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***MASS MEDIA FOR POLITICAL PLURALISM IN LIBERIA:
An Analysis of News and Talk Shows in Three Radios***

MA Thesis
Global Journalism
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Dedication

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List of Abbreviations in the Study

AM-Amplitude Modulation

CDA-*Critical discourse analysis*

ELBC-Liberian Broadcasting Corporation

ELWA- Eternal Love Winning Africa

FM-Frequency Modulation

ICCPR-International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICTs-Information and Communication Technologies

LCBN- Liberian Christian Broadcasting Network

NTGL-National Transitional Government of Liberia

SW-Short Wave

UDHR-Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Sciences

Definition of Keywords

Access- refers to the right to be allowed the chance to express his/her opinions on national issues by the media.

Balance- means the equal or proportional access and fair evaluation and presentation of competing interests in news stories.

Bulletin- refers to a summarized news piece presented by a newscaster.

Diversity-As used in this study refers to the plurality of contents in relation to opinion and topics of information and news.

Free media- As used in this study refers to the mass media system devoid of political, commercial or any other outside interference.

News Interview- refers to pre-recorded interview conducted out in the field by reporters and played during news time.

Objectivity- The concept of objectivity as used in this study refers to the display of the lack of bias, factual accuracy, transparency in sources with the separation of facts from comments in news stories.

News Magazine- refers to a news presentation that combined both bulletin and reportage.

Political Pluralism- refers to the consideration and promulgation of diversified political opinions.

Political Tendencies- refer to the trends followed by the media in the construction of their sources in text.

Proportionate Attention- Refers to providing a balance attention to all sides.

Public Broadcaster- refers to an independent, non-partisan, non-commercial and impartial broadcasting service whose programming and related activities are primarily geared toward serving the interest of all members of the public.

Public Interest- refers to issues that are relevant to the growth of the people or the society at large.

Reportage- refers to a detailed news piece by reporter which is usually accompanied by sound bites.

Abstract

The proliferation of the mass media in Liberia has never ceased to generate concerns among the people as to whose priorities these media usually serve. Thus, this study was inspired by the desire to establish some answers to the above concerns. As its core interest, the study examined the level of diversity in political opinions in the Liberian media. The case study is on three radio stations: one state-funded and government-controlled-*ELBC*; one private religious-*Radio Veritas*; and the other private, NGO-funded, commercial-“not-for-profit”-*Star Radio*.

The major daily newscasts and talk shows of the three radio stations were recorded for one week (7 days) [December 3, 2007 to December 9, 2007] through which one set of the empirical data was collected. Two events making the news and reported by three radio stations were subjected to textual analysis. The other set was collected through *respondent interviews* with two main editors from *ELBC* and *Radio Veritas* and one from *Star Radio* (the only available editor) between January 4 and January 27, 2008. A Follow-up was made with four of the interviewees (one from *ELBC* and *Star Radio* and two from *Radio Veritas*) using questionnaire through e-mail between March 15 and March 29, 2008.

The study adopted three research questions: *how much political pluralism is reflected by Liberian media; what are the political tendencies of the three radio stations; and what are the distinguishing factors explaining the level of political pluralism allowed by Liberian media?*

The findings of the study show that there is a diminutive level of political pluralism in Liberian media; and these media tend to rely greatly on government sources, often failing to explore diversified opinions even when such would be needed for an objective and neutral news story. Nevertheless, the study established that the level of education, and poor salaries for journalists coupled with the news room practices are responsible for the problem of the level of political pluralism exhibited by Liberian media.

The theories of democracy and the free mass media and its alternatives presented in chapter three served as the basis for interpretations and conclusions for this study. The study climaxes with some recommendations for further research in the field and the improvement of the journalism profession in Liberia.

¹ According to the management of Star Radio, revenues accrue from its commercial services are solely intended for the continuous running of the station and not dividend.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This chapter provides the basis for the entire thesis. It encompasses the background, statement of the problem, justification of the study, the aim of the study and research questions, the scope and limitation of the study, and an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

The increase in the number of mass media outlets in Liberia over the last decade has never managed to provide answers to the general public's concern that they only serve particular political or commercial interests. Though The Liberian mass media have become more accessible to the citizenry and have also invested more time and resources into enlightening the public on issues of human rights, good governance, democracy and nation-building, they are often accused of avoiding critical issues of public interests and usually allow access only to government officials, their political or commercial 'godfathers' or people who have the power to reward them with gifts.

But the extent to which these media relegate their responsibility of meeting the informational needs of the greater society to the backbench is yet to be fully established.

There is an overall recognition that an 'informed society' would be 'knowledgeable' and once knowledgeable would make informed judgements for the social, economic and political alteration of its members. The mass media certainly have the power to educate, entertain and inform the public; something which the American scholar Wilber Schramm calls the agents of change role (Schramm, 1964). McQuail (2000) suggests that the main power of the mass media can be summarized as: "attracting and directing public interest; persuasion in matters of opinion and belief; influencing behaviour; structuring definitions and realities; conferring status and legitimacy and informing quickly and extensively" (c.f. Burton, 2005: 29).

According to John Street, it is assumed that people's actions are directly influenced by their thoughts and something which are results of the picture of the world as constructed by the mass media. Nevertheless, Street maintains that inasmuch the mass media bear the responsible for the spread of ideas and thoughts; and the shaping of people's thoughts and actions, the mass media usually operate "on behalf of a distinct set of interests that benefit from the ideology being propagated" (Street, 2001: 233-4).

Consequently, John C. Merrill says traditional media in every country have often failed to “stimulate citizen participation in government” (Merrill 2004:25). Merrill further emphasizes that “Stock prices and social restraints are dictating the editorial policies of media everywhere”. (Ibid: 27)

While this may be having some veracity, the gravity and direction of restraints are driven by distinct factors from society to society. It remains an open fact that while democratic nations across the world have realized the inalienable role of the media in fostering political democracy and have moved to somehow liberalize their mass media sectors and allow them unfettered freedom most African nations are yet to grasp the concept of “free media”. Conditions of the mass media in Africa point to apprehension by political leaders that a free media system could create the prospect for easy challenge of their political powers which are often draconic.

Nevertheless, these political leaders often use the mass media for their own benefit as they normally seek the mass media’s partnership in nation-building and development, as well as informing and educating the public on government policy and action (Hachten, 1993; Tudesq, 1995; cited in Nyamnjoh 2005: 42-3).

Francis B. Nyamnjoh further laments that African governments acting as “both paymasters and gatekeepers of public interest, have almost without exception kept the press in check”. (Ibid: 42)

Notably, the current wave of democracy sweeping across Africa has brought not only multiparty political system but also a diversity of media. Since the 1990s, the numbers of private radio stations and newspapers as well as private television channels have increased in almost every African country (Ibid.).

However, radio arguably remains the most viable mean of information dissemination across Africa. According to UNESCO:

For most of the world population comprising inhabitants of huge rural areas and illiterate people, radio and television remain the most available and widespread information and communication technologies (ICTs) with radio in the first place as primary communication medium (Banerjee & Seneviratne, 2005: 12).

Radio broadcasting has allowed the dissemination of messages as well as the establishment of contact with people otherwise “removed from centers of administration and influencing individuals cut off from the print media” (Hyden & Leslie, 2002: 11). According to Karin Deutsch Karlekar, a great number of Liberians depend on radio news and radio is a major player in the promotion of political participation in the country (Karlekar, 2005).

Multiplicity or diversity as outlined by Francis B. Nyamnoh may not necessarily leave every citizen with “the power of access”. Street (2001: 235) says this power of access refers to “the way in which the operation of mass media controls the range of voices or interests able to use the various formats, either as viewers, readers, or contributors. The “power of access” herein as defined by John Street can be categorized as barrier which may inadvertently result from a variety of factors. These factors include and are not limited to: routine practices of journalists which more or less determine what has news values; commercial interest; mechanisms for the collection and dissemination of news-the arrangement of sources; conflicts between interests of editorial staffs; and above all the ownership of the media. (Ibid: 235)

The way out of media barriers has arguably continued to point out the establishment of mass media as outlets that may give space and voice to the socially, politically and economically ‘weak’ in society. Lowe and Hujanen (2003: 46) says “in light of the growing commercialization of all media, public service broadcasting continue to designate a strong value of social worth, the last best hope for socially powerful media acting in the public interest”. UNESCO has maintained further that *Public Service Broadcasting* has a major role to play in providing access to and participation of all in public life, especially in developing countries as it can be “instrumental in promoting access to education and culture, developing knowledge, and fostering interactions among citizens” (UNESCO General Conference; 32nd Session; 2003²).

1.1.1 Media in Liberia

The surge in media pluralism in Liberia can be attributed to the fight for democracy that the country experienced from 1990-2003³. Yet the history of the media in Liberia can be traced back to the founding of the Liberian nation by the American Colonization Society in 1822. Four years later, American Methodist Prelate Charles L. Force launched the first newspaper

² The 32nd Session of Unesco General Conference was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France between 29 September -17 October 2003.

³ Liberia had series of protracted civil conflicts between 1990 and 2003

(Liberian Herald) in the country in 1826. The Liberian Herald remained the only paper in Liberia until after independence in 1847 after which a number of business and religious newspapers came up. The status quo remained more or less the same until early 1980 when the political chemistry changed as the military took control of the country⁴. Though many saw this opportunity as the cogent political renewal the country needed at that time and began establishing newspapers to at least serve the informational needs of the people, the military soon moved to tighten its grip on the media. This cumulated to the passage of a ‘draconic’ media law, Decree 88A⁵. As was expected the end of this military rule in 1990 saw the emergence of a multiplicity of newspapers.

Present day Liberia has dozens of newspapers all of which are concentrated in Monrovia, the capital. Among them are: The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The News, The Analyst, Public Agenda, The Monitor, The Informer, The New Democrat, and New Liberia. Most of the newspapers have a very minimum circulation⁶.

Comparatively, the electronic media (radio and television) has a much recent history. The first radio station (Radio ELWA- Eternal Love Winning Africa) was launched in 1954 by the American Christian Missionary organization Sudan Interior Mission. Two years later, American Doctor Colonel John B. West set up another radio-the Liberia Radio Service.

Between 1959 and 1960, the government of Liberia forged a partnership with a UK-based commercial company Rediffusion International Ltd. to establish the Liberia Broadcasting Corporation. In 1964, the company acquired a television transmitter⁷.

Contemporary Liberia enjoys the presence of more than a dozen of private commercial, private religious, and a private commercial “not-for-profit” radio alongside the state-run Liberia Broadcasting System (broadcasting only from Monrovia). In addition, there are over 30 community radios throughout the country. The private commercial radio stations comprise of: Truth FM, Sky FM, Love FM, Kings FM, Magic FM, Power FM, Crystal FM. These stations are all based in Monrovia, and as their names might suggest, they only operate on

⁴ The 1980 military coup ended 193 years of the Americo-Liberian political hegemony

⁵ Decree 88A makes criminal for anyone to “spread rumors, lies, and disinformation about the government and its officials

⁶ An assessment report published in March 2004 by the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa said most Liberian newspapers sell less than 3,000 copies across the country, despite there being a population of over three million people.

⁷ Source: Liberia Broadcasting System Online www.liberiabroadcastingsystem.com, (Retrieved on November 13, 2007)

Frequency Modulation (FM), covering approximately 50 kilometers radius. Among the private religious radio stations are: *Radio Veritas*, Radio ELWA, and Liberia Christian Broadcasting Network, LCBN (all with FM and Shortwave services), Radio Advent, and the United Methodist Radio. *Star Radio*, funded by some International Non-governmental Organizations is the only private commercial and not-for-profit radio. The station operates FM and shortwave services⁸.

Additionally, there are four television channels (all commercial) in the country. They include: Real TV, Clar TV, Power TV and Love TV. However, like most of the radio stations, these television channels only serve parts of Monrovia, the Capital.

From time to time, the Liberian media has remained politicized and divided into at least two camps, one sympathetic to the government and the other non-sympathetic-, both claiming to work in the interest of the people. Government, political actors as well as ordinary citizen often accuse the media of “professional impropriety”.

At the same time successive Liberian governments have often entertained criticism. But while claiming tolerance of criticism, these governments have, on occasion, called for the closure or censure of the mass media especially the private media. Burrowes (2004: 2) says independent media and journalists are frequently subjected to death threats, detention without trial, intimidation, and flogging by government security forces.

1.1.2 Liberia Broadcasting System (ELBC)

Like in many other African nations, where governments keep tight control of the state-funded media, the Liberian government has continued to exert effective control over the state-run broadcaster, often using it as a mouthpiece rather than an independent source of information for the public.

The Liberia Broadcasting System (formerly Liberia Broadcasting Corporation) was inaugurated in 1960 as a commercial station through a partnership deal between the Liberia government and a UK-based company Rediffusion International Ltd. Under the deal, Rediffusion International Ltd. was entitled to fifty nine percent (59%) of its profits and the

⁸ This information was gathered on November 13, 2007

Liberia government forty one percent (41%). In 1973, however, the station was transferred under full government control⁹.

A military decree in 1980, changed the then Liberia Broadcasting Corporation into the Liberia Broadcasting System with sixty percent (60%) government support in term of financial obligation and forty percent (40%) commercial right. But the administrative operation of the station remained the sole responsibility of the Executive branch of government with its Director General answerable to only the President though the entity has a board of directors.

By mid 1980s, the Liberia Broadcasting System had become an amalgamation of several (FM, AM, MW, SW, and TV) components. Later in the 1980s, the Liberia Rural Communication Network (LRCN) was added worth three satellite rural FM stations.

However, years of civil conflict have wrecked the system¹⁰. The Shortwave, SW, Medium Wave, MW, Amplitude Modulation, AM, radio transmitters as well as the Television transmitter and relay sites were destroyed as a result of the conflict¹¹.

Nevertheless, the ‘political iron grip’ of the state-run state broadcaster still persists, maintaining it as a ‘propaganda’ tool of government, often denying the general public and opponents of government unhindered political access. Journalists working with the state-run radio have to accept the political system of the day or at least pretend to. Journalists are often advised against reporting “negative news” about government officials¹². State-run radio employees, who cannot reconcile the government’s expectations with their professional beliefs or with those of the public, would have to consider the honorable-quit¹³.

⁹ Since then, the Liberia Broadcasting System has been operating under government control.

¹⁰ The Liberia Broadcasting only runs (2007) an FM station that covers more than half of the country (May 2008)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² On May 17, 2006 the administration of the Liberian Broadcasting System issued a warning to its journalists that they must “seek clearance to broadcast news stories on the corruption of government officials and others”. The warning contained in a memorandum stated that the Liberia Broadcasting System news was not “courtroom for prosecuting government officials and other personalities in society”. The management further warned that it would not hesitate to institute administrative measures against violator(s). Source: IFEX: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/74800>, Retrieved on: November 13, 2007.

¹³ Francis B. Nyamnjoh quotes Cole (1995) in the scholarship-West Africa: Unprofessional and unethical journalism- as saying this predicament has forced many media practitioners to quit the profession entirely. Source: <http://library.fes.de/fulltext/iez/00710a01.htm#E9E2> ; retrieved: April 18, 2008

Alternatively, the need to have a National Public Service Broadcaster free from extraneous interference and control by political authorities and that which will be accountable to the Liberian public cannot be overemphasized.

1.1.3 *Radio Veritas*

Radio Veritas, formerly ELCM is a non- commercial religious station established in April 1981 by the Catholic Church in Liberia. When ELCM was established, there were only two radio stations-Liberia Broadcasting System, *ELBC*-the national station; and Radio ELWA-a religious station established in 1954 by the United States based church group Sudan Interior Ministry.

ELCM provided news and other programming in addition to the teaching of the Catholic doctrine and other religious programmes.

In 1988, the station fell into trouble with the government of President Samuel K. Doe when it broadcast the alleged death of some spectators during a football match between Liberia and Malawi. The station reported that several spectators died in a stampede that was caused by the overcrowding of the stadium, something that has never been substantiated.

The reaction from president Doe's government was the immediate closure of the station without any due process.

ELCM did not return to the airwave until 1992, after the overthrow of President Doe.

ELCM was again forced to shut down in 1996, as a result of the destruction of the station's facilities during intra-government fighting that rocked Monrovia between April and June of that year.

The station reopened a year later as *Radio Veritas* and has since then remained one of the major radio stations in the country broadcasting on FM and SW.

The station is supervised by a manager with editorial guidelines by the board of directors, based on the Catholic Decrees on Social Communications, and is funded by the Catholic Church in Liberia and its international partners.

1.1.4 *Star Radio*

Star Radio was established in 1997 by the Swiss-based non-governmental organization Fondation Hirondelle in partnership with some Liberians through funding from the United States Aid for International Development (USAID). The station is managed by a Liberian Board of Directors in partnership with Fondation Hirondelle¹⁴.

Since its establishment, *Star Radio* has had problems with the Liberian authorities, especially during the rule of President Charles Taylor. In March 2000, the government of Mr. Taylor shut down *Star Radio*, accusing the station of “disseminating hate messages against the government”.

However, *Star Radio* returned to full operation in Liberia in May 2005 following the ousting and departure of Mr. Taylor and his government in 2003.

Star Radio operates on FM and has a limited daily broadcast on shortwave (SW).

Though *Star Radio* was registered in Liberia as a “Non-governmental Not-For-Profit Corporation”, *Star Radio* has joined other local commercial radio stations in the advertising market.

1.2 *Statement of the problem*

There have always been public concerns about the lack of democratic tenets by Liberian media even with the proliferation of the mass media coupled with the level of freedom they enjoy in the last five years. These concerns have been that the media only serve particular political or commercial interests based on their ownership; thus relegating their responsibility to the greater society to the backbench. Some Liberians argue that Liberian media avoid following critical issues of public interests and usually allow access only to government officials, their political or commercial ‘godfathers’ or people who have the power to reward them with gifts. On the other hand, there are people who counteract that the media have been serving the general interest of the public by the increase in their news and public affairs programs. They further argue that the increase in public affairs programs geared at cultivating public concerns in issues of national interest has positively impacted popular political participation in Liberia. Nowadays, some issues of public concern are easily tested through

¹⁴ www.starradio.org.lr

public affairs programs on local radios. However, these programs which provide for public opinions often follow the trend or direction of the ownership of these media.

1.3 Justification for the study

Liberia lacks adequate studies on how the various sectors of society are often represented in the Liberian media thus leaving the imperative need for the conduct of a comprehensive study to assess the contribution of Liberian media in the promotion of pluralistic opinions in the country.

However, every Liberian media claims to attend to all sectors of the society regardless of social, political and economic status. Understanding the media's actual role in the promotion of diversified opinions means understanding their contributions to participatory democratic Liberia.

Consequently, this study is useful in assessing the performance of the media, thus putting into perspective the debate mentioned earlier.

1.4 Aim of the study and research questions

The general objective of this study is to examine how much and what kind of voices are 'easily' allowed by Liberian media; the textual representations of these voices and the possible factors responsible for the way they are presented in the media.

Three precise key questions have therefore been developed to help provide answers to the above concerns. They are:

1. How much political pluralism is reflected by Liberian media?
2. What are the political tendencies of the three radio stations?
3. What are some of the distinguishing factors explaining the level of political pluralism allowed by Liberian media?

1.5 Scope and limitation of the study

The study is an analysis of three Liberian radio stations: *ELBC*; *Radio Veritas*; and *Star Radio*. The main news and talk shows produced by these stations between December 03, 2007 and December 09, 2007 were analyzed with the selection of every story presented to establish

the level of pluralistic views as portrayed by these media. The study also assessed factors affecting journalism in Liberia by interviewing editors at the three radio stations.

However, one of the limitations of this study is that it only used radio stations while talking in the broadest sense of Liberian media. The inclusion of newspapers, the second largest media type in Liberia, may offer different results. Also, the inclusion of ordinary reporters as part of the interview process might provide more diversified answers to factors affecting the Liberian media.

The other limitation is that the sample used from the talk shows is too small to be representative of the overall.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

Chapter One contains the introduction and background of the study. In Chapter Two, I examined previous research whose findings relate to the media and political participation in Liberia. In Chapter Three I outlined the theoretical perspective upon which the analysis of the study is based. This chapter discusses political pluralism as a core value of democracy and the role of the mass media in democracy. It also looks at some free media theories and alternatives. Chapter Four presents the methods used in the field data collection process and their analysis in addition to their strengths and limitations, description and criteria for selection of the samples and the character of the empirical material gathered. Chapter Five presents the findings, analysis and discussion of the results obtained through the quantitative analysis while chapter six presents those from the qualitative analysis. In the final chapter, I draw conclusions from the research materials and made some recommendations for further research in the area of mass media and democracy in Liberia and the empowerment of the Liberian media.

CHAPTER TWO

Previous Research

This Chapter looks at some studies which are related to the mass media and politics in Liberia.

Few studies have been conducted in relation to the contribution of the media in the promotion of democratic culture in Liberia. But most of these studies, if not all, were carried out using only random sampling survey methods where respondents were asked to provide comments on how they perceived the media in those instances.

Nevertheless, I wish to mention some of these studies whose findings and conclusions remain relevant to this thesis.

2.1.1 Media and Political Awareness

In 2005, Malcom W. Joseph produced *Political Communications in Fragile Democracies, the Liberian Experience: A Case Study (1997-2002)*, which established that the Liberian media have the potential to shape opinions and decisions and present alternatives.

The research reports that the different facets of the Liberian media, during the period under review, presented the views of all sectors of the society from independent or partisan standpoints.

The study however, maintains that major political actors established a strangle hold on the psyche of the nation by employing the use of private radios, television stations and newspapers.

The objective of the research included, establishing the specific ways in which political information was conveyed and the specific effect of political messages on recipients. It used the collection of historical documents, books, Internet and respondent face-to-face interviews.

With regards to radio, the research concluded that commercial and private radios have helped to provide the people with voice and reported on politics more openly as ordinary citizens broadly expressed opinions on the air.

Another study *The Mass Media and Political Conscientization in Liberia: 1990-Present*, produced in 2001 by Cornelius N. Nagbe, concluded that by wider coverage, in-depth analyses, and greater accessibility, the Liberian media has encouraged an active citizens' participation in political debates and advocacy.

Using questionnaires distributed to one hundred respondents drawn from communities in Monrovia in a random sampling survey, the study established that the media have made gains in stepping up "political conscientization"; paving the way to achieving greater political consciousness among Liberians.

However, it maintained that a lot more could be achieved in enhancing the political consciousness of Liberians if the media became "more exertive".

In 1999, Cheechiay Jablasone produced *The Role of the Media in Setting Political Agenda* which concluded that the Liberian media have continued to strive for independence in the face of persistent political pressure.

The study used questionnaires distributed to one hundred respondents drawn from communities in Monrovia in a random sampling survey.

It established many media houses were fighting to keep a good footing with the government; thus making them to guide against entertaining those voices that are critical against the government.

2.1.2 Radio and Political Diversity

In 2006, Ophelia George produced *The Impact of Radio News on National Decision Making: Case Study of LBS and Radio Veritas* which concluded that most Liberians do listen to radio to make informed national political decisions.

The study used questionnaires distributed to one hundred respondents drawn from communities in Monrovia in a random sampling survey; and had as objective: "assessing the contribution of radio news to the process of national decision-making".

However, it established that the broadcast sector of the country was finding it difficult to live up to the expectation of the people due to several factors ranging from the lack of financial and material supports and the political will.

Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the research fell short of establishing as to whether the guidance provided the Radio influences Liberians in their political decision-making process.

Another study, *Evaluating News Quality: A Comparative Analysis of Star Radio 104 FM and Ducor Broadcasting Corporation, DC 101.1 FM*, produced in 1999 by J. A. Africanus Gabriel, concluded that most radio stations in Liberia do not produce a balance or two-sided story.

Using questionnaires distributed to one hundred respondents drawn from communities in Monrovia in a random sampling survey, the study established that low salaries for journalists and corruption have made some journalists to always turn to the 'highest bidder' for news.

The study however pointed out that *Star Radio* news quality "exhibits a more professional and mature posture (objectivity, fairness, and truthfulness) in the Liberian electronic media".

In 2003, Klonious D. Blamo produced *The Role of Radio Talk Shows in Enhancing Free Information Flow in Post War Liberia: An Analytical Look at DC-Talk and Topical Issues* noted that Radio Talk Shows have provided platform for participatory communication in Liberia.

The study used questionnaires to one hundred respondents in a random survey to establish that apart from setting the stage for the discussion of issues of national concerns, Talk Shows provide ordinary Liberians the opportunity for "opinions, criticism and feedback".

In conclusion, the study maintains that radio talk shows in contemporary political post-war Liberia have given democracy in the country "taste of genuineness" and have ushered the country into a society of collectivity and participatory citizenship.

2.2 Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of six previous studies in two themes: media and political awareness and radio and political diversity.

Most of the reviewed studies used questionnaires distributed to one hundred respondents drawn from communities in Monrovia in random sampling surveys.

The reviewed studies on the overall suggest that though the mass media in Liberia are playing some meaningful roles in the greater political consciousness among Liberians, many media houses try to keep a good footing with the government; thus making them to guide against entertaining those voices that are critical of the government.

And having examined these previous studies presented above, it is important to conclude that much research needs to be done in assessing the mass media performance in Liberia based on their contents and output on one hand and the production process on the other. This has become imperative because all previous studies examined by this scholarship only showed how the media were perceived by a cross-section of the population.

Thus, this research seeks to bridge the gap left as the result of the use of only random sampling methods by previous studies through the combination of three research methods: Content Analysis (quantitative), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Respondent Interview. The use of Content Analysis is intended to provide knowledge on the frequency and portrayal of the various aspects of the society; and the CDA, the relationship between the text produced by the sample and its social conditions, ideologies and power-relations. I used Respondent Interview to fill the gap left by the use of both Content Analysis and CDA, which are just limited to the study of media content, and not the production process which is also important in determining why media contents are the way they are. The interviews with editors from the three radio stations (*ELBC, Radio Veritas and Star Radio*) were intended to find out possible factors bearing on their respective newsrooms. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework upon which my analysis will be based.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I first of all briefly discuss pluralism as a value rooted in liberal democracy; and move on to define democracy as a concept and before examining the ideal types of democracy including the ‘public sphere’ coined by German Philosopher Jurgen Habermas. It also presents some of the generally accepted theories of the free press and some of their alternatives and concludes that though many critics have challenged the liberal democratic concept of the ‘public sphere’, the concept is ideal for the address of plurality in opinions in the public interest.

