The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

THE PATRON'S PRESS:

AN EXAMINATION OF BROADCAST PRESS FREEDOM IN THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA BETWEEN 1976 AND 1986

A Thesis in

Speech Communication

by

Ronald Joseph Shope

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 1995

We approve the thesis of Ronald Joseph Shope.

Date of Signature

Richard L. Barton
Associate Professor of Communications
Thesis Advisor
Chair of Committee

June 12, 1995

Richard B. Gregg
Professor of Speech Communication

June 12, 1995

Thomas W. Benson
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Rhetoric

June 12, 1995

John S. Nichols
Associate Professor of Communications

June 12, 1995

Dennis S. Gouran
Professor of Speech Communication
Head of the Department of Speech Communication

ABSTRACT

I spent ten years in the Republic of Liberia West Africa with Radio ELWA. During my tenure of service I observed a continuing conflict between the government and the press which many times resulted in direct government intervention in the affairs of the press.

The major issue was press freedom. It appeared as if the government had its concept of press freedom, while the press had another. The guiding question for this dissertation, therefore is as follows: "What were the patterns of broadcast press freedom found in the Republic of Liberia between 1976 and 1986?"

The theoretical framework for this study was based on two interactive matrices of determinants. The first was a theoretical matrix based on power, control, authority, and political stability. The second, was a matrix of practical determinants taken from Liberian culture which reflected the determinants in the theoretical matrix. This matrix consisted of patronage, which reflected power, secrecy, which reflected control, and credibility, which reflected authority. Political stability was a constant in both matrices.

The data for the study consisted of experiences I had during my ten years working at Radio ELWA in which there were conflicts between the station and the Liberian government regarding news content. These

experiences were written as personal historical narratives and then analyzed to determine the factors which generated the conflict between the Liberian media and the government. Of particular interest were elements of technical form and the news appeals which created the perception to the government that the press was engaging in provocative discourse.

The study reveals that there are two patterns of press freedom which existed in Liberia during the period. These were defined as "The Patron's Press," and "The Journalists' Press." Through these patterns of press freedom the press acted as a mediator between the Liberian government and the people of Liberia by performing two "rituals" of journalism which were "constructing news content" and "defending news content."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It was a warm April morning in 1976 when I arrived in Liberia, West Africa. I was a career missionary assigned to the Society of International Ministries' (SIM) Radio ELWA, whose call letters stand for Eternal Love Winning Africa. During my ten years in Liberia I held many job assignments including a year as Acting Broadcasting Director. Through these experiences I became a participant in the media system of a developing country.

As a student of international mass communications, I quickly became interested in the factors that influenced the development of the press system in Liberia. Liberia is an interesting country to study because unlike most developing countries it was never colonized by a western power. What follows is a brief political and press history of Liberia and the issues that arise out of that history.

Liberia - A Brief Political History

The modern nation of Liberia was established by freed Afro-American slaves who came to the country under the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1822. The aim of ACS was to return the slaves to their homelands in Africa

The freed slaves were eventually referred to as "Americo-Liberians." In 1847, the ACS granted independence to the young colony. While Britain was the first to recognize the new nation, the United States became its closest economic and political ally.

The constitution of Liberia was modeled after the United States' constitution. It established a multi-party system and included guarantees of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. Liebenow writes,

> . . . the Liberian Constitution of 1847 made no specific references to political parties or interest groups. "Factionalism" and "politics," moreover, seemed to have the same negative connotations associated with these words that were held by James Madison in his tenth Federalist paper and George Washington in his Farewell Address. Interest groups and parties, nevertheless, were found to be as necessary to the functioning of the First Republic as they had been to its American antecedent. (1987, p. 89)

Except for the first few years of its existence, Liberia had been a one party state in which one political party or a military government dominated the political process. The True Liberian or Republican party was the first party to come to power. Soon, other political parties began, which led to inter-party rivalry that continued until 1877 when the True Whig Party (TWP) came to power with the election of Anthony Gardiner. From 1877 until the coup of 1980, the TWP dominated Liberian politics despite the constitutional framework of a multi-party political system.

In 1980, Samuel Doe, a Master Sergeant in the Liberian army, ousted the TWP from power in a military coup. Doe and his government, the People's

Redemption Council (PRC) ruled Liberia until 1984, when Doe became President of the Interim National Assembly (INA). The INA was a transition government that was formed following the referendum vote on the 1984 constitution. Doe continued as President of the INA until January 6, 1986, when he became President of the civilian government following his victory in the October 1985 elections.

Preceding the October 1985 elections, Doe and the PRC lifted the ban on political activities. For the first time since the 1980 coup, political parties were permitted to organize. Doe's party, the National Democratic Party of Liberia, (NDPL) was certified first. The certification process was long and complicated. It appeared as if the process was designed to discourage the certification of opposition parties.

According to the official vote count in the disputed election of 1985, the NDPL, led by Doe, captured the majority of seats in the legislature. Following the election the opposition parties attempted to form a loose coalition known as the "Grand Coalition." The Coalition was led by Gabriel Kpolleh, the founder of the Liberian Unification Party (LUP). Doe challenged the formation of the Grand Coalition declaring that since it was organizing for political purposes it was therefore subject to the procedures of party organization established by the election commission (Liebenow 1987). If it failed to do this, the Grand Coalition would be considered an illegal political party. In addition, the media was forbidden to broadcast stories regarding the coalition and its activities until it was registered. Doe's actions indicated that his government would attempt to continue to exercise direct influence in the political process. Doe and the NDPL remained in power until he was killed in the Civil War in October 1990.

A Selective Historical Overview of the Liberian Press

The Development of Print Media

Like many African countries, Liberia had both government and independent newspapers. Government newspapers were operated or subsidized by the government and editorially reflected the government's viewpoint. Independent newspapers were funded and operated by private ventures. Editorially, they often carried opposition viewpoints.

Initially, Liberia's press began as an independent private press. The first newspaper appeared in 1826 when Charles Force published the *Liberian Herald* on a printing press donated by the Boston Auxiliary of the American Colonization Society (Rogers 1986, p. 275). After Force died, the colonial government took charge of the press and appointed John Russwurm, the Colonial Secretary, as editor. The paper continued under Russwurm until in 1835 when some members of the public became unhappy because of his close association with the outgoing Colonial Agent Dr. Joseph Mechlin, Jr. who gave Russwurn "general financial control of the colony and complete control of the *Herald*" (Rogers 1986, p. 276). Russwurn was eventually dismissed and became the governor of the newly created colony of "Maryland in Liberia" (Rogers 1986, p. 277).

Hilary Teage, who held the position of Colonial Secretary, was then appointed editor and eventually became the owner of the paper in 1839. According to Rogers, many Liberian journalists have played a dual role as journalists and government officials. He notes,

> . . . the government has not always owned or controlled the press as other writers would have us believe. The fact that some editors were also politicians did not mean outright collusion with the government in power nor lack of criticism of government actions in their papers. (1986, p. 277)

Teage was a strong defender of the government. While other papers attacked the government, the *Herald* defended it. There were those, however, who questioned whether the *Herald* was truly an independent paper. For example, in a letter to the Secretary of ACS dated November 12, 1839, Jacob W. Prout wrote,

> . . . the society or the Government has made Mr. Teage a present of two fine printing presses to hold his tongue and even invited him to sign a pledge that he would not (as I consider it) write the truth and use it to their injury. (in Rogers 1986, p. 277)

The paper continued under Teage until 1868. It reappeared in 1870-1871 and 1881. It was revived in 1930 and continued until 1943. It appeared for the last time in 1964 (Rogers 1986, p. 275).

During the mid 1800's the number of newspapers continued to increase. By 1859, Liberia boasted six newspapers with the arrival of the Liberia *Christian Advocate* (Rogers 1986, p. 275). This trend continued into the 20th century. For example, in 1939 the *Liberian Star* began as an independent newspaper, but later its editorial policy was influenced by the TWP. The paper folded in 1968. In 1946, the *Liberian Age* became the nation's first biweekly (Nelson 1985, p. 232) and later became the official newspaper of the TWP (Nelson 1985, p. 233). It later folded after the 1980 coup. In 1950 C.C. Dennis, Sr. a member of the

Liberian legislature, began the *Daily Listener*. While the paper was owned by Dennis, it was also subsidized by the Liberian government (Nelson 1985, p. 233). The *Listener* with its ties to the Tubman government and its editorial policies attacked other independent newspapers that led to the suppression of freedom of the press (Rogers 1986, p. 281). Many newspapers folded during this time which included *The Friend*, the *Independent*, and the *African Nationalist* (Rogers 1986, p. 281).

