highlighted the fact that gay hatred was wrong which, *AD* stated, was a modest goal compared to finding an anti-AIDS drug.¹⁹¹ However, there were also examples which demonstrate that art played an important role in making the AIDS debate more common among the public as newspapers, magazines and TV programs increasingly focused on the virus.¹⁹² The *De Telegraaf* headline 'Tears during the play "The Normal Heart"', referred to Larry Kramer's play. The play connected the themes of homosexuality, AIDS and death. The newspapers called it the most important play of the moment. The article does however

¹⁸⁵ 'Homo's zijn de schaamte voorbij, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-09-1990.

¹⁸⁶ 'Starky's vrouw gaat AIDS dood dapper tegemoet' *De Telegraaf*, 24-10-1994.

¹⁸⁷ 'Over de grens: Aids walk', *De Volkskrant*, 25-05-1991.

¹⁸⁸ 'Tamme reactie homo's op slap aids-beleid is zeer begrijpelijk', *De Volkskrant*, 21-07-1992.

¹⁸⁹ 'Liever aidsgala zonder franje', *Trouw*, 28-09-1991.

¹⁹⁰ 'Fantaseren over erotiek', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10-01-1991.

¹⁹¹ 'Hollywood en aids hebben elkaar gevonden, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29-10-1994; 'Heibel in West-Hollywood', *De Gay Krant*, October 1985.

¹⁹² 'Drie vrouwen ontdekken AIDS', *De Volkskrant*, 14-02-1987.

emphasize that the play was not a masterpiece and that some scenes were melodramatic.¹⁹³ This criticism on American artistic work appears in other articles as well. *De Volkskrant* wrote a similar review on a documentary about a theater group called *The A.I.D.S. Show* (Artists Involved in Death and Survival) who tried to create awareness for AIDS. The review stated that the show might be daring for Americans, but Dutch viewers would only be surprised by what the film was not. It was missing loud jokes, the undermining of taboos, and shocks.¹⁹⁴ Five years later, the newspaper wrote a similar review on an American theater group *The Hot Peaches*, giving them the same criticism by arguing that the group's statements were very American and not modern enough. Moreover, *De Volkskrant* stated that it did not display the real battle of AIDS patients.¹⁹⁵

In the beginning of the 1990s, the number of articles on the AIDS crisis started to fall. Multiple newspapers covered how the fear and therefore the interest surrounding AIDS slowly started to disappear, despite no official treatment being found.¹⁹⁶ The newspapers understood this to be due to a decline in the Dutch infection rate: 30,000 people infected with HIV had become 'possibly 10,000.'¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the virus had not become the predicted national disease in the Netherlands but was limited to the circles of gay men, drug users and their partners, and hemophilia patients. *De Telegraaf* emphasized that, fortunately, there was no discrimination against AIDS-infected people, nor a dichotomy within society. People with AIDS were not considered the lepers of the 20th century in the Netherlands.¹⁹⁸ Overall, the article proudly portrayed a society that had chosen the correct plan of action to combat the AIDS crisis. The article is interesting as six months earlier *De Telegraaf* warned the rising AIDS numbers in the Netherlands, due to less careful behavior, could indicate American conditions.¹⁹⁹ This shows the constant comparison of Dutch conditions to foreign countries. In 1994, *NRC* considered the lower mortality rate from AIDS and a reduction in the number of AIDS diagnoses as 'the benefit of the fear of the past ten years among gay men'.²⁰⁰ The media coverage of the Dutch response to AIDS often had a proud undertone, especially if articles

¹⁹³ 'Tranen met tuiten bij toneelstuk "The Normal Heart"', *De Telegraaf*, 02-05-1986.

¹⁹⁴ 'Artiesten in de weer met dood en strijd', *De Volkskrant*, 14-02-1987.

¹⁹⁵ 'Routineuze Peaches niet brutaal genoeg', *De Volkskrant*, 17-07-1992.

¹⁹⁶ 'Angst voor AIDS verslapt', *De Telegraaf*, 15-06-1991; 'Buitenlandse bladen: Aids raakt uit de belangstelling', *De Volkskrant*, 20-06-1990; 'Aids-epidemie gaat door maar met lagere aantallen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 15-11-1994.

¹⁹⁷ 'Angst voor AIDS verslapt', *De Telegraaf*, 15-06-1991.

¹⁹⁸ 'Buitenlandse bladen: Aids raakt uit de belangstelling', *De Volkskrant*, 20-06-1990.

¹⁹⁹ 'Aantal gevallen Aids plotseling omhoog', *De Telegraaf*, 02-12-1989.

²⁰⁰ 'Aids-epidemie gaat door maar met lagere aantallen', *NRC Handelsblad*, 15-11-1994.

compared the response to the American. By the end of 1995, *Trouw* summarized the US response to almost 15 years of AIDS crisis as wry and shortsighted.²⁰¹