3.1 Pluralism as a Political Value

As briefly stated in the introductory paragraph of my theoretical framework, pluralism is rooted in liberal democracy. It is also recognized as a universal standard of the press which has become important to mass media theories (McQuail, 1992).

But like any political value, pluralism in the media often proves difficult to define. However, generally, it can be construed for a principle of access for all views and voices irrespective of social, economic or political status. For instance, McQuail (1992:144) stresses that pluralism demands that the mass media make available channels through which the separate voices, groups and interests that make up the society can speak to the wider public; and “it is often by this way of access that critical, oppositional and deviant voices, which are essential to change and choice can be heard”.

The thoughts and values of political pluralism conform to the goal of countering homogeneity in and centralized control of the mass media.

Since political pluralism which I define as the consideration and promulgation of diversified political opinions is inextricably mixed with concept of democracy as a core concept, I have elected to discuss democracy in its general perspective, which has been theorized by many scholars as the determining factor for the amount of diversified information the citizenry is offered.

3.2 Democracy as a Concept

From the Athenian era to contemporary days, the concept of democracy has largely remained built around people and power. However, the concept is ‘unstable with no fixed definition (Cammaerts, 2007; Buss, Redburn & Guo, 2006; Louw, 2005; Kuper, 2004; Barber, 1984).

Though there is no integrated definition for democracy, the concept has never lacked direction, which is power as manifested in the people. Robert Dahl (1956) described democracy with its minimum concern as the exertion of a “relatively high degree” of power by ordinary people over their leaders; David Easton defined it as a “political system in which power is so distributed that control over the authoritative allocations of values lies in the hands of the mass people” (c.f. Barber, 1984:7).

Let me say here that citing the definition of democracy as delineated by both Robert Dahl and David Easton, by no means concludes the numerous definitions of the concept. It is only intended to draw the line between two pervasive schools of thought regarding the concept of democracy.

It is my opinion that the consideration of a “relatively high degree of control by citizens over their leaders” as suggested by Dahl’s definition of democracy, points to Liberal Democracy; Easton’s “authoritative allocations of values” in the hands of the mass people leads to Participatory Democracy.

As aforementioned, though the concept of democracy remains unstable in definition, it has largely come to be based on two basic schools of thought: one normative which many call “Deliberate Democracy”, and the other “Liberal Democracy” which is based on practice. According to Kuper (1984:76-7), the normative theory of democracy (Deliberate Democracy) is considered by its proponents to “supply the conceptual foundation for democratization of the global order; while Liberal Democracy remains the most widely accepted form of official justification for political rule”.

3.2.1 Liberal Democracy

As I briefly described, this form of democracy is leading the global race for acceptable democratic rules.

Eric Louw has attributed the popularity of Liberal democracy to “historical accidents” one of which he named as the Anglo political processes over the last three and half centuries¹⁵ (Louw, 2005:38).

Political power in the view of Liberal democracy is manifested in the people through their representatives. Barber (1984:3) maintains that Liberal democracy has no authentic theory on “citizenship, participation, public goods, or civic virtue”. Kuper (2004:76) adds that representation is considered by Liberal democracy as an individual concept; which charges the “representatives of the people to act on their behalf”. The citizens only act when it is time to elect or select their representatives (my emphasis). Benjamin Barber states emphatically that:

Because liberal democracy makes an ideology of radical individualism, it depends heavily on the idea of private property, held both by individual and corporate persons, private life is secured for some but a public life in which all would participate becomes impossible (Barber, 1984: 110).

Critics of Liberal democracy have argued its practice places too much emphasis on individual freedom over collective freedom. They call for “a popular sovereignty under which the people are allowed direct participation in body politics, independence and self-governance (Buss, Redburn, & Guo, 2006:9). They observe that private judgments and the market will assume responsibility where community cannot act for itself; and where “citizens will not act, judges, bureaucrats and finally thugs run in” (Barber, 1984:107-8). Barber further adds that representative political systems harm democracy by reducing the scope of self government and limiting citizen participation to passive activities of listening, thinking and voting (Barber, 1984; also in Dahl, 1989).

According to Barber (1984:104) a society with a centralized power; pursuing “individual and absolute freedom without providing for a politically free citizenry, is a society ripe for both anarchy and tyranny”.

Additionally, a philosopher who has come to be known as the ‘foremost’ deliberate democracy theorist, Jurgen Habermas has maintained that democracy will be democracy only when there is the mass participation of the people at every level of decision making process (Buss, Redburn & Guo, 2006; Newman, 2005; Kuper, 2004; Crossley & Roberts, 2004; Barber, 1984). He named the state of the people’s participation as the Public Sphere.

¹⁵ The Anglo political processes Louw is talking about involve power sharing arrangements under a constitutional monarch.

According to Habermas, the public sphere is a “realm of general interest in which all members can participate in and have a stake in preserving”; and people participation should not be limited to only choosing leaders when the need arises (c.f. Gardiner, 2004: 43; and my emphasis).

3.2.2 The Public Sphere

As briefly stated, the concept of the Public Sphere was put forward by German philosopher and political theorist, Jurgen Habermas. In his book, *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, written in 1962 in German and translated into English in 1989, Habermas called for “a notional space which provides a more or less autonomous and open arena for public debate” (McQuail, 2005: 181).

Core to the public sphere is direct participation in national policy, and efforts to find solutions to pertinent issues in the society through open and free deliberation.

Contrary to the representative form of governance provided for by liberal democracy where the people are “mobilized around conceptions of rights and duty to the state”, within the public sphere, the state is required to create the enabling platform for public discourse, and must remain accountable to the people at all times (Buss, Redburn & Guo, 2006, Newman, 2005, Kuper, 2004; Crossley & Roberts, 2004; Barber, 1984).

According to Habermas, the public sphere is a network for “freely communicating information and points of views in affirmative or negative attitudes”. Habermas noted that the people must be fed with the necessary information in order for them to make informed judgments after the deliberation process (Kuper, 2004: 57). He further stressed that the deliberation processes should be based on the “common good of all and not on self-interest” which engender participatory democracy (Cammaerts, 2007: 3 and my emphasis).

It is my opinion that mass participation, something which White, Little and Smyth (2005) have maintained is the definitive institution of democracy can be enabled by right representation, voting and balances of power. By balances of power I mean, public officials submitting to the people.

But the concept of the public sphere like most normative concepts has drawn criticism from several individuals. They pointed to the German philosopher's "failure" to clearly define the "constitution and composition" of the public within the public sphere. They also argue that participatory governance as ascribed by the public sphere would require total inclusiveness of the people something which is not easily achieved due to competing individual needs (Kuper, 2004: 77).

Andrew Kuper further outlines that:

A democratic system will require agents who act as representatives, and must resolve some crucial questions: who appoints representatives, on what basis, what powers do they have, who judges whether they have attempted to use those powers in the interest of and with appropriate attention to views of the public, and by what processes (Kuper, 2004: 77).

However, Newman (2005:133) suggests that the constitution of the public within the public sphere should be between public officials and the general public.

In another challenge of the distribution of power within the public sphere, Michel Foucault noted that "the operation of power crucially involves the application of disciplinary pressures on the individual and collective body, and the internalization of these forces by particular subjects which further means that domination must be resisted first and foremost by bodies" (Ibid: 43). Foucault's argument I surmised is suggesting that the people must be pushed into action by authority. In this case, the provisions of platform to demand that the people contribute their opinions to significant national policy issues arguably serve as "disciplinary pressures".

3.3 Mass Media as Tool for Social Change

No scholar can objectively dispute the power of the media in the transformation of society. However, the manifestation of the power as possessed by the media continues to remain a subject of debate.

3.3.1 Mass Media and Democracy

One enquiry often sought by media researchers is: whether information released to the people by the media most of the time represent popular need. Cammaerts (2007:161) says information lacks neutrality and the "selection and distribution of information and the related processes by the media has been part of academic scrutiny for decades".

In Liberal democracy, the role of the media can be surmised to include informing, entertaining and educating the people (citizens). It is widely accepted in Liberal democracy that when the media help to put information at the disposition of the people, they will be able to formally or informally control the state (Cammaerts, 2007).

Reminiscing on the core value of liberal democracy-individual freedom-, I can arguably say that the ascribed role to the media herein is 'mediatory'. My argument seems to draw support from the statement by Brian McNair that "modern politics are largely mediated politics, experienced by the great majority of citizens at one remove, through their print and broadcast media of choice" (McNair, 2000:1).

McNair indicated that any study of contemporary democracy is also a study of the following: "how the media report and interpret political events and issues; how they facilitate the efforts of politicians to persuade their electorates of the correctness of their programs; how they themselves influence the political process and shape public opinion" (McNair, 2000:1). Eric Louw further suggests that the ascertainment of media role play in the political process is assisted by the establishment of the type of relationship existing between journalists and politicians; how commercial pressures set parameters for journalists; and journalists' beliefs about their role in the political process, among others (Louw, 2005: 60).

In Liberal democracy theory, the principal role of the media is to act as a check on the state and "fearlessly expose abuses of official authorities". James Curran says "this watchdog role is said to override in importance all other functions of the media and dictate the form in which the media system should be organized". They emphasized that liberal democracy strongly believes that "only by anchoring the media to the free market, in this view, is it possible to ensure the media's complete independence from government (Curran, 2000: 121)

Additionally, liberal democracy theory holds public opinion (public gathering) as a "marketplace of ideas". However, though pluralism is accepted as necessary democratic value, personal autonomy is emphasized in determining which ideas prevail over others (Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007; Buss, Redburn & Guo, 2006; Burton, 2005; Crossley & Roberts, 2004; Barber, 1984). It is my opinion that unlimited individual personal autonomy in the public gathering (marketplace of ideas) creates the situation where 'the strongest survive'. It is also my argument that in a society where individuals are left to compete for supremacy,

whether economic, political or cultural, the weak sometimes fall prey to the strong. 'Strong' here is used to mean the economic and political powerful.

According to Habermas, the characterization of the public gathering as marketplace for ideas has come to generate “problematic dynamics and tendencies within public space”. He further indicated that the “mass media have been hijacked for the purpose of selling goods via advertising” and thus has become saleable itself (c.f. Crossley & Roberts, 2004: 6; and my emphasis). (Habermas’s ascribed role to the mass media in democracy is defined in the Public Sphere which I shall come to later in this scholarship).

Hollingsworth, (1986); Bagdikian, (1997); and Curran and Seaton, (1997) attribute this phenomenon to the “conglomeration of news media into corporations”. They maintain that the conglomeration of news media into corporations which took place in the last three decades has created some “no-go” areas for journalists who avoid threading certain path for fear of “stepping on the corporate toes” or those of a “parent or sister company” (c.f. Curran & Gurevitch, 2000: 123). McChesney (1997) posits that the media are in general less vigilant in relation to corporation than public bureaucracy because they are part of the corporate business sector (c.f. Curran & Gurevitch, 2000: 123)

In a brief summary, I argue along with Louw (2005:27) that in contemporary democracy, publics are created and assembled by the media which in turn hold public opinion together. However, public opinions have often become politics-driven and manipulated by outside forces (political and/or corporate interests) to produce what Entman (1989) calls “democracy without citizens” (c.f. Louw, 2005: 32).

3.3.2 Mass Media and the Public Sphere

As noted earlier, the concept of the public sphere was advanced by Jurgen Habermas with the desire of a mass society where communal interest will supersede individual interest; which would in turn create a “notional space” providing more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate (Ibid: 181).

But what is the role of the media within the public sphere? Habermas tasked the media to help the people to monitor by educating and encouraging them (the people) to form “informed and influential public opinion” (McQuail, 2005; Newman, 2005; Crossley & Roberts, 2004).

Habermas maintained that public opinions should be sought by the media on issues of importance as viewed by the public. I view this position as conferring a mediatory role upon the media, discouraging them from their traditional role of agenda setting¹⁶ (McQuail, 2005; Newman, 2005; Crossley & Roberts, 2004).

However, Habermas remained pessimistic about the media assuming this role due to what he saw as the public's easy prey to manipulation by the media (McQuail, 2005) which has established itself as a viable market (Crossley & Roberts, 2004). He further lamented:

Public communication has been moderated by the demands of the big businesses and has led to a regressive 'dumbing down' as editors pursuing new and large markets, have been inclined to play the lowest denominator. Where the early sphere, as a domain of self-education and cultivation tended to 'level up', the modern media, in its pursuit of the widest audience, it is inclined to 'level down' (Crossley & Roberts, 2004: 6).

Jensen (2002: 105) reinforces by noting that “the formation of public opinion in capitalist societies is controlled by those with economic power over the mass media, which will see it fit that representations do not jeopardize their interests and privileges”.

But as McQuail (2005: 182) is suggesting, the role of the media within the public as envisaged by Habermas, has begun to be appreciated at least by media scholars as a result of the emergence of the new media.

It is my opinion that the technological breakthrough of the mobile phone (one of the Information Communication and Technologies, ICTs) has also contributed to the realization of participatory communication, especially through radio, at least judging from happenings in Africa. (I will elaborate later)

If I may theorize the relationship between the mass media and democracy, I will arguably say that access to unlimited information *a la mode Habermas* represents an ideal condition.

3.3.3 Radio and Participatory Communication in Democracy

Communication between the rulers and the general society is central to any political system. Darren Lilleker (2006) says communication is crucial for the building of a society where the state and people feel connected. The notion of participatory communication in democracy remains fluid and contested. This study has defined participatory communication in

¹⁶ The term agenda-setting according to McQuail (2005) was coined by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 and remained the general notion that media direct public attention by providing the public with what to think about.

democracy as the process that provides ordinary people with the power to contribute their opinions to major political decision-making process in the governance of the state.

But according Jan Servaes, there is hardly any participation in communication except to a very limited extent in “small and localized experiments” (Servaes, 1999: 196).

Servaes (1999) however, acknowledges that the concept is so popular to the extent that no one can easily argue against it as broadly conceived. He suggested in his communication for development that for participation to be meaningful, it has to directly address power and its distribution in society.

Nevertheless, Pateman (1970) delineates participatory communication into two categories. The first is “partial participation-a process in which two or more parties influence each other in making decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only”; the other “full participation-a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions” (Carpentier, 2007: 88). It is my opinion that participatory communication with the aim of establishing a citizenry who will think as a public has to adopt the latter definition-full participation.

Within the concept of participatory communication further lie two characteristics: access and participation.

According to Servaes (1999), *access* means opportunities to choose relevant programs with feedback; and *participation* implies a higher level of public involvement in the production process and also the planning and management of communication systems (c.f. Carpentier, 2007: 88).

In addition, Nico Capentier (2007:88) says a third notion (interaction) has been introduced by Grevisse and Carpentier (2004) as an intermediary between access and participation.

So participatory communication in democracy requires the citizenry to have direct access and saying in the functioning of the media. But Carpentier suggests that to derive the media’s role in participatory communication, one needs to further distinguish between participation in the media and participation through the media. According to Cammaerts:

Participation in the media deals with the participation of non-professionals in the production of media output and in media decision-making; and participation through the media deals with the opportunities for extensive participation in public debate and for self-representation in the public spheres (Ibid: 89).

I argue that radio offers opportunities to achieve the two criteria of participatory communication outlined by Cammaerts (2007).

Curran and Gurevitch (1991) state that radio like other mass media can be effective in promoting development and good governance as long as there is press freedom and diversity of access to the media by the public. According to Hendy (2000: 15), radio can assume a quality of democracy where stations and programs truly reflect the voices of the people talking to those in position of influence and power and at the same time receiving feedback from them. David Hendy (2000: 195) quotes German playwright, Bertolt Brecht as urging against radio being a channel through which homes passively receive information and entertainment; noting that if listeners could transmit as well as receive information, they would become producers of radio as well as consumers which will make radio a truly public, two-way forum of communication.

Van der Veur (2002: 81) adds that:

Since its introduction...radio has been billed as the most democratic of media...crossing the vast territories which divided people, linking people cut off from the rest of the world, expanding people's understanding and extending knowledge, bridging the gap created by illiteracy.

The characteristics of radio nowadays further make it a potential player in democratic communication. But however, there has to be press freedom in the first place. Not only that most radio programs have become technically easy to produce, people can actually contribute meaningfully to these programs without necessarily availing their physical presence. Hendy (2000: 195) posits that:

contemporary radio phone-in program built on the ability of listeners to use their telephones to become contributors, at least momentarily, certainly now allows radio to advertise itself to the world as a democratic, reciprocal, two-way medium on a large scale-a claim easily enhanced with the rapid adoption of e-mail and Internet and discussion forums as tool of audience involvement.

I can add that the mobile phone has at least for now broken certain barriers of communication between radio stations and the people, particularly across Africa. According to Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu (2002) most radio stations in Africa, especially the privately owned, avoiding direct political involvement in news and other programming for fear of economic and political reprisal, have largely resulted to adopting call-in programs; providing opportunities for

listeners to talk on issues of interest and thus making their radio stations interactive and participatory.

In summary, it is my argument that radio can play a pivotal role in democracy. Since democracy as a concept highly values open debate, persuasion and compromise, radio can provide the platform upon which such debate, persuasion and compromise would be reached. For example, through phone-in programs, the people can directly talk to their leaders or the authority, questioning policies or suggesting remedies to national predicament.

3.4 Theories of the Free Media

This session looks at some normative theories of the media. According to McQuail (2005), normative media theories are concerned with the examination and prescription of how media ought to operate if certain social values are to be observed. The 'free media' is an ideal media system devoid political, commercial or any form of manipulation.

3.4.1 The Liberal Theory of Press Freedom

The Liberal theory of press freedom also known as the Libertarian theory is deeply associated with Western culture. John Keane (1991) identifies Great Britain as the birthplace of libertarianism (Williams, 2003:39).

According to Williams (2003:38-9), English Poet John Milton in the book *Areopagitica*, published in 1644 opposed state restriction on freedom of expression on grounds that people are blessed by God with thinking faculty which allowed them to make decisions.

Milton advanced what many modern scholars now referred to as "The Miltonic Concept" of right which states that "truth will win out over falsehood in the marketplace of ideas" (von Humboldt, 2001: 7-8).

Almost 50 years after Milton had published *Areopagitica*, another Englishman John Locke came with a partial challenge of Milton's concept on freedom of expression. Locke argued that freedom of expression should not be based on religion. He suggested that freedom of expression or freedom of the press should rather be based on the notion that everyone has the right to decide for him or herself on any matter (Ibid: 8).

But John Stuart Mill is often regarded as one of the modern founders of a theory of free speech. In his book *On Liberty* which was first published in 1859, Mill provides four arguments on which the liberty of thought and discussion might flourish. These arguments include: the “recognition that an opinion could be fallible; the necessity for the collision of different opinions to establish truth”; the elimination of “prejudice”; and the elimination of “dogma” (Crossley & Roberts, 2004: 21).

The overall view of the free press theory is the independent role of media in society which they believe leads to pluralism. It urges the freedom of the press with the belief that “freedom is somehow associated with the degrees of morality” (Burton, 2005: 352). According to Williams (2003:50), “pluralism conceives of the media as reflecting the diversity of their audiences. Viewers, readers, and listeners are regarded not as passive dupe of the media but as agents who can exercise influence over them”. He maintains that pluralism attends to the notion that “everybody has a voice and everybody has a choice, and this underpins the social and political role of the media”.

But libertarian theory’s close identification of press freedom with property rights has neglected the “economic barriers to access and the abuse of the monopolistic publishing power” as suggested by (Nerone, 1995 in McQuail, 2005: 177). Alternatively, Glasser (1986) writes:

From the perspective of a negative concept of freedom, the press is under no obligation to extend its liberty or to accommodate the liberty of others...from the perspective of affirmative understanding...in contrast, freedom and responsibility stand side by side ...and an individual’s ability to gain the benefits of liberty must be included among the conditions definitive of liberty (c.f. McQuail, 2005: 177)

It is my opinion that a free and independent press system working in a liberalized society will engender the platform on which varying interest groups will have the opportunities to express their views or to have them heard.

3.4.2 The Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility theory of the press was propounded in the USA in 1947 and became effective in other countries other than the USA, especially in Western European countries about two to three decades after the end of World War II.

According to McQuail (2005: 170), the theory was advanced by the commission which came to be known as the Hutchins Commission to look into widespread criticism of the American newspaper press by the public for its sensationalism, commercialism, political imbalance and monopoly tendencies.

McQuail (2005) maintained that the findings of the Hutchins Commission were critical of the press for its frequent failure to attend to concerns of the public and support for voices of a “privileged and powerful minority”.

Like the liberal theory of the press, this theory also holds the mass media at the same level but differs from the former such that government and the press are allowed to criticize each other. The concept holds that the government must not only allow freedom but should vigorously promote it and move in to protect the freedom of its citizens when necessary (McQuail, 2005: 171).

McQuail (2005: 172) summarises five main principles of the social responsibility theory which charge that:

The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust; news media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant; the media should be free, but self-regulated; the media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct; and under some circumstances, government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest.

I agree that the media must operate with a high degree of ethical and moral principles and practice self-regulation. But I do not agree with the invitation of government as a means of safeguarding “public interest”. In my opinion, it remains an open secret that governments over the world operate in secrecy to certain degree; and calling for government’s intervention in the name of safeguarding public interest is giving the government *la carte blanche* to operate. Everything might just become public interest.

3.4.3 The Public Service Broadcasting Alternative

The concept of public service broadcasting refers to a set of relationship between electronic media and the society they operate in and are mandated to serve. The concept emerged in Western Europe in the 1920s, and at its core was a cultural mission: to facilitate nation-building efforts, to build a common culture, to provide information, educate and entertain the citizenry (McQuail, 2005; Street, 2001).

Many countries have seen the evolution of national broadcasters supported through public funds. According to McQuail (2005: 179), early government intervention in broadcasting was thought necessary “to regulate the use of limited transmission wavelengths in the interest of both the industry and consumers”.

Nowadays, public service refers to an independent broadcaster set up by law and generally financed by public funds to serve the public by meeting the important communication needs of society and its citizenry through the democratic political system. Though public service broadcasting varies from country to country, the notion consists of certain goals that is presumed can only be adequately achieved by a public form of ownership and/or regulation. The goals include: serving the general public; providing diversity in programming as well as meeting the needs of special minorities; concern for national identity including culture and language; existing as part of the political system; providing balanced and impartial information, and above all putting public interests above financial objectives (Barendt, 1995: 52-3; McQuail, 2005: 179-80).

It is my opinion that public service broadcasting plays a pivotal role in Habermas’ concept of public sphere (a notional space where collective decisions are made by citizens for the common good of all).

An often criticized aspect of public service broadcasting is its reliance on public funds and direction and it has been accused of being “mouth pieces of governments” (Downing, 1996; Sparks, 1998; Curran & Park, 2000a in Curran & Gurevitch, 2000: 125).

According to Curran and Gurevitch (2000), public service broadcasting is suffering from constant censorship and intimidation by government, public as well as private persons and above all privatization. But Raboy (2003: 46) says in the face of the growing commercialization of all media, public service broadcasting continues to designate a strong value of social worth, the last best hope for socially powerful media acting in the interest of the public.

I argue that public service broadcasting represents an instrument which provides platform for participatory communication. Not only does public service broadcasting remains relevant, it provides an ‘escape route’ for public discourse already besieged by political and commercial interests. However, it is my opinion that public service broadcasting can complement other

services provided by commercial broadcasters, satisfying the needs and interests the latter do not attend to and the public right to know, and ensuring diversity in programming.

3.4.4 The Communitarian Theory Alternative

The communitarian theory of the media is a relatively new concept expressed in terms of “communitarianism” which emphasises the “social ties connecting people in contrast to the modern libertarian individualism” (Taylor, 1989; Rorty, 1989; Sandel, 1982; McIntyre, 1981 in McQuail, 2005: 184)

According to Nisbet (2001) the concept pioneered by American professor Amitai Etzioni is fast growing.

Communitarianism, like many other complex concepts lacks a definitive meaning. However, its proponents share one basic attribute which is collectivity. Nisbet (2001: 71) states that “all forms of communitarianism have reflected a natural inclination of people to gather together, to belong, and to have a common morality and lifestyle”.

Communitarianists say elitism, individualism, and individual rights before community often place power in the hands of the powerful few. They further hold the view that power and responsibility must be placed in the hands of “social groups or communities” (Ibid: 73).

But where does the media fit in? And what role communitarians ascribe to journalism?

According to Merrill, Gade & Blevens (2001), communitarians want to take emphasis off press rights (journalistic freedom) and place on press responsibility. They argue that for instance when freedom of the press is enthroned by journalists; there is almost complete neglect of the listener and the reader.

In their somehow radical argument, communitarians believe that the people can only dethrone the few elites who have been setting agenda for them though public participation in the media. According to Robert Nisbet, public participation in press power in addition to public participation in social power would confer freedom-not personal autonomous freedom of the Enlightenment kind, but community freedom to influence society (Ibid: 27).

Furthermore, communitarians see the goal of media reporting as a civic transformation. They emphasized that the press has bigger fish to fry than merely improving technology and streamlining performance. In a communitarian world-view, the news media should seek to engender a like-minded philosophy among the public; and make news an agent of community formation (Nerone, 1995 in McQuail, 2005: 185).

They urge “public journalists”¹⁷ to give away some of their freedom by engaging in focus groups, polls, surveys, and conferences with public representatives (Ibid: 28).

However, it is my opinion that while proponents of the communitarian theory of the press are demanding that some power be transferred from individual journalist to the people, the media has not been relegated to the back row (the media’s role in society has not been neglected). Communications theorist and researcher Clifford Christians notes that “despite the conundrums and the far-reaching ramifications, community cannot be resuscitated without the leadership of the press” (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993 in Nisbet, 2001: 27).

Nevertheless, Christians et al. (1993) warns that instead of “drowning audiences with data and fattening company coffer, journalist must help to engender a like-minded world view” (Nisbet, 2001: 29).