Following the coup of 1980, the *Liberian Age* was replaced by the *New Liberian* which became the official newspaper of the Doe government. Before the coup, the paper had been published by the Ministry of Information (Nelson 1985, p. 233-234). During that time, many new independent newspapers also appeared. These included *The Sun Times*, *Footprints Today*, the *Sunday People*, the *Liberian Inaugural*, the *Sunday Express*, *We*, *Weekend News*, and the *Daily Observer*. The largest was the *Daily Observer*, which sold 10,000 copies per issue (Maja-Pearce 1990). Other independent papers include *The Herald* which was published by the Catholic Church in Liberia, and *The News*, which claimed to be independent but was published under the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the Ministry of Information in association with the African Development Bank (Maja-Pearce 1990). Also during the early 1980's rural newspapers were launched in the cities of Gbarnga and Sanniquellie with funding provided by international agencies (Nelson 1985, p. 234).

The Development of Broadcast Media

Like newspapers, Liberia's electronic media also consisted of government and private radio stations. Radio in Liberia began on an experimental basis in 1949 when an American medial doctor on an assignment for the U.S. government started a small medium-wave radio station as a hobby (Head 1974, p. 102). The government gave the doctor a subsidy to keep the station on the air. In 1959, the government negotiated a contract with Rediffusion of Britain to set up a radio station. At that time, the government established the Liberian Broadcasting Company (LBC). The station, which would become known as ELBC, went on the air in 1960 and was boasted as Africa's first commercial radio station (Head 1974, p. 102). The government eventually took over total control of LBC in 1971. LBC was a public corporation in which government owned the stock and derived the economic benefits of the corporation. The government also chose the members of the Board of Directors and the Director General. The balance of the funding for LBC came from advertising. In September of 1980, the government changed the corporate name to the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS).

LBS offered radio services and one television service. The first was station ELBC, which had services on medium-wave, FM, and short-wave. It was a general service that originated all of its programming in Monrovia and consisted of music, announcements, religious programs, commercials, and news. LBS maintained its own news staff who gathered news and produced public affairs programming. ELBC had broadcast services both in English and many of Liberia's vernacular languages.

The second radio service offered by LBS was a development service known as the Liberian Rural Communications Network (LRCN). LRCN began as a joint project between the Government of Liberia and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was established in September 1980 through government Decrees 20 and 21 (Laflin and Mackie 1980).

LRCN was a system of three radio stations located in the rural cities of Voinjama, Lofa County; Zwedru, in Grand Gedeh County; and Gbarnga, in Bong County. While 80% of the programs were produced at the stations, there was also a central production unit located at LBS headquarters in Monrovia. These three stations covered about 70% of Liberia's rural population (Laflin and Mackie 1989). While initial talks began in 1977, it was not until 1986 that the first program was broadcast. The network's development was guided by a steering committee. I served on this committee for about two years. One of the main concerns of the steering committee during its existence was that LRCN might be used for political rather than development purposes. The steering committee was dissolved at the end of 1985 when the daily operation of LRCN was supervised by a technical committee.

Each LRCN station carried programming in English and four to five Liberian vernaculars. According to Michael Laflin, of the International Institute of Research, LRCN was a credible source of development information for Liberians in the coverage area (Laflin and Mackie 1991). Programming consisted of development issues, local music and local news. Liberian news was relayed from Monrovia over ELBC, the national radio station.

Television in Liberia began in 1964 when station ELTV went on the air. Grant (1965) reveals that the station was constructed in only twelve days, six

hours and six minutes (in Head 1974, p. 103)! ELTV's primary coverage area was Monrovia, Liberia's capital. The signal, however was also broadcast on repeaters in Bomi Hills, about 40 miles from Monrovia, Mano River, on the Sierra Leone border, and in Harbel, the site of the Firestone rubber plantation about 45 miles from Monrovia. Programming was broadcast each evening and afternoon and evening on weekends and consisted of both local and foreign entertainment programs, religious programs, news, cultural, and public affairs programming. Programming was in English with the exception of newscasts in the vernacular languages. The station was funded through government subsidies and advertising revenues.

In addition to the government radio service, there were a number of privately owned radio stations. The oldest of these was Radio ELWA, whose call letters stand for "Eternal Love Winning Africa." The station was begun in 1954 by missionaries from the Society of International Ministries (SIM), formerly The Sudan Interior Mission. Radio ELWA was a full-service station with broadcasts on the medium-wave and short-wave bands. Even though Radio ELWA was primarily a religious station, the government mandated in its charter that the station must also provide news programming. Radio ELWA also maintained its own news staff and relayed international news from the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and from the Voice of America (VOA). In addition to stories from its reporters, ELWA also gathered local news from newspapers and from the Liberian News Agency (LINA).

Radio was only one of the primary ministries of the SIM in Liberia. Other ministries included education, village heath, church planting, evangelism and medicine. For example, on the same campus as the radio station, the mission

maintained a hospital that included surgical facilities and operated a school for children from Kindergarten through sixth grade. Each of these ministries including radio was designed to present a Christian witness to the people of Liberia. Since radio was a ministry which could have instantaneous national impact, the programming decisions which were made on Radio ELWA could ultimately have an impact on the other outreaches of the mission.

Throughout its history, the SIM in Liberia sought to maintain a close identification with the Liberian people. While many missionaries came from the United States, the U.S. government never interfered in Radio ELWA programming decisions. Discussions with U.S. Embassy personnel revolved around technical matters such as broadcast equipment and international short-wave frequencies, or about matters which affected the safety and security of American missionaries.

Due to the Liberian civil war, many newspapers and radio stations had either had to close, or operate on a limited basis. Radio ELWA, while still on the air, has a much more limited schedule than it did during my tenure in Liberia.

Problems of Liberia's Press

While it appears that Liberia's press developed pluralistically, its independent press struggled to exist for three reasons. First, independent newspapers struggled financially. Rogers (1986) did not find "a record of a financially successful newspaper enterprise in more than a century of Liberian journalism" (p. 279). Many editors of independent papers had to subsidize the paper by doing printing or by taking other employment. The second factor was

limited readership mainly due to Liberia's low literacy rate of less than 20% (Rogers 1986, p. 280). Finally, there was direct government involvement in press affairs. This occurred in two areas. First, the government issued radio licenses through the Ministries of Information, and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication. Politically, these ministries were directly associated with the executive branch of the government. The ministers were appointed by the Head of State. This is different from the Federal Communications Commission in the U.S., which is an independent government agency whose commissioners are appointed by the President and must be approved by the Senate.

The second area of direct involvement was in media content. The government through the Ministry of Information regulated media affairs using laws and decrees. Violations of these laws were handled directly through the Ministry of Information or the Head of State rather than through legal channels and could result in the closure of facilities, fines, imprisonment, and verbal or physical harassment of reporters and editors. While Liberian historians disagree when systematic suppression of the press began, most agree that it was underway during the administration of William V.S. Tubman in 1943 and continued throughout the TWP and Doe governments. (Liebenow 1987, p. 93)

There are numerous examples of direct intervention both in private and government newspapers, and private radio stations. I will cite key instances of such involvement from the *Daily Observer*, the *Sun Times*, the *Liberian Star*, and radio stations ELWA and ELCM.

The *Daily Observer* newspaper was closed twice during its first year of publication in 1981, and another three times during the next four years. This culminated in a 22 month ban beginning in January of 1985, the year of the

elections. Soldiers raided the offices, ordered the staff out, and padlocked the doors (Liberian Diaspora 1990). The facilities of the *Daily Observer* were mysteriously burned in early 1990.

In addition to actions against the *Observer*, the *Sun Times* newspaper was fined $3,000 in September of 1986. This came about when it published a story about a call by a women's group in the U.S. for the suspension of U.S. aid to Liberia until the Doe government was removed (Liberian Diaspora 1990). When the full amount wasn't paid, the paper was closed until May of 1987. It was closed again in April of 1988.

The government also intervened in the affairs of government owned newspapers. For example, in 1966 during the Tubman Administration, the editor of the *Liberian Star*, the government newspaper, was imprisoned for "improprieties." These improprieties were "never clearly defined" (Liebenow 1987, p. 93).

Broadcasters also had their share of encounters with the government. At Radio ELWA we were called to the Ministry of Information numerous times regarding news programming. On two of these occasions we were asked to bring our station license for review. I will detail these encounters in Chapter Four. Also, the Catholic radio station, ELCM had its license revoked on June 15, 1989, because it failed to release a transcript of a broadcast regarding the deaths of four persons at the Liberia-Malawi soccer match.