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter showed multiple explanations can be found for the critical nature of the Dutch media on the US AIDS policy. The social consequences of AIDS in US society were highly covered and condemned. Through multiple examples, the newspapers demonstrated the rise in discrimination against homosexuals was severe, while in the Netherlands it was made clear from the beginning that the disease was not a specifically homosexual disease, the media argued.²⁰² Secondly, the political interest of the newspapers particularly focused on the armed forces and the US border restrictions for patients with HIV/AIDS. The articles highlighted how these situations could not occur in the Netherlands and openly criticized the US federal government. Lastly, the differences in activism between the two countries showed how some criticism was built upon cultural and statistical differences. In the Netherlands, the disease had not become a social disease due to the lower mortality numbers. This meant the visibility and the need to act was much lower. Coverage from the Dutch media could therefore be unfairly critical towards the outspoken modes of activism in the United States. The media did not consider that in the United States, the opposite had happened. The disease had made many victims, also outside of its risk groups. Furthermore, gay emancipation meant two different things in the oppositional countries. In the United States, AIDS activism did not only advocate for more money and medical support, which had initially been the case, but was expanded to become a movement which included the preservation and improvement of the gay culture that was built in the 1970s.²⁰³ In the Netherlands, gays also found their way to the public stage partly due to the AIDS epidemic. However, their ideals and methods were different. The Dutch media believed Dutch homosexuals had achieved equal rights and were therefore willing to settle for the 'home, garden and kitchen lifestyle'.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ 'Wrang en kortzichtig', *Trouw*, 08-11-1995.

²⁰² 'Geen paniek hier over geheimzinnige ziekte', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-06-1983.

²⁰³ 'Tamme reactie homo's op slap aids-beleid is zeer begrijpelijk', *De Volkskrant*, 21-07-1992.

²⁰⁴ Homo's zijn de schaamte voorbij, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-09-1990.

Chapter 3: *De Gay Krant* and *Aids Info* on the US' AIDS approach

'America is the land of limitless possibilities for the stronger to limit the weak in their possibilities'. That is the first sentence Tielman wrote in one of his columns for *De Gay Krant*. After doing research in the United States for four months, Tielman framed this statement as summarizing one of the most important characteristics of the country.²⁰⁵ This chapter focuses on the coverage of the Dutch gay media on the American approach to AIDS and the American homosexual community in general, as it was this community which experienced the greatest social, cultural, and political battles regarding the recognition and treatment of AIDS. The sections of this chapter are similar to the sections of the second chapter in order to accurately reflect differences in opinion between the general media and gay media and to provide a more complete and inclusive answer to the research question.

3.1 The social consequences



Image 4: Cartoon portraying a group of homosexual men calling the former Mr. Universe 'faggot'; 'Flikker geen scheldwoord', *De Gay Krant*, 02-07-1988.

²⁰⁵ 'Amerikaanse uitersten', *De Gay Krant*, October 1987.

In February 1986, *De Gay Krant* published a column on how, due to AIDS hysteria, a rapid change was taking place in public opinion in the United States.²⁰⁶ There was an already existing fear of homosexuality in the southern states, but even in more tolerant areas, the public opinion was turning increasingly against homosexuals. Image 4 illustrates this, showing a cartoon of former Mr. Universe, a heterosexual man, who was so offended by an incident in which he was called 'faggot' that he took the incident to court. His charges were dismissed but *De Gay Krant* depicted the situation with a diverse group of homosexual men calling Mr. Universe, portrayed as the classic American male stereotype, a faggot and showing him their middle fingers.²⁰⁷ As became customary in their publications, this cartoon was created by *De Gay Krant* to accompany an article and aimed at their readers. It was meant to ridicule the incident and to better portray their own opinion on the matter.

The growing fear of homosexuals caused by AIDS created gay-razzia's involving various forms of discrimination.²⁰⁸ In 1986, *De Gay Krant* reported that the state of Michigan, with the full cooperation of police and judiciary, filmed the behavior of male visitors to public toilets along highways. The state argued this filming was intended to comply with anti-sodomy laws and stop the spread of AIDS.²⁰⁹ The growing fear of homosexuality was illustrated by a *Los Angeles Times* survey of more than 2,300 of its readers. Almost half of the respondents supported mandatory isolation of AIDS patients. Moreover, half wanted a sex ban for HIV positive people and 77 percent saw it as a crime for gay men to donate blood.²¹⁰ Tolerance among citizens was expected only to decrease further due to the rapidly increasing number of AIDS patients.²¹¹ In reality this meant that homosexuals experienced discrimination from all corners of society, as seen through the samples provided in the previous chapter.²¹² *De Gay Krant* blamed the increasing hysteria among the American population on prejudice and ignorance. Four of their articles stated fear was fueled by

²⁰⁶ '42%: Sluit de homo-bars', *De Gay Krant*, February 1986; 'Homohaters geven niet op', *De Gay Krant*, 27-08-1988.

²⁰⁷ 'Flikker geen scheldwoord', *De Gay Krant*, 02-07-1988.

²⁰⁸ 'Besmet', *De Gay Krant*, February 1984.

²⁰⁹ 'Razzia's door verborgen camera's in toiletten', *De Gay Krant*, September 1986.

²¹⁰ '42%: Sluit de homo-bars', *De Gay Krant*, February 1986.

²¹¹ 'Veranderende houding ten aanzien van AIDS', *De Gay Krant*, nr.99 30-01-1988.

²¹² 'Begravenis geweigerd' *De Gay Krant*, May 1985.

ignorance of the transmission of the disease.²¹³ *The New York Times* found the majority of Americans remained convinced that AIDS could be transmitted through ordinary social contact. According to the article, a kiss, drinking from the same glass or using the same toilet could be a cause of contamination.²¹⁴ *De Gay Krant* mockingly reported how in the United States ‘everything was possible, and an answer could be found for anything’. This also applied to a newly discovered theory about the cause of homosexual behavior. Reagan's drug advisor suggested in 1987 that smoking cannabis products developed homosexual feelings.²¹⁵ The theory, which is complete nonsense according to the article, was depicted in an attached satirical illustration below. The cartoon shows two homosexual men, seemingly surprised about the American theory, stating they do both with great pleasure and without doing anything wrong. The cartoon was again added by the newspaper to ridicule the American report and was addressed to *De Gay Krant*'s readers.