Though I share the communitarian press concept that the public should be allowed much power in and through the media, I am of the opinion that eliminating individual autonomy totally would not create the social order and discipline the notion desires.

3.5 International and Constitutional Guarantees

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)¹⁸ guarantees that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)¹⁹ also guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the same way as expressed in Article 19 of the UDHR.

¹⁷ Public journalist here is defined as journalist working for media within the community

¹⁸ Adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, Resolution 217 A(III).

¹⁹ UN General Assembly Resolution 2200 A(XXI) of December 16, 1966, in force March 23, 1976.

Additionally, Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights²⁰ guarantees that:

*Every individual shall have the right to receive information.
Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions without laws.*

The Constitution of Liberia also guarantees freedom of expression at Article 15 as follows:

Article 15

- a. *Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression, being fully responsible for the abuse thereof. This right shall not be curtailed, restricted or enjoined by government save during emergency declared in accordance with this Constitution.*
- b. *The right encompasses the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to knowledge. It includes freedom of speech and of the press, academic freedom to receive or impart knowledge and information and the right of libraries to make such knowledge available. It includes non-interference with the use of mail, telephone and telegraph. It likewise includes the right to remain silent.*
- c. *In pursuance of this right, there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries.*
- d. *Access to state owned media shall not be denied because of disagreement with or dislike of the ideas express. Denial of such access may be challenged in a court of competent jurisdiction.*
- e. *This freedom may be limited only by judicial action in proceedings grounded in defamation or evasion of the rights of privacy and publicity or in the commercial aspect of expression in deception, false advertising and copyright infringement.*

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I briefly discussed pluralism as a core value of liberal democracy and defined it as the consideration and promulgation of diversified political opinions. Since pluralism is a core democratic value, I defined democracy and presented some of its generally acclaimed and accepted forms. I also presented some concepts reflecting the mass media in democracy and some theories of the free press which include: the liberal theory of press freedom; the social responsibility theory; the public broadcasting alternative and the communitarian alternative.

However, after an examination of the various theories presented above which include some theories on democracy and the free media it is clear that they have their own strengths and limitations. Nevertheless, they offer multi dimensional approaches to the role of the mass media in a democratic society and also the mass media's responsibility to the general public. The concept of the 'public sphere' seems to adequately define how the mass media can best work in the interest of the public. Nevertheless, this study has tried as much as possible to incorporate many concepts about democracy and the ideal media system. The next chapter presents the methods used in empirical data collection, analysis and interpretation.

²⁰ Adopted on June 26, 1981, in force October 21, 1986.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methods and material

This chapter presents the methods used in the gathering, analysis and interpretation of experimental data to answer the research questions put forth in Chapter One. It also explicates reasons for the choice of the three radio stations under study, as well as the selection of interviewees. Section 4.1 explains the methodology employed while the criteria used to select the sample have been described in Section 4.2.

4.1 Methods: content analysis, critical discourse analysis and respondent interview

Due to the scope of the study, I used one quantitative method-*content analysis* and two qualitative methods-*critical discourse analysis*, and *respondent interview*. For the *content analysis*, news stories from the radio stations were recorded and topics, actors, sources, source contexts and space counted in addition to the counting of guests appearing on their talk shows. Data from the talk shows were used to examine the attitude of talk shows hosts toward their guests and public input into the topics discussed.

For the *critical discourse analysis*, two sets of stories as reported by all the sample stations were selected and analyzed along textual representation; and the *respondent interviews* were with two editors from the radio stations under study (except *Star Radio* where only one was available).

4.1.1 Choice of method

4.1.1.1 Content analysis

Berelson (1952) described *content analysis* as: “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”. (Deacon et al. 2007: 118, Jensen 2002: 220). As for Krippendorf (1980), it is a “research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context” (Ibid: 220). Kerlinger (1980) further suggests that *content analysis* is “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner for the purpose of measuring variables. (Ibid: 220).

However, *content analysis* (purely quantitative) as applied to media text only counts occurrences of predefined entities. Deacon et al (2007) say quantitative *content analysis* is a directive method. It only gives answers to questions posed.

As indicated earlier in this text, the purpose of quantitative *content analysis* is to objectively and systematically describe “the manifest content of a communication using a large number of texts and the statistical result thereafter to make broader inferences. (Ibid)

Content analysis was adopted for this study given the responses it sought to draw from the reflection of pluralism by Liberian media.

Quantitative *content analysis* in the mass media follows three phases which Riffe, Lacy & Fico (1998:47) describe as: conceptualization, design, and execution.

The conceptualization phase includes the derivation of research questions or hypotheses; something which Neuendorf (2002:107) says is “a declaration by the researcher as to exactly what he or she wishes to study”; thus, this study developed a research question: *How much political pluralism is reflected by Liberian media?*

To answer the above research question, the material was formulated into content methodical units with analysis made accordingly. The variables analyzed were those coded under the themes of topic and actor in the story, source of story, source context, and space the story received, for the category of news stories, and guest profile, attitude toward guest and public input, for the talk shows; constituting a part of the design phase described by Riffe, Lacy & Fico (1998). The other portion includes what Deacon et al. (2007) details as deciding qualifying criteria; and designing a coding frame. A coding frame is composed of a coding schedule (pro-forma sheet on which values for each variable is entered) and a coding manual (host of the numbers of each of the variable listed on the coding sheet) (Deacon et al. 2007: 126-7) (See appendix 1 for a full list of variables)

The major daily newscasts of the three radio stations (*ELBC-7pm*; *Radio Veritas-9:30pm*; and *Star Radio-6pm*) were recorded for one week (7 days) [December 3, 2007 to December 9, 2007]; this include: *ELBC Newsline*, 45-minute magazine package; *Radio Veritas News Update*, 30-minute magazine package; and *Star Radio Liberia Today*, 60-minute news magazine. For the talk shows (phone-in-programs) three editions each of the major talk shows hosted by these stations were also recorded during this period. The talk shows include:

ELBC's Lets Talk; Radio Veritas' Topical Issues; and Star Radio's I Beg to Differ. Each edition of the talk shows lasted for about one hour.

The news stories were transcribed and scrutinized with the aid of the coding manual and data entered into the coding sheets. During this process, 250 news stories (*ELBC*, 80; *Radio Veritas*, 85; and *Star Radio*, 85) were coded. As for the talk shows, 9 editions (three per station) were recorded. But only questions to the guests by the talk show hosts were transcribed.

4.1.1.2 Critical discourse analysis

The lack of sensitivity to hidden meanings that may be conveyed by media in pure quantitative form of *content analysis* has been the concern of many media researchers. It is within this context that the researcher chose to adopt *Critical discourse analysis* as part of methods for this research.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as described by Fairclough (1995:17-8) is “an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse practices and social practices. CDA tries to illuminate the most relevant textual and contextual factors contributing to the production and interpretation of a given text. Deacon et al. (2007: 154) posits that:

The critical scope and potential of discourse analysis resides most of all in its examination of how structures of power are embedded in the forms of everyday language use, and thus how language contributes to the legitimization of existing social relations and hierarchies of authority and control.

Wodak (2001: 2) adds that (CDA) is basically “concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language”.

Thus, the adoption of CDA by this research was aimed at “unmasking” the ideological constructs of news texts from these radio stations as well as establishing links between the texts and their discourse practices. Two sets of news stories regarding two distinct actors, one opposition figure and the other government official, were used by the research to establish the above.

Fowler (1991:10) asserts that “institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated and all news is always reported from one particular angle”; noting:

Many parts of newspapers which seem to be not quotation of official voices, but, rather, written articles for which the editor, or a named journalist, seems to take responsibility are tinged with an official ideology, because they are written in the

formal, authoritative style which accessed figures such as politicians or experts habitually use. (p.23)

This may also apply to other media texts including radio. I believe Fowler is not limiting this practice as defined to only newspapers.

For the purpose of this study, two stories of different characteristics but reported by the sample were selected. The stories include: *an arrest and detention order for a former Liberian Head of State by a Liberian Judge*; and *a reaction to a corruption charge by a Liberian government minister*. The researcher believes these two stories have the potential to affect the lives of many Liberians because they dealt with issue of corruption involving two prominent individuals.

4.1.1.3 Respondent interview

The use of CDA and *content analysis* by this research cannot explain the driving force behind the production of these texts. An analysis of media content may show representation and textual practices but it cannot show reason for such preference. Only inquiry (*interview*) from the producer of such text may.

Fowler (1991) says news as reported from some particular angle is due to the social, economic and political situations of institutions of news. Fairclough (1995: 103-4) further asserts that “the media clearly operate within a set of economic and political frameworks, representing the social order; and media producers make choices in consonance with their social positions, interests and objectives”.

It is within the above context that this research chose to incorporate the respondent interview method.

According to Kvale (1996:105) “*interviews* are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective of their lived world”. Lindlof & Taylor (2002: 173) further elaborates that “*qualitative interviews* are storytelling par excellence in which people are given complete license to craft their selves in language”; something which Scott and Lyman (1968) defines as “excuses or justifications of social conduct (c.f. Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:173).

Paul Lazarfeld further described the general goal of *Respondent Interview* as clarifying the “meaning of common conceptions”; distinguishing “the decisive elements of an expressed opinion”; determining “what influenced a person to form an opinion or act in a way”; classifying “complex attitude patterns”; and understanding the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act. (cf. Lindlof & Taylor (2002):179)

The research followed Lindlof & Taylor (2002) approach by eliciting “open-ended responses”.

Though Deacon et al. (2007) emphasize that the more non-standardized and informal the interviewing procedures (like respondent interview), “the greater the intervening presence of the interviewer”, the researcher allowed the interviewees to freely express their thoughts.

For the purpose of this study, five individual *respondent interviews* were conducted between January 4 and January 27, 2008 with two main editors from *ELBC* and *Radio Veritas* and one from *Star Radio* (the only available editor). All the interviews were conducted at different dates and locations. The interviews were tape-recorded and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Lindlof & Taylor (2002:187) says the use of tape recorders “enables research to capture the interview more or less exactly as it was spoken”. The respondents were asked to comment on their editorial policy and freedom; news sources; audience characteristics; and role as editor. (See appendix 16 for Interview Guide). Follow-up e-mail interviews were also conducted with four of the interviewees (one from *ELBC* and *Star Radio* and two from *Radio Veritas*. (See Appendix 17 for questionnaire). Each interview was transcribed.

I must point out here that though I am familiar with all the interviewees, I tried hard not to allow that familiarity to overshadow the process.

4.2 Material

4.2.1 Criteria for the selection of the radio stations, news stories, and the interviewees

4.2.1.1 The radio stations

The three radio stations under study-*ELBC*, *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* arguably represent the core of broadcast radio in Liberia. Though broadcasting from Monrovia, the capital, on Frequency Modulation (FM), their signals cover more than 75 percent of the country. Also, *Star Radio* and *Radio Veritas* have limited daily broadcasts on Short Wave (SW) that are heard throughout the country and probably beyond²¹. In addition, the three radio stations also maintain arrangements with Community Radios in most parts of the country who relay their news and public affairs programs.

Apart from having a ‘wider’ coverage the selection of the three radio stations are diversified in terms of ownership and control: *ELBC* is government funded and controlled; *Radio Veritas* is private and religious; and *Star Radio* is partly NGO-funded, commercial but not-for-profit.

4.2.1.2 The news stories and the talk shows

The news stories were chosen from what the researcher considered prime time news broadcasts by the three radio stations. They are considered prime time news broadcasts because they are all broadcast in the evening hours when most people are at home or are beginning to return from work. Reporters from these radio stations often return to base from the field to make these evening news magazines package (based on the researcher observation and experience).

The choice for the talk shows is based on the fact that they represent the only such programs on the three radios with the exception of *Star Radio* that has other talk show programs. However, these other talk show programs on *Star Radio* seem less prominent.

4.2.1.3 Respondent interviews

I used a purposive non-random sampling technique to select the interviewees. The Editors were carefully selected based on their positions and tasks within each news room. My choice

²¹ *Star Radio* broadcasts on 9525 kHz daily between 7:30 - 8:00 Am; while *Radio Veritas*’ daily broadcast is in two-fold: between 06:00-09:00 Am on 6090 kHz and 05:45-10:00 Pm on 5470kHz

for only editors as part of the interview is based on the fact they are the ‘gatekeepers’ who have the last power in story selection for newscast in addition to the power to assign reporters.

4.2.2. Presentation of the samples

4.2.2.1 The radio stations

The three radio stations have diverse ownership but they all broadcast from Monrovia, the Capital. They all broadcast mostly in English but with little local languages broadcast slots. *ELBC* is a state-funded and managed radio station established in 1960. Initially, the station had Amplitude Modulation (AM) and Short Wave (SW) frequencies but for now it only broadcasts on Frequency Modulation (FM 99.9). *Radio Veritas* is a non-commercial station owned and operated by the Catholic Church in Liberia. It was launched in April 1981 and operates on FM and SW frequencies. However, its main broadcast is 98.7 FM. *Star Radio* was launched in 1997 by the Swiss-based non-governmental organization, Fondation Hironnelle in partnership with some Liberians through funding from the United States Aid for International Development USAID. It is managed by a Liberian Board of Directors in partnership with Fondation Hironnelle. Initially, *Star Radio* was non-commercial but that status has now changed to “commercial-but-not-for-profit” due to drop in donors funds.

4.2.2.2 The news stories for *critical discourse analysis*

I selected two sets of news stories about two different actors-one governmental and the other opposition political figure as reported by all the three stations for further analysis within the frame of *critical discourse analysis*. The first set of stories is about an arrest and detention order placed on a former Liberian transitional head of state by a local Judge. For this category, two separate stories were analyzed from *ELBC* because this station had the story within its bulletin and later as reportage. The same applied for *Star Radio*. The difference is with *Radio Veritas* where there was only one broadcast news story about the event.

The second set of stories was about Liberia’s Education Minister’s clarification on allegation of his involvement in corruption. Again, two separate stories about this event were analyzed from *ELBC* and *Star Radio* as well and only one from *Radio Veritas*.

4.2.2.3 The respondent interviewees

The five editors I talked to were people who had held their respective positions for more than two years. They include: the news editor and news director of *ELBC*; the editor and assistant editor of *Radio Veritas*; and the acting news editor of *Star Radio*.

4.2.3 Analysis of data

4.2.3.1 The *content analysis*

The recorded news stories from each of the radio stations were transcribed individually. However, stories appearing as both bulletin and reportage dealing with the same actor or source were considered a unit during the process of data entry²² (this mostly applied to *ELBC* and *Star Radio*). This limitation was aimed at avoiding the duplication of actors or sources present in the same newscast.

As already stated, 250 news stories (*ELBC*, 80; *Radio Veritas*, 85; and *Star Radio*, 85) met the criteria. A coding schedule was developed (see appendix 1) and the variables and their corresponding values were entered onto coding sheets. The variables include: medium-name of the radio station; story date; topic-designation of the main theme in the news story; actor-person or organization manifestly referred to within the story; source-person(s) or organization(s) the story is attributed to; and space-the total allotted time (second) to the story (see appendix 1 for the full list).

Though stories appearing as both bulletins and reportages were treated in their individual category as a unit, they were separated in terms of time allotment. Bulletin stories were accorded direct 45 seconds while reportages were measured based on their actual lengths in time.

Data from the coding sheets were then entered and analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which was also used to assist in the description of the findings.

For the purpose of this study, the recorded talk shows from the three stations were reviewed for: topic of discussion; guest profile-professional or social status of guest; presenter's attitude to guest-determined by characters of questions to guests by host; and public input-determined by public participation through phone calls. The coding schedule (see appendix 1) was used to determine the profiles of the guests. Questions to the guests by hosts were reviewed for their subjectivity to determine the host's attitude. They were assessed under the degrees: lenient, moderate and critical. Though this procedure might also be subjective in itself, I was mindful of possible slip into bias judgments. Lenient attitude means: mild or tolerant disposition; while moderate follows: reasonable limits; and critical implies: severe treatment.

²² The selected news programs from *ELBC* and *Star Radio* go along the following format: a presenter will come and introduce the news presentation; which is usually followed by a 15-minute bulletin by a newscaster before the return of the presenter with the presentation of reportages, voice excerpt, pre-recorded or live interviews.

SPSS was also used to analyze data from the talk shows.

4.2.3.2 The *critical discourse analysis*

The collection of material (news texts) for *critical discourse analysis* followed the recording and transcription of the news sample.

Two stories of different characteristics were selected from each of the three radio stations. Apart from having the potential that have real consequences on the lives of a larger number of Liberians, each of these set of stories was reported by all of these radios.

The analyses were mostly conducted using the steps as suggested in Deacon et al. (2007: 174-86). These steps include: examination of the formal staging of the news text; thematic structure & Discourse schema-order of presentation (the sequence structure); source quantity and quality; framing procedures; examination of lexical choice and lexical markers-sense of verb, or language connotations, etc; and examination of the text in light of broader ideological concepts.

4.2.3.3 The *respondent interviews*

Following the completion of the field study I transcribed the interviews and entered them into a word processing program. I then followed the procedures recommended by Lindlof and Taylor (2002) and Kvale (1996) during the analysis process of the empirical material; i.e. creating categories and a coding scheme. “Categorization refers to the process of characterizing the meaning of a unit of data with respect to certain generic properties”; and coding refers to the marking of parts “of text as they relate meaningfully to categories (concepts, themes, constructs) (Lindlof and Taylor 2002:216-7).

Thus, similar themes and concepts were put together and dominant themes and ideas construed significant to the research question which looked at the distinguishing factors explaining the level of pluralism allowed by Liberian media.

The analysis of the data carried out comparatively under themes drawn up as the result of the interview guides.

4.3 Generalizability, Validity and Reliability of the study

The generalizability, validity and reliability of this study can be assessed at every level of the methodologies it employed.

4.3.1 Generalizability

The *Generalizability* of this study will be assessed by the ‘representativeness’ of the sample as well as the derived categories’ reliability and consistency with the research questions. I believe the samples: radio stations, interviewees and stories selected for textual analysis, are suited for the study because they best represent their respective categories. The use of the study’s analysis procedures by others to ensure “replicability” with different set of messages can also assess my generalisability in part.

On the other hand, the editors were selected non-randomly based on their individual experience and position. Seidman (1998) suggests that generalizability based on representativity of interview sample could be replaced with the evocation of an individual’s experience.

4.3.2 Reliability

Reliability represents the extent to which results are consistent over time and are accurate representation of the total population under study. Neuendorf (2002:146) notes that reliability is established by a quantitative study through the provision of “a coding scheme that more than one individual can use as a measuring tool with similar results”. The reliability of this study will be assessed in part with the repeated use the coding instruments in the *content analysis* to record the same result. According to Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998), “a full report of *content analysis* reliability would include protocol definitions and procedures”; which the researcher calls here coding instruments.

Kvale says reliability in interview-based research is measured by the consistency of the findings (Kvale: 1996:235). The use of the same interview guide by this study for all of the five editors interviewed suggests consistency and transparency in the interviewing process. The combination of the three methods also adds reliability to the study.

4.3.3 Validity

Neuendorf (2002:112) says Validity in *content analysis* is established by “the extent to which a measuring procedure represents only the intended concept. Krippendorff (2004:313) further maintained that “a *content analysis* is valid if the inferences drawn from the available texts withstand the test of independently available evidence of new observations...or of being able to inform successful actions. The *Validity* of this study can be assessed in part by the appropriateness of the methods employ to answer the first research question.

Kvale (1996) says validity in interview-based study is assessed by the extent to which such research followed its declared intentions. The declared intention of this study through the use of the respondent interview was to assess factors explaining the level of pluralism allowed by Liberian media. Thus, the study’s interview guide and subsequent findings are presented according to the above declaration.

Meyer (2001:29) says CDA must allow the assessment of the quality of its findings through necessary concepts. Such assessment could tag along Teun van Dijk’s suggested accessibility: “findings should be at least accessible and readable for the social groups under investigation (Ibid: 29). Thus, the quality assessment of the CDA analysis has been met by the conduct of analysis, interpretation and presentation of the findings in the same language by means of which the three media under study operate.

4.3.4 Limitations of the methods

Though the study used one aspect of quantitative *content analysis* combined with two qualitative methods-CDA and respondent interview, a fourth approach-survey questionnaires (another quantitative method) could have complemented attempts to throw light unto the greater population to evaluate the three radio stations. However, due to time constraint, the latter could not be incorporated.

Additionally, also due to time and logistic constraints a fourth radio station that represents commercial radio its true sense could not be added to the sample of radio stations.

Moreover, the selections of only editors from the three radio stations for interview and two sets of news stories for textual analysis are also due to time limitation. An addition of

reporters to the list of interviewees could have provided more insights into the workings of the news rooms of the three radio stations.

The major limitations of the methods follow that:

- a) *Content analysis* is an extremely directive method which provides answers to questions posed by the researcher and does not offer the choice to explore text in order to develop ideas or insights (Deacon et al 1999:117);
- b) *Critical Discourse Analysis* is appropriate only on the analysis media texts, showing the relationship between text and its social conditions, ideologies, and power-relations as it cannot answer questions relating to attitude, behavior and beliefs of individual (Wodak, 2001); and
- c) *Respondent interview* is time consuming.

Most importantly, I hereby proclaim the probable criticism of my bias in this study. I worked at one of the radio stations (*ELBC*) for a number of years. I resigned in May 2006 due to policy differences with the Management of the radio station. The fact that I worked at *ELBC* and had resigned my post could present a limitation. However, having acknowledged this possible limitation, I put in my outmost best to steer clear of subjectivity in order to produce a scientifically accepted piece of work.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the methods employed by the study- *content analysis*, *critical discourse analysis*, and *respondent interview*- to answer the research questions, and their limitations. It also presented the materials selected for the conduct of the research. However, in spite of the limitations of the methods, the collective use of the three methods has been able to provide some valuable findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results and Analysis- Quantitative Analysis

Chapter Five presents findings from the quantitative content analysis. This process examined the core question of *how much political pluralism as to diversity of opinions is reflected by Liberian media*.

The findings in this section were gathered through the analysis of data collected from the main evening news and main talk shows of the three radios: *ELBC*, *Radio Veritas*, and *Star Radio* over a period of one week (December 03-09, 2007). Two separate coding schedules were developed (*see appendices 1 and 2*); with the aid of these instruments data from the news were tallied and analyzed under *topic, actor, source, source context; and space*; and those from the talk shows under: *guest profile and attitude toward guest*. A total of 250 news stories (*ELBC*, 80; *Radio Veritas*, 85; and *Star Radio*, (85); and nine (9) editions of talk shows (three per radio station) were analyzed during this process.

This chapter is structured as follows: results (5.1 to 5.1.8) and analysis and discussions (5.2).

5.1 Results

5.1.1 Topics in the news

Political pluralism as used in this scholarship refers to the consideration and promulgation of diversified political opinions. Such diversity includes the provision of a wide range of choice on all possible dimensions of interest and preference. It is an unarguably fact that the heterogeneous nature of any given society means the ever presence of competing interests and desires. Such differences of opinions and social conditions of the society can be represented or reflected by pluralistic mass media through their rather pursued topics of news.

Thus the inclusion of topics treated by the three radios is intended to examine what issues interested the radio stations most. However, only results of topics in the news discussing what I consider issues relating directly to national political governance have been presented and discussed. They include: domestic politics, conflicts, corruption, social development, and labor. The ideas and values of political pluralism attuned well with among other things the goal of countering uniformity in the reflection of the prevailing differences in society. For the purpose of brevity and clarity, I summarized single topics into topics groups (*see appendix 3*).

Table 1 Distribution of Topics in the News				
Topic	ELBC	Radio Veritas	Star Radio	Grand Total
*Domestic Politics	23 (28.8%)	21 (24.7%)	13 (15.3%)	57 (22.8%)
*Conflicts	3 (3.8%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.5%)	8 (3.2%)
*Corruption	1 (1.3%)	7 (8.2%)	3 (3.5%)	11 (4.4%)
Health	3 (3.8%)	6 (7.1%)	3 (3.5%)	12 (4.8%)
Environment	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.5%)	5 (2.0%)
*Labour	2 (2.5%)	10 (11.8%)	3 (3.5%)	15 (6.0%)
Elections	3 (3.8%)	3 (3.5%)	7 (8.2%)	13 (5.2%)
Security	3 (3.8%)	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.5%)	7 (2.8%)
*Social Development	19 (23.8%)	10 (11.8%)	8 (9.4%)	37 (14.8%)
Crime	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (8.2%)	9 (3.6%)
*Foreign Relations	4 (5.0%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.5%)	9 (3.6%)
*Economy	4 (5.0%)	3 (3.5%)	8 (9.4%)	15 (6.0%)
Religion	3 (3.8%)	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.2%)	6 (2.4%)
Culture	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.4%)
Sports	7 (8.8%)	7 (8.2%)	10 (11.8%)	24 (9.6%)
Others	1 (1.3%)	11 (12.9%)	9 (10.6%)	21 (8.4%)
Total	80 (100%)	85 (100%)	85 (100%)	250 (100%)

Note: The topic of election was excluded from the analysis because I viewed it as seasonal. Additionally, news addressing issues of domestic politics, conflicts, corruption, labour, social development, foreign relations, and economy are being analyzed because of what I believe is their direct connections to political governance in the country.

As table 1 illustrates Domestic politics which includes local administration, reform of political institutions and the governance in general, was featured prominently by the three stations: *ELBC* (28.8%); *Radio Veritas* (24.7%); and *Star Radio* (15.3%).

Issues of social development in a country concern the general social context, i.e; the needs and priorities of the poor population. They highlight the plight of the poor people. And discussing these issues often points to the need for the creation of more cohesive, inclusive and accountable societies. Social development was also keenly followed by these stations, especially *ELBC* (23.8%); followed by *Radio Veritas* (11.8%) and *Star Radio* (9.4%).

Labor (including issues of workers strike and trade union affairs) had a better attention on *Radio Veritas* (11.8%) than on *Star Radio* (3.5%) and *ELBC* (2.5%).

Corruption which is I defined as the use of official positions by government or public officials for illegitimate private gain. Such acts are by government office holders are considered political when they are directly to the official duties of the officials. In Liberia, one would consider the issue of corruption to be a ‘hot’ topic in the news context. But such issues were minimally dealt with by the stations. However, it found more attention on *Radio Veritas* news (8.2%); than *Star Radio*, (3.5%); *ELBC*, (1.3%).