The Focus of this Research

From this brief overview of political and press history, the relationship between the government and the press could be described as "adversarial." One term which has been used to describe the types of restrictions placed on the Liberian press is "censorship." For example, Hachten (in Hawks 1992) notes that in most African countries, reporters are subject to censorship either directly through bureaucratic processes, or indirectly through restrictions on reporting. Kenyan journalist Hilary Ng'weno notes,

> In respect to the all pervading power of government, nothing has really changed from the bad old days of colonialism. Only the actors have changed: the play remains the same. Instead of a colonial governor, you have a president or a field marshal. . . . Newspapers were taken over and those which were totally opposed to being incorporated into the government propaganda machinery were closed down. (in Hawks 1992, p. 40)

Andoh (in Martin and Hiebert 1990) notes that even as an African journalist, his access to information was restricted by the availability of "official spokesmen" whom he said were "public relations officers attached to government departments" (p. 273).

These examples of direct government intervention in the affairs of the press by a government politically dominated by one party raises the issue of "press freedom." Dennis and Merrill (1991) define "press freedom" as " the right to communicate ideas, opinions, and information through the printed word without government restraint" (p. 5). If we use this definition we would have to conclude that there is not press freedom in Liberia.

Merrill (1989) notes, however, that each country has a measure of press freedom which he characterizes as state freedom, personal freedom, and institutional freedom. Under state freedom, the state controls the information channels through editorial policies, and at times, overt intervention into press affairs. The purpose of state control is to protect the ruling class or to protect the society from exploitation from outside interests. Personal freedom focuses on the freedom given to the journalist to make personal decisions about what to write and report (1989, p. 119). Many would equate personal freedom with "press freedom" and would evaluate press systems according to the amount of personal freedom which is permitted.

Finally, institutional freedom focuses on the power of the media managers to control the flow of information using editorial policies. Individual journalists relinquish their individual freedom in favor of policies established by the institution. They report and write their stories according to these policy guidelines. To some degree, each category of freedom exists in every press system, but there is usually one dominant category.

At the root of each of these perspectives is the issue Fredrick (1993) terms, "The Right to Communicate." This issue, which evolved out of international law, can be used to compare media systems internationally. Fredrick (1993) notes that there are conflicting views on this issue which reflect cultural and political differences. The first view is a western view, which holds that "individuals can exercise their human rights in association with other humans" (Fredrick 1993, p. 257). A second is a socialist approach, which states that "rights belong collectively to society and not to individual citizens" (Fredrick 1993, pp. 257-258). A third approach centers on the individual as a member of

society. This is the approach taken by developing countries including ones in Africa. Fredrick notes,

> As in many cultures, in Africa a person is not an isolated individual, but rather a member of a larger social group. This contrasts with the Western view of the individual, wherein a person is perceived as having a unique identity, and a group is merely a collection of individuals. The other distinction is that a "people" is different from the state, which often cannot be counted upon to protect basic rights (p. 258).

In Africa, therefore, there is a "people's" right to communicate. Kiwanuka (in Fredrick 1993) notes that, "The main attributes of peoplehood are . . . commonality of interests, group identity, distinctiveness and a territorial link (p. 258). Each of these perspectives on the "right to communicate" politically and culturally define the relationship between the government and the press which characterizes a pattern of press freedom. Kenneth Best, the editor of the *Daily Observer*, wrote in an editorial during the Liberian Civil War of 1990,

> . . . the press is only a mirror of the society it serves. It reflects the types of images it creates for itself. It is sad and regrettable that no matter what it does, the Liberian press can do no more nor any less than what the society creates for itself in its own image (1990, p. 2)

During my ten years in Liberia I was able to observe the relationship between the government and the electronic media as a working member of the Liberian press. The guiding question, therefore, for this dissertation will be as follows: "What were the patterns of broadcast press freedom found in the Republic of Liberia between 1976 and 1986?" This question can be addressed by first formulating a

set of determinants from press theory and Liberian culture which define the characteristics of press freedom in Liberia. This socio-political framework provides a background from which to examine my personal encounters with the government regarding news content. These encounters will be written as narratives and will be analyzed to determine the way in which the packaging and the viewpoints expressed in the news content contributed to the conflict between Radio ELWA or other journalists and the Liberian government. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the patterns for understanding the Liberian press system revealed through the application of this method to my experiences with the Liberian press.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Altschull (1995) compares world press systems to movements of a symphony. He notes,

> In this symphony of the press we can identify three movements, each containing a basic theme, through also numerous variations on that theme. (1995, p. 418)

Altschull labels the three movements, "market," "communitarian," and "advancing" because these labels are less value laden than the traditional labels such as "Libertarian" and "Communist" found in normative press theory (1995, p. 419). In addition to these major themes, there are variations that are peculiar to a particular society (Altschull p. 418). McQuail contends,

> While each society is likely to have a detailed and distinctive version of normative theory, there exist also a set (or sets) of more general principles that can be used to classify different national cases. (1987, p. 109)

Each of the movements and subsequently the variations define the relationship between the government and the press. This relationship mirrors the political system of the country and describes the conditions under which the press is responsible to serve the people of that country. These conditions dictate the parameters of press freedom in that society. Merrill contends that "When a press system does not mirror its country's political philosophy, it is then irresponsible" (1983, p. 27).

For example, market countries perceive the press as a "watchdog of government acts" (Altschull 1995, p. 426). The press, therefore, is perceived as being outside the control of the government. Communitarian societies perceive the press as a "creature" of government and should support the collective doctrine of the society (Altschull 1995, p. 426). In Advancing countries, such as Liberia, the press is perceived as being "partners of the government" and is described by Bode Oyewolo as the "twin agents of socioeconomic progress" (In Altschull 1995, p. 426).

The partnership between Liberia's press and the government can be understood by examining the basis for Liberia's political philosophy. This will be accomplished by constructing two interactive matrices. The first identifies theoretical determinants that form the basis of political philosophy. The second identifies Liberian and African political, religious, and cultural concepts that reflect the theoretical determinants. These two matrices will be called "Theoretical Determinants" and "Practical Determinants." The matrix of Theoretical Determinants is composed of power and its dimensions, control and authority, and political stability. The matrix of Practical Determinants is composed of

Patronage, Secrecy, and Credibility, and Political Stability. The balance of this chapter is devoted to developing each of these matrices.

Theoretical Determinants

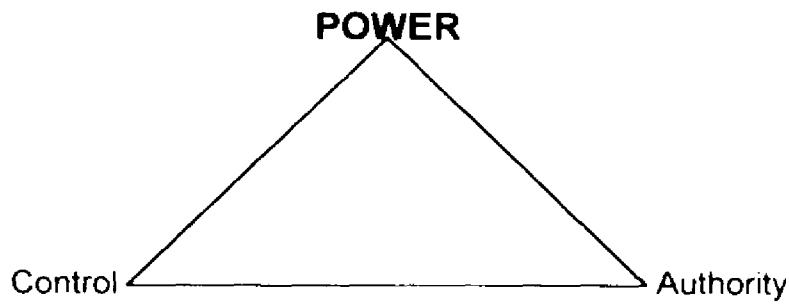
The Concept of Power

The key to understanding the philosophy of any political system is to examine its concept of power. Kelvin (1970) defines power as "situations in which the behavior of one individual is partly determined by the actions of another" (p. 171). Weber expands on this definition by adding that power is "a person's ability to impose his will upon others despite resistance" (in Blau 1974, p. 40). These definitions lead to two observations regarding power. First, power is a relationship which can result in influence. The relationship could involve a supervisor and a subordinate, or the government and a social institution such as the press. Second, the person who is building influence must have access to resources to build power.

There are two ways to use the resources of power. Weber's definition infers that the resources can be used to produce involuntary compliance while Kelvin's definition implies that they can be used to produce voluntary compliance. These two definitions outline the two dimensions of power, control and authority. The relationship between power, control and authority is diagrammed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

The Relationship Between Power Control and Authority



Control

Control is defined by Altschull as "purposive influence toward a predetermined goal" (1995, p. 49). For example, the goals of an organization are a reflection of the mission statement, while the constitution reflects the ideals or goals of a society.

In organizations, supervisors can use the resources of power to influence subordinates to accomplish the goals of the organization by giving rewards or administering punishments. Similarly, in society, political and economic resources can be used to reward or punish individuals or institutions in the society. This includes the press. Press controls take the form of legal restrictions, economic sanctions, and direct censorship (Merrill 1983). Examples of each of these controls can be seen during the TWP and Doe governments.