Image 5: Cartoon on the connection between cannabis and homosexuality. ‘Van roken komt pijpen’, *De Gay Krant*, nr.1 8th issue 1987.

The newspaper stated the US population's lacking knowledge about AIDS and homosexuality was the fault of the media and politicians, who had distributed scarce or

²¹³ ‘Amerika vol vooroordelen’, *De Gay Krant*, October 1985; ‘Amerikaanse uitersten’, *De Gay Krant*, October 1987; ‘Meer premie voor Amerikanen’, *Aids Info*, nr.16 1987; ‘Huwelijksvoorwaarden’, *De Gay Krant*, August 1982.

²¹⁴ ‘Enquête-uitslag wekt ongeloof’, *De Gay Krant*, nr. 100 13-02-1988.

²¹⁵ ‘Van roken komt pijpen’, *De Gay Krant*, nr.1 8th issue 1987.

incorrect information and had advocated ineffective measures.²¹⁶ Prudishness had influenced information distribution by only mentioning body fluids, which could also indicate tears or sweat, and not mentioning preventative measures like condoms. Tielman, whose columns in *De Gay Krant* were critical of the public AIDS situation in the United States²¹⁷, identified three main consequences of American ignorance. Firstly, the United States was one of the only countries unable to meet its own blood needs. Consequently, the United States bought its blood elsewhere. This commercial blood system had increased the spread of the disease.²¹⁸ Secondly, he noticed that language was a problem when talking about the AIDS virus and antibodies. In the United States, one had trouble understanding the difference between the two. Due to the confusion between virus particles and antibodies, it became difficult to explain to the public that antibody vaccines were good, and that research and money were required to develop them. However, *Aids Info* notes that this was also frequently misinterpreted by the ANP.²¹⁹ Lastly, only the link between homosexuality and AIDS was used in prevention campaigns. For this reason, drug users saw the disease as a gay problem, separate from them. The contrary was true and many young drug users became infected. In the United States, drug users were outlawed and much less cared for through education and preventative measures. *De Volkskrant* had earlier discussed how this policy contrasted strongly with that of the Netherlands and criticized the debate's emotional burden in the United States.²²⁰ In 1993, *Trouw* reported in disbelief how some American scholars still argued AIDS was not caused by the HIV virus but by drug use.²²¹ Tielman concluded by stating it was a pity the United States had little inclination to learn from foreign examples, particularly the Dutch model.²²²

Two years prior to this, Tielman had written a full page article called 'What Everyone Should Know About AIDS'. In that article he refuted the biggest misconceptions about AIDS as a response to some 'nonsensical' stories.²²³ Many of these misconceptions correspond to

²¹⁶ 'Amerikaanse uitersten', *De Gay Krant*, October 1987; 'De kennis van een Amerikaanse senator', *De Gay Krant*, 16-01-1988; 'TV minimaliseert homo-aandeel aids', *De Gay Krant*, 30-01-1988.

²¹⁷ 'Dreigen homo's als melaatsen behandeld te gaan worden?', *De Gay Krant*, Januari 1985; 'Amerikaanse uitersten', *De Gay Krant*, October 1987.

²¹⁸ 'Bloed ontsnapt', *De Gay Krant*, September 1986.

²¹⁹ 'Opiniepeiling in VS', *Aids Info*, March 1986.

²²⁰ 'Schone spuiten', *De Volkskrant*, 29-06-1989.

²²¹ 'HIV-virus, en niet slechte gewoonten, veroorzaakt AIDS', *Trouw*, 12-03-1993.

²²² 'Amerikaanse uitersten', *De Gay Krant*, October 1987.

²²³ 'Wat iedereen behoort te weten omtrent AIDS', *De Gay Krant*, September 1985.

those mentioned in the three main reasons for American ignorance. The articles, being quite similar but two years apart, show once again *De Gay Krant* was of the opinion that American ignorance was caused by incorrect information provided on the disease. Jan van Wijngaarden, one of the first doctors to recognize AIDS in the Netherlands and later the head of the NCAB, stated in 1988 that every country's AIDS policy reflected the social situation of the country. He admitted however that even the Netherlands would not stay the 'island of reasonableness' forever. Just like in the United States, drug users had more trouble organizing themselves and advocating their needs than homosexuals. Van Wijngaarden emphasized that this could complicate the debate in Dutch society.²²⁴

Another effect of the growing fear of AIDS in the United States was the increase in violent crimes against homosexuals. This increase was not covered by the regular newspaper, but *De Gay Krant* reported four times on men being harassed due to their sexuality.²²⁵ In 1987 the newspaper reported an increase of 7,008 reports of violent crimes and intimidation towards homosexuals, compared to 4,946 in 1986. In a study investigating these crimes against homosexual men, over half of 2,700 respondents reported heterosexuals discriminated against them due to AIDS.²²⁶ Research furthermore showed that violence on the basis of prejudice was more severe than other forms of violence, and that it was aimed not at the individual but at the group as a whole.²²⁷ In January 1988 *De Gay Krant* reported that, for the first time, the US Congress had passed a bill recognizing rights for homosexuals. This bill instructed the Justice Department to keep statistics on cases of violence against minorities. Previously, these statistics were only kept by private organizations or the media.²²⁸ On the basis of the information gathered, a policy had to be developed to combat violence against minorities. Barney Frank, one of two openly gay men in the House of Parliament, called the passing a 'breakthrough in the fight for gay rights' and compensation for the hard setbacks homosexuals had faced in past years in the United States.²²⁹

²²⁴ 'Gefascineerd door reactie op aids in samenleving', *Aids Info*, nr.34 August 1988.