Issues regarding Liberia’s foreign relations had a better attention on *ELBC*, (5.0%) than on *Star Radio*, (3.5%); and *Radio Veritas*, (2.4%).

The general economy condition of the country was reported more on *Star Radio*, (9.4%) than on *ELBC*, (5.0%); and *Radio Veritas*, (3.5%).

Liberia has had a series of political and armed conflicts between 1979 and 2003; and issues of national reconciliation remained noticeable in political discussions. Thus, issues related to conflict and national reconciliation had 3.8% share on *ELBC*; 3.5% on *Star Radio*; and 2.4% on *Radio Veritas*.

5.1.2 Actors in news

Pluralistic media would try as much as possible to reflect the many sectors of the society. According to McQuail (2005:355), the pluralistic nature of a media is measured through its “true or sufficient reflection... of the varied reality of experience in society”. Such varied realities are what I refer to as actors in this scholarship. These actors are those manifestly referred to in the news stories. They were identified according to the codebook. This process helps to identify if the radios preferred particular actors. However, for the purpose of clear delineation, the actors were regrouped into actors groups (*see appendix 4*).

Table 2 Distribution of Actors in the News				
Actors	ELBC	Radio Veritas	Star Radio	Grand Total
*Executive Government	29 (36.3%)	17 (20.0%)	26 (30.6%)	72 (28.8%)
*Ruling Party	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.1%)	8 (3.2%)
*Legislative Government	8 (10.0%)	4 (4.7%)	3 (3.5%)	15 (6.0%)
*Opposition Parties/Groups	3 (3.8%)	15 (17.6%)	5 (5.9%)	23 (9.2%)
*Independent Institutions	6 (7.5%)	2 (2.4%)	5 (5.9%)	13 (5.2%)
Local Non-governmental Groups	5 (6.3%)	7 (8.2%)	2 (2.4%)	14 (5.6%)
Religious Groups	4 (5.0%)	7 (8.2%)	3 (3.5%)	14 (5.6%)
International Groups	5 (6.3%)	7 (8.2%)	6 (7.1%)	18 (7.2%)
Entrepreneurs	3 (3.8%)	3 (3.5%)	4 (4.7%)	10 (4.0%)
Professionals	7 (8.8%)	3 (3.5%)	5 (5.9%)	15 (6.0%)
*General Public	4 (5.0%)	14 (16.5%)	11 (12.9%)	29 (11.6%)
Others	4 (5.0%)	6 (7.1%)	9 (10.6%)	19 (7.6%)
Total	80 (100%)	85 (100%)	85 (100%)	250 (100%)
*Note: Only actors from executive government, ruling party, legislative government, opposition parties or groups, independent institutions and the general public are being analyzed because of what I believe is their direct connection to the political sphere in the country				

As table 2 depicts, the three media maintained a focus on the institutions of Executive government (including the presidency, government ministries and agencies and other local administration) with *ELBC* leading the chart with (36.3%); followed by *Star Radio* (30.6%) and *Radio Veritas* (23.6%).

The ruling political party and its auxiliary groups received a faint average of (3.2%) of which *Star Radio* accounted for (7.1%); *ELBC* (2.5%) and *Radio Veritas* nothing to declare (0%).

Nevertheless, *Radio Veritas* paid more attention to opposition political institutions than the other two stations. It accounted for (17.6%); followed by *Star Radio* (5.9%) and *ELBC* (3.8%).

The Legislative government played a bigger role on *ELBC* (10.0%) than on *Radio Veritas* (4.7%); and *Star Radio* (3.5%).

Independent institutions (including the judiciary) were quite represented on *ELBC* (7.5%) and *Star Radio* (5.9%) than on *Radio Veritas* (2.4%).

The general public was important actor on *Radio Veritas* (16.4%); *Star Radio* (12.9%) than on *ELBC* (5.0%).

5.1.3 Sources in news

It is somewhat an accepted notion that by the mere mention of a person in a news story by a media does not necessarily imply that such person has been provided access by that media. In short, media presence is not media access. The notion of pluralistic mass media maintains that journalists or media must provide means through which separate groups, voices and interests in the society can make their views or opinions known to the larger society. Denis McQuail indicates that this sort of access brings about “critical, oppositional and deviant voices” necessary for change and choice (McQuail 1992:144). Furthermore, pluralism subjects the mass media to the commitment to the principles of opposition, diversity, self-reflexivity and open-endedness. Such principles may be assessed through the provision of direct voice to the various sectors of the society. As such, source is used in this context as the provider of the information contained in the news story. Sources were determined by attribution or quotation. Multiplicity of sources was considered during the process of data analysis (*see table 3 and 4*); and sources regrouped into source group (*see appendix 5*). However, I wish to note that due to

the low level of second and third sources (less than 5% of the overall when combined) (see table 3), I decided to limit my presentation to the first level of sources.

Sources	<i>ELBC</i>	<i>Radio Veritas</i>	<i>Star Radio</i>	Grand Total
S1	80(96.4%)	85(95.5%)	85(93.4%)	250(95%)
S2	3(3.6%)	4(4.5%)	5(5.5%)	12(4.6%)
S3	-	-	1(1.1%)	1(0.4)
S1+S2+S3	83(100%)	89(100%)	91(100%)	263(100%)

Actors	<i>ELBC</i>	<i>Radio Veritas</i>	<i>Star Radio</i>	Grand Total
*Executive Government	30 (37.5%)	18 (21.2%)	28 (32.9%)	76 (30.4%)
*Ruling Party	1 (1.3)	0 (0.0%)	5 (5.9%)	6 (2.4%)
*Legislative Government	7 (8.8%)	3 (3.5%)	3 (3.5%)	13 (5.2%)
*Opposition Parties/Groups	0 (0.0%)	9 (10.6%)	3 (3.5%)	12 (4.8%)
*Independent Institutions	10 (12.5%)	7 (8.2%)	9 (10.6%)	26 (10.4%)
Local Non-governmental Groups	4 (5.0%)	9 (10.6%)	3 (3.5%)	16 (6.4%)
Religious Groups	6 (7.5%)	5 (5.9%)	3 (3.5%)	14 (5.6%)
International Groups	6 (7.6%)	5 (5.9%)	4 (4.7%)	15 (6.0%)
Entrepreneurs	2 (2.5%)	3 (3.5%)	4 (4.7%)	9 (3.6%)
Professionals	6 (7.5%)	2 (2.4%)	5 (5.9%)	13 (5.2%)
*General Public	2 (2.5%)	11 (12.9%)	10 (11.8%)	23 (9.2%)
Media	1 (1.3)	10 (11.8%)	3 (3.5)	14 (5.6%)
Others	2 (2.5%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.5%)	7 (2.8%)
No Source	3 (3.8%)	1 (1.2%)	2 (2.4%)	6 (2.4%)
Total	80 (100%)	85 (100%)	85 (100%)	250 (100%)
*Note: Only sources from executive government, ruling party, legislative government, opposition parties or groups, independent institutions and the general public are being analyzed because of what I believe is their direct connection to the political sphere in the country				

About ninety five percent of the stories analyzed did have only a source which suggests that these radio news lacked diversity in sources (Further analysis of this follows in section 5.2)

Following almost the same trend as within the category of actors, (as table 4 portrays) the executive government maintained a commanding attention as given by the three radios. Once again *ELBC* outnumbered the others with 37.5%; followed by *Star Radio* (32.9%); and *Radio Veritas* (21.2%).

Independent institutions (including the judiciary) were quite equally quoted on *ELBC* (12.5%) and *Star Radio* (10.6%); while *Radio Veritas* lagged behind with 8.2%.

Sources from the legislative government received more attributions on *ELBC* (8.8%) than both *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* (3.5%) a piece.

The ruling political party is a relatively important news source for *Star Radio* (5.9%) than *ELBC* (1.3%), while *Radio Veritas* has nothing to declare (0%).

However, opposition political institutions had more voice on *Radio Veritas* (10.6%) than on *Star Radio* (3.5%) with *ELBC*, declaring nothing (0%).

The general public had nearly equal voice on *Radio Veritas* (12.9%) and *Star Radio* (11.8%) than on *ELBC* (2.5%).

5.1.4 Source context

It is incumbent upon the ‘democratic mass media’ to freely and unconditionally provide means through which members of the public may make their views heard. As part of its responsibility to the public, the mass media is tasked with the power to seek and report happenings in the society. It is also a duty of the ‘democratic mass media’ not to only focus on what it feels is good for the public but seek to reflect what the public thinks. So source context herein refers to the means by which the reporters or journalists received the information. The objective of this is to detect how journalists from the three radios collect news from sources.

Table 5 Distribution of Source Context in the News				
Context	<i>ELBC</i>	<i>Radio Veritas</i>	<i>Star Radio</i>	Grand Total
Press Conference/Media Event	30 (37.5%)	17 (20.0%)	29 (34.1%)	76 (30.4%)
Press Release	9 (11.3%)	10 (11.8%)	6 (7.1%)	25 (10.0%)
Conference/Workshop	14 (17.5%)	5 (5.9%)	2 (2.4%)	21 (8.4%)
Demonstration	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.2%)
Other Events	6 (6.5%)	5 (5.9%)	4 (4.7%)	15 (6.0%)
Interview/Inquiry by Journalist	13 (16.3%)	40 (47.1%)	39 (45.9%)	92 (36.8%)
Others	7 (8.8%)	6 (7.1%)	5 (5.9%)	18 (7.2%)
Total	80 (100%)	85 (100%)	85 (100%)	250 (100%)

From the above table, journalists from the three radios (combined) quite heavily used personal interviews, inquiries or observation to access their sources with an average of 36.4%.

However, *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* shared much of this percentage with 47.1% and 45.9% respectively; while *ELBC* accounted for only 16.3%.

Arranged occasions by external media actors and organizations also played a remarkable part for the three radio stations: *ELBC* heavily relied on press conferences 37.5%; followed by *Star Radio* (34.1%) and *Radio Veritas* (20.0%).

Press releases were also used by the three stations: *Radio Veritas* (11.8%); *ELBC* (11.3%); and *Star Radio* (7.1%). Conferences, seminars or workshops were the second reason or source context for *ELBC* (17.5%) followed by *Radio Veritas* (5.9%); and *Star Radio* (2.4%).

Other events (including official meetings and ceremonies) were almost equally importance areas for sources accessed by the three stations: *ELBC* (7.5%); *Radio Veritas* (5.9%); and *Star Radio* (4.7%).

5.1.5 Space

Space here refers to the overall time each category of sources received from the three radios. News stories within the bulletins were directly assigned 45 seconds each, and reportages and news interviews were considered based on their actual duration (i.e. transition from presenter was omitted). However, this analysis only took into account the first level of sources due to the overall insignificance of the second and third levels of sources (less than 5%) within each medium except *Star Radio* that attained (6.6%). (See table 3).

Table 6 Distribution of Space in the News (Seconds)				
	<i>ELBC</i>	<i>Radio Veritas</i>	<i>Star Radio</i>	Grand Total
*Executive Government	2791 (38.9%)	1379 (20.7%)	3912 (32.6%)	8082 (31.2%)
*Ruling Party	138 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	786 (6.6%)	924 (3.6%)
*Legislative Government	829 (11.6%)	233 (3.4%)	421 (3.5%)	1483 (5.7%)
*Opposition Parties/Groups	0 (0.0%)	764 (11.4%)	135 (1.1%)	899 (3.5%)
*Independent Institutions	1005 (14.0%)	668 (10.0%)	1333 (11.1%)	3006 (11.6%)
Local Non-governmental Groups	180 (2.5%)	496 (7.4%)	135 (1.1%)	811 (3.1%)
Religious Groups	364 (5.0%)	274 (4.1%)	315 (2.6%)	953 (3.7%)
International Groups	690 (9.6%)	385 (5.8%)	620 (5.1%)	1695 (6.7%)
Entrepreneurs	127 (1.8%)	170 (2.5%)	533 (4.4%)	830 (3.2%)
Professionals	581 (8.1%)	219 (3.2%)	571 (4.8%)	1371 (5.3%)
*General Public	193 (2.6%)	1038 (15.6%)	1793 (14.9%)	3024 (11.7%)
Media	45 (0.6%)	908 (13.6%)	1091 (9.1%)	2044 (7.9%)
Others	90 (1.2%)	90 (1.3%)	254 (2.1%)	434 (1.7%)
No Source	135 (1.8%)	45 (0.7%)	90 (0.7%)	270 (1.0%)

Total	7168 (100%)	6669 (100%)	11989 (100%)	25826 (100%)
*Note: Only spaces allotted to sources from executive government, ruling party, legislative government, opposition parties or groups, independent institutions and the general public are being analyzed because of what I believe is their direct connection to the political sphere in the country				

As *table 6* illustrates the three radios maintained the almost same pattern by giving a significant space to executive government sources: *ELBC* (38.9%); *Star Radio* (32.6%); and *Radio Veritas* (20.7%).

Star Radio gave much more space to the ruling political party (6.6%) than *ELBC* (1.9%) and *Radio Veritas*, nothing (0%).

In contrast, *Radio Veritas* provided more space to opposition political institutions (11.4%) than *Star Radio* (1.1%) and *ELBC*, nothing (0%).

Independent institutions received an average of about 11.0% in space with *ELBC* providing 14.0%; *Star Radio* 11.1%; and *Radio Veritas* 10.0%.

The legislative government was allowed much time on *ELBC* (11.6%) than on *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* (3.4%) and (3.5%) respectively.

The general public was provided more coverage in time on *Radio Veritas* (15.6%) and *Star Radio* (14.9%) than on *ELBC* (2.6%).

5.1.6 Talk Shows

Talk shows have emerged as a ‘viable’ platform where Liberian radios invite people to discuss pertinent national issues. The panel of guests (a person or group of people) discuss topics put forth by the talk show host(s). More besides, most Liberian radios have incorporated the phone-in format-where the public is allowed participation by telephone during the talk shows.

5.1.7 Guest Profile in Talk Show

Based on my personal observation, I wish to note that Liberian radios do normally invite their talk show guests; however, some guests occasionally ask the hosts for opportunity to appear. Thus, the examination of the profiles of guests appearing on the main talk shows of these three radios would assess the category of people they allowed voice. This process also helps

to establish if the radios preferred particular category of individuals which could be against the principles of open-endedness in the mass media as ascribed by political pluralism. The profiles of the guests were identified with the aid of the coding schedule and sources grouping (see appendices 2 and 5).

Table 7 Distribution of Guests in the Talk Shows				
Guest Profile	ELBC	Radio Veritas	Star Radio	Grand Total
Executive government	0 (0.0%)	1(20.0%)	2(33.3%)	3(17.6%)
Opposition parties/groups	0 (0.0%)	1(20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1(5.8%)
Independent groups	2(33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2(11.7%)
Local non-governmental groups	1(16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1(16.7%)	2(11.7%)
Religious groups	0 (0.0%)	2(40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2(11.7%)
Entrepreneurs	1(16.7%)	-	0 (0.0%)	1(5.8%)
International groups	1(16.7)	1(20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2(11.7%)
Professionals	1(16.7%)	0(0.0)-	3(50%)	4(23.5%)
Total	6(100%)	5(100%)	6(100%)	17(100%)

Note: The low level of guests appearing on these talks is partly due to the fact that almost all of these programs are held thrice a week. In addition, they most often entertain between one to three guests at a time. And this research only gathered empirical material covering one week of these programs. Therefore, I must register that the result obtained may not be representative of guests appearing on these talk shows; but rather shows guests appearing during this particular week.

As Table 7 shows Professionals (including academics) maintained a high presence among guests featured by ELBC and Star Radio with no appearance on Radio Veritas.

The executive government also received adequate opportunity on *Star Radio* (33.3%); *Radio Veritas* (20.0%) and *ELBC*, nothing (0.0%).

Radio Veritas was the sole medium that hosted a guest from opposition political institutions, (20.0%).

In the same direction, *ELBC* was the only station that hosted guests from independent institutions, (33.3%); which were most of its guests.

5.1.8 Attitudes toward Guests in Talk Shows

I used the tendency of questions directed at the guests by talk show hosts under the measure- lenient, moderate and critical- to determine the attitude of the hosts toward the guests. The tendencies of the questions were measured based on their construction, tone, and persistence of the host to have a definite answer where the guest tried to evade issue addressed by the question. Though somewhat subjective, I believe the evaluation of what stance these talk

hosts maintained against particular category of guest could further elucidate their preference of guests. As defined in section (4.2.3.1), lenient attitude means: mild or tolerant disposition; while moderate follows: reasonable limits; and critical implies: severe treatment.

Table 8a ELBC Attitudes toward Guests in Talk Shows				
		Attitude		
Guest Profile	Frequency	Lenient	Moderate	Critical
Independent groups	2	2 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Local non governmental groups	1	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Entrepreneurs	1	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
International groups	1	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Professionals	1	1 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	6	6 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Table 8b Radio Veritas Attitudes toward Guests in Talk Shows				
		Attitude		
Guest Profile	Frequency	Lenient	Moderate	Critical
Executive government	1	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20%)
Opposition political groups	1	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Religious groups	2	2 (40%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
International groups	1	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20%)
Total	5	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)

Table 8c Star Radio Attitudes toward Guests in Talk Shows				
		Attitude		
Guest Profile	Frequency	Lenient	Moderate	Critical
Executive government	2	0 (0.0%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Local non governmental groups	1	0 (0.0%)	1 (16.7%)	
Professionals	3	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (50.0%)
Total	6	0 (0.0%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)

As illustrated by *tables 8a, b, & c*, *ELBC* maintained a lenient posture toward all guests appearing on its talk shows.

Radio Veritas was critical of guests from executive government and was moderate toward its guest from opposition political institutions.

But *Star Radio* on the other hand maintained a moderate stance toward its executive

government guests and was critical of guests from both local non-governmental institutions and professional organizations.

5.2 Analysis and Discussions of the Findings

Though the components of the news and talk shows analyzed to establish the level of political pluralism in the Liberian media might need some other complementary criteria; they provided a wide range of information upon which such analysis can be based.

The findings revealed that domestic politics which includes issues of political governance and local administration featured prominently in the news by the three stations. The three radio stations also followed matters relating to social development with keen interest. They also more or less treated issues regarding national reconciliation on the same scale.

Though corruption is believed to be prevalent in both the public and private sectors, it was minimally attacked by the three radio stations. However, the Catholic Church owned *Radio Veritas* attempted treating this concern, followed by *Star Radio* and *ELBC*. Notably, the diminutive nature (1.3 percent of the overall) of stories relating to corruption in the news of the government-run *ELBC* could be the consequence of the rule adopted by the newsroom that before any news about corrupt government official is aired it has to pass through “administrative” scrutiny²³ (this was revealed by the two editors interviewed from *ELBC*)

In the same token, subjects concerning labor unrest and workers’ welfare or strike, which may require addressing some sensitive political questions, were addressed twice on *Radio Veritas* than on both *Star Radio* and *ELBC* combined.

As one would anticipate, actors (those manifestly referred to) in the news of the three radios were dominated by the institutions of Executive government (including the presidency, government ministries and agencies and other local administration) with *ELBC*, the government controlled and run radio maintaining an obvious leadership role; and followed by *Star Radio*.

²³ IFEX reported that on May 17, 2006, the administration of the Liberian Broadcasting System issued a warning to its journalists that they must “seek clearance to broadcast news stories on the corruption of government officials and others”. The warning contained in a memorandum stated that the Liberia Broadcasting System news was not “courtroom for prosecuting government officials and other personalities in society”. The management further warned that it would not hesitate to institute administrative measures against violator(s). The issuance of this memorandum was confirmed by Joseph T. Koon, News Director and Edward Kennedy, News Editor during my interview.

Almost the same pattern ensued in the address of the Legislative government; i.e. *ELBC* at the forefront but this time around was followed by *Radio Veritas*.

Independent institutions (including the judiciary) were quite represented and in the order: *ELBC*, *Star Radio* and *Radio Veritas*.

The ruling political party and its auxiliary groups received a faint mention within the three media. However, individually, *Star Radio* gave more attention to the ruling party than *ELBC*; and *Radio Veritas* which had no actor from this category in its news.

Nevertheless, *Radio Veritas* paid more attention to opposition political institutions than the other two stations. *Radio Veritas* also addressed issues relating to the general public ahead *Star Radio* and *ELBC* respectively.

It is a notion that by the mere presence of an individual or institution within media content does not necessarily mean that such individual or institution was provided direct voice/access. Access in the media is measured primarily by role played in media content. Playing a direct or speaker's role; i.e., speaking directly in media content gives an individual or institution the status of 'source'. Source in news indicates the provider of the information contained in the news story.

On the overall about ninety five percent of the stories lacked diversity in sources, i.e.; they each had only a source each. This finding suggests that these radios did not, almost in all instances seek additional sources other the main providers of their stories something which the notion of pluralism speaks against. Pluralistic mass media are expected to seek and reflect varied voices and interests which make up the wider society. The lack of diversified sources in these news stories might be due to several factors including news room practice. (See sections 6.2 and 6.3)

Not surprisingly, there is an indication that sources employed by the three radios almost followed the same trend as within the category of actors. Nevertheless, there are some contrasting differences.

One remarkable aspect of the findings is the competition put by *Star Radio*, the NGO-funded, "commercial-not-for-profit independent" radio against the government-funded and managed state radio *ELBC* in the use of executive government sources. The almost equal use of these

sources by the two radio stations may possibly suggest that ownership does not necessarily serve as the only major determining factor for the selection of news sources by Liberian media but also newsroom practices.

The use of members of the general public as sources of news was almost equally sought by *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* with *ELBC* maintaining a distance from them.

But the general public even had a better chance on *ELBC* than people perceived as political opponents of the government. Members of opposition political parties or institutions received not a direct voice on *ELBC*.

On the other hand, *Radio Veritas* sought three times more opposition politicians than *Star Radio*.

A further parallelism can be drawn between *Star Radio* and *ELBC* on one hand and *Radio Veritas* on the other in terms of the treatment of institutions related to the ruling party. Often, the ruling party in Liberia as an institution wields enormous political power. Here, both *Star Radio* and *ELBC* treated the ruling Unity Party to a certain extent while *Radio Veritas* showed apparent lack of interest; i.e., the ruling party received no direct voice.

Notably, the provision of spaces to the news sources followed the same patterns as those of the direct access allowed the various sectors of the Liberian society by the three media.

For *ELBC*, one may easily comprehend that as a government funded and run radio station in Africa, the intricacies of political manipulations are so evident. So, to be able to maintain their jobs, reporters/journalists at this institution may have to play to the dictate of the authorities.

But for *Radio Veritas*, owned and operated by the Catholic Church in Liberia and *Star Radio*, an independent and NGO-funded radio, it is not clear where their determining factors rest. It might just be that ‘big names make big news’ (big names here refers to politically or economically powerful).

Another aspect of the findings suggests that journalists from *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* ‘heavily’ used personal interviews, inquiries or observation to access their sources; while *ELBC* ‘deeply’ relied on press conferences and arranged occasions by external media actors and organizations.

However, arranged occasions by external media actors and organizations also served as a remarkable means through which *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* got their news.

Press releases, conferences, seminars or workshops were also employed by the radio stations more or less in the order: *ELBC*, *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio*.

Nevertheless, the tendency of the three media mainly focussing on the executive government slightly shifted within their choice of guests for the talk shows (a talk show is radio or television program that afford an individual or group of people to come together and address questions or issues put forward by the host). People of professional backgrounds were, on the overall, welcomed by them though only *ELBC* and *Star Radio* shared their presence.

The findings further indicate that professionals (including academics) maintained a high presence among guests featured by the three radio stations during their talk shows.

Individually, *ELBC* focused on people from independent institutions; *Radio Veritas* people from religious groups; and *Star Radio*, executive government. However, *Radio Veritas* gave at least a voice to an opposition political party member, which was lacking by *ELBC* and *Star Radio*.

Though material analyzed from the talk is too small to generalize, I may say that the findings also established an inconsistency in the attitude of most of the talk shows hosts toward their guests which is normal. *Radio Veritas* developed a critical stance toward guests from the executive government, moderate attitude to opposition political institutions guests and leniency toward its guests from the religious communities. For *Star Radio* guests from professional bodies were treated critically and those from executive government, moderately treated. Yet, *ELBC* maintained a lenient posture toward all of its guests.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter results obtained from the quantitative content analysis were presented. They showed how much space and attention the three media gave the various sectors of the Liberian society in their news and talk shows. The findings revealed that domestic politics and the Executive government received much of their attention and space respectively.

The next chapter presents results obtained from the use of the two qualitative methods-*CDA* and *Respondent Interviews*-employed by this study.

CHAPTER SIX

Results and Analysis- Qualitative Analysis

In this chapter I present results of the qualitative analysis. It is divided into three main sections. The first section (6.1. to 6.1.2.4) addresses the *Critical Discourse Analysis* part of this methodology and the second section (6.2 to 6.2.1.5), the *Respondent Interview*. Analysis and discussions of the findings follow in section (6.3)

6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA was used to address the second research question which examines the *political tendencies* of the three radio stations (*ELBC, Radio Veritas, and Star Radio*). *Political tendencies* as used within this scholarship refer to the trends followed by the media in the construction of their sources in text. Pluralism in the media does not only address diversity in content in terms of space and time but also in terms of representation. Representation has been referred to by Denis McQuail as the “balance, impartiality, fairness of any direct or indirect valuation” (McQuail 1992:149) is as important as access or attention in terms of space or time.

Thus, for the said purpose, two stories of different characteristics but reported by the sample were selected. The first set of story concerns: *an arrest and detention order for a former Liberian Head of State by a Liberian Judge*. The Liberian government had charged former Transitional Head of State Gyude Bryant with corruption and put him on trial. The other set has to do with a *reaction to a corruption charge by a Liberian government minister*. Minister of Education Joseph Korto was accused by a Liberian residing in the United States, Dr. Joseph Woah-tee, of selling some computers donated to the educational system of Liberia by some philanthropists in the United States and converting the proceeds to his personal use. The analysis employed the elements of consideration in conducting *critical discourse analysis* of news as suggested by Deacon et al. (2007: 174-86) which include: *formal staging; thematic structure and discourse schema; lexical choice; ideological concepts*. The ideological leverages of the news items were assessed based on some guiding principles of professional journalism: *objectivity, neutrality and balance*.