Legal Restrictions

Legal restrictions were designed to stifle public political criticism of the TWP and the Doe governments. Two notable examples of these restrictions were the "sedition laws" written under the TWP government, and Decree 88A issued under the Doe government. These laws were originally designed to apply to public speaking situations. Later, however, they were applied to the press.

Economic Restrictions

Economic restrictions take the form of taxes on printing supplies or on newspapers and magazines. In June of 1985 the Liberian government imposed a 100% tax on *West Africa* magazine following a June 17th interview with Brigadier General Thomas Quiwonkpa (*West Africa* December 16, 1985, p. 2625). This tax was in addition to the 15% tax imposed on publications. Editor-in-Chief, Kay Whiteman visited with the Minister of Information in an attempt to have the tax repealed and to attempt to collect over $6,000 in advertising fees that the government owed the magazine. Following the meeting, Whiteman wrote,

> I left after a week sadly convinced that the lifting of the tax and honoring of the debt were conditional on a move favorable coverage of the Doe regime in *West Africa*. (*West Africa* December 16, 1985, p. 2625)

Direct Censorship

A third means of control used by the government was direct involvement in the affairs of the press. Direct involvement is not unique to Liberia. For example, in Zimbabwe, the government selected journalists on the basis of party loyalty to assure that the views they communicated were consistent with those of the ruling party. Zaffiro (1986) observes that following independence the staff of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting System (ZBC) were selected from persons loyal to the ruling party the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU)(PF)), rather than on the basis of expertise. This government borrowed this idea from the white minority days of Rhodesia. The government also established its own news network, the Zimbabwe InterAfrica News Agency (ZIANA). According to the Deputy Director of ZIANA, Farayi Minyunki, "through ZIANA, the government will be able to achieve uniformity of ideology, placing emphasis on presentation of events which illustrate socialist transformation" (Zaffiro 1986, p. 133).

The TWP and Doe governments used direct involvement to overtly kill a story. The measures the government used included imprisoning journalists, closing newspapers or broadcast facilities, and requesting journalists be fired.

For example, the government held the publisher and sports editor of *Footprints Today* incommunicado for two months in the Post Stockade in Monrovia for filing a lawsuit against the Ministry of Information (*Liberian Diaspora* 1990). Rufus Darpoh, the editor of the *Sun Times* was beaten with a water hose during an interrogation in 1984 for "allegedly printing anti-government articles for the foreign press." In particular, the government banned *West Africa* magazine

following the publication of an article in the December 1985 edition regarding the death of journalist, Charles Gbenyon (*Liberian Diaspora* 1990)

The government closed the *Daily Observer* twice during its first year for publishing letters critical of the government's ban on student leaders and the filth found in Liberia's capital city, Monrovia (Maja-Pearce 1990, p. 58). *Index on Censorship* reports that the paper was closed another three times over the next four years. Two other independent newspapers, the *Sun Times* and *Footprints Today* also experienced closure.

Radio stations were also subject to direct involvement by the government. The government closed ELCM in 1989 for failing to provide transcripts to the government of a news story it had aired regarding deaths that occurred during the soccer game between Liberia and Malawi. While Radio ELWA was never closed, the government issued numerous warnings regarding news stories. In addition to the warnings, the Head of State instructed Radio ELWA management to fire its chief news editor. This occurred following the October 1985 elections. This incident will be detailed in Chapter Four.

Authority

In addition to control, the resources of political power can be used to build authority. Blau (1974) notes that authority involves the ". . . unconditional willing obedience on the part of the subordinates" (p. 41). The subordinates perform their duties because they recognize and respect the authority of the supervisor.

There are three sources of authority. These are, heredity, personality, and laws (Weber in Blau p. 42). Authority based on heredity is called "traditional authority." Traditional authority is inherited through a royal line and is considered sacred, or pre-ordained. It sometimes is characterized as "the divine right of kings" and existed before the modern states.

Authority based on personality is called "charismatic" authority. The source for authority is the "mission" of the leader. The mission of the leader is sometimes viewed as "being inspired by divine or supreme powers (in Blau 1974, p. 42)." Finally, authority based on laws is called "legal authority."

Each of these sources of authority has been present in the Liberian social system. Before the freed slaves arrived, there was traditional authority that came through the lineage of the chief and elders. The freed slaves who established a government based on the rule of law used laws as their source of authority. During the coup of 1980, Doe exercised charismatic authority by successfully overthrowing the TWP and establishing a new era in Liberian political history.

These sources of influence enable those in power to exercise personal influence on members or groups in an organization or in society that results in involuntary compliance. When the supervisor or the government removes the controls, the behavior of the subordinates may revert to its original state. This indicates that the subordinates, or members of the society, do not recognize the authority of those in power as "legitimate" (see Blau 1974, p. 40).

Legitimate authority requires the subordinates or members of the society to transform the beliefs and values of those in power into a "collective conscience" (Blau 1974, p. 52). As a result, obedience occurs out of a sense of duty, rather than under duress.

Building legitimate authority involves two-steps. First, the supervisor must use the resources of power to furnish individuals and groups with "services" that the subordinates view as a benefit to them. Blau states,

> Managerial practices that advance the *collective* interest of subordinates create *joint* obligations. When social consensus develops among subordinates that the practices of the manager contribute to their common welfare and that it is in their obligations to him, shared feelings of loyalty and group norms tend to emerge that make compliance with his directives a *social* obligation that is enforced by the subordinates themselves. The subordinate's approval of managerial practices that benefit them jointly gives rise to social norms that legitimize managerial authority. (Blau 1964, p. 207)

In organizations this can occur in several ways. One example is the practice of developing "Quality Circles." Quality Circles permit employee input into solutions for problems and organizational goals. Since the employees have proposed the solutions, they will enforce the directives with little or no control from management because the solutions reflect their beliefs and values. Communication plays a key role in this process. The supervisor builds an interpersonal relationship with the subordinate and attempts to convince the subordinate that he or she can meet some of the needs of the subordinates.

The supervisor can also create obligations by providing subordinates with training or expertise to help them in areas where they are inadequate (Blau 1971, p. 52). When the subordinates perceive that the services the supervisor offers are beneficial to them they feel obligated which leads to the incorporation of the supervisor's values and beliefs into the social norms of the subordinates (Blau

1974, p. 51). This results in voluntary obedience of the supervisors' directives because the subordinates recognize the supervisor's authority as legitimate.

This same process must occur for government's political authority to be recognized as legitimate. While the government may have legal authority over the people, this authority many not be viewed as "legitimate." Its directives must be enforced through controls or restrictions on individuals and institutions including the press. To build legitimate authority the government must first use some of its resources of power to create "joint obligations."

One means the TWP used to attempt to create joint obligations among Liberia's ethnic groups was to establish a system of indirect rule based on "Paramount" and "Clan" chiefs. The government created these new offices between 1910 and 1920 (Stakeman 1982, p. 86). Stakeman observes that in the Kpelle ethnic group,

> This new hierarchy of chiefs no longer expressed the will of the elders, but that of the Liberian government. They served to collect taxes, adjudicate disputes, and transmit the Liberian government's demands to the people (1982, p. 84-85).

These new offices gave the appearance that the TWP government was relinquishing some of its power to the established local leaders.

Another resource available to a government to build legitimate authority is the press. Altschull (1995) writes that "Language has been the chief instrument of social control as long as human beings have communicated with one another" (p. 50). Zaffiro contends that when African leaders do not have ties to traditional sources of authority, they attempt to build this authority through mass

communications (in Martin and Hiebert 1990, p. 115). For example, in Botswana prior to 1980, the political leadership had close ties to traditional lines of political communication and authority in its territories. Since these ties existed, the government had no need to use the media to build their authority. As a result, the press was free to be more critical of the government. After 1980, however, the political leadership did not have such ties and needed to use the media to build authority. The result was that the press was less free to criticize the government (in Martin and Hiebert 1990, p. 114-115).

The TWP in Liberia also had few ties with traditional sources of authority. Although the government devised a plan of indirect rule, Liebenow reveals however that the establishment of the office of Paramount Chief, "undermined" the authority of the clan chief. The reason is that in traditional political systems, the "clan" was the largest territorial unit (1982, p. 41). It was not until the 1940's when persons other than Americo-Liberians were admitted into the party.

Mass media, especially radio, therefore, became a means the government used to build legitimate authority. Rather than establishing a media system under sole government control, the government created joint obligations by permitting the establishment of private radio stations. This would give the appearance that it was allowing for the expression of alternate viewpoints and not attempting to monopolize the media.