²²⁵ 'Meer geweld', *De Gay Krant* nr.110 2-07-1988; 'Geweld', *De Gay Krant*, nr.99 30-01-1988; 'Amerikaanse rechten', *De Gay Krant*, nr.97 02-01-1988; 'Amerika opent jacht op homo-bars', *De Gay Krant*, December 1986.

²²⁶ 'Amerikaanse rechten', *De Gay Krant*, nr.97 02-01-1988.

²²⁷ 'Geweld', *De Gay Krant*, nr.99 30-01-1988.

²²⁸ 'Amerikaanse rechten', *De Gay Krant*, nr.97 02-01-1988.

²²⁹ Ibidem.

3.2 The political consequences

The critique of foreign AIDS policy was highlighted by *Aids Info*'s statement that the Dutch government protected their minority groups wherever possible, while foreign governments did not hesitate to blame at-risk groups.²³⁰ However, since *Aids Info* received its subsidy from the Ministry of WVC, their opinion on the position of the Dutch government cannot be seen as fully independent. Most frequently attacked by *Aids Info*, besides the United States, were those who copied the US-hysteria²³¹, including Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.²³²

In the United States, AIDS was a constant subject of political debate. It had become part of an expensive power struggle that did not help any of the AIDS victims.²³³ The situation in the United States differed the most from the situation in the Netherlands, where *De Gay Krant* stated that the protection of minorities was more important than creating hysteria concerning AIDS.²³⁴ *Aids Info* advised readers to take precautionary measures before visiting one of the earlier mentioned countries. The case of Paul Verhoef, the Dutch HIV-infected citizen mentioned previously, got a huge response from the Dutch gay community.²³⁵ More interesting is the second part of the recommendation, where they strongly urged their readers to avoid sexual contact in public places or outdoor spaces at risk of instant deportation from the country.²³⁶ There was no warning included that these activities were also dangerous for possible AIDS infections, which was the reason countries like the United States tried to keep high-risk immigrants and visitors out wherever possible.²³⁷ The distinction of the Dutch attitude is visible within this article: protect the gay community from racism and deportation, instead of focusing attention on preventing the spread of AIDS. In addition to extensive coverage of Verhoef's case, *De Gay Krant* published other stories about victims of the American border legislation. An American-Australian gay couple was forced to leave the United States after ten years of fighting for a residence permit. One of the man in the couple, the US citizen Richard Frank Adams, called the deportation of him and his boyfriend 'sexual-

²³⁰ 'Nederlandse en Europese artsenorganisaties wijzen non-Aids verklaring af', *Aids Info*, issue 6 April 1986.

²³¹ 'VS-hysterie slaat over naar Engeland', *Aids Info*, Januari 1986.

²³² 'Sluitingsbevel', *De Gay Krant*, November 1986.

²³³ 'Obstructie tegen wetgeving', *De Gay Krant*, 27-02-1988; 'Aids-voorlichting onvoldoende in Nederland', *Aids Info*, May 1986.

²³⁴ Winston, 'The Impact of Removing the Immigration Ban', 709.

²³⁵ Ibidem, 710.

²³⁶ 'Buitenland steeds HIV-vijandiger', *Aids Info*, nr.54 1990.

²³⁷ Ibidem.

apartheid', stating it was incomprehensible that he was forced to leave the country when Soviet citizens entered for family reunification.²³⁸ The couple blamed the AIDS-fear influencing authorities in the United States.

The regular newspapers only started to connect AIDS and politics once President Clinton appeared on the stage as a progressive candidate who would fight for the rights of his homosexual supporters. *De Gay Krant*, having followed the situation on AIDS in the United States closely since 1982,²³⁹ had already published critique of the American response to AIDS during the Reagan administration. According to *De Gay Krant*, the Reagan administration demonstrated how a political ideology could hinder a pragmatic approach to AIDS. The newspaper built its criticism partly on the book *And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts, which gave rise to the AIDS debate in the United States. The book focused on the actions of politicians, doctors and gay activists during the AIDS crisis and was an indictment to those who had allowed AIDS to claim so many victims.²⁴⁰ That moralistic ideology was chosen over pragmatism by the US Minister of Education, William Bennet. Bennet rejected the first major federal recommendation package for AIDS education. He argued that schools and parents only wanted full abstinence to be propagated.²⁴¹ According to *De Gay Krant*, Bennet's decision was clearly based on moralizing arguments.

There was much protest after Reagan appointed a conservative presidential advisory board on AIDS for this very reason. Although Reagan stated that the board was chosen on the basis of expertise, real experts were missing. Instead the board included Archbishop O'Connor of New York, a known opponent of homosexuality, and Phyllis Schlafly, a Christian fundamentalist anti-feminist woman, who had submitted a bill in Illinois to trace the sexual partners of AIDS patients from the past seven years.²⁴² The newspaper emphasized how even the House of Representatives called the board controversial, stating AIDS was not a case for the White House or politics. The House argued that AIDS had to remain a medical issue and it was not a matter that could be used to exclude people. Opposition from gay movements to the failing AIDS policy of the Reagan government grew and became more public, stating:

²³⁸ 'Amerika zet homo-paar het land uit', *De Gay Krant*, January 1986.

²³⁹ 'GRID', *De Gay Krant*, August 1988; 'Amerika hoopt op democraten', *De Gay Krant*, August 1982.