The concept of *objectivity* in news journalism is based on the core values of *neutrality* and *balance*. Objectivity, though often challenged by its critics remains somehow relevant to the

defining characteristics of professional journalistic practices. Objectivity calls for journalists to develop transparent approaches to their news sources and evidence so as to avoid the creeping in personal biases in news items which could undermine their work. McQuail (1994:202) illustrating Westerstahl (1983) component criteria of objectivity assessment noted that the concept can be assessed in media reports through “two set of criteria: factuality-truth and relevance; and impartiality-neutrality and balance”. Neutrality here implies the “non-evaluative and non-sensational forms of presentation” (Ibid: 203) and composition of news items.

Moreover, neutrality demands that news media remain void of assuming the role of an agent distributor of questionable information. It also tasks journalists to provide complete and accurate account of events without the slightest intention to mislead the public or to suppress the truth. Neutrality also implies impartiality which suggests that journalists or news media should avoid taking side in matters where there are two or more points of view or competing interests.

On the other hand balance in news means the equal or proportional access and fair evaluation and presentation of competing interests in news stories (Ibid). Balance in this sense entails that journalist as mouthpiece for the public in reporting events must carefully and evenly offer virtually all sides of any matter under discussion (Merrit, 1999). McQuail 2005 sums up that mass media must provide a comprehensive supply of relevant news and background information about events in society making their news coverage.

Meanwhile, the presentation of the findings of each story follows the order: *ELBC*, *Radio Veritas*, and *Star Radio*. The selected stories are treated in each media with a general comparison among the three media in the summary segment of each event.

6.1.1 Results

A. JUDGE BOIMAH KONTOE ORDERS GYUDE BRYANT ARRESTED

Introduction

The news items analyzed in this segment were produced on December 03, 2007 in relation with the arrest order placed for former Liberian transitional head of state Gyude Bryant by Judge Boimah Kontoe.

6.1.1.1 ELBC

ELBC presented the story as both bulletin (appendix 6) and reportage (appendix 7) within its main evening news magazine presentation. Bulletin in news refers to a summarized news piece presented by a newscaster; reportage refers to a detailed news piece by reporter which is usually accompanied by sound bites; while news magazine refers to a news presentation that combines both bulletin and reportage.

Presentation of the Bulletin

The bulletin (appendix 6) came fourth among fourteen stories read by the newscaster. Though this story was read in the first part of the newscast, it was not headlined.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Bulletin

News reports are normally presented in a top-down or pyramid structure with information flowing in a descending order of significance (van Dijk, 1988a, in Deacon et al. 2007). Consequently information a reporter chooses to put forth earlier in media is at times viewed by most reader as most essential and that brought in last, as least important. In the case of this story (*appendix 6*), the reporter has elected to foreground the arrest order for Mr. Gyude Bryant, and not the reason for the arrest order as released by Judge Boimah Kontoe. However, the reason for the arrest order was mentioned in the third paragraph of the story.

The article maintained a narrative thread (central theme): Judge Boimah Kontoe's arrest order for Mr. Gyude Bryant which is summarized in the lead paragraph [*Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe has ordered the arrest and detention of former transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant with immediate effect*]. Lead paragraphs in news stories, according to van Dijk (1986), provide the overall gist of what information awaits readers in the texts (Deacon et al. 2007).

The story answers four of the “journalistic five Ws and the H²⁴. So in this instance, the lead provides answers to the questions of ‘who’, and ‘what’ which are: *Criminal Court ‘C’ Judge Boimah Kontoe* and *ordered former Transitional Government Chairman Gyude Bryant arrested*, respectively. The questions of ‘when’ and ‘why’ were answered in the third paragraph of the text [*Judge Kontoe took the decision Thursday due to Former Chairman Bryant’s failure to appear in court on two occasions for the hearing of the theft case despite the issuance of two notices of assignment by the court by legal proceedings*].

The top-down structure of news report compels the writer to arrange information in a descending order of statements, with the initial ones outlining the story. So, it suggests what is presented first is what the reporter has deemed a priority.

The story does not specify directly the source of its information. It also provides no background or commentary to the entire event.

However, it is noticeable that state lawyers in the case were prioritized in building up the background and reason why Mr. Bryant was ordered arrested by the judge [*State lawyers previously requested the court to have Mr. Bryant arrested and detained for breaching the terms and conditions of the bond filed on his behalf which secured his release pending the determination of the economic sabotage case*].

Missing was the apparent reason for Mr. Bryant’s failure “to appear in court on two occasions”.

The story foregrounds Judge Kontoe-versus-Mr. Bryant frame. Additionally, what it uses as background is also supportive of the above frame:

State lawyers previously requested the court to have Mr. Bryant arrested and detained for breaching the terms and conditions of the bond...

Though Mr. Bryant is mentioned in every paragraph of the text, he seemed not to be endowed with much power. Noting how agent-patient relations are depicted, one can see that in all the sentences, constituting the four paragraphs of the text the judge is the one initiating actions: he orders, sets aside, take. And where the judge is not initiating action, it is state lawyers initiating actions:

[*Criminal Court ‘C’ Judge Boimah Kontoe*] has ordered ...

²⁴ The journalistic five Ws and the H include: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

[*He*] also set aside ...

[*Judge Kontoe*] took the decision ...

[*State lawyers*] previously requested ...

[*Former Associate Justice Wilkins Wright who is also associating with state lawyers*] to prosecute Mr. Bryant also requested...

A look at individual sentences shows a clear pattern of sentence topics supporting the Judge Kontoe-versus-Mr. Bryant frame. Probably the use of these words: *arrest and detention, with immediate effect, determination, failure to appear in court, legal proceedings* by the reporter also support this frame:

Criminal Court ‘C’ Judge Boimah Kontoe [*has ordered the arrest and detention*] of former transitional government Chairman Gyude Bryant [*with immediate effect*].

He also set aside Mr. Bryant’s bond pending [*the determination*] of the economic sabotage charges brought against him by the Liberian government.

Judge Kontoe took the decision Thursday due to Former Chairman Bryant’s [*failure to appear in court*] on two occasions for the hearing of the theft case despite the issuance of two notices of assignment by the court [*by legal proceedings*].

Presentation of the Reportage

The reportage (*appendix 7*) came fourth from among a total of six reportages the station had as part of its presentation. Since the reportage shares the same attribute with the bulletin in term of headline, the same lack of headline as was in the case of the bulletin, also applies to it.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Reportage

Like in the bulletin, the reporter foregrounded the arrest order for Mr. Gyude Bryant, and not the reason for the arrest order as released by Judge Boimah Kontoe. However, the reason for the arrest order was mentioned in the third paragraph of the story where the reporter’s actual voice began.

The reportage maintained the same narrative thread (central theme) as in the bulletin: *Judge Boimah Kontoe’s arrest order for Mr. Gyude Bryant* which is summarized in the lead paragraph (part of introductory paragraphs read by the news presenter); answering the questions of ‘*who*’, and ‘*what*’: However, unlike the bulletin, the reportage has presented the

answer to the ‘who’ and to the ‘what’ respectively: [*Former NTGL Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant*]... [*ordered arrested and detained*]... The questions of ‘when’ and ‘why’ were answered in the third paragraph of the text: Judge Boimah Kontoe...[Thursday] ...[request by state lawyers].

The top-down structure of news report compels the writer to arrange information in a descending order of statements, with the initial ones outlining the story. So, it suggests what is presented first is what the reporter has deemed a priority.

But unlike the bulletin wherein Judge Kontoe was the principal agent initiating actions, the reportage on the overall relegate this role to state lawyers. The reportage foregrounded state lawyers-versus-Mr. Bryant frame with reference to the judge supporting the above frame:

[*Former NTGL Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant*]...

Judge Boimah Konto... [*by state lawyers*].

[*The lawyers*]...

[*The lawyers*]...

[*The state lawyers*]...

The story contained no additional sources other than the seeming observation by the reporter. It also lacked background information to the whole trial except for the particular incident-The arrest order for Mr. Bryant.

A look at individual sentences shows a clear pattern of sentence topics supporting the state lawyers-versus-Mr. Bryant frame.

Though Mr. Bryant is mentioned in nearly every paragraph of this reportage, he again seemed not to be endowed with much power. One can see that in all the sentences, making up the six paragraphs of the text either Judge Kontoe or state lawyers are the ones initiating actions:

Former NTGL Chairman *Charles Gyude Bryant* has been ordered arrested and detained at the Monrovia Central Prison by [Criminal Court ‘C’ Judge Boimah Kontoe].

But just what led to this decision by Judge Kontoe, here is our Judicial Bureau Chief Fallah Matthews with the story:

[Judge Boimah Konto] reached the decision...

[The lawyers]... requested the court to have former NTGL Chairman *Gyude Bryant* ...

[The lawyers] submitted that *Mr. Bryant’s* ...

[The state lawyers] therefore requested the court to also summon *Mr. Bryant's* ...

The reporter used words like: *order, arrest and detain, request by, prosecuting attorneys, detain, submit, tantamount, bill jumping, summon, show cause, contempt, strict compliance, and temporary release* to support the story's narrative thread:

Former ... [*ordered arrested and detained*] at the Monrovia Central Prison by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Konto.

Judge Boimah Konto ... based on the [*request*] by state lawyers.

The lawyers... [*prosecuting attorneys*] [*requested*] the court to have ... [*arrested and detained*] ...

The lawyers [*submitted*]... is tantamount to [*bill jumping*].

The state lawyers... to [*summon*] ...and [*show cause*] why it should not be held [*in contempt*] ... in [*straight compliance*] with... to secure his [*temporary release*] pending the hearing of the case.

Commentary of the Bulletin and Reportage

Objective reporting calls for background information (related news stories at earlier stage) and commentary (journalist's present-time observation of the action) in addition to the presentation of facts. The reporter's attempts to vividly present the current event and the lack of background and perhaps commentary may be geared at hiding history.

Teun van Dijk News Schema (van Dijk 1993) suggests that the field of news-report allows for 'substantive' background information of events being reported and verbal commentary which were absent from both the bulletin and reportage. However, the reportage (see appendix 7) prioritized state lawyers in the build-up of the background and reason why Mr. Bryant was ordered arrested by the judge.

Both texts could have included additional information about the trial of Mr. Bryant I know has been going on for some times. They also failed to present any comments from Mr. Bryant which could have served as a balance. However, the way both stories are framed presupposes that arresting and detaining Mr. Bryant before the conclusion of his trial is more interesting than the trial process as a whole.

The writer in both instances could have provided the monetary value of Mr. Bryant's crime in addition to what the state has as evidence to prosecute Mr. Bryant.

The framing of the story depicts 'an attempt to pursue justice' which favors Judge Kontoe at the disadvantage of Mr. Bryant (in the case of the bulletin) and state lawyers at the disadvantage of the former head of state (in the case of the reportage).

News reporting discourse demands objectivity by reporter. The reporter said in paragraph three of the bulletin that [*Judge Kontoe took the decision...despite the issuance of two notices of assignment by the court by legal proceedings*]. Though the reporter could argue he/she is providing background to the judge's decision, by failing to attribute this statement to Judge Kontoe arguably suggests that he/she is witness to the claim that Mr. Bryant has failed to appear in court despite receiving invitation.

It is worth emphasizing that the use of the phrase [*with immediate effect*] in the lead paragraph of the bulletin (see appendix 6) endows Judge Kontoe with maximum power and Mr. Bryant a weakling. It may also imply that the reporter has joined the judge in emphasizing the urgency to have Mr. Bryant arrested and detained.

Additionally, the phrase [*failure to appear in court on two occasions*] as used in paragraph three of the bulletin (see appendix 6) without direct attribution to Judge Kontoe may lead one to believe that the author had established independently that Mr. Bryant had been ignoring court order without a 'just reason'. The legitimacy of the Judge's order is further strengthened by the reporter through the use of the phrase [*despite the issuance of two notices of assignment by the court by legal proceedings*].

Furthermore, [*associating with state lawyers*] as used in the fifth and last paragraph of the bulletin (see appendix 6) to describe the function of the lead state lawyer, Former Associate Justice Wilkins Wright is also an attempt to legitimize the judge's order.

Noticeably, the reporter has arguably endowed state lawyers with much power in the reportage (appendix 7) through the use of the phrase [*...Requested the court to have former NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant arrested and detained...*] in the fourth paragraph

Moreover, [*The state lawyers requested the court to also summon... to secure his temporary release pending the hearing of the case*] in the fifth and last paragraph of the reportage also sanctions the state lawyers.

It is worth mentioning that the reporter has used [*reported failure*] in the reportage when referring to Mr. Bryant's action that has led to the judge calling for his arrest and detention to portray certain level of objectivity; something which was lacking in the bulletin.

Nevertheless, on the overall, both stories maintain the same ideological tendency which points toward 'supporting justice'

Consequently, in the terrain of "common sense", The Court is the arbiter of justice and is flawless (at least it is supposed to be). I would say that the reporter has chosen not to be at odd with this common sense and has hence remained unreflective and uncritical of the court.

It is also a common conception in the Liberian society (I may say) that every political leader is corrupt; and there should be no sympathy for any politician facing justice for the crime of corruption. Once again, the reporter who I surmise is the author of both news items tried not to get in contrast with this public opinion.

6.1.1.2 Radio Veritas

Radio Veritas presented the story only in a news interview format (appendix 8) though the interview was pre-recorded. News interview refers to pre-recorded interview conducted out in the field by reporters and played during news time.

Presentation of the News Interview

This news item came second among eleven stories read by the presenter with the headline [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant reacts to Criminal Court 'C' order of his arrest; says his trial is characterized by lot of flaws*] which was the second among four headlines.

Staging of the Main Actors in the News Interview

In the structuring process of this news, the reporter elected to foreground Mr. Gyude Bryant's reaction to the arrest order released for him by Criminal Court 'C'. And, the reason for the arrest order was mentioned in the lead paragraph.

The lead paragraph [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant has reacted to report that Criminal Court ‘C’ has ordered his arrest for what the court said his refusal to accept a citation to appear in court for trial*] reinforces the headline: [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant reacts to Criminal Court ‘C’ order of his arrest; says his trial is characterized by lot of flaws*]. Together, the headline and the two introductory paragraphs answer the questions of ‘who’ ‘what’ and ‘why’ in the following ways: ‘who’, [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant*]; ‘what’, [*has reacted to his detention order by Criminal Court ‘C’*]; and ‘why’, [*believes his trial is with flaws*].

The news maintained only one source which is Mr. Bryant and lacked background information. It also foregrounded Mr. Bryant-versus-Criminal Court ‘C’ frame.

A closer look at individual sentences in the two introductory paragraphs, including the lead, provided by the text shows a pattern of sentence topics supporting the Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant-versus-Criminal Court ‘C’ frame.

[Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant] has reacted to report that Criminal Court ‘C’ has ordered his arrest...

[Mr. Bryant] said he...

It is worth indicating that apart from being mentioned in every paragraph emanating directly from the reporter, Mr. Bryant seemed endowed with much power. One can see that in all the sentences of the text Mr. Bryant is the one initiating actions: he reacts, says, etc. Notably, the level of space he has received to speak directly in the text is a further manifestation of how much power he has.

Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant [*has reacted*] to report that Criminal Court ‘C’ has ordered his arrest for what the court said his refusal to accept a citation to appear in court for trial.

Mr. Bryant [*said*] he [*was prepared*] to surrender himself to the Supreme Court; but [*said*] his trial is characterized by flaws and abuse of his constitutional rights.

Furthermore, a closer look at the style and angle of questioning by the reporter seems to favor Mr. Bryant and beg the issue main theme of the news:

What is this news that [*your security has been reduced*]?

There are some interpretations that during your two-year transitional period [*you were very hasty to turn over the government*] even though that was the composition of the Accra Peace Agreement. There were those who perhaps wanted to prevail on to have an extension and you were very adamant that

you had specific period and the process of elections took place. [*Have you any regret?*]

[*The reward today is dragging you to court and perhaps as a former head of state this could not be embraced by yourself; how do you look at it?*]

Most of the text is written in news interview register—"a course of interaction to which participants contribute on a turn-by-turn basis for most part asking and answering questions" (Clayman & Heritage 2002:13). However, the first two introductory paragraphs set the Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant-versus-Criminal Court 'C' frame which was followed throughout the interview. A closer look at individual sentences in this segment of the text shows a clear pattern of sentence topics supporting this frame. The reporter used words like: *reacted, report, refusal to accept, citation, prepared to surrender, characterized, flaws and abuse, constitutional rights*, etc. to support the thematic framing of the story:

Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant [*has reacted*] to [*report*] that Criminal Court 'C' has ordered his arrest for what the court said his [*refusal to accept*] a [*citation*] to appear in court for trial.

Mr. Bryant said he was [*prepared to surrender*] himself to the Supreme Court; but said his trial is [*characterized*] by [*flaws*] and [*abuse*] of his [*constitutional rights*].

Commentary on Findings of the News Interview

'News interview' follows interactional thread rather than thematic line (Ibid.). However, I suppose this piece could have added more background information on the case, and could have directly used the court as a source in the build-up of the introductory staging.

I would say that the headline [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant reacts to Criminal Court 'C' order of his arrest; says his trial is characterized by lot of flaws*] combined with the lead paragraph [*Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant has reacted to report that Criminal Court 'C' has ordered his arrest for what the court said his refusal to accept a citation to appear in court for trial*] provides a picture of the posture the news item has taken on the trial of Mr. Bryant. This is made clearer by the lack of background information elaborating on what Mr. Bryant was needed in court for by the judge.

Furthermore, the framing of the questions presupposes that the reporter is sympathetic to the interviewee. I would agree with Steven Clayman and John Heritage (2002:13) that organized patterns by which an interviewer threat a particular interviewee "can be a means by which ideological bias enters into the interviewing process".

While it is a belief widely held by the Liberian society that every national political leader is corrupt; and there should be no sympathy for any political leader being brought to justice for corruption; it is also a notion that subjecting a past political leader to justice is a “witch-hunt”. I would say the reporter in this instance chose to follow the latter as he painted a one-sided picture that favors the former transitional government head, framing the story as a ‘witch-hunt’.

Additionally, the phrase [*Mr. Bryant said he was prepared to surrender himself to the Supreme Court*] as used in the second paragraph of the text (part of the introduction) may suggest that Mr. Bryant is only ready to submit to the ‘highest court’. But contrary to this, the following paragraph which is a direct intervention of the principal source (Mr. Bryant) suggests the latter is ready to submit to any court of Liberia as this phrase may establish: [*If the courts of Liberia sent a writ of arrest for me, I will submit*]

6.1.1.3 Star Radio

Star Radio presented the story in its bulletin (*appendix 9*) and an interview with its Judicial Correspondent (*appendix 10*) as part of the reportage presentation.

Presentation of the Bulletin

The story (*appendix 9*) was the third read among ten stories comprised by the bulletin; with a headline which made the second position among five items.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Bulletin

As I have said repeatedly in this text, quoting Teun van Dijk, news reports are normally presented in a top-down or pyramid structure with information flowing in a descending order of significance which means that information a reporter chooses to put forth earlier in a media report is at times viewed by most reader as most essential and that brought in last, as least important. Hence, the structural arrangement of this story foregrounded the arrest order issued by Criminal Court ‘C’ for Mr. Gyude Bryant.

The headline [*Criminal Court ‘C’ issues arrest order and prison commitment for Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant*] and the lead paragraph [*Criminal Court ‘C’ has ordered the arrest and detention of Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant*], though identical, they provide the answers to ‘who’= *Criminal Court ‘C’* and ‘what’= *orders the*

arrest and detention of Mr. Bryant. The question ‘why’= *State Prosecutor asked the court to arrest Mr. Bryant for bail jumping*, was answered in the second paragraph, providing more support for the lead.

The writer of the story employed two sources-Criminal Court ‘C’ and Mr. Bryant- in addition to its own observation and background information from state prosecutors in the case.

Missing however is background information on the twist-and-turn in the whole trial (I shall elaborate later).

Though Mr. Bryant has been mentioned in every paragraph, he seemed not to be endowed with much power. The judge initiated most of the actions: he orders, accepts, denies. Notably, where the court is not initiating action, it is state prosecutor initiating one:

[*Criminal Court C has ordered*] ... *Charles Gyude Bryant*.

According to our judicial correspondent, [*State Prosecutor asked*] ...to arrest *Mr. Bryant* ...

[*The court accepted*] ... that *Mr. Bryant* ...

[*Mr. Bryant reportedly wrote*] ...

The arrest and detention of the [*former transitional chairman*] ...

[*Mr. Bryant*] is facing trial ...

Most of the text is written in the semi-formal register of reportorial discourse. The reporter used words: *arrest order*, *prison commitment*, *detention*, *bail jumping*, *gross disrespect*, *deny*, and *financial loss* to support the thematic framing of the story:

Criminal Court C has [*ordered the arrest and detention*] of ...

According to ...arrest Mr. Bryant for [*bail jumping*].

The court accepted ... Mr. Bryant [*disrespected*] it...

[*The arrest and detention*] of the ... to the [*Monrovia central Prison*].

Mr. Bryant is facing trial for allegedly causing [*financial loss*] to the...

The reporter also employed some figurative expressions in the story including: [*prison commitment*], a euphemism which appeared in the headline: [Criminal Court ‘C’ issues arrest order and *prison commitment* for Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant].

Presentation of the Interview

The interview (appendix 10) appeared first among ten reportages presented by the news presenter. The News Presenter was the interviewer and the station's Judicial Correspondent, the interviewee who also provided verbal commentary on the event. The interview also shared the same headline with the bulletin which came second among five items.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Interview

The structural arrangement of the interview (determined through questions arrangement) also foregrounded the arrest order issued by Criminal Court 'C' for Mr. Gyude Bryant.

Like the bulletin, the headline [*Criminal Court 'C' issues arrest order and prison commitment for Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant*] and the lead paragraph [*Criminal Court 'C' has ordered the arrest and detention of Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant*], provide the answers to 'who'= *Criminal Court 'C'* and 'what'= *orders the arrest and detention of Mr. Bryant*. The question 'why'= *for bill-jumping* was answered in the second paragraph, providing more support for the lead.

The interview foregrounds Criminal Court 'C'-versus-Mr. Bryant frame which was built upon throughout the text.

Remarkably, the reporter employed two sources-*Criminal Court 'C'* and *Mr. Bryant*-in addition to its own observation and verbal commentary. Nevertheless, he put forth Criminal Court 'C'-versus-Mr. Bryant frame with background from state prosecutor, which is supportive of the above frame:

Presenter: The Criminal Court C has ordered the arrest and detention of formal Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant.

According to our judicial correspondent, state prosecutor asked the court to arrest Mr. Bryant for bail-jumping.

Our correspondent is Bruce Boweh; he is on the line. Hello Bruce.

Can we safely say Mr. Bryant is a fugitive right now?

Reporter: *Bryant* is a wanted man according to the court. [*Criminal Court C Judge*] released the order ...

Presenter: As we speak, Bruce do you have the information as to the whereabouts of Mr. Bryant?

Reporter: Well, the last information... the arrest order is out and it has been placed in hands of the sheriff of the [court]... And anywhere they find *Mr. Bryant*, according to the arrest order...

Presenter: So he is a possible candidate now of the Monrovia Central Prison?

Reporter: Yes, of course; *Mr. Bryant* is a possible candidate. According to [the court] he should be... To speak, *Bryant's* bond has been set aside by [the court]...

Presenter: Has the court said how many times has Mr. Bryant violated the terms of the bail?

Reporter: Well... Besides the application, when [the court] sends for you... [The court] calls... So it is based on this that he has ordered *him* arrested and detained.

Most of the text is written in news interview register between the news presenter and the reporter with the presence of these lexical terms amongst others: *arrest order, prison commitment, bail jumping, wanted man, re-arrest and subsequent detention, possible candidates, bridged, decapitated*, which support the framing of the story.

A closer examination of individual sentences in the first two paragraphs-lead and background-in addition to the reporter's account shows a pattern of sentence topics supporting the Criminal Court 'C'-versus-Mr. Bryant frame which endowed Criminal Court 'C' with much power:

Presenter: Criminal Court C [*has ordered the arrest and detention*] of formal Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant.

According to our judicial correspondent, state prosecutor asked the court [*to arrest Mr. Bryant for bill-jumping*].

Our correspondent is Bruce Boweh; he is on the line. Hello Bruce.

Can we safely say [Mr. Bryant is a fugitive] right now?

Reporter: [*Bryant is a wanted man according to the court. Criminal Court C Judge released the order today*] ...

Presenter: As we speak, Bruce do you have the information as to the whereabouts of Mr. Bryant?

Reporter: Well ... [*the arrest order is out and it has been placed in hands of the sheriff of the court with a commitment*]... [*He is supposed to be arrested and detained at the Monrovia Central Prison*].

Presenter: So he is a possible candidate now of the Monrovia Central Prison?

Reporter: Yes, of course; [*Mr. Bryant is a possible candidate*]... [*To speak, Bryant's bond has been set aside by the court*]...

Presenter: Has the court said how many times has Mr. Bryant violated the terms of the bail?

Reporter: Well ... When the [*court sends for you*] ... you should come ...But you can't stay away... [*The court calls that a gross disrespect to it*]...

Commentary on Findings of the Bulletin and Interview

Both the news story (appendix 9) and commentary in the form of news interview by the reporter (appendix 10) scantily provided background to the event. The reporter also quoted or attributed statements emanating from the court with utmost certainty and that from Mr. Bryant with skepticism.

A closer look at individual sentences in the news story shows a clear pattern of sentence topics supporting a Criminal Court 'C'-versus-Mr. Bryant frame. It is worth indicating that the use of the euphemistic expression-*prison commitment*- suggests sensationalism or the position taken by the news presenter²⁵.