Doe also had few ties to traditional lines of authority because he was a member of a rather small ethnic group, the Krahn. He, too, made use of the media to attempt to legitimize his authority. One memorable media event occurred shortly after the 1980 coup in which the world watched the hanging of former government officials on a Monrovia beach. Doe also attempted to build

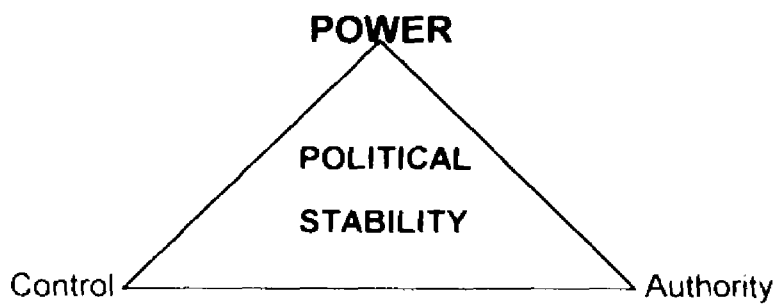
authority by involving the media in the process of drafting the 1984 constitution. This incident will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

The Concept of Political Stability

Both authority and control contribute to building and maintaining political stability. This is the central term in the matrix as seen in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2

The Relationship Between Power and Political Stability



Political stability could be defined as "the normal state of political affairs." Challenges to political stability can be either external or internal. External challenges can come from other countries or outside groups. These are considered matters of national security. Internal challenges usually come from individuals or groups who question the legitimacy of the government.

Since the media are a means to build legitimate authority, they also play a role in maintaining the political stability in a society because they provide a

means to communicate political ideology. McQuail notes that mass communications systems have two tendencies regarding content. The first he labels "centripetal," which is the tendency of the media to build cohesion, order, control and unity (1987, p. 59). The second is a contrasting tendency that he labels "centrifugal," in which the media tend to foster change, freedom, diversity and fragmentation, and ". . . have seemed to challenge established ways and value systems." (1987, p. 59) To maintain political stability, the media content must be politically supportive (centripetal) of the government. Merrill (1983) writes that African leaders

> . . . would contend the responsibility of the press should be to society, which means the will of the people as expressed by the government. No press system can be responsible if it betrays the summum bonum - the supreme good of the people. The press cannot and must not act selfishly, as a totally free press in the American sense. (1983, p. 240)

Changes in press philosophy reflect perceived challenges to political stability. Returning to the example of Botswana, Zaffiro found that the government press philosophy changed from a rather open system in which opposition could be expressed, to a one of greater editorial control over opposition viewpoints. The reason for the change is that the regional pressures from violence in South Africa challenged the legitimacy of the government (in Martin and Hiebert 1990, p. 113).

This illustrates that when the government perceives that its legitimacy is being challenged by external or internal forces, it will institute editorial controls that will limit the expression of viewpoints that might erode political stability.

These controls may take the form of legal restrictions that make the expression of such content illegal. For example, in Liberia the sedition laws and Decree 88A, mentioned earlier, were designed to limit opposition viewpoints.

In summary, the theoretical matrix provides a framework to understand the way in which the concept of power influences the partnership between the media and the government. The government uses the resources of mass communication to create legitimate authority in society when it has few ties to traditional lines of authority for the purpose of maintaining political stability. To accomplish this, the government must use its resources of political power to control the media either through coercion, or by building legitimate authority. When the government chooses to use coercion, the press may choose to involuntarily obey or to suffer the consequences that could include legal action or direct censorship by the government.

McQuail (1987) contends that each country will have a "distinctive version" of this theory (p. 109). A second matrix of "Practical Determinants" will be developed to portray the particular Liberian version which consists of the distinctive cultural social and political determinants that reflect those in the Theoretical Matrix. This matrix provides a means to understand the cultural, political and social factors which have played a role in shaping the partnership between the Liberian press and the government.

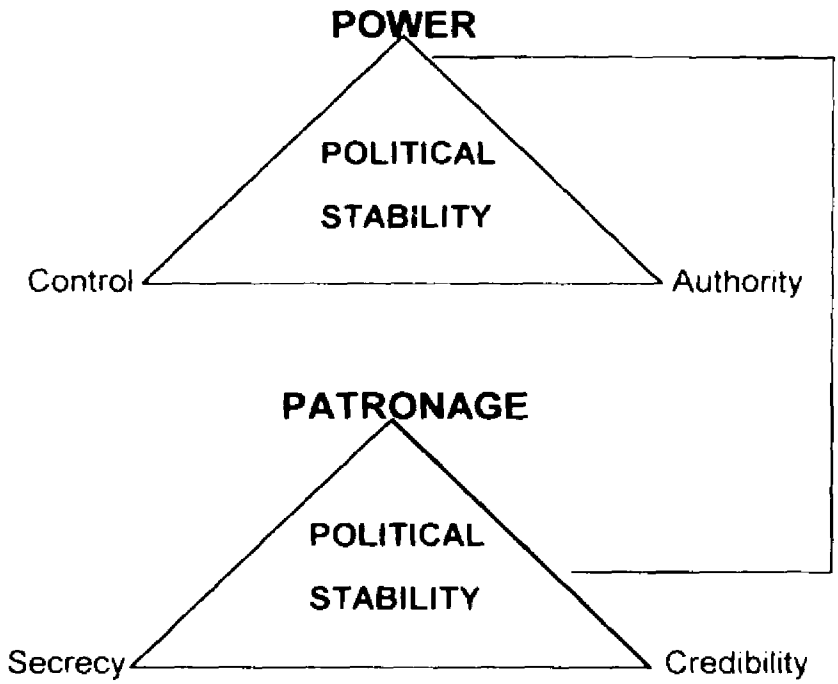
Practical Determinants

The determinants in this matrix reflect power, control and authority found in the Theoretical Matrix. Since each of the determinants in this matrix

contributes to the political stability of the Liberian government, the determinant. "Political Stability" also occurs in the matrix of Practical Determinants. The relationship between the determinants in the two matrices appears in figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3

The Relationship Between the Theoretical and Practical Determinants



In the matrix, the determinant of patronage reflects power, the determinant of secrecy reflects control, and the determinant of credibility reflects authority.

The Concept of Patronage

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines "patronage" as "The power to make appointments to government jobs on the basis other than merit alone (1967)." The Oxford English Dictionary defines "patronage" as "The right or control of appointments to offices, privileges, etc. in public service (1961)." These definitions indicate that patronage is a means to obtain and maintain the resources of political power. The political concept of patronage is related to the concept of power because the political and economic resources of patronage enable the government to have influence through control and to build authority. To understand how patronage functions, one must examine the African concept of power and how leaders acquire power

The African Concept of Power

A Spiritual Hierarchy

Africans perceive they need power to control their destiny. Unlike western culture that is built on individualism, the African does not think of himself apart from the kinship group (Steyne 1989). Bourgault (Oct. 1991) quoting Placide Temple, author of La Philosophie Bantoue also notes that

> . . . a key feature of the conception of human nature [in African society] is that the person is not an entity separate from others, but rather participates in other human beings (including persons) and is in part constituted by other human beings (p. 16).

This belief leads the African to two conclusions. First, there is no separation between the physical and spiritual as there is in western religions such as Christianity. All of life is spiritual. Second, nothing happens as a result of chance. According to the beliefs of African traditional religion, spiritual forces control the events of life. Bourgault (Oct. 1991) writes,

> Motivations are ascribed to outside sources (spirits, gods, witchcraft). Such attitudes make it difficult for individuals to engage in self-analysis. In order to do so, it is necessary to separate one's physical self from one's soul or mind to study it at a distance. (p. 13)

John Mbiti has coined the phrase "living dead" to characterize the relationship between the ancestors and the living world (in Mitchell 1977, p. 49). Mitchell clarifies this relationship by stating,

> To be sure the living-dead do occupy their own separate world, but African thought does not describe this world in much detail . . . What African thought does emphasize is the ongoing character of the new relationship between the ancestors and the relatives who are alive. The living-dead have spiritual power and act as intermediaries between the family and the spirits and guardians of family affairs and the traditions of the people. (1977, p. 49)

These forces form the power structure for African life. The structure of this spiritual hierarchy can be represented by a triangle. At the top of the triangle

is the supreme being. On one side of the triangle leading up to the supreme being are the ancestors. On the other, are natural forces such as the sun and rain or forces at work in the rivers (Parrinder 1962, pp. 24-25). Mitchell divides these three forces into the following three categories: 1. forces activated by human mistakes and failures; 2. forces which represent arbitrary chance; and 3. forces which are malicious (1977, pp. 63, 64).

In addition to the ancestors and natural forces, are chiefs and monarchs who are also treated with "religious awe" (Parrinder 1962, p. 67). Africans believe these persons stand between human beings and God. Through death they are believed to have increased power and knowledge of the spirit world.