²⁴⁰ 'Waarom negeerde regering Reagan eigen medische adviseurs?', *De Gay Krant*, nr.102 12-03-1986.

²⁴¹ Ibidem.

²⁴² 'Reagan benoemt conservatieve adviesraad', *Aids Info*, nr.24 1987

'History will recall: Reagan did nothing at all'.²⁴³ Moreover, gay groups began to block and hinder meetings of the advisory board with door blocks and demonstrations.²⁴⁴ *De Gay Krant* found it incomprehensible that even after all this criticism, the US government continued to approach the AIDS epidemic with so much laxity.

De Gay Krant highlighted the importance of the next US elections in 1988, after the eight 'lost' years of the Reagan-Bush administration. The newspaper emphasized how the elections were not only about choosing a new president, but were hugely important for the position of American gay movements.²⁴⁵ The election of the new president could reflect a change in mentality. Moreover, the paper had a similar argument as *NRC*, stating the politics conducted in the largest democratic country in existence had an impact on the mentality of the entire world, including the Netherlands.²⁴⁶ In their new party program, the Democrats took a clear stand for gay and lesbian rights and for government involvement in the fight against AIDS. Through this, the party hoped to attract the votes of twelve million gays and lesbians.²⁴⁷ *De Gay Krant* reported excessively on the run-up to the American elections and had a clear favorite candidate within the democratic primaries, who was much more progressive than Clinton would turn out to be, four years later. Pastor Jesse Jackson was a civil rights activist who had been promoting equal rights for various minorities for years, including rights for gays and lesbians.²⁴⁸ Jackson even gathered an advisory board on gay affairs with which some well-known American gays and lesbians cooperated. In his campaign team Jackson included a 'gay advisor' for gay affairs. The main task of this 28-year-old black gay activist, Randy Miller, was to raise support for Jackson from the many gay groups in the United States.²⁴⁹ Jackson's campaign was labeled as extremely progressive, even by Dutch standards. Some of the points in his program stated that equal rights for gays and lesbians had to be fully recognized. Also, two trillion dollars had to be allocated for AIDS research. Insurance companies would no longer be allowed to exclude AIDS patients, and other forms of discrimination against AIDS patients and seropositive patients would be prohibited.²⁵⁰ The

²⁴³ 'VS-beleids anti-aidsmiddelen versoepeld', *Aids Info*, nr.36 1988.

²⁴⁴ 'Demonstraties verheugen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.105 23-04-1988.

²⁴⁵ 'Het belang van de Amerikaanse verkiezingen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.115 24-09-1998.

²⁴⁶ 'Amerikaanse homo's lopen warm voor verkiezingen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.101 27-02-1988.

²⁴⁷ 'Van de hond of van de kat gebeten', *De Gay Krant*, nr.116 08-10-1988.

²⁴⁸ 'Amerikaanse homo's lopen warm voor verkiezingen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.101 27-02-1988.

²⁴⁹ 'Homo-adviseurs voor Jesse Jackson', *De Gay Krant*, nr.99 30-01-1988.

²⁵⁰ 'Support van Jesse Jackson', *De Gay Krant*, nr.100 13-02-1988.

progressive nature of the campaign might explain *De Gay Krant*'s high level of attention, considering some of these points were not even achieved in the Netherlands. In Image 6, a cartoon portrays gays and lesbians supporting Jackson's campaign, stating 'President? We want a queen!!'. The supporters are portrayed at a protest with many diverse looking participants. The cartoon was meant to illustrate the enthusiasm among the group and the political unity the gay movement formed during the 1980s. It was created by *De Gay Krant* and aimed at its readers. Once again, the cartoon was added to an article.

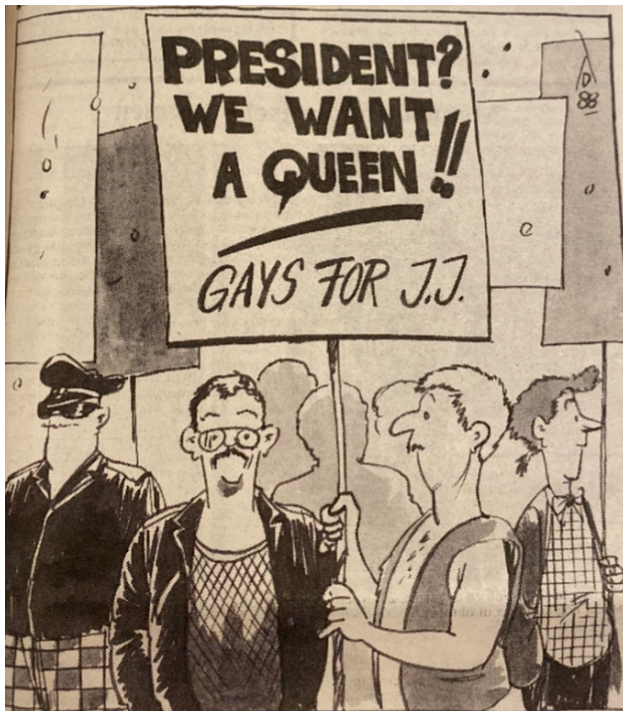


Image 6: cartoon in *De Gay Krant* portraying gays and lesbians supporting Jesse Jackson's campaign; 'Amerikaanse homo's lopen warm voor verkiezingen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.101 27-02-1988.