Recounting my earlier reference from Teun van Dijk-news reports allow for “substantive” background information and verbal commentary-, the reporter could have sought and added more background details about Mr. Bryant’s trial in the news story. However, such details were presented during his verbal commentary. Nevertheless, Mr. Bryant’s contribution could be said to be greatly diminished with the constant use of: [*he claimed*]; while the reporter constantly described series of actions by the court in a somewhat factual tone without the slightest hint of uncertainty. Above all, Mr. Bryant was subjected to ‘conditional, hypothetical and subjunctive’ modality by the reporter in his commentary or observation. One could see the above posture in the following statement appearing in the last session of the text: [*but nothing else was seen asking the court for 30 days. **If at all** that was the case, he **should have come** to the court because he **could have represented** himself ... Besides the application ...**you should come** actually to tell the court why you cannot do certain things but you can’t stay away...*]

The fourth paragraph of the news text (appendix 9): [*Mr. Bryant reportedly wrote the court to give him 30 days to get a new defense team ...*]; arguably suggests that something might have happened to his previous defense team. It is important to stress that such information would

²⁵ In broadcast news presentation, the presenter usually cuts headlines with supervision by editors. However, the latter depends on guidelines set by the newsroom.

have provided a more firm background to Mr. Bryant's argument for wanting "30 days to get a new defense team". Once again, this information was provided by the reporter in his analysis of the story (appendix 10): [*...He claimed that the Supreme Court had decapitated his defense team. He said the suspended suspension of Cllr. T.C. Gould and Samuel Clarke would have tied their hands that they would not have the chance to robustly represent him in court*].

Additionally, I would argue that "reportedly" as used in paragraph four of the bulletin: [*Mr. Bryant **reportedly** wrote the court to give him 30 days but the court denied receiving such communication*] and "claimed" in the last session of the reporter's analysis: [*...he **claimed** he has written the court asking for 30 days to get another defense team...*] discredit Mr. Bryant's position. I am of the view that though 'reportedly and claimed' as used by the reporter respectively are intended to 'objectify' the story or his comments; it failed to realize objectivity in terms of source treatment as he treated statements from other sources opposed to Mr. Bryant with utmost certainty:

Well... I got reports that before this notice of assignment came out, Monday he should have gone to court; and [*the sheriff of the court tried, they could not get Mr. Bryant*]. Tuesday he should have gone to court also and he was not there. [*Three days in row they could not get him*]...

Borrowing from Paul Manning, the reporter failed both in the text and his analysis to 'paramountly' ensure "balance between the competing truth claims of the different parties involved" (Manning 2001:69).

Though news reporting requires a high degree of objectivity, neutrality, and balance, I would say the reporter here tried to follow public perception-no empathy for corrupt leader- which has perhaps made the story bias against the former transitional leader.

I would again say the combination of the headline and the lead paragraph in the news story provides a picture of the posture the news item has taken on the trial of Mr. Bryant. As an apparent manifestation of the news article's slant in favor of the court, the reporter said in paragraph five of the news story that: [*The arrest and detention of the Former Transitional Chairman will now lead him to the Monrovia Central Prison*]; though nothing within the text suggests that Mr. Bryant had been arrested.

It is my opinion that the slant in the news story ran down through the reporter's analysis. The legitimacy of the court's action is further strengthened by the reporter's insinuation that Mr.

Bryant ‘actually’ jumped bail by refusing to accept a “notice of assignment” from the court. Instead of relying entirely on information from the court, the reporter could have contacted Mr. Bryant or remained ‘unemphatic’ about the latter’s refusal to accept the court citation.

Furthermore, the insinuation by the reporter in his analysis that since he had not seen Mr. Bryant’s letter he said he wrote the Court asking for 30 days to get new defense among his documents at the court also means he had not written the Court, is also a manifestation of this slant. At least the following expression [*...He claimed he has written the court...I went to the court, searched, the court documents and we could not find anything*] perhaps confirms the above.

In addition, the reporter and news presenter have both framed the story as ‘an attempt to serve justice’; as the presenter portrayed Mr. Bryant in an unfavorable term and the court in a favorable term throughout his questioning and the reporter, the same manner in his responses. I may say that the stance maintained by the reporter in both occasions (news story and interview-analysis) presupposes that the most attention-grabbing attribute of court proceedings is the incarceration of the defendant before the final verdict.

Conclusively, I would say that the reporter in both instances tried to follow public perception- no empathy for corrupt leader- which has perhaps made the story bias against the former Transitional leader.

6.1.1.4 Summary

In the treatment of the issue (*arrest and detention order for a former Liberian Head of State by a Liberian Judge*, both *ELBC* and *Star Radio* relied on only the court as source while *Radio Veritas* used the former transitional leader as its only source. *ELBC* and *Star Radio* further based their thematic structure in their respective pieces in connection with the issue on the court order; but in contrast, *Radio Veritas* took up the issue from the perspective of the defendant.

The commonality among the three media is that they failed to provide adequate background information on the event and the little each media chose to provide seemed to support one side.

On the overall, the treatment of the issue in each media lacked basic *objectivity*, in some of the instances at least using the primary demands of this concept to judge them. As I outlined earlier in section (6.1), objectivity in news calls for journalists to develop transparent approaches to their news sources and evidence so as to avoid the creeping in personal biases in news items which could undermine their work. Sources and backgrounds provided in the stories by both *ELBC* and *Star Radio* on one hand came mostly from the viewpoint of the court or state prosecutors; while on the other hand, those used or provided by *Radio Veritas* came from Mr. Bryant's (the accused) angle.

B. EDUCATION MINISTER DR. JOSEPH KORTO DENIES MISAPPLYING DONATED COMPUTERS

Introduction

In continuation of the *Critical discourse analysis* process this section analyzes all news produced on December 05, 2007 by the three media institutions (*ELBC, Radio Veritas, Star Radio*) in relations with Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of an allegation of corruption levied against him. The analysis follows the same methodological approach and sequence.

6.1.2.1 ELBC

ELBC had the story as both bulletin and reportage within its main evening news magazine presentation with the headline: [*Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto refutes media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*].

Presentation of the Bulletin

The bulletin (appendix 11) was read first among nine stories that made up the bulletin package.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Bulletin

As I have cited repeatedly in this scholarship quoting Teun van Dijk, news reports are normally presented in a top-down or pyramid structure with information flowing in a descending order of significance; and information a reporter chooses to put forth earlier in media is at times viewed by most readers as most essential and that brought in last, as least important, thus, the bulletin (appendix 11), 'hierarchized' Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification.

The headline: [*Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto refutes media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*] and the lead paragraph: [*Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto has once again refuted media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*]; though almost identical, answer the questions of 'who'= *Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto*; 'what'= *has denied allegation of corruption*. In further building the text, the reporter provided answer to the 'why'= [*...Dr. Joseph Woah-tee is poised to damage his character through negative media campaign*] in the third paragraph.

The headline and the lead paragraph set the main frame or central theme-*Dr. Korto denial of allegation of corruption levied against him*-which is built upon throughout the text. The report employed two sources with no background information. However, the two sources-one primary and the other secondary- were not used for counter information but rather corroboratory. The secondary source which also lacked 'basic identity': [*Several County Educational Officers from Maryland, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Bong Counties...*].

The writer of the story chose lexis like: *refutes media reports, linking, alleged sale, documentary evidence, principal accuser, poised to damage, negative media campaign, etc.*, to support thematic framing of the story:

Education Minister ... [*refuted media reports*] [*linking*] him to the [*alleged sale*] of ...

Speaking to *ELBC* ... Dr. Korto called ... to [*substantiate*] their claims through [*documentary evidence*] rather than what he called [*mere allegations*].

He said his [*principal accuser*] ... is [*poised to damage*] his character through [*negative media campaign*].

Meanwhile, several... [*confirmed receiving*] ...

Presentation of the Reportage

The reportage (appendix 12) came third among four items making the news presentation. It shared the headline with the bulletin (appendix 11) as they formed part of the same package.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Reportage

Unlike the bulletin, the reportage started by providing a background for the item in the first introductory paragraph (lead). However, this lead paragraph [*Last week several local dailies carried headlines in which Liberia's Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto was accused of selling several thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*] also provides answer to the question 'why'. The questions of 'who' and 'what' are answered in the immediate paragraph after the lead in the following manner: 'who'=*Dr. Korto*; 'what'=*reiterated call for his accusers...*

In further building the text, the reporter continued the next two paragraphs (third & fourth) with a commentary:

A contemporary Theologian is quoted as describing truth as something that has no grave and that truth once buried will one day resurrect.

The unnamed theologian's argument appears to be making its way into the nearly week-long accusation against Liberia's Information Minister Dr. Joseph Korto.

Notably, the headline and the lead paragraph set the main frame or central theme-Dr. Korto's attempt to redeem his name -which is built upon throughout the text.

The reporter employed three 'abstract' sources-several local dailies, a contemporary theologian, and observers- for background information; two 'concrete' sources-Dr. Joseph Korto and Mr. Victor Paye- and another 'abstract' source-several County Educational Officers- to support Dr. Korto, the main source; meaning all the sources have been used to corroborate one another.

The lexical choice of: *carried headlines, accusers, prove, allegation, facts, claims, assassinating, character, contemporary theologian, truth, buried, resurrect, argument, believed to have come, alleged, scandal, observers, chances to spew out, glaring, clarification, exercise, minimum contribution, several, the concerned, media reports, accused of selling* etc., supports the thematic structure of the story:

Last week several local dailies [*carried headlines*] in which...Korto [*was accused*] of ...

Dr. Korto on Wednesday [*reiterated*] call for his [*accusers to prove their allegation*] through [*facts*] rather than what he calls [*mere claims*] aimed

A [*contemporary Theologian*] is quoted as describing [*truth as something that has no grave*] and that [*truth once buried will one day resurrect*].

The unnamed theologian's [*argument*] appears to be ...week-long [*accusation*] against...

This is because ... who is [*alleged to be*] Dr. Korto's partner in the [*alleged scandal*] has [*denied ever accusing*] the ...

If this communication is [*true*], observers [*believe that chances*] for Dr. Korto to [*spew out all of the allegations are glaring*].

Meanwhile, several ... [*confirmed receiving*] computers ...

They however said they could not give the exact [*quantity received*] on grounds that...

Dr. Korto's [*reaction*] comes... last week [*media reports*] in which he was [*accused of selling*]...

In addition, the reporter utilized figurative expressions to further add some weight to the language of the text. For example, the expressions [... truth as something that has no grave and that truth once buried will one day resurrect] (in paragraph 3) is a personification; and [... chances for Dr. Korto to spew out all the allegations are glaring] (in paragraph 7) is a metaphor.

It is worth emphasizing that the text has not sufficiently established the main source of the allegation; though its headline [*Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto has refuted media reports...*], reinforced with the lead paragraph [*Last week several local dailies ...*] could point to “the local dailies” as the originators of the allegation.

The entire text has been written in the indicative mood and past tense with the interjection of the actual voice of the main actor in the story (Dr. Joseph Korto).

Commentary on Findings of the Bulletin and Reportage

As I have repeatedly said objective reporting calls for background information and commentary in addition to the presentation of facts; and a reporter’s attempt brush aside any of these background information may be geared at hiding history.

The story presented in the bulletin (appendix 11) lacked background information while the two sources it employed were for corroboratory purposes. However, one of the sources is ambiguous and its contribution could be said to be marred with lack of transparency. For example, the reporter said [*several County Educational Officers... have confirmed receiving computers from the Education Ministry. However, most of them said they could not give the exact quantity of computers received because they were out of their respective offices*]. Not only that this group of sources is ambiguous, one may also consider that they do not exist owing to the fact that no one name has been provided as “several” does not point to any individual. It may also be argued that it is ‘highly questionable’ for all the “County Educational Officers” who confirmed receipt of the computers” to be “out of their respective offices” at the same time.

The way this story is framed (bulletin) presupposes that Dr. Joseph Korto has done nothing wrong as regards to the issue.

Following this path, the reporter said in paragraph five of the text that [*Dr. Korto also led an array of local journalists to the Freeport of Monrovia where the two containers, 40-feet each are being kept; including a warehouse in JJY, Gardnersville containing **many computers***].

The above might suggest that the “many computers” the reporter had seen equals the number of those in question. I suppose the reporter would have maintained a certain degree of objectivity in drawing up this supposition were he to have independently verified documents regarding the number of computers received, distributed, and the remainder.

It is worth emphasizing that the headline and the lead which say [*Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto refutes **media reports** linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*] could lead listeners to believing at first that the media have been the prime sources of the story. However, it is later that one gets to know that there is a source that the media might have quoted.

Furthermore, [*refute*] as used in the headline and lead paragraph [*Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has once more **refuted** media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*] may suggest that the reporter had established that the number of computers at display in the warehouses he was taken to by Dr. Korto, actually proved the case of ‘no wrongdoing by Dr. Korto’.

Another arguable lexis is [*linking*] as used in the headline and the lead which may suggest that besides Dr. Korto, there is another character associated with “the alleged sale of four thousand computers” that remained unidentified throughout the text.

Additional presupposition may be said to be associated with the use of [*principal accuser*] referring to Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in paragraph three [*He said his **principal accuser**, former presidential candidate in the 2005 general and presidential elections Dr. Joseph Woah-tee is poised to damage his character through negative media campaign*]. This seems to imply that there are other individual(s) accusing Dr. Korto; something that nothing in the text further suggests.

The reportage more or less followed the same pattern of omissions, suppositions and presuppositions, and lack of source clarity, etc. However, a draw down of some these follow comes below:

For instance, (evocation of my earlier example in the bulletin relating to this item) the reporter said [*several County Educational Officers ...have confirmed receiving computers from the Education Ministry. However, most of them said they could not give the exact quantity of computers received because they were out of their respective offices*]. In the same vein, [several local dailies] as a source arguably points to no particular local dailies.

I would say the framing of the reportage also presupposes that Dr. Joseph Korto has nothing more to prove regarding the allegation. In pursuit of this path, the reporter further brought in “Victor Paye” whose reported communication with the reporter has been intended to vindicate Dr. Korto. It is worth pointing out that the reporter had tried to portray a certain degree of ‘neutrality’ through the use of conditional, hypothetical or subjunctive attribution to Mr. Paye in the fifth paragraph: [*This is because an e-mail in the possession of ELBC, dated December 3, 2007 and **believed** to have come from Victor Paye ...*]; and he continued in the seventh paragraph [*If **this communication is true**, observers believe that chances for Dr. Korto to spew out all of the allegations are glaring*]. But I would opine that this attempt is a camouflage because nothing in the background information has mentioned any linking between Dr. Korto and Mr. Paye (maybe omitted consciously or subconsciously).

Another arguable expression is [*carried headlines*] appearing in the lead paragraph [*Last week several local dailies **carried headlines** in which Liberia’s Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto was accused of selling several thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*] which might suggest that only the headlines of the local dailies accused the Minister of wrongdoing.

Additional presupposition may be said to be associated with the expression [*investigation continues*] coming the end of the report which might suggest that though the reporter has established Dr. Korto’s ‘no wrongdoing’ he chose to keep the story hanging for the purpose of maintaining ‘an escape route’.

Notwithstanding, on the overall, both news stories (bulletin and reportage) provided little background on the issue and reporter accepted everything Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto had to say without any counterchecks.

6.1.2.2 *Radio Veritas*

Radio Veritas presented the story as news excerpt (appendix 13). News excerpt follows the format: brief introduction by the news presenter proceeded with the actual voice of the news maker.

Presentation of the News Excerpt

This news item (appendix 13) ranked fourth out of thirteen stories making the presentation without a headline.

Staging of the Main Actors in the News Excerpt

In the structural arrangement of this news, the reporter placed emphasis on the background of the event, answering the question ‘why’ in the lead paragraph [*Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in the United States recently claimed that there was foul-play in the distribution of four thousand computers donated by the school system in the US State of Maryland*]. The text later established the answer to the questions ‘who’= *Dr. Joseph Korto* and ‘what’=*trying to disprove claim*, in the immediate paragraph following the lead [*Ever since Dr. Woah-tee claimed the receiver of the donation, Education Minister Joseph Korto has been busy trying to disprove the claim*].

The text employed two sources: one for background information and the other (main source) for reaction, giving both of them active voice in their participation. However, only one of the two sources’ actual voices was presented in the news.

The text foregrounded Dr. Joseph Woah-tee-versus-Dr. Joseph Korto frame. Though much of the news item is composed of the actual voice of the main source (Dr. Joseph Korto) I would say the lexical choice of: *claimed, foul play, busy trying to disprove, and receiver*, etc. in the introductory paragraphs arguably supports the framing of the story:

Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in the United States recently [*claimed*] that there was [*foul-play*] in the distribution of four thousand computers donated by the school system in the US State of Maryland.

Ever since Dr. Woah-tee’s [*claim*] the receiver of the donation, Education Minister Joseph Korto has been [*busy trying to disprove the claim*].

Commentary on Findings of the News Excerpt

In news reportage, the inclusion of the actual voice of the news maker should be to further provide clarification to support, disprove, or comment on a point; and when such intervention

brings out further questions, it is the reporter's duty to follow up. In this case, Dr. Korto in his personal intervention offered to provide the reporter with documents regarding the transaction for verification, but no such document was quoted or used in the text, suggesting that the reporter 'cared less' or was satisfied with what he saw in addition with Dr. Korto's clarification.

I would say the absence of a headline coupled with the focus of the introductory paragraphs provides a picture of the posture the news item has taken on the issue which is: picturing Dr. Joseph Korto in a 'favorable' term and Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in a 'neutral' term.

Remarkably, the use of [*foul play*] in the lead paragraph [*Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in the United States recently claimed that there was **foul-play** in the distribution of ...*] arguably suggests 'sensationalism' as misapplication of computers does not 'necessarily' require violence which may be said to be closely associated with "foul play".

In addition, the definite stance of the reporter in paragraph three (last part of introduction) of the text: [Today Dr. Korto took a team of reporters to the Freeport of Monrovia where ***the computers*** were in storage] presupposes that the computers which the reporter was allowed to view represent the number of those in question. Contrary to this position by the reporter, Dr. Korto's direct intervention in the text implies what in storage does equal to the amount of computers in question. I would believe the following: [*...So I wanted you first to see all computers received by us and have not gotten rid of*] implies the above.

On the overall, the reporter failed to seek independent information other than quoting the accuser and the accused. Also, he seemed to have accepted clarification provided by the accused at face value; thus, arguably following the notion "the burden of proof lies with the accuser". It is my opinion that that following such notion betrays the 'watchdog role' of the media in society.

6.1.2.3 *Star Radio*

The story appeared as bulletin and news interview though the latter was pre-recorded from the field. They have no headline.

Presentation of the Bulletin

The bulletin (appendix 14) came fourth among twelve stories making the bulletin package.

Staging of the Main Actors in the Bulletin

In the build-up of the text, the reporter chose to foreground Dr. Joseph Korto's account for computers received-which was built upon throughout.

The lead paragraph [*The Minister of Education has clarified that he received 2,291 computers and not 4,000 as being alleged*] answers the 'important' questions of 'who'=Minister of Education; 'what'=has clarified. But another 'important' question of 'why' was answered by the last paragraph which also provided background to the story [*The clarification comes in the wake of allegation by Dr. Joseph Woah-tee that Dr. Korto sold four thousand donated computers and pocketed the money*].

Notably, the lead paragraph set the main frame or central theme-Dr. Korto clarification-which is built upon throughout the text.

The story employed one major source-Dr. Joseph Korto and a minor source-Dr. Joseph Woah-tee (for background information).

Most of the text is written in the active voice and past indicative mood. A closer look at individual sentences further outlines the amount of power the main source who is also the actor, has within the text. He was given active voice throughout. For example he *clarifies*, *says* and *tells*; but within the background where the 'minor' source was allowed to speak, he was treated with a certain degree of uncertainty:

The Minister of Education *has clarified* that *he received*

Dr. Joseph Korto *said* the Ministry *has already refurbished and distributed* ...

The Education Minister *said* the computers *were distributed* to...

Minister Korto *said* the While non-educational institutions *paid*...

He *told* reporters the service fees *were used* to refurbish the computers.

The clarification comes *in the wake of allegation* by Dr. Joseph Woah-tee that Dr. Korto *sold* four thousand donated computers and pocketed the money.

Words like: *clarified, as being alleged, a number, free of charge, service fees, wake of allegation, pocketed the money*, etc. were chosen by the reporter to support the thematic framing of the story:

The Minister of Education [*has clarified*] that... not 4,000 [*as being alleged*].

The Education Minister said the computers were distributed to [*a number of*]
...

Minister Korto said the educational institutions were given... [*free of charge*]
...

He told reporters the [*service fees*] were used to refurbish the computers.

The clarification comes in the wake of [*allegation*] ...and [*pocketed the money*].

Presentation of the News Interview

The news interview (appendix 15) was the first item read from among eight stories contained by the reportage segment of the news presentation.

Staging of the Main Actors in the News Interview

In building the text, the reporter foregrounded Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification which was built upon throughout the introductory part of the text.

The lead paragraph [*Since it was alleged that he sold computers donated to the country, Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has been trying to clarify issues in a bid to save his reputation*] answers the questions of 'why'=*since it was alleged*; 'who'=*Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto*; and 'what'=*has been trying to clarify*. But another 'important' question of 'when'=*On Wednesday*, was answered in the last paragraph of the introduction which also provided background to the story.

Most of the text is written in news interview register. However, the first three introductory paragraphs laid down the 'Dr. Korto-clarification-frame' which was followed throughout the

interview. A closer look at individual sentences making the introduction segment of the text arguably shows a clear pattern of sentence topics supporting this frame:

Since it was alleged that he sold computers donated to the country, *Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has been trying to clarify issues in a bid to save his reputation.*

On Wednesday *Dr. Korto took some media practitioners to...*

After the tour, Vasco Weagbe asked *Dr. Korto what prompted his decision to take journalist on the tour.*

The style and angle of questioning by the reporter also followed Dr. Korto-clarification-frame:

How many computers have you received?

Who donated these computers?

Non-educational institutions benefited from your distribution according to your list?

It is worth indicating that apart from being mentioned in every paragraph emanating directly from the reporter, Dr. Korto was allowed direct intervention, providing answers to the reporter's inquiry.

The text maintained only one source throughout with little background built up into the lead paragraph.

I would say that words: *alleged, trying to clarify, a bid, save reputation*, etc. were used in the introductory paragraphs to support the thematic framing of the story:

Since it was *alleged* that he sold computers donated to the country, Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has *been trying to clarify* issues in *a bid to save his reputation.*

On Wednesday Dr. Korto *took* some media practitioners to Freeport of Monrovia, and one of the Ministry's warehouses on the JJY Community where computers donated to the Ministry *are kept.*

Commentary on Findings of the Bulletin and News Interview

It is my interpretation that the way the story has been framed presupposes that the reporter is convinced with the information provided by the source that also happened to be the main actor in the story as the entire text was written without the least hint of uncertainty.

Apart from that there was only one source-the accused-that is providing the clarification with little background information from the accuser. I would say objective journalism would have sought to provide more information from the accusing source for the purpose of maintaining certain balance in the story or provide 'adequate' background information where such source(s) is/are not readily available.

It is worth noting that the lack of a subject (left out consciously or subconsciously) for the predicate [*as being alleged*] in the lead paragraph [*The Minister of Education has clarified that he received 2,291 computers and not 4,000 as **being alleged***] has perhaps berated the author of the claim and made it insignificant.

Furthermore, [*a number*] used to identify "*educational and non-educational institutions*" recipients of some of the computers in question lack definite identity. Though the reporter attributed this statement to Dr. Korto, he could have also sought and added the names of some of these recipients.

Like the news item in the bulletin, the news interview employed only one source and little background. Though the story is an allegation and a subsequent clarification, it lacks counter-balance.

It is worth emphasizing that the lack of a definite identity for the accuser as implied by the use of the pronoun [*it*] in the lead paragraph arguably downplayed the importance of the accuser as well as the allegation.

The style and angle of questioning by the reporter also arguably favored the accused-Minister Korto.

Above all, the reporter maintained an uncritical stance toward the Education Minister and accepted what he provided as information without any cross-check.

6.1.2.4 Summary

The three radio stations treated the issue (a senior government minister's clarification of an allegation of corruption levied against him) in a matter and form which I could interpret as uncritical. They constructed their news items in every respect based on information provided them by the accused; and made little efforts in counter-checking those information.

Additionally, the three media never sought counter-opinions on the issue whose source is the one at the center stage of the news. *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* used only the accused as main source and provided little background to their news. On the other hand, though *ELBC* sought to add other sources other than the accused, that attempt was marred by apparent lack of basic identity and definitiveness of those sources whose role became corroborative of the accused (the main actor and source).

6.2 Respondent Interview

6.2.1 Factor Bearing on the Level of Political Pluralism in the Media

The third research question examines factors that could have leverages of the level of pluralism allowed by Liberian media. Thus, the researcher assessed these factors through *respondent interviews* with two editors from each of the three radio stations (except *Star Radio* where only one was available). The findings are presented under five themes: editorial policy, editorial autonomy, newsroom routine, education and training and salaries and job incentives. However, findings presented by this study by no means complete the list of factors bearing on the level of pluralism allowed by Liberian media.

6.2.1.1 Editorial policy

Editorial policy here refers to institutional guiding principle governing the collection, processing and dissemination of news.

As one would anticipate, all the editors said they have guidelines that govern their newsroom activities which they however described as being based on the ownership of their respective media institutions.

Edward Kennedy, News Editor of *ELBC* described his institution's editorial policy:

ELBC is a government entity; and based on that, we propagate messages from government. We disseminate information relating to the development of Liberia. We tend to do away with news that has the tendency of causing confusion.

But Frank Sainworla, Assistant Station Manager of *Radio Veritas*, the Catholic Church funded radio editorial policy is based on fairness, balance, and objectivity:

We take our cue from the standard of good journalism; i.e. we should be fair, and balance to all sides; and that we should report the news that would be of interest to the people; news that affects the lives of the people no matter who is involved.

According to Wellington Geevon-Smith, Acting News Editor, *Star Radio*, his institution serves every sector of the Liberian society:

Star Radio is independent news and information station. It works to give independent, balance and equitable information. It provides an alternative voice to the people-the aggrieved, the accused and the accuser-regardless of status".

By the mere description of their editorial policies it is possible to draw the line between the levels of editorial freedom each newsroom enjoys.