To acquire power to control the events of life, Africans believe that they must form relationships with members of the hierarchy who possess power. This is done through rituals. Parrinder explains,

> The whole organization of society is maintained by the spiritual forces which pervade it. This is brought out clearly in an important study of African Political Systems. The authors stress the importance of religious symbols, rites, dogmas, sacred places and persons in unifying the African society and giving it cohesion . . . The religious beliefs enshrine the attitude of men to their daily needs, and the way in which their satisfaction is safeguarded. (1961, p. 27)

Steyne terms the power needed to control life's events, "Life force." Other terms associated with "life force" are "life essence," "vital force," and "dynamism" (1989, p. 91). The more "life force" a person possess the stronger, smarter, or more successful they will be (Steyne 1989, p. 90).

Two observations can be made regarding the African concept of power. First, all of life is controlled by a spiritual hierarchy whose power is based on traditional authority. Second, power is used to control the events of life and is obtained by forming a dependent relationship with the members of the spiritual hierarchy. Each of these characteristics found in the African concept of power are reflected in the political "hierarchy" of the Liberian political system during the TWP government.

The TWP Political Hierarchy

The TWP controlled political life through a political hierarchy initially composed mainly of Americo-Liberians. Liberia's political structure during the TWP administrations can be viewed as a series of concentric circles of political involvement (Liebenow 1987, pp. 103-105). At the center of the concentric circles was the president, while on the outside were the eligible voters. When individuals passed from the outer level to the second level they made a transition from tribal culture to the cultural, social, and political norms of the Americo-Liberian community. At this level, they were eligible to nominate TWP candidates.

Following this transition, each succeeding inner circle represented a particular class. Level three, was the "Honorable" class, which is composed of those who have held or would hold public office. The fourth level was the actual office holders, while the fifth circle consists of the President's Cabinet.

The inner circles of the hierarchy were limited mainly to Americo-Liberians especially the holding of public office. Moreover, during the Tubman

and Tolbert administrations, public offices in the inner circles were further restricted to relatives of the respective presidents. This relationship between the two families forged a political dynasty that stretched from 1945 until the coup of 1980 and further strengthened the grip of the TWP and Americo-Liberian influence in Liberian politics (Liebenow 1987, pp. 107-109).

The Americo-Liberians later permitted other "alien Blacks who adopted the ways of the settlers" to participate in government (Liebenow 1987, p. 49). These people were called "Congo People." The Congo People played a key role in TWP politics and gained equal status with the descendants of the freed slaves (Liebenow 1987,p. 49). Today the term "Congo People" is also applied to Americo-Liberians.

As individuals reached the levels of the inner circles, they gained greater resources of power through patronage. The source of authority in the Liberian political system was membership in the Americo-Liberian community and proven loyalty to the TWP. Access to the resources of political power is obtained by forming a relationship with those in political power. This relationship is found in traditional African political systems and is called the "Patron Client Relationship."

The Patron/Client Relationship

Just as spiritual power must be obtained through forming relationships with the spiritual hierarchy, political power must be obtained by forming relationships with the political hierarchy. Collier (1988) and Stakeman (1982) define this relationship as the "patron/client" relationship which is found in equal bridewealth societies (Collier 1988, p. 73). Collier's term "bridewealth" refers to

societies which have "a kin corporate mode of production" (Collier 1988, p. 3). This is common in ethnic groups across West Africa.

In equal bridewealth societies, while everyone has access to the tools and materials needed for production, some households are larger and are able to produce more. Individuals in the society who are able to produce more have additional resources they can share with others. For example, the valuables a junior member of the society needs for marriage, can be borrowed from a senior member who is able to provide them.

These individuals are called "big men". Their generosity or "patronage" becomes a resource of power that they use to become leaders (Collier 1988, p. 74). The big man, or "patron," lends money and or other resources to those in need and specifies the conditions of repayment. This relationship may be established between junior and senior members of the society or between successful and unsuccessful senior members.

There were several ways to become a "big man." For example, in the Kpelle ethnic group of Liberia, an individual could become a "big man" through the accumulation of wealth, or through lineage as members of "the original settler family" (Stakeman 1982, p. 82). Persons outside of the lineage could be "adopted" into the lineage and become "clients" (Stakeman 1982, p. 69).

The patron/client relationship is a dependent relationship (Collier 1982, p. 75) in which the resources of power are used to control. The patron also uses gifts to establish authority over the client. The gifts create "status obligations because the client now has a debt which must be repaid. Conflict can result if it is not repaid (Collier 1988, pp. 105-107). Collier reveals that,

> In societies where people perceive their obligations to others as a function of what they gave to them or received from them (whether the object was willingly given, extracted by force, or stolen), people expect others to fulfill the obligations implied by past exchanges, or to nullify past exchanges and past relationships by returning equivalent gifts. (p. 107)

Even though the patron/client relationship initially may be established on traditional authority, the resources needed to build power come from the ability to offer gifts, or "patronage."

The "Big Man" in Liberian Politics

The patron/client relationship is the means that Liberian government officials used to build power. The gifts of patronage usually included government jobs for relatives, payment of a "dash" or bribe from a citizen, and the "forgiveness" of taxes (Liebenow 1987, p. 105). These gifts of patronage created political obligations. In exchange for the "gifts" of patronage, loyalty was expected. The TWP used patronage to keep "the party faithful" in line with party viewpoints and to control political dissidents (Liebenow 1987, p. 91).

Patronage also describes the political means that the government used to exercise authority over the media. Access to mass communication channels could be compared to the "gifts" given by a patron. The government gives the "gifts" of radio licenses and newspaper charters through the Ministries of Posts Telecommunication, and The Ministry of Information. In return the government expects loyalty including content that is supportive of government viewpoints

The licenses and charters, therefore, become a means the government can use to exercise authority over the media and impose controls.

In an interview with the Nigerian Magazine *Newswatch*, Doe alluded to the patron/client relationship by saying,

> **Doe:** If I come to you to collect the money you promised me for the first time, the second time I went back to you and say, look give me the money you promised me, and you say no, should I go to court to tell you to give me the money? . . . Let me tell you, it is mentioned in the guidelines in the published handbook by the ministry that if any of the newspaper or radio station refused to abide by the laid down guidelines, the ministry of information has the right to close the station down (Epku 1991, p. 41).

Doe's statement implies that since the government grants the right to communicate through the media, it can also establish the rules under which the press operates. In addition, disputes regarding the operation of the media and media content can be handled directly through government channels rather than through the court system.

The "partnership" between the government and the media under patronage becomes a **political** partnership in which information becomes an important means to build political influence and authority over society for the purpose of maintaining social integration. This can be understood by examining the concept of secrecy.

The Concept of Secrecy

Information and Social Integration

The concept of "secrecy" is used here to describe principles of interpersonal communication found in Liberia's "secret societies" and it borrowed from Bellman's (1984) work among the secret societies. While the secret society is not found in all ethnic groups, where it is prevalent it is an important means through which cultural traditions are communicated and religious rituals are performed. The two major secret societies in Liberia are the "Poro" for men, and the "Sande" for women.

Gibbs notes that attachment to secret societies is similar to the western concept of "patriotism" as found in the U.S. and Europe (1965, p. 222). The beliefs found in the secret societies are based on those found in traditional African religions which include a concept of power based on the traditional authority of a spiritual hierarchy. Access to the resources of spiritual power is obtained through rituals that are performed by the "Zoe," who is the top religious leader in the village.

Social integration is built through conformity to the customs of the society. Steyne writes,

> As a member of the society he conforms emotionally and intellectually to societal customs or pressures. He accepts these with little or no objection. . . . Independent thinking about life's issues is a costly eccentricity. Various pressures, overt and covert are used to force conformity to community norms. (1989, p. 182)

When the members of the society conform to the values of the society "with little or no objection," they are acknowledging the legitimate authority of the society.

For example, the Kpelle worldview is based on the concepts of "knowledge" and "truth "(Gay 1967, p. 89). These concepts represent two levels of social integration. Knowledge is surface level in which individuals demonstrate their mastery of the Kpelle way of life. "Truth" is the deeper level of integration and involves the **conformity** of an individual's statements and actions to the Kpelle way of life which includes respect for the ancestors. Gay notes,

> Knowledge for its own sake seems to have no place in Kpelle society. Education fashions the child in the mold of his ancestors. (1967, p. 90).

Influence is transformed into legitimate authority (truth) through education which is accomplished through oral tradition, and participation in the activities of the society. This results in social integration based on allegiance to sources of traditional authority.