Jackson's campaign booked successes at the primaries in Iowa and New Hampshire. Jackson received considerably more votes than predicted, especially due to the number of black voters in the white states. *De Gay Krant* proudly argued that this meant many gays had voted for Jackson.²⁵¹ The paper concluded optimistically that with a large number of black voters and a highly organized gay movement, this success could continue.²⁵² Henk Krol argued in his opening column in *De Gay Krant* that hopeful American gays and lesbians understood the need to seize political power before it undesirably interfered with gay affairs. He emphasized that the gay movements in the Netherlands could learn from this approach.²⁵³

²⁵¹ 'Jesse Jackson zeer succesvol', *De Gay Krant* nr. 102 12-03-1988.

²⁵² 'Jesse Jackson', *De Gay Krant*, nr.104 09-04-1988.

²⁵³ 'Redactioneel', *De Gay Krant*, nr.102 12-03-1988.

When Jackson lost his candidacy to the more moderate Michael Dukakis, the paper portrayed it as a blow for gay movements. Dukakis' reputation on gay rights was not very promising and neither was that of his running-mate.²⁵⁴ Dukakis had a history of gay discrimination and as Governor he had expressed his dislike of the fact that gay people could be eligible as adoptive parents.²⁵⁵ Regardless of the criticism, Tielman stated in his column that losing had been a logical consequence for Jackson.²⁵⁶ The majority of the gay population supported the new democratic candidate. Tielman stated that although a Dukakis administration would mean a change from the past eight years of misery, the democratic government still had to be carefully watched. Even in the Democratic camp, equal rights for all could not be taken for granted.

3.3 The varying forms of activism



Image 7: One of Henk Krol's monthly columns on the front page of *De Gay Krant*, 'Redaktioneel', *De Gay Krant*, nr.102 12-03-1988.

²⁵⁴ 'Van de hond of van de kat gebeten', *De Gay Krant*, nr.116 08-10-1988.

²⁵⁵ 'Dukakis contra homo's', *De Gay Krant*, nr.108 04-06-1988.

²⁵⁶ 'Het belang van de Amerikaanse verkiezingen', *De Gay Krant*, nr.115 24-09-1998.

²⁵⁷ 'Redaktioneel', *De Gay Krant*, nr.102 12-03-1988.

The column above is one of Krol's monthly columns on the first page of *De Gay Krant*. In these columns, Krol introduced readers to the main topics of the newspaper's edition. In the excerpt shown above he briefly discussed how impressed he was by the effort gay groups and organizations put into US elections and his hopes for the next government. What is more interesting, however, is the second paragraph in which he focused on the differences between the two countries when discussing the subject of AIDS. Although there was a form of resistance in the Netherlands when talking about AIDS, according to Krol, it was necessary to keep talking and writing about it.²⁵⁸ This plea for openness on the topic was copied from the US example, where gay movements had used AIDS as an initial reason to unite and advocate their rights. Where the general newspapers found some of the US gay protests too radical, *De Gay Krant* endorsed most protest methods. The newspaper even accused national newspapers like *De Telegraaf* of apparent tolerance if it really came to gay interests.²⁵⁹

Almost every month *De Gay Krant* reported about a gay march in an American city. The marches were often described as historic and as an example to all parts of the United States that 'pink power' could make a fist everywhere.²⁶⁰ The most impressive demonstration was the March on Washington in 1987, in which almost a million gays and lesbians participated, and which attracted serious attention from both the media and politics.²⁶¹ The march was extensively displayed in *De Gay Krant* by Henk Krol, who had attended the march himself. The article, which covered five full pages, stated 'March on Washington: Biggest Protest March of All Time', proudly followed by 'At least 45 Dutch participants.' *De Gay Krant* labelled the protests as a revival of the Stonewall Riots because of the unification of the gay population. The protests showed that American gay men still lacked rights in the 1980s, and that this would no longer be tolerated.²⁶² This statement was substantiated by interviews with leaders of the American gay movements. They called for the protests to continue until homosexuality could become an ordinary part of life.²⁶³ A great variety of activists were

²⁵⁸ Ibidem.

²⁵⁹ 'Telegraaf', *De Gay Krant*, 30-07-1988.

²⁶⁰ 'Middenwesten laat zijn tanden zien', *De Gay Krant*, nr.108 04-06-1988.

²⁶¹ 'Washington opnieuw centrum protest', *De Gay Krant*, nr.115 22-10-1988.

²⁶² 'Homo's bundelen krachten tegen laster', *De Gay Krant*, Februari 1986.

²⁶³ 'Armistead Maupin: welkom in mijn wereld', *De Gay Krant*, 23-05-1988; 'Ieder vogeltje zingt zoals God het gebekt heeft', *De Gay Krant*, May 1987.

covered by *De Gay Krant*.²⁶⁴ The newspapers argued that while politicians, judges and others in America avoided the AIDS problem, activists dove right in. The downside - the high mortality surrounding these key activists - was also highlighted.²⁶⁵

Although the oppression of gays was felt daily in the US, the movement knew that campaigning and political pressure could work, and they continued to make their voices heard.²⁶⁶ That attitude was different in the Netherlands, according to *De Gay Krant*. In an interview Gert Zeebregts, a Dutchman who had moved to San Francisco during the AIDS epidemic, explained why there was such a difference in attitude: 'In the Netherlands, people are arguing about nothing or simply over a (wrong) word. That has nothing to do with politics. In the Netherlands, the gay movement has gone to sleep; spoiled because there is little to fight for.'²⁶⁷ Zeebregts was convinced the American gay movement would be stronger after the AIDS-epidemic. He doubted whether the same would be true for the Dutch movement, emphasizing that once everyone around you is dying from AIDS, you do not have the time to discuss particular words. Zeebregts emphasized one of the main reasons the Dutch gay movement had not created this attitude of political pressure and campaigning. As shown earlier, the AIDS crisis had claimed fewer lives in the Netherlands, so this was not a unifying issue.