6.2.1.2 Editorial autonomy

Editorial autonomy (freedom) is used here to signify the absence of administrative dictates in the news processes at the radio stations.

Overall, the editors said they benefit from unhindered freedom in their respective duties. However, there appeared some contrasting views between the two editors interviewed from *ELBC*:

I enjoy no real freedom. The administrative managers determine what stories should be aired and who should have a voice on the radio. For me I think we are doing a disservice to the people as we don't carry information perceived to be against the government" (Edward Kennedy, News Editor; ELBC).

I enjoy every freedom possible. There is nothing like press censorship. The only time management comes in is when reporters go against journalistic principles" (Joseph T. Koon, News Director, ELBC).

Similarly, Wellington Geevon-Smith of *Star Radio* said he sometimes consults the Station Manager when there is a "big story" in his newsroom.

Constant or occasional consultations with administrative managers by editors of a news media may develop into a practice that adversely affects the news content.

6.2.1.3 Newsroom routine

Newsroom routine used here encompasses: sources normally sought by the three radio stations; their selections and arrangements of news package. The researcher believes these routines could highlight some preferential treatment of certain news sources.

Without any peculiarity, the three radio stations maintained different approaches toward the selection of news sources:

We have reporters assigned to various institutions, especially government ministries and agencies. In selecting our news, we turn to government institutions, public and private institutions, our international partners and the general public (Joseph T. Koon, News Director, ELBC).

When important issues of national concern come about, we send reporters to gather the public's views. But we don't normally air those views contrasting government; no matter how grievous and genuine they may be" (Edward Kennedy, News Editor, ELBC).

We usually gather the local dailies every morning and go through some of the major stories and follow up on what we think is missing out. We also turn to civil society leaders, opposition politicians, religious leaders, government officials, the Executive Mansion-seat of the presidency, the judicial and legislative branches of government" (Zoegar Z.Q. Jaynes, Editor, Radio Veritas).

Our major sources of news are the commoners. We don't prioritize news from the presidency of government circle unless it is a major government pronouncement or action" (Wellington Geevon-Smith, Acting News Editor, Star Radio).

Somewhat expected (at least based on their individual news selection formula), the three radio stations once again maintained different manners for the selection and ordering of their news stories:

In keeping with our editorial policy, we first start with the three branches of government. Though the Constitution indicates that the legislative arm is the first branch of government, our policy is such that we start with the executive branch who heads the government. This is followed by the legislature and the judiciary, government ministries and agencies and others (Joseph T. Koon, News Director, ELBC)

Edward Kennedy, news editor at *ELBC* however added that "ordinary people only come in when there is a space left".

At Veritas, we try to make our news reflective of every sector of the society. Our news judgment is powered by happenings-the relevance of the story, the effect on the society-not necessarily prominence. However, we take all elements of news into consideration and put them on the scale; and try to determine what affects the society most; and the public will appreciate most. It is not just big names that make news for us. At times the ordinary persons' voices have to be heard and we must provide them that platform (Frank Sainworla, Assistant Station Manager, Radio Veritas).

our pattern of news presentation is such that we itemize every news piece based on how relevant such news addresses the plights or highlights the concern of the people" (Wellington Geevon-Smith, Acting News Editor, Star Radio).

At the same time, while editors at the three radio stations seemed to maintain different approaches to the selection and presentation of their news stories, they gave the impression of having the knowledge of their responsibility to the larger society. However, individually, they define this responsibility to the public based on their editorial guidelines and other factors:

We see our role as crucial; that is Star Radio usually goes beyond the issues and brings them to national attention. But there are several factors that usually impede our desire to conduct full scale investigations. One of such factors is the small setting of our society-interrelationship. We are in a society where when you push someone to the wall, either that person has someone who knows you or has extended relations with you; this is something that really makes it difficult for us to pursue certain stories to logical conclusion.

Though I am aware that journalism ethics demands that I must be impartial, it is sometimes hard to resist family pressure, especially in the African setting (Wellington Geevon-Smith, Star Radio).

We know our statutory responsibility as state radio; we disseminate information to the public. We try to ensure that whatever information that is significant to the public can be aired without fear or favor. But we don't allow character assassination which we believe is not newsworthy.

Before a critical story is aired, it has to pass through the clearing house. This clearing house starts from the news editor, the editor-in-chief, the news director and the assistant director for news and public affairs who is the administrative head of the department. The clearing house is intended to ensure that information about corrupt government officials are verified (Joseph T. Koon, ELBC).

But his news editor, Edward Kennedy, offered a contrasting opinion:

ELBC diverts from its own role; instead of serving as a national radio it then becomes what I will call public relations media outlet for government. Many at times we are prevented from airing views that are critical; that oppose those of government or government officials. Due to the fact that we are not allowed to air critical views, reporters do not waste their time as they only seek opinions from people sympathetic to the government.

We see ourselves as one of the dependable, reliable source of impartial information. We think that poses serious challenge to us. We strive continuously and around the clock to pursue the truth wherever it can be found. There is a high level of editorial independence at Radio Veritas; so we believe that it is our duty to use this editorial independence to champion the cause of the common people who are often left unheard. So for us the media will remain a true media if it stands for objectivity, impartiality and fairness. But there is a general problem among reporters which I may say is fear of antagonizing people. This is partly due to laziness and the economic condition of Liberian journalists and the Liberian society as a whole. Journalists prefer running after those stories that have less headache and at times those stories whose sources will offer them gifts (Frank Sainworla, Radio Veritas).

6.2.1.4 Education and training

The level of education and training an individual possesses within a particular discipline has a direct or indirect impact on his/her output. Education and training as explored within this study describe the level of formal journalistic education and training among newsroom staff of the three radio stations.

According to Joseph T. Koon, News Director of *ELBC*, his newsroom has about “thirty (30) journalists/reporters” most of whom have 3-6 months training or certificates in broadcast journalism.

Zoegar Z.Q Jaynes, Editor of *Radio Veritas* describes his newsroom:

There are ten journalists working as paid staff and interns in the newsroom of Radio Veritas. Only one has a bachelor degree in Mass Communications from the University of Liberia while the other six (6) are students reading mass communications. However, all of the staff has had some levels of training in news gathering, writing and reporting.

Comparatively there exists not much difference between *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio*.

Star Radio has eight (8) journalists of which seven are still at the University of Liberia. One holds a BA degree and undergoing his masters program. Besides the eight journalists, there are ten correspondents across the country that fall under the newsroom. The correspondents are high school graduates but trained by Star Radio (Wellington Geevon-Smith, Star Radio).

6.2.1.5 Salary and job incentives

Salary and incentives outlined here include monthly wages and other benefits that could help motivate journalists. Journalism seems to be among the least paid professions in Liberia.

Joseph T. Koon, News Director of *ELBC* revealed that newsroom staffs at the state funded radio make between “US\$20-70.00 (twenty to seventy United States dollars) equivalents” as monthly earnings with no other incentives.

The situation seems better at *Radio Veritas* than at *ELBC*; journalists at the Catholic radio have monthly salaries “between US\$50-70.00 (fifty to seventy United States dollars) equivalents” with no additional incentives (Zoegar Z.Q. Jaynes, *Radio Veritas*).

Relatively, journalists earn the best salaries at the partially NGO-funded and “commercial-not-for-profit *Star Radio*. They are offered between US\$150-250.00 (one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty United States dollars) with other benefits. Wellington Geevon-Smith, Acting News Editor of *Star Radio* observed:

Inadequate financial capacity compelled Star Radio to cut off incentives that got the best out of the journalists. For example, besides their monthly salaries, Star Radio journalists used to receive US\$20.00 (twenty United States dollars) worth of phone cards monthly; available transport service to take the journalists on assignments and back; vehicles were available to team of reporters to places outside Monrovia every weekend, mainly places where the station does not have correspondents.

These opportunities carried Star Radio to the rural people; brought happenings in the rural communities to the attention of policymakers and central government; and made the station relevant in the country.

Obviously, some of the editors have recognized the impact low salaries and the absence of other benefits are having on their newsrooms and the journalism profession in Liberia in general.

The lack of incentives for my reporters is greatly affecting their total output in the news room. As a result of this, my reporters often find it difficult to go on assignments due to logistical problems.

In most instances, my reporters... most of them are fond of compromising the journalism profession. They are constrained to take or receive bribes [money] in the discharge of their reportorial duties to either facilitate their transportation or for journalistic equipment.

*In short due to the prevailing circumstances, my reporters cannot survive only on their salaries but tokens received from news makers (Joseph T. Koon, *ELBC*).*

However, Wellington Geevon-Smith of *Star Radio* expressed a diametrical view to the above as expressed by Joseph T. Koon of *ELBC*:

Star Radio journalists survive the temptation of inducement because in spite of its strained financial situation, institutional policy makes it a [suspendable] or

dismissible offence, considering the gravity of the offence, for any journalist in its employ to engage in such acts.

Nevertheless, Frank Sainwora of *Radio Veritas* was bold to describe the general repercussion of the under payment of the journalism profession in Liberia.

Personally, I think the poor level of incentives for journalists throughout Liberia is seriously undermining professionalism in and depriving the field from putting out its best.

Thus, Liberian media, like all other sectors cannot divorce itself from being tainted by corruption. Corrupt practices in terms of receiving gifts to slant a particular story and commercializing the news are undermining the practice of good journalism.

6.3 Analysis and discussion of the findings

The general aspect of the apparent preferential treatment of governmental or government related actors and sources by the three radio stations was not only limited to attribution and space in the news but also textual representations (within the two set of stories analyzed). The stories which were produced by the three radios in relations to an arrest order issued against the Chairman of the erstwhile National Transitional Government of Liberia Gyude Bryant by Judge Boimah Kontoe; and attempts by Education Minister of Liberia Dr. Joseph Korto to clear his name of an allegation of corruption levied against him by a Liberian politician residing in the United States of America more or less did not go beyond official pronouncements.

In the case of the story involving the formal Liberian transitional leader, both *ELBC* and *Star Radio* did not go beyond information provided by the Court or State Prosecutors respectively. On the other end, *Radio Veritas* also remained confined to information it was provided with by the former Liberian interim leader. (See Table 9)

As for the second story which involved the Education Minister, the three radios maintained the same approach (uncritical stance and lack of basic backgrounds). (See Table 10)

Another aspect of the findings of the textual analysis is the lack of diverse sources in most of the texts even though such requirements were needed. The reporters relied on what they had been told by the prime sources without independent inquiries or attempted inquiries (at least absent from the texts).

Moreover, background information was lacking in most of the stories and when provided, they arguably appeared to suit one particular side of the story.

On the overall, findings from the analysis of the two set of stories suggest *ELBC*, *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* followed uncritical and unbalance trends in the construction of individuals and sources associated the events in texts. This further confirmed the findings of section (5.1.3) which revealed that these radio news lacked diversity in sources; something which the notion of pluralism speaks against. Pluralistic mass media are expected to seek and reflect varied voices and interests which make up the wider society (already highlighted in

section 5.2). To sum up, there was a dominant hegemonic ideology²⁶ in most of the news texts.

Table 9 Sketch of How the Three Radios Reported the Arrest Order Judge Boimah Kontoe Placed for Mr. Gyude Bryant

Media & Story	Primary Source(s)	Secondary Source(s) and (Role-play)	Background Information and (Role-play)	Reporter's Stance
ELBC- Bulletin	Judge Boimah Kontoe	None	-Yes (To support the action of the judge)	uncritical
ELBC-Reportage	Judge Boimah Kontoe	None	-Yes (Supporting the action of the judge)	uncritical
Radio Veritas-News Interview	Gyude Bryant	None	None	Bias In favor of Mr. Bryant
Star Radio-Bulletin	Criminal Court 'C'	None	-Yes (Supporting the action of the judge and describing the whole event)	uncritical
Star Radio-Reporter Interview	Criminal Court 'C'	None	-Yes (Supporting the action of the judge)	Against Mr. Bryant

Table 10 Sketch of How the Three Radios Reported Education Minister Joseph Korto's Clarification on Allegation of Corruption Levied Against

Media & Story	Primary Source(s)	Secondary Source(s) and (Role-play)	Background Information & (Role-play)	Reporter's Stance
ELBC- Bulletin	Dr. Joseph Korto	-Unnamed (corroborative)	None	uncritical
ELBC-Reportage	Dr. Joseph Korto	-Victor Paye (corroborative) -Several unnamed County Educational Officers (corroborative)	-One paragraph (23 words)	Bias In favor of Dr. Korto
Radio Veritas-News Interview	Dr. Joseph Korto	-Dr. Joseph Woah-tee (for background)	- One paragraph (28 words)	Uncritical
Star Radio-Bulletin	Dr. Joseph Korto	-Dr. Joseph Woah-tee (for background)	-One paragraph (23 words)	Uncritical
Star Radio-News Interview	Dr. Joseph Korto	None	-One paragraph (28 words)	Uncritical

Additionally, the findings from the respondent interviews revealed that a few Liberian journalists sometimes engage in unprofessional practices; something which some of the editors attributed to the economic and social conditions of their society. According Frank Sainwora of *Radio Veritas*, "Liberian media, like all other sectors cannot divorce itself from

²⁶ The concept of 'hegemony' as coined by Antonio Gramsci says the media helps to maintain a class-divided and class-dominated society. 'Hegemony', according to Gramsci is a loosely interrelated set of ruling ideas permeating society, but in such a way as to make the established order of power and values appear natural, taken-for-granted and common-sensical. He noted that a ruling ideology is not normally but appears to exist by virtue of an unquestioned consensus. 'Hegemony' tends to define unacceptable opposition to the status quo as dissident and deviant (McQuail, 1994: 99)

being tainted by corruption”. He maintained that “corrupt practices in terms of receiving gifts to slant a particular story and commercializing the news are undermining the practice of good journalism”. This opinion was somehow confirmed by Joseph T. Koon of *ELBC*. Mr. Koon said his reporters/journalists take “bribes [money] in the discharge of their reportorial duties to either facilitate their transportation or for journalistic equipment” because what they take home at the end of the month is not enough to meet their basic necessities.

Obviously, the above statement by the *ELBC* News Director leaves members of the general public, often poor to afford a decent square daily meal, least to speak of a chance to have their voices heard on *ELBC* as they may lack the power to “bribe” or ‘tip’ the reporters. This condition perhaps might have been responsible for the miniature nature of the attention the general public has received from *ELBC* as the findings suggest (see section 5.1.3).

The findings also established that certain types of stories tend to be avoided by some of the editors because of family connections or ownership of their media. Wellington Geevon-Smith of *Star Radio* noted: “We are in a society where when you push someone to the wall, either that person has someone who knows you or has extended relations with you; this is something that really makes it difficult for us to pursue certain stories to logical conclusion”.

The ownership factor barrier is clearer at the state radio as editors openly spoke of shying away from stories that could discredit the government or its officials due to its editorial policy which is geared at propagating government policies. Edward Kennedy, News Editor of *ELBC* declared: “*ELBC* is a government entity; and based on that, we propagate messages from government. We disseminate information relating to the development of Liberia. We tend to do away with news that has the tendency of causing confusion”.

Additionally, the findings disclosed that *ELBC* newsroom has twice as many journalists as *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio* combined; but however has the least in terms of journalists’ qualification and salary scale. The meager salaries paid to journalists working at *ELBC* may be responsible for the lack of attraction for ‘better-schooled journalists’.

It is noteworthy that none of the three radios neither conducts audience research nor encourages feedback from the audience through letters or any other forms to draw on how the general public rates their individual performance.

Generally, the findings revealed that ownership, economic conditions and practices as outlined by the editors, have respectively condemned the three radio stations to playing on the overall a 'mediocre' role in the information needs of the people of Liberia.

The next chapter concludes this study based the theoretical framework presented in chapter two; and puts forward some recommendations that could help support the role of the media in a democratic state.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Seven wraps up this thesis with conclusive comments on the findings presented in the previous two chapters (Five and Six) along the research themes. This last chapter also presents some recommendations in section 7.2 that could help the media play a pivotal role in a democratic Liberia; and some further research areas in section 7.3

7.1 Conclusions

This research attempted to analyze the level of political pluralism in the Liberian media and their political tendencies in addition to factors bearing on the plurality of opinions as allowed by these media. As indicated earlier, the conclusions go along the research themes (questions).

7.1.1 Political Pluralism as to Diversity of Political Opinions

Firstly, I argue that the measurement of diversity of opinions in media content is possible just like the measurement of other type of information contained in media content.

In this light, the first research question examined the level of pluralism as to diversity of political opinions as reflected by Liberian media. It attempted to ascertain the degree to which the three radio stations (sample) gave equal or proportionate attention to issues ‘highly’ political in nature and to discern the views of different actors and opinions in the Liberian society. This followed the formulation of some categories encompassing some elements of news content: topics, actors and sources. The type and degree of presence of these categories was calculated using their distribution in time within each of the three radio stations; and how their distribution varied across the wider spectrum of the Liberian society.

Thus, using the various aspects of the functions of the media in democracy and the ideal media I presented in chapter two as part of my theoretical framework as benchmarks couple with the findings and analysis in chapters five and six to rule on my data analysis, I can now say that on the overall Liberian media have the tendency to share little political pluralism as they provide a disproportionate access for government and government-related functionaries over the other sectors of the society. This finding somehow confirms McQuail’s view on bias in media content: “media news tends to overrepresent official sources in its sources; a

disproportionate amount of news attention is given to members of political and social elites” (McQuail, 1994: 255).

Gillian Doyle said democracy would not flourish in the event where “a single voice, with the power to propagate a single political viewpoint, were to become too dominant” emphasizing that “political pluralism is about the need, in the interest of democracy for a range of political opinions and viewpoints to be represented in the media” (Doyle, 2002:12).

Doyle further says that pluralism is the result of diversified output (content) (Ibid.) which I would say was almost absent from the contents of the Liberian media analyzed in this thesis.

Denis McQuail further said that pluralistic media would contribute to society in three ways which include: “*reflecting* differences in society, by giving *access* to different points of view and by offering a wide range of *choice*” (McQuail, 1992:144). He outlined that by reflection, pluralistic media “are expected to present or reflect the prevailing differences of culture, opinion and social conditions of the population as a whole.

7.1.2 Political Tendencies of ELBC, Radio Veritas and Star Radio

The second research question examined the political tendencies of the three radio stations through textual analysis.

The findings from the two sets of stories analyzed also indicate that the three radios tend to treat government actors or sources with ‘leniency’ often left unverified information provided by these sources while people from opposition political institutions are treated with apparent indignation. Nevertheless, *Radio Veritas* tried to strike a balance between government and opposition sources which often resulted in bias in favor of the latter against objective journalism. McQuail says ‘objective journalism’ is a reflection of fairness and balance coupled with objective writing style (2002:187). I believe bias in media content does not occur only in terms of space or time provision but also in terms of representation in texts.

The three radio stations also lacked diversity in use of sources (they did not verify and check all the facts before they put out information); and did not provide adequate background information in most of stories. However, when they tried to present such, they appeared to point at their positions on the issues at bar.

7.1.3 Factors Responsible for the Level of Pluralism in Liberian Media

The third research question explored factors explaining the level of political pluralism as allowed by the Liberian media.

According to the editors interviewed, the lack of adequate journalistic training for many of the journalists coupled with low wages or salaries is among the biggest factors responsible for the ways Liberian journalists operate. Journalists are among the least paid professionals in Liberia²⁷. So most often some of them would solicit or accept payments or gifts in exchange for airing or suppressing certain stories. Frank Sainworla lamented that: “Corrupt practices in terms of receiving gifts to slant a particular story and commercializing the news are undermining the practice of good journalism” in Liberia. However, though some of the editors accepted the fact that there might be many forms of corruption within their respective newsrooms, they maintained it was against institutional policy.

Due to the above factors, the local news in the media seem dominated by people who have the power to pay for ‘accesses’ (often government officials), leaving the public with spectator status.

Moreover, as a matter of routine practices, some of the media institutions somehow rely heavily on arranged media events or press conferences for news ahead of possible story formulation ideas; i.e., investigative story ideas and conducting professional interviews (getting expert opinions where specialized knowledge required). However, there are some exceptions as seen from the variable that explored *Source Context* in the quantitative analysis where *Radio Veritas* and *Star Radio*’s first means of encountering their sources was through interviews or personal inquiries.

Additionally, the genuine or apparent fear of losing their employments or risking personal safety or well-being is at the core self-censorship by Liberian journalists and editors. Denis McQuail advises that: “The conflict of interests between the individual and the mass media is often resolved by invoking the public interest as mediating principle” (McQuail, 2002:162).

But I would say that a mass media or a journalist that relegates the public to the backbench through its or his activities may not see this ‘mediating principle’ worthy. The ‘monetized’

²⁷ According to the findings, some media institutions pay their journalists as low as twenty United States dollars a month which is less than half of the minimum salary for any Liberian in the civil service.

mass media which provide access based only on the power to purchase will have less space in the 'public sphere' where direct participation in national policy, and efforts to find solutions to pertinent issues in the society are held through open and free deliberation. It is of no doubt that a free and independent press system working in a liberalized society will engender the platform on which varying interest groups will have the opportunities to express their views or to have them heard.

7.2 Recommendations

Recognizing the potential of mass media in the nation-building process of Liberia through the provision of adequate, balance and impartial information, I hereby put forward the following recommendations:

7.2.1 An Alternative Media

There is a need for a truly public service broadcaster which would reflect the view of the general population in a non-partisan manner that serves the interest of the public. Such media should be independent from the government or the ruling party and must be open for alternative views and comments. It should also be independent of business or special interests and must be accountable only to the public through the national legislature. For the purpose of expediency, the state-owned media should be transformed into this Public Broadcaster with the legal and policy framework which will guarantee its editorial independence.

7.2.2 Education and Training of Journalists

The provision of adequate journalism education and trainings for Liberian media personnel is necessary to remedy the level of mediocrity within the mass media of the country. The need for basic training in news gathering and writing, investigative reporting and on the overall, ethical journalism is imperative judging from the findings of this study.

7.2.3 Journalists Salary and Wages

The need for the revision of basic salaries for journalists in the country has also been highlighted by this study. Journalists make as low less than half of the minimum salary set for civil service employees by the Liberian government²⁸. This responsibility should be assumed by the Press Union of Liberia, the umbrella group of journalists in the country.

7.3 Further Research

7.3.1 Unprofessional Practices by Liberian Media

There is a more or less general silence on the level of corruption imbibing the Liberian media; coming down to the question: ‘who shall watch the watch dog?’ Though conducting research in this domain may not prove easy, it could go a long way in setting certain professional standard for journalists in the country.

7.3.2 Political Pluralism in the Liberian Media (second aspect)

Since this study has been conducted using only radio stations, I would suggest that further research could be conducted using newspapers.