In the secret society there is a similar process. Children attend "bush school" at which time they are introduced to the beliefs and rituals of the society. These beliefs are later transformed into legitimate authority by participation in the rituals of the society.

Not all persons, however, join the society. Those who do not join are called "sinners." They can feel like outcasts because life in many villages revolves around the society. The sinners can pose a threat to the stability of the society by learning its secrets and using them as a source of power over

members of the society. A term that grows out of Collier's (1988) work in traditional African political systems that describe this type of information is "gossip."

Gossip: A Challenge to Social Integration

Just as information is used as a means of integration, it can also be used as a means for building power for social control. Collier notes that information can be used to gain a political advantage. She writes,

> People gossip because, in equal bridewealth societies where actions are interpreted as counteractions to past actions, knowledge of past actions appears essential for predicting, and managing, the future. To predict how someone is likely to act, one must know the history of that person's past and present relationships. People thus seek out all the scurrilous information they can obtain and eagerly pass it on to allies. And to the degree that people act on such information, gossip harms its victim. (1988, pp. 124-125)

Gossip poses a challenge to legitimate authority because it criticizes the values and actions of those in spiritual or political power that could pose a threat to social integration. For this reason, during the days of the TWP public criticism of the government

> . . . was regarded as a threat to the solidarity of the Americo-Liberian community, exposing it to challenges from the tribal majority. . . . Public dissension also tarnished the image of the "New Liberia" which the leadership was attempting to project in its intra-Africa relations. (Liebenow 1987, p. 94)

Since gossip challenges legitimate authority that poses a threat to social integration, it must be controlled. In the secret society this is accomplished by imposing restrictions on interpersonal communication of secrets regarding the society

The Principles of Secrecy

Bellman (1984) notes that there are three key principles that control the communication of information regarding the "secrets" of the society. The first two, "the right to know," and "the need to know," control access to secret information. He writes,

> In Western culture, access to secret information is based on the right to know and the need to know. Someone may have the right to know but lack the need and so be denied information he may later discover he may be entitled to. . . (p. 142)

To these principles Bellman adds a third that is called the, "do-not-talk-it" proscription. "Do-not-talk it" addresses the importance of concealing secret knowledge. He reveals,

> In every culture that is contradicted by the fact that secrecy is, as Simmel called it, "a sociological form" that is constituted by the very procedures whereby secrets are communicated. (1984, p. 144)

In the secret society it's, just as important **how** something is said as **what** is said. Secret information regarding the society is concealed using what Bellman terms a "veiled code." This code allows members of the society to communicate secret information while at the same time concealing that information from non-members. Those who share such news, or other beliefs regarding the society that are subject to the rules of "do-not-talk-it" could have a curse placed on them or even be killed for disobeying it.

For example, Bellman (1984) relates that while he was in the U.S his Kpelle language informant, who had traveled with him to the U.S., received a letter from a friend in his village. While the content of the letter appeared ordinary, there were cues in the letter telling the reader to look for hidden meaning. What the letter contained was not only news about the village, but news regarding the death of the Zoe, or witch doctor, in the village. This is news that is subject to "do-not-talk-it" and must be concealed.

In this example there are three factors that contributed to the meaning of the content. These are organic form, technical form, and the perception of the audience. Barton and Gregg contend that

> For any final product of human endeavor is a holistic presentation, comprised of materials never wholly raw because of the nature of human perception, materials are further organized through limiting and shaping procedures guided by artistic or technical procedures. (in Benson and Medhurst 1984, p. 34)

Organic form refers to

> . . . essential formative principles that are intrinsic to the content and grow organically within it and imbue it with unique characteristics of formed meaning. (Barton and Gregg in Benson and Medhurst 1984, p. 34)

Technical form consists of "artificial presentational or shaping devices that are imposed on content to give it the quality of discreteness" (Barton and Gregg in Benson and Medhurst 1984, p. 34). In the informant's letter, part of the technical form was the obvious level of meaning that might be evident to the casual reader. The way the letter was written combining the cues of the veiled code, however, prompted the informant to look for the deeper, organic meaning that was not evident on the surface. In this way the technical form intermingled with the organic form to influence the meaning.

A third influence on content is audience perception. In the example, even though Bellman is an anthropologist who is familiar with the Kpelle ethnic group, his informant, identified the veiled code and perceived the content of the letter differently. Perceptions of content are influenced by a number of different factors including cultural background and social position (see Barton 1990, p. 15-16). In the case cited above, the informant perceived the content differently because he was a **member** of the secret society.

Secrecy and Press Control

Three principles emerge from the concept of secrecy that provide a framework for understanding editorial controls on the press. The first is the selection of stories, the second, is the manner in which the stories are written,

and the third, is the perception of the audience. Mass communication content is a tool which can be used to build political legitimacy and achieve political integration. This means that news stories must be carefully selected and reported discretely. The reason is that the meaning derived from mass communication content is also influenced by the elements of organic form, technical form and audience perception. The government, therefore is concerned with both what is said, and how it is said. Just as the "veiled code" invites a member of the secret society to look further for a deeper meaning, there are linguistic and formatic practices used by journalists which shape the meaning of news content. These elements that influence the meaning of news content are summarized in what Barton (1990) terms "News Voice."

News Voice

Barton uses the term "voice"

> to identify the range of elements including people, words, images, and sounds, selected to participate in news discourse. . . (1990, p. 16)

While the selection of stories, and journalistic conventions affect the political meaning that news voices can generate ultimately, however, the meaning is determined by the political orientation of the audience (Barton 1990, p. 17).

For example, in a statement to the foreign press, which could also apply to the Liberian press, Doe said that "many unfair articles have been written and

published about the Liberian government by some journalists reflecting their own selfish motives" (in Liebenow 1987, p. 256). Writing about Doe's comment Liebenow reveals that ". . . Doe hoped that foreigners would cover Liberia "**objectively**" (emphasis mine) -that is in a manner sympathetic to Doe (Liebenow 1987, p.256)." Libenow's comment infers that Doe is redefining the term "objectivity." Rather than equating it with fairness through balanced reporting, Doe is equating it with fairness through subjective reporting which means having a news voice which is supportive of the government. Altschull (1995), writes that,

> Objectivity is a mechanism for ensuring the status quo, an instrument to guarantee the preservation of institutions and the social order. It permits criticism of individuals, but not of the fundamental political, economic or social order (p. 425).

Under the TWP being critical of a government official or the TWP would be equated with being critical of the party because for all practical purposes the party was the political system. Little criticism, therefore, was permitted of the government. Such criticism could be equated with the term "gossip." The government, however, did permit limited criticism of low ranking officials, and policies that did not affect political stability (Liebenow 1987, p. 93). There is also evidence to suggest that the Tolbert and Tubman administrations permitted criticism of officials they wished to place "on notice" (Liebenow 1987, p. 93). As the Botswana Minister for Presidential Affairs noted the press should be

> . . . playing the role of a public watchdog to nurture the process of democracy, acting as sentinel and mirror of public corruption, public conscience and consciousness; exercising self-restraint on sensational, inflammatory reporting likely to mar individuals, groups or Government for no justifiable cause. . . If media tends to promote developments that build the nation and play down those that push the nation down the drain, they will be moving in the right direction (Zaffiro in Martin in Hiebert 1990, p. 115).

Journalists, therefore, must take great care to choose stories which could not be critical of the government and its policies.

From my experiences in Liberia, there were two broad categories of stories that would be regarded as critical. The first was stories that centered on politically controversial subjects and the second, was stories that embarrassed the government. These stories would be regarded as criticism of the government because they raised questions about the actions or policies of the political leadership.

Two examples illustrate these categories. The first story raises political controversy and was written nearly two months before the October 15, 1985 elections. On August 14, 1985 the *Sun Times* published an article based on a portion of a speech Doe gave the day before in Nimba County. In the speech he threatened to use military force against a "few Congo People who are against his government" (Liebenow 1987, p. 258). Following the publication of the article, the Interim National Assembly banned the paper. Liebenow notes that "The government did not deny the truth of the reporting-just the fact of reporting" (1987, p. 258).

The second example occurred during the January 1984 state visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog. During the visit, the *Daily Observer*, rather than highlighting the state visit, published a front page article regarding the

demonstration of public school teachers who hadn't been paid in months. Doe viewed this as, "a calculated effort to embarrass his government" (Liebenow 1987, p. 255).