Tielman shared the opinion that the American gay movement would come out of the battle stronger. He started his column by praising the way the American gay movements used the AIDS crisis to further develop and unite themselves. AIDS made American gays more aware of the negative sides of the created gay subculture.²⁶⁸ Through safe sex, greater political power, increased visibility and resilience, the movement showed their survival strategy would succeed.²⁶⁹ Tielman emphasized how the Dutch movement could follow this example. Krol agreed with Zeebregts' and Tielman's plea for a stronger, more united Dutch gay front. He stated the Dutch front should no longer fight internal battles but should focus on the emancipation of homosexuals. Internal struggles would hinder the AIDS education of

²⁶⁴ 'Donna Summer boycott', *De Gay Krant*, August 1982; 'Gloria Allred: een advocate als politiek activiste', *De Gay Krant*, August 1986.

²⁶⁵ 'Homo-activist geveld', *De Gay Krant*, April 1984.

²⁶⁶ 'Amerikanen op oorlogspad', *De Gay Krant*, 09-05-1988; 'Nieuwe editie grensverleggend Amerikaanse proza', *De Gay Krant*, 30-07-1988.

²⁶⁷ 'Namen-Project ook in Nederland van start', *De Gay Krant*, nr.112 30-07-1988.

²⁶⁸ 'Hoe word je homo in Amerika?', *De Gay Krant*, October 1984.

²⁶⁹ 'Amerikaanse homobeweging komt versterkt uit de strijd', *De Gay Krant* September 1987.

youngsters who were figuring out their sexuality and for whom AIDS might be a reason to not openly express their sexuality.²⁷⁰ This message was similar a year earlier, when Krol argued that the 'AIDS-ghost' could only be overcome if the gay population spoke openly about sexual preferences. He called for the readers of *De Gay Krant* to dare to let their voices be heard publicly as well as in the newspaper. The AIDS crisis was the moment to join forces. The Dutch AIDS movement had to unite as a front to prevent the outside world pitting them against one another.²⁷¹ When asked the final interview question 'How did the AIDS epidemic change the activist and political imaginations?', Van der Meer skeptically answered that the outcomes are always different than intended. The Dutch gay movement also benefited from the AIDS crisis in that they were more accepted in the Netherlands than ever before. However, a lot of their values and battle points had been commodified due to their position in the crisis, overshadowing their ambitious emancipation goals of the 1970s.²⁷²

3.4 Conclusion

In the end, *De Gay Krant* and *Aids Info* maintained strong interest in the state of affairs with regard to AIDS in the United States. Just like the regular newspapers, *De Gay Krant* covered and condemned social and political situations in the United States that clashed with Dutch ideals and Dutch policies on AIDS. However, the perception of activism deviated from that of the general newspapers. This section showed the US movement was further developed in publicly discussing AIDS and its consequences. The US movement realized that by uniting and propagating their interests in the battle against AIDS, it could influence the debate and politics, as demonstrated by the near-unanimous support of Jesse Jackson. *De Gay Krant* seemed to envy this proactive standpoint of the American movement and stated multiple times that the Dutch gay movement, instead of having internal fights, should look at its American counterparts and unite to stand up for gay emancipation in the Netherlands, which in their opinion, was still not completed.

²⁷⁰ 'Redactioneel', *De Gay Krant*, Februari 1985.

²⁷¹ 'Redactioneel', *De Gay Krant*, Januari 1985.

²⁷² Van der Meer, *Grenzeloos* interview.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to research why the American approach to the AIDS virus caused an extensive media reaction in the Netherlands during the period 1981-1996. By examining the reaction of the media through newspapers articles, it is clear that the main reasons for critique can be summarized into three main points. The chapters were divided into the three main forms of response, namely: the perception of social, political and activist decisions and consequences. The conclusion summarizes the outcomes of the three points, including the findings from the three chapters. The outcomes are supported by the theories of states being unevenly impacted by AIDS, the Dutch poldermodel, and the position of the Dutch gay movement compared to the movement in the United States. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that in the case of the Dutch media response to the American AIDS approach, the countries being unevenly impacted by AIDS explains the Dutch view of social and political situations in the United States, but not the attitude towards the different forms of activism. This can be explained by comparing the social and political position of the gay movements in the two countries.

The most visible form of response was on the social consequences of AIDS for homosexuals in the United States. Gay men were openly discriminated against by the American population. Both the general newspapers and *De Gay Krant* condemned the hysteria that arose in the US population due to AIDS. The newspapers covered multiple examples of how this fear created panic leading to discrimination and violent acts toward homosexuals. The public and political hysterical attitude towards AIDS not only fueled indirect and personal discrimination against homosexuals, it also complicated their access to basic needs like mortgages and jobs. *De Gay Krant* emphasized that this hysteria was created by prudishness and ignorance. According to the Dutch media, the lacking knowledge of the population on AIDS and homosexuality was created by the US federal government, who distributed incorrect information about the disease, if any, or advocated ineffective measures.²⁷³ This stands in contrast to the Netherlands, where, according to the newspapers, the minority group was socially protected by an actively involved government, a difference which resulted in the fierce condemnation of the American situation.

²⁷³ 'Amerikaanse uitersten', *De Gay Krant*, October 1987.