²⁸ The minimum salary for any Liberian in the civil service is US\$ 50.00 (fifty United States dollars) as of July 1, 2007; Source: Republic of Liberia, FY2007/2008 Budget Proposal Fact Sheets by the Office of Public Affairs and IT, Ministry of State and Presidential Affairs, Executive Mansion, Monrovia, Liberia: www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/200708budget_fact_sheet.pdf; Retrieved: April 18, 2008

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Appendix 1: Coding Schedule (News)

Variable1. Identification

000-999= *ELBC*

1000-1999= *Radio Veritas*

2000-2999= *Star Radio*

v.2 Medium

1=*ELBC*; 2= *Radio Veritas*; 3= *Star Radio*

v.3 Story date

1= Day one; 2= Day two; 3= Day three; 4= Day Four; 5= Day five; 6= Day six; 7=Day seven

v.4 Headline

1=yes; 2=no

v.5 Bulletin

1=yes; 2=no

v.6 Reportage

1=yes; 2=no

v.7 Rank Order

1= high; 2= Medium; 3= Low

v.8 Topic: designated by theme(s) of news

1= Domestic Politics

2= Violent Conflicts

3= Corruption

4= Health

5= Environment

6= Labour

7= Elections

8= Crime

9= Foreign relations

10= Economy

11= Religion

12= Culture

13= Sports

14= Media

15= Others

99= Not Applicable

v.9 Actor: designated by person(s) or group(s) referred to manifestly in text

1= Executive government

2= Ruling party

3= Legislative government

- 4= Opposition political parties or organizations
- 5= Independent institutions
- 6= Local Non-governmental organizations
- 7= Religious groups
- 8= International groups
- 9= Entrepreneurs
- 10= Professionals
- 11= General public
- 12= Opinion polls
- 13= Media
- 14= Others
- 99= Not Applicable

v.10 Source: designated by attribution

- 1= Executive government
- 2= Ruling party
- 3= Legislative government
- 4= Opposition political institutions
- 5= Independent institutions
- 6= Local Non-governmental groups
- 7= Religious groups
- 8= International groups
- 9= Entrepreneurs
- 10= Professionals
- 11= General public
- 12= Media
- 13= Others
- 14= No Source
- 99= Not Applicable

v.11 Source 2

- 1= Executive government
- 2= Ruling party
- 3= Legislative government
- 4= Opposition political institutions
- 5= Independent institutions
- 6= Local Non-governmental groups
- 7= Religious groups
- 8= International groups
- 9= Entrepreneurs
- 10= Professionals
- 11= General public
- 12= Media
- 13= Others
- 14= No Source
- 99= Not Applicable

v.12 Source 3

- 1= Executive government
- 2= Ruling party

- 3= Legislative government
- 4= Opposition political institutions
- 5= Independent institutions
- 6= Local Non-governmental groups
- 7= Religious groups
- 8= International groups
- 9= Entrepreneurs
- 10= Professionals
- 11= General public
- 12= Media
- 13= Others
- 14= No Source
- 99= Not Applicable

v.13 Source Context

- 1= Press conference/media event
- 2= Press Release
- 3= Conference/Workshop
- 4= Demonstration
- 5= Other Event
- 6= Interview by Journalist
- 7= News agency
- 8= Other media
- 9= Others

v.14 Source 2 Context

- 1= Press conference/media event
- 2= Press Release
- 3= Conference/Workshop
- 4= Demonstration
- 5= Other Event
- 6= Interview by Journalist
- 7= News agency
- 8= Other media
- 9= Others

v.15 Source 3 Context

- 1= Press conference/media event
- 2= Press Release
- 3= Conference/Workshop
- 4= Demonstration
- 5= Other Event
- 6= Interview by Journalist
- 7= News agency
- 8= Other media
- 9= Others

v.16 Length (second): Duration

Appendix 2: Coding Schedule (Talk Shows)

Variable1. Identification

- 00-10=*ELBC*
- 20-29=*Radio Veritas*
- 30-39=*Star Radio*

v.2 Medium

- 1=*ELBC*; 2=*Radio Veritas*; 3=*Star Radio*

v.3 Date

v.4 Topic (Issue discussed)

- 1= Domestic Politics
- 2= Violent Conflicts
- 3= Corruption
- 4= Health
- 5= Environment
- 6= Labour
- 7= Elections
- 8= Crime
- 9= Foreign relations
- 10= Economy
- 11= Religion
- 12= Culture
- 13= Sports
- 14= Media
- 15= Others
- 99= Not Applicable

v.5 Guest Profile

- 1= Executive government
- 2= Ruling party
- 3= Legislative government
- 4= Opposition political parties/groups
- 5= Independent institutions
- 6= Local Non-governmental groups
- 7= Religious groups
- 8= International groups
- 9= Entrepreneurs
- 10= Professionals
- 11= General public
- 12= Others

v.6 Presenter's Attitude toward Guest

- 1=Lenient; 2=Moderate; 3=Critical

v.7 Volume of Questions to Guest

- 1=Low; 2=Medium; 3=High

v.8 Public Input

1=Low; 2=Medium; 3=High

Appendix 3: Regrouped Categories and Sub-categories of Topics, Actors, and Sources

Nr.	Topics	Sub-categories
101	Domestic Politics	Reform of political institutions Organization of administration and political process
102	Violent Conflicts	Political or personal conflicts Events of Liberian civil war Issues of reconciliation in Liberia
103	Corruption	Corruption
104	Health	Health
105	Environment	Environment
106	Labor	Trade Union Workers Strike
107	Election	National Election
108	Security	Military and Paramilitary Security sector reform
109	Social Development	Education Water and Sanitation Electricity Cases of Social Problems and Poverty, Infrastructure, national reconstruction
110	Crime	Crime
111	Foreign Relations	Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Foreign Missions
112	Economy	Trade and Commerce Business Agriculture and Forestry Employment Finances Economy in General
113	Religion	Religion
114	Culture	Culture
115	Media	Media
116	Others	Topic Mix, accident, natural disaster
117	Sports	Sports

Appendix 4: Regrouped Categories and Sub-categories Actors

Nr.	Actors	(Sub-categories)
101	Executive government	President Government Central authorities Military Police Local administration
102	Ruling Party	Ruling political party Ruling party auxiliaries
103	Legislative government	Parliament
104	Opposition parties/groups	Opposition parties Opposition political stakeholders
105	Independent Institutions	Judiciary Independent commissions
106	Local Non-governmental groups	National NGOs National Rights groups
107	Religious groups	Religious groups
108	International groups	International NGOs Foreign political bodies Diplomatic missions Peace keeping forces
109	Economy	National entrepreneurs International business
110	Professionals	Culture Science/education/university
111	General public	Employees People from general public Ordinary citizen
112	Opinion Polls	Opinion Polls
113	Media	Media
114	Others	Others; including sports personalities, athletes

Appendix 5: Regrouped Categories and Sub-categories of Sources

Nr.	Sources	(Sub-categories)
101	Executive government	President Government Central authorities Military Police Local administration
102	Ruling Party	Ruling political party Ruling party auxiliaries
103	Legislative government	Parliament
104	Opposition parties/groups	Opposition parties Opposition political stakeholders
105	Independent Institutions	Judiciary Independent commissions
106	Local Non-governmental groups	National NGOs National Rights groups
107	Religious groups	Religious groups
108	International groups	International NGOs Foreign political bodies Diplomatic missions
109	Entrepreneurs	National entrepreneurs International business
110	Professionals	Culture Science/education/university
111	General public	Employees People from general public Ordinary citizen
112	Media	Media
113	Others	Others, including sports personalities and athletes

Appendix 6: A transcript of ELBC News bulletin on the arrest order for Former Liberian transitional head of state Gyude Bryant by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe

ELBC Newsline (Bulletin)
December 6, 2007

Criminal Court C Judge Boimah Konto has ordered the arrest and detention of former transitional government Chairman Gyude Bryant with immediate effect.

He also set aside Mr. Bryant's bond pending the determination of the economic sabotage charges brought against him by the Liberian government.

Judge Kontoe took the decision Thursday due to Former Chairman Bryant's failure to appear in court on two occasions for the hearing of the theft case despite the issuance of two notices of assignment by the court by legal proceedings.

State lawyers previously requested the court to have Mr. Bryant arrested and detained for breaching the terms and conditions of the bond filed on his behalf which secured his release pending the determination of the economic sabotage case.

Former Associate Justice Wilkins Wright who is also associating with state lawyers to prosecute Mr. Bryant also requested the court to summon the manager of the Accidental and Casualties Insurance Company to show cause why the company should not be held in contempt for its failure to ensure that its client Mr. Bryant appear in court in keeping with the conditions of the bond.

-end-

**Appendix 7 A transcript of ELBC reportage on the arrest order for
Former Liberian transitional head of state Gyude Bryant by
Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe**

ELBC Newsline (Presentation)
December 6, 2007

Presenter: Former NTGL Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant has been ordered arrested and detained at the Monrovia Central Prison by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe.

But just what led to this decision by Judge Kontoe, here is our Judicial Bureau Chief Fallah Matthews with the story:

Reporter: Judge Boimah Kontoe reached the decision Thursday based on the request by state lawyers.

The lawyers led by former Associate Justice of Liberia Cllr. Wilkins Wright, who is associating with state prosecuting attorneys requested the court to have former NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant arrested and detained at the Monrovia Central Prison for his reported failure to live to the terms and conditions of bond filed to secure his temporary release pending the determination of the economic sabotage case.

The lawyers submitted that Mr. Bryant's reported failure to honour two notices of assignment for the hearing of the economic sabotage case against him is tantamount to bill jumping.

The state lawyers therefore requested the court to also summon Mr. Bryant's surety to the bond, the management of Accident and Casualty Insurance Company to appear before the court and show cause why it should not be held in contempt for its reported failure to assure that Mr. Bryant appear in court in strict compliance with the terms and conditions of the criminal appearance bond previously filed to secure his temporary release pending the hearing of the case.

-End-

Appendix 8 A transcript of Radio Veritas news interview on Former Liberian Transitional Head of State Gyude Bryant's reaction to his arrest order issued by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe

Veritas News Update (Presentation)
December 6, 2007 (Denys Samukai)

Headline: <i>Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant reacts to Criminal Court C order of his arrest; says his trial is characterized by lot of flaws</i>

Presenter: Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant has reacted to report that Criminal Court 'C' has ordered his arrest for what the court said his refusal to accept a citation to appear in court for trial.

Mr. Bryant said he was prepared to surrender himself to the Supreme Court; but said his trial is characterized by flaws and abuse of his constitutional rights.

Mr. Bryant: If the courts of Liberia sent a writ of arrest for me, I will submit. On one occasion; the first time they came, I was not here because citations are served on lawyers and I don't have lawyers. I asked some friends who are lawyers and they told me since I don't have lawyers the court is supposed to give me 30 days to find lawyers... I don't know about that.... They are the government of the day. They have the right to arrest and if they arrest me, I will go and find out what the arrest is about.

Reporter: What is this news that your security has been reduced?

Mr. Bryant: Yes. On yesterday, the SSS wrote me to say that they are pulling out the detail here that I have had for quite some times; and replacing them with new people whom I don't know. I guess I knew one of them because he used to be at Robertsfield when I used to travel. That is not somebody I knew so well that I can entrust my security with during this time.

So the Director who brought the new detail I asked him to take them back because these were just dangerous times; these were difficult times for me that I needed to have a detail around me that I trust and I have confidence in. So he left the old detail and took the new one back. He however told the old detail to report at the Mansion the next morning.

Reporter: There are some interpretations that during your two-year transitional period you were very hasty to turn over the government even though that was the composition of the Accra Peace Agreement. There were those who perhaps wanted to prevail on to have an extension and you were very adamant that you

had specific period and the process of elections took place. Have you any regret?

Mr. Bryant: No whatsoever. It was the honourable thing to do and that is what we did. All of us... all of those guys even though we sometimes refer to them as rebels, those guys are more honourable than many of us parading the streets and corridors of government today. We had a mission to fulfil in two years and we fulfilled that mission. And it was only right and proper to turn the government over.

Reporter: The reward today is dragging you to court and perhaps as a former head of state this could not be embraced by yourself; how do you look at it?

Mr. Bryant: You know the process is being abused...and people working in the government paraded this town and country before as protectors of civil liberties....and for them to be doing this kind of things to me on charges that I can't see the evidence....it is their choice; that is their right to do what they want to do.

-End-

Appendix 9 A transcript of Star Radio News bulletin on the arrest order for Former Liberian transitional head of state Gyude Bryant by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe

Star Radio, Liberia Today (Bulletin)
December 6, 2007

Headline: <i>Criminal Court issues arrest order and prison commitment for former transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant'</i>

Criminal Court C has ordered the arrest and detention of former Transitional Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant.

According to our judicial correspondent, State Prosecutor asked the court to arrest Mr. Bryant for bail jumping.

The court accepted the state request on grounds that Mr. Bryant disrespected it by refusing to accept an assignment notice from the court.

Mr. Bryant reportedly wrote the court to give him 30 days to get a new defence team but the court denied ever receiving such communication.

The arrest and detention of the former transitional chairman will now lead him to the Monrovia central Prison.

Mr. Bryant is facing trial for allegedly causing financial loss to the state during his two years transitional period.

-End-

Appendix 10 A transcript of Star Radio news interview on the arrest order for Former Liberian transitional head of state Gyude Bryant by Criminal Court 'C' Judge Boimah Kontoe

Star Radio, Liberia Today (Presentation)
December 6, 2007

Headline: *Criminal Court issues arrest order and prison commitment for former transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant'*

Presenter: Criminal Court C has ordered the arrest and detention of formal Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant.

According to our judicial correspondent, state prosecutor asked the court to arrest Mr. Bryant for bill-jumping.

Our correspondent is Bruce Boweh; he is on the line. Hello Bruce.

Can we safely say Mr. Bryant is a fugitive right now?

Reporter: Bryant is a wanted man according to the court. Criminal Court C Judge released the order today for his re-arrest and subsequent detention. He is not going to be taken anywhere else but to the Monrovia Central Prison where is going to be detained until the determination of his case.

Presenter: As we speak, Bruce do you have any information as to the whereabouts of Mr. Bryant?

Reporter: Well, the last information I had was that Bryant was at his house when the sheriff went there yesterday and serve him the notice of assignment from the court that he refused which has sparked this entire saga. So I cannot tell right now whether he is there, but one thing that I am sure of is that the arrest order is out and it has been placed in hands of the sheriff of the court with a commitment. Probably the next few days...if they don't get Bryant by tonight, police will get involved. And anywhere they find Mr. Bryant, according to the arrest order, he is supposed to be arrested and detained at the Monrovia Central Prison.

Presenter: So he is a possible candidate now of the Monrovia Central Prison?

Reporter: Yes, of course; Mr. Bryant is a possible candidate. According to the court he should be detained because he has jumped bail and has bridged the criminal appearance bond. A criminal appearance bond is a bond that allows you to go home and appear in court anytime the court needs you. So if at all you have that

bond and you bridge it, obviously, the court has no other alternative but to set the bond aside. To speak, Bryant's bond has been set aside by the court and that is why is being sought for detention.

Presenter: Has the court said how many times has Mr. Bryant violated the terms of the bail?

Reporter: Well, we did not get any specific number as to how many times he did so but on three other occasions, I got reports that before this notice of assignment came out, Monday he should have gone to court; and the sheriff of the court tried, they could not get Mr. Bryant; Tuesday he should have gone to court also and he was not there. Three days in row they could not get him; and yesterday when they got him, he claimed he has written the court asking for 30 days to get another defence team. I went back to the court, searched the court documents and we could not find anything. In fact what we found from the court documents is Bryant's press statement in which he dismissed his lawyers. He claimed that the Supreme Court had decapitated his defence team. He said the suspended suspension of Cllr. T.C. Gould and Samuel Clarke would have tied their hands that they would not have the chance to robustly represent him in court; so that it why he dismissed them. But nothing else was seen asking the court for 30 days. If at all that was the case, he should have come to court because he could have represented himself and make an application. Besides the application, when the court sends for you and you know you are on a criminal appearance bond, you should come actually to tell the court why you can not do certain things. But you can't stay away and say because I have written the court so I can't come. The court calls that a gross disrespect to it as the state lawyers claimed also. So it is based on this that he has ordered him arrested and detained.

**Appendix 11A transcript of ELBC News bulletin on Education
Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of allegations of corruption
levied against him**

ELBC Newsline (Bulletin)
Dec 05, 2007

<p>Headline: <i>Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto refutes media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools</i></p>

Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has once more refuted media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools.

Speaking to *ELBC* at the Freeport of Monrovia, Dr. Korto called on his accusers to substantiate their claims through documentary evidence rather than what he called mere allegations.

He said his principal accuser; former presidential candidate in the 2005 general and presidential elections Dr. Joseph Woah-tee is poised to damage his character through negative media campaign.

According to the education minister, the two additional containers of computers that could increase the numbers of computers distributed to 4000 are yet to be unloaded.

Dr. Korto also led an array of local journalists to the Freeport of Monrovia where the two containers, 40-feet each are being kept; including a warehouse in JJY, Gardnersvile containing many computers.

Meanwhile, several County Educational Officers from Maryland, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Bong Counties have confirmed receiving computers from the Education Ministry.

However, most of them said they could not give the exact quantity of computer received on grounds that they were out of their respective offices.

-End-

Appendix 12 A transcript of ELBC reportage on Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of allegations of corruption levied against him

ELBC Newslines (Reportage)
Dec 05, 2007

Headline: *Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto refutes media reports linking him to the alleged sale of four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools*

Presenter: Last week several local dailies carried headlines in which Liberia's Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto was accused of selling several thousand computers intended for Liberian schools.

Dr. Korto on Wednesday reiterated call for his accusers to prove their allegation through facts rather than what he calls mere claims aimed at assassinating his character. We have a report:

Reporter: A contemporary Theologian is quoted as describing truth as something that has no grave and that truth once buried will one day resurrect.

The unnamed theologian's argument appears to be making its way into the nearly week-long accusation against Liberia's Information Minister Dr. Joseph Korto.

This is because an e-mail in the possession of *ELBC*, dated December 3, 2007 and believed to have come from Victor Paye who is alleged to be Dr. Korto's partner in the alleged scandal has denied ever accusing the education minister of selling computers.

A sentence in the e-mail reads and I quote: "I want to tell all of you that I Victor Paye has no dealing with Mr. Korto, neither his computer issue. I spent ten months in Liberia trying to establish my company and not a day that I ever spoke with Dr. Korto or met with him on any transaction".

If this communication is true, observers believe that chances for Dr. Korto to spew out all of the allegations are glaring.

As part of his clarification exercise, the Education Minister Wednesday took a number of local journalists to the Freeport of Monrovia where two containers, forty-feet each are still being kept including a warehouse in JJY, Gardnersville.

Dr. Korto: But as you see, one of those forty-foot containers by the time it is loaded from the warehouse in Rockville; from there to the Port; and from this port to the Freeport of Monrovia. By the time we get them here, one of those containers would have cost us pretty close to eight thousand dollars.

Reporter: He said based on the situation, government institutions were asked to make a minimum contribution.

Dr. Korto: I asked the ministries to pay one hundred dollars each to help us raise the money. The money received from the ministries is the one we are using now to bring in the remaining four containers that just arrived. There was an agreement for contribution. Now, I want you to go to these ministries and confirm with them. But all of the institutions, especially institutions that have received, received free.

Reporter: Meanwhile, several County Educational Officers from Maryland, Nimba, Grand Gedeh Grand Bassa and Bong among others confirmed receiving computers from the Education Minister.

They however said they could not give the exact quantity received on grounds that most of them were out of their respective offices.

The concerned County Education Officers spoke to *ELBC* Wednesday via mobile phone.

Dr. Korto's reaction comes in the wake of last week media reports in which he was accused of selling some four thousand computers intended for Liberian schools.

Meanwhile, investigation continues.

-End-

**Appendix 13 A transcript of Radio Veritas news excerpt on
Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of allegations of
corruption levied against him**

Veritas News Update (News Presentation)
December 5, 2007

Presenter: Dr. Joseph Woah-tee in the United States recently claimed that there was foul-play in the distribution of four thousand computers donated by the school system in the US State of Maryland.

Ever since Dr. Woah-tee's claim, the receiver of the donation, Education Minister Joseph Korto has been busy trying to disprove the claim.

Today, Dr. Korto took a team of reporters to the Freeport of Monrovia where the computers were in storage.

Dr. Korto: In Dr. Woah-tee's letter he said we received four thousand computers and sold them. So I wanted you first to see all computers received by us and have not gotten rid of. We have received two consignments of computers. The first consignment that we received came in five twenty-foot containers; totalling two thousand, two hundred and ninety nine. If you want to review this, I will show you and then you can add the figures. But these are the bill of lading; and you can look at them and be able to verify.

The two thousand two hundred and ninety-nine that came, the CPU is the most important part of a computer; it was two thousand two hundred and ninety nine. The monitors were less in number. The monitors were two thousand two hundred and twenty six. Now when these computers come like these, as you see them, they are used computers and they are brought in parts in the containers.

-End-

Appendix 14 A transcript of Star Radio news bulletin on Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of allegations of corruption levied against him

Star Radio, Liberia Today (Bulletin)
December 5, 2007

The Minister of Education has clarified that he received 2,291 computers and not 4,000 as being alleged.

Dr. Joseph Korto said the Ministry has already refurbished and distributed 2,101 of the computers.

The Education Minister said the computers were distributed to a number of educational and non-educational institutions across the country.

Minister Korto said the educational institutions were given the computers free of charge while non-educational institutions paid one hundred United States dollars per computer.

He told reporters the service fees were used to refurbish the computers.

The clarification comes in the wake of allegation by Dr. Joseph Woah-tee that Dr. Korto sold four thousand donated computers and pocketed the money.

-End-

Appendix 15 A transcript of Star Radio news interview on Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto's clarification of allegations of corruption levied against him

Star Radio, Liberia Today (Presentation)
December 5, 2007

Presenter: Since it was alleged that he sold computers donated to the country, Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto has been trying to clarify issues in a bid to save his reputation.

On Wednesday Dr. Korto took some media practitioners to Freeport of Monrovia, and one of the Ministry's warehouses on the JJY Community where computers donated to the Ministry are kept.

After the tour, Vasco Weagbe asked Dr. Korto what prompted his decision to take journalist on the tour.

Dr. Korto: I wanted to clear the air that there is nothing I am doing to profit from. I was accused of receiving and selling 4-thousand computers. And so I wanted to show the journalists that I have not received nor sold 4 thousand computers.

Reporter: How many computers have you received?

Dr. Korto: We have received two consignments of computers. In the first consignments we received in late December last year there were about 2,299 computers listed on the bill of landing. About 125 of the CPUs were not good. A total of 2,101 were refurbished and distributed. Those are the computers that have been distributed. The second consignment just came in four containers. We just unloaded two of the containers in the warehouse which I took the journalists to and they saw them. And two of the containers are still at the port. They have not even been cleared.

So when I am accused of receiving four thousand computers, only the first consignment that has been distributed. The second consignment which they have added onto the first consignment making it four thousand computers that I am accused of selling at 250 dollars each are still in the warehouse and in fact in containers at the Freeport. That is the reason why I took the journalists to go and see because they have been reporting that I have sold four thousand computers in Sierra Leone and Guinea; and I have pocketed 1 million dollars. But the journalists saw for themselves that the bulk of the computers have just arrived and I have not even cleared them from the port.

Reporter: Who donated these computers?

Dr. Korto: The Montgomery County School System donated the computers to the Liberian Development Foundation/the Ministry of Education. Let me explain why. Prior to my coming to Liberia, I lived in the United States. And I was operating this small non-profit organization and through that I was able to get donation of materials and resources and ship them to Liberia. For Example, I shipped

several container-loads of books and educational materials through the Catholic Church of Liberia for distribution to schools. When I came to Liberia, and saw that the University of Liberia did not have a computer lab, I started to seek donation of good used computers. I helped to establish the first computer lab for the university in 2003 with a total of about 85 computers. After that I also assisted several other colleges to establish their computer labs. After I became Minister of education, I went to the same sources that used to donate to me. So this time, from the two thousand one hundred and one computers that I have distributed, more than one thousand of them were donated to educational institutions and organizations.

Pilot computer labs were established in some of the schools.

Reporter: Non-educational institutions benefited from your distribution according to your list?

Dr. Korto: Yes

-End-

Appendix 16 Interview Guide for respondent interviews conducted in Liberia between January 4 and January 27, 2008.

Editorial Policy and Responsibility

- Do you have an Editorial Policy and how will you describe it?
- How would describe the level of freedom you enjoy as Editor?
- How do you perceive your station's role when it comes to the Liberal ideal media being a fourth estate; i.e. a critical and investigating institution of society?
- How do you draw up the balance between the critical role of the media and your responsibility as editor?

Newsroom Practice

- What are the characteristics of your audience?
- What sources do you usually turn to for news?
- What is your typical news structure?

Obstacles

- What do you see as main obstacles to the performance of a professional job at your station?

Appendix 17 Follow-up e-mail Questionnaire for interviewees (editors) sent out between March 15 and March 29, 2008.

1. How many journalists do you have in your news room? And what are their journalistic training backgrounds?
2. In what way do you think the level of training for your journalists is affecting the overall output of the news room?
3. What is the salary range (minimum & maximum) of journalists working in your news room?
4. How do you think the level of incentive for journalists is affecting the total output of your news room?
5. How does corruption in the Liberian media (often denied) affect your newsroom?

Appendix 18 List of Interviewees

1. Joseph T. Koon, News Director, ELBC
2. Edward Kennedy, News Editor, ELBC
3. Frank Sainworlar, Assistant Station Manager, Radio Veritas
4. Zoegar Z.Q. Jaynes, Editor, Radio Veritas
5. Wellington Geevon-Smith, Acting News Editor, Star Radio

**Appendix 19 Distribution of time in coverage among the sources by
the three radio stations**

ELBC

Sources	Time Received in Coverage (Second)	Frequency	Total Time (Second)
Executive government	45	17	765
	47	1	47
	52	1	52
	102	1	102
	112	1	112
	113	2	226
	131	1	131
	143	1	143
	199	1	199
	219	1	219
	245	1	245
	261	1	261
Grand Total	289	1	2791
Ruling party	138	1	138
Legislative government	45	3	135
	115	1	115
	133	1	133
	189	1	189
	257	1	257
Grand Total			829
Independent institutions	45	5	270
	136	1	136
	143	1	143
	225	1	225
	231	1	231
Grand Total			1005
Local non-governmental organizations	45	4	180
Religious groups	45	5	225
	139	1	139
Grand Total			364
International groups	45	3	135
	165	1	165
	191	1	191
	199	1	199
Grand Total			690
Entrepreneurs	45	1	45
	82	1	82
Grand Total			127
Professionals	45	3	135
	79	1	79

	177	1	177
	190	1	190
Grand Total			581
General public	45	1	45
	148	1	148
Grand Total			193
Media	45	1	45
Others	45	2	90
No source	45	3	135

Radio Veritas

Sources	Time Received in Coverage (Second)	Frequency	Total Time (Second)
Executive government	45	8	360
	64	1	64
	66	1	66
	73	1	73
	85	1	85
	90	1	90
	105	1	105
	114	1	114
	116	1	116
	147	1	147
159	1	159	
Grand Total			1379
Legislative government	45	2	90
	143	1	143
Grand Total			233
Opposition political institutions	45	5	225
	65	1	65
	103	1	103
	184	1	184
	187	1	187
Grand Total			764
Independent institutions	45	4	180
	119	1	119
	120	1	120
	249	1	249
Grand Total			668
Local non-governmental organizations	45	7	315
	60	1	60
	121	1	121
Grand Total			496
Religious groups	45	4	180
	94	1	94
Grand Total			274
International groups	40	1	40
	45	2	90
	62	1	62
	193	1	193
Grand Total			385
Entrepreneurs	45	2	90
	80	1	80
Grand Total			170
Professionals	89	1	89
	130	1	130
Grand Total			219
General public	45	1	45
	60	1	60
	76	1	76
	77	1	77
	86	1	86
	89	1	89
	107	1	107

	119	2	238
	130	2	260
Grand Total			1038
Media	45	6	270
	127	1	127
	156	1	156
	172	1	172
	183	1	183
Grand Total			908
Others	45	2	90
No source	45	1	45

Star Radio

Sources	Time Received in Coverage (Second)	Frequency	Total Time (Second)
Executive Government	45	16	720
	90	1	90
	174	1	174
	223	1	223
	250	1	250
	253	1	253
	270	1	270
	285	1	285
	297	1	297
	299	1	299
	317	1	317
	329	1	329
	405	1	405
Grand Total			3912
Ruling party	45	1	45
	133	1	133
	150	1	150
	203	1	203
	255	1	255
Grand Total			786
Legislative government	45	1	45
	120	1	120
	256	1	256
Grand Total			421
Opposition political institutions	45	3	135
Independent institutions	45	5	225
	221	1	221
	249	1	249
	250	1	250
	388	1	388
Grand Total			1333
Local non-governmental organizations	45	3	135
Religious groups	45	2	90
	225	1	225
Grand Total			315
International groups	45	3	135
	485	1	485
Grand Total			620
Entrepreneurs	45	1	45
	127	1	127
	174	1	174
	187	1	187
Grand Total			533
Professionals	45	2	90
	105	1	105
	168	1	168
	208	1	208
Grand Total			571
General public	45	5	225

	124	1	124
	133	1	133
	345	1	345
	479	1	479
	487	1	487
Grand Total			1793
Media	180	1	180
	262	1	262
	649	1	649
Grand Total			1091
Others	45	1	45
	70	1	70
	139	1	139
Grand Total			254
No source	45	2	90