Even though the government placed restrictions on the press in an attempt to maintain a politically objective news voice, the interpretation of news content is dependent on the perception of the audience. Revaut writing about foreign ideologies contends,

> In many instances, the receiver using his or her own cultural and experiential background can, to a large extent, control the meaning that a foreign message has for him or her. (in Paletz 1987, p. 259)

The audience is active and assigns meaning to content based on their own experiences. These experiences include the perception of the audience of the current political situation. This indicates that the audience is politically active. Barton explains that,

> People who are politically active are likely to use news about international affairs in a selective, discursive way to make informed judgments that will influence their actions. Their media use is inherently political. (1990, p. 22)

This observation could also apply to news regarding internal political affairs. Individuals use news as a means to evaluate the political situation in the country and what actions, if any, they should take.

The audience searches for information sources that engage them in political discourse regarding political issues. Barton (1990) terms this "invitational

discourse" (p. 25). Invitational discourse provides the audience with a "reflexive consciousness" by supplying them with information to help them consider "alternative possibilities to present social circumstances" (Dahlgren 1981, in Barton 1990, p. 26).

The audience's need for invitational discourse is the basis for the conflict between the press and the government. To fulfill this need, the audience must perceive that the media is a credible source for political discourse.

Credibility

I will define credibility as "the extent to which the press and its content is perceived by the audience as authoritative." While this determinant is not directly linked to Liberian culture, Zaffiro notes that

> Central to understanding the future character and direction of media-government relations is the question of the extent to which media credibility and regime legitimacy rest on the same foundation. (1986, p. 117)

Since information is a resource that can be used to build authority, credibility is related to the concept of authority.

When the press engages in invitational discourse as part of its political partnership with the press the government expects loyalty. This means that the government expects press content to be selectively invitational. Dahlgren would define this as "non-reflexive consciousness" (in Barton 1994, p. 26). When news content is structured this way, Dahlgren (1981) writes that the audience

> does not see itself as a participant in the construction of the social world; it sees itself as merely acted upon by the social world. (in Barton 1994, p. 26)

The press should not engage in invitational discourse which challenges its views, but rather in invitational discourse which presents the government viewpoint in a positive rather than a critical manner. The press must reflect in its content the important role that the government plays in the lives of the audience.

It's interesting to note that there is no word for "opposition" in any of the Liberian languages. Laflin and Mackie 1991 reveal that

> The word that comes closest to [opposition] is "enemy." While the assertion may not withstand strict linguistic scrutiny, the common wisdom underlies a strong cultural attitude. To criticize a chef is to stand as his enemy.

When the press is critical of the government, the government perceives that the press is being disloyal or even an "enemy." This results in government restrictions on the press. Kenneth Best, editor of the *Daily Observer* wrote in an editorial published during the Liberian civil war.

> In the last four months, the Liberian press has been striving to give the public or people a true picture of what has been taking place in the country. We see this as our duty and **responsibility** (emphasis mine) so that the people and the government may respond adequately to the danger on hand; so that actions may be concerted. It would seem that we have been wrong and this has earned for us unwholesome comments. . . (Best 1990, p. 2)

Best's editorial illustrates the struggle that the press finds itself in. According to Best, the press perceived it was serving the Liberian people by providing information regarding the political situation so that the people could "respond adequately to the danger on hand." Since the press had access to information regarding the political situation, they could engage in invitational discourse regarding the situation. This fulfilled the need of the people for political information so that the people could make informed decisions. Best said that the press saw this as their "responsibility." By doing so, the press was in a position to exert influence over the people of Liberia. The press, therefore, become an "authority" on the political situation. The government reacted negatively to this because the press was exerting influence which was outside of the political hierarchy which resulted in "unwholesome comments" from the government.

To put it in the context of the patron/client relationship, when the press engages in invitational discourse, it begins to step out of its role as the compliant client, and assumes the role of the patron by using information as a resource to build authority. To counter this authority, the government places controls or restrictions on the press. The presence of controls, therefore, indicates that the government perceives that the press is engaging in provocative discourse defined here as "invitational discourse."

The use of restrictions on the press to minimize invitational discourse, can, however, result in what Revaut terms a "boomerang effect" (in Paletz 1987). "Through the 'Boomerang Theory' the function of communication can no longer be limited to the function intended by the producer or sender, it can have an adverse or pervasive effect" (in Paletz 1987, p. 259). If the audience does not perceive the authority of the government as legitimate, the press controls can

lend further credibility to the message because the audience will perceive that the government is attempting to stifle the alternative point of view.

Summary

The key to understanding the patterns of press freedom is to understand the boundaries for invitational discourse in the Liberian media system. The conflicts which occur between the press and the government are the result of the government's perception that the press is engaging in provocative discourse, operationalized here as "invitational discourse." The two matrices provide the framework to understand the political concerns of the government regarding invitational discourse and thus provide the cultural and political framework for understanding press freedom in Liberia. Since the political partnership between the press and the government is built on the patron/client relationship, the government expects loyalty from the media in exchange for the privilege of using the channels of mass communication. This means that the government expects that media content should be selectively invitational. Conflicts arise when the press criticizes the political system of one party rule, and high ranking government officials and government policies without the consent of the government.

The existence of both invitational and non-invitational discourse in Liberia is similar to the existence of the surface and deeper levels of meaning in Liberia's secret societies. Just as the principles of secrecy hide secret information regarding the society, the government places restrictions on the press when it perceives that the press is engaging in provocative discourse which Barton

(1994) defines as "invitational discourse." Just as the "veiled code" invites a member of the secret society to look for a deeper meaning, there are linguistic and formatic practices used by journalists that are used to shape invitational discourse.

They can be uncovered by examining situations in which the government perceived that the press was engaging in invitational discourse. This will be accomplished using my personal experiences at Radio ELWA.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for the Method

Atwood (1980) notes that communications research should be viewed from the actor's perspective. This indicates that the dimensions of news voice in Liberia, therefore, must be defined from the perspective of the Liberian press, the audience, and the government.

Barton poses four questions that must be addressed to analyze voice. These are as follows: "Who are the actors?"; "What are the voices they use?"; What do they say?"; and "What are the policy implications of what they say?" (1990, p. 17). Barton continues,

> The way news forms encourage or discourage individuals from participating in public forums that enable diverse political (national and international) constituencies to engage in political discourse about specific issues is a logical focal point for international communication research. (1990, p. 24)

The analysis should reflect "the specific ways news language invites political responses among citizens or discourages further discourse about issues. . . " (Barton 1990, p. 18). Building on Barton's (1990, pp. 16-17) definition of voice cited in chapter 2 and the questions noted above, the analysis would include reporting technique, wording of the story, the attribution of quotations, and the sources chosen for the story. These dimensions can be described by observing and documenting situations in which there was conflict between the government and the press regarding news content.

Defining the Method

The method which will be used is consistent with Denzin's (1970) notion of "life history." He defines life history as presenting

> . . . the experiences and definitions held by one person, one group or one organization as this person, group or organization interprets those experiences. (1970, p. 315)

A Life history is documented from the perspective of the person or group and defines meaning from the perspective of the social group that is being studied. The researcher, therefore, must be familiar with the situation which is being studied (Stoll 1983, p. 22). When researchers write about situations that they are unfamiliar with, they run the risk of making "abstract characterizations, summarization's, and typifications of phenomena that are simply wrong" (Lofland in Stoll, 1983, p. 22). Data for a life history or case study can come from public or

private records. The criteria for the evidence includes the truthfulness of the source and evidence of external collaboration.

I have been able to directly observe the situations from which the case studies were taken. I was a missionary in Liberia, West Africa, for ten years. During that time I became familiar with the culture through direct experience, reading and writing. Through the administrative and training positions I held at Radio ELWA, including that of Acting Broadcasting Director during 1985-1986, I had direct contact with members of the working press and the government. These contacts included personnel from the Liberian Broadcasting System, the *Daily Observer* newspaper, LRCN, the Press Secretary to the President, and several Ministers of Information. I also had contacts with U.S. officials including consular officers and information officers.

In the situations that I did not directly observe, I obtained the information through briefings by Radio ELWA staff members and SIM personnel. My position as a missionary working in the media gives me the perspective of an insider who has spent an extended period of time in the country.

Observational Data to be Analyzed

Anderson writes that "Ethnographic studies most often begin with an interest in how things get done in distinguishable situations in everyday life" (1987, p. 283). He terms these situations "scenes" (1987, p. 283). The scene is not defined by observable characteristics, such as the setting, but "by the actors' understanding of the situation they are in" (Anderson 1987, p. 283). Stoll (1983) for example, in her study of interactive talk in the classrooms, defined the scene

in terms of the relationship between teacher and student which was expressed in interactive talk. Stoll (1983) wanted to learn how students and teachers "do class" (p. 8). Epworth (in Martin and Hiebert 1990) outlined the