Secondly, US politics were intensively followed and covered. *De Gay Krant* initially followed the American political situation due to the failing Reagan administration. In the United States, AIDS became a constant subject of political debate. It created an expensive power struggle which failed to help AIDS victims. The Reagan administration, great supporters of neoliberalism, showed how a political ideology can hinder a pragmatic approach to an epidemic. The US border legislation for homosexuals and contagious diseases was one of the main topics of critique. Following Clinton's election with the intention to do better for gay rights, the general newspapers responded harshly when it emerged how many of his intentions were empty promises. In the Netherlands, homosexuals were involved in the AIDS policy, making progress from the beginning. However, the results showed that this was partly due to geopolitical pressure, as the Netherlands witnessed how the situation was escalating in the United States.²⁷⁴ Van der Meer and Drucker argued that even though gay involvement had partly been to increase political influence within the gay movements, Dutch homosexuals and AIDS patients still felt they had contributed to the AIDS policy and that decisions regarding their lives would be made with their input.

Lastly, the different forms of activism explain the extensive Dutch response to the US approach. Gay activism in the United States took different forms and was much more outspoken and radical than Dutch activism. It transpired that the American forms were often too radical for the general Dutch newspapers. The results showed that the US gay movement was more internally developed on the AIDS debate, and that most Dutch citizens and homosexuals did not feel comfortable acting upon the AIDS situation in the same way as the American homosexual community. According to Duyvendak and Tielman, the Netherlands was ready for the 'home, garden and kitchen-lifestyle' of gay men and women, meaning that they were ready to settle with the rights they had received in the beginning of the 1980s.²⁷⁵ This is confirmed by an answer to the interview question 'How did the AIDS epidemic and its' activists change the political imagination?', in response to which Van der Meer stated that AIDS brought Dutch emancipation, but that the goals of emancipation had become less ambitious and many of them had already been achieved. This research did show, however, that some voices in *De Gay Krant*, like Henk Krol, were more emancipated and open to the

²⁷⁴ 'AIDS-voorlichting vraagt meer geld', *De Gay Krant*, nr.3 6th issue 1985.

²⁷⁵ 'Homo's zijn de schaamte voorbij', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25-09-1990.

radical forms of activism and therefore fully supported activists in United States. This highlights a difference in position between general newspapers and *De Gay Krant* when it came to the perception of US activism. In the Netherlands, more emancipated figures saw the American gay movement as an example which the Netherlands should emulate, with the actual gay movement being called lazy and lacking a fighting spirit. Instead of internal conflicts, the Dutch gay movement was encouraged to learn from its American counterparts.

All things considered, the Dutch newspapers stated that the overall approach to AIDS was better organized in the Netherlands than in the United States, where prudishness, bad education, discrimination and a lacking government dominated the crisis. The theory of states being unevenly impacted by AIDS explains why the Dutch population held such a critical view of the political and social situation in the United States and praised their own responses. The Dutch response to AIDS was determined by a conscious comparison to responses from other countries. The symbolic and actual fears in the Netherlands were lower than in the United States, which resulted in a comparatively mild Dutch response to the virus. This response constituted and reconstructed Dutch nationalism as it deliberately opposed the American example. In this sense, the threat (or lack thereof) posed by AIDS offered an opportunity for the production of Dutch nationalism. This can be seen in the newspaper articles that generally address the Dutch response to the virus as a success. However, this does not explain the response to US activism and why some articles in the general newspapers argued the US gay movement was too violent, loud, and selfish in their activism. There are multiple explanations for this finding supported by the other two theories: firstly, that it was a result of the Dutch poldermodel of pragmatism, the strategy to always look for consensus before the situation escalates. Another explanation was the high visibility of the US gay movements. This exacerbated fear of homosexuality as well as AIDS in the country. At the same time, it explains why in the Netherlands, where gay movements and homosexuals themselves were less radically visible and outspoken, the general newspapers had a critical attitude towards US activism. Moreover, the visibility of AIDS was higher in the United States due to high mortality rates and the death of a large share of American activists. The impact of the disease was much larger than in the Netherlands, where it never became a catastrophe. Lastly, the Dutch policy on AIDS only related to the AIDS crisis itself. In the United States, as shown in the results, the AIDS responses related to all parts of gay emancipation and gay rights. This made the battle of the US gay population bigger and more important.

In conclusion, the extensive Dutch response to the American AIDS approach was partly created by a feeling of superiority on the topic, since they believed that the Dutch choices during the AIDS crisis had been the right ones. This feeling was strengthened by restored Dutch nationalism. This research has shown that this can explain the viewpoints and arguments of the general newspapers and some articles from *De Gay Krant*. But it has also shown that progressive figures such as Henk Krol argued for a stronger Dutch gay front, using the United States as an example. They believed that the Dutch gay movement had become too lax and too involved in mutual struggle, rather than focusing on the entire gay emancipation in the Netherlands. Therefore, they believed that gay emancipation was not yet complete in the Netherlands, contradicting the argument of a completed gay emancipation in the 1980s. The progressive side of the Dutch gay community was inspired by the US activism, which is a new finding that contributes to the history of the Dutch gay community.

This thesis has predominantly focused on newspaper articles to explain why the American approach to the AIDS virus caused an extensive public reaction in the Netherlands during the period 1981-1996. In further research, it would be interesting to include the real voices of both experts and individuals involved in the AIDS crisis. Through interviews, their opinions could provide a more nuanced view on the matter. This is especially the case for people within the Dutch gay population. How they experienced the period themselves would provide an interesting new insight into the outspoken Dutch opinion on the American AIDS approach.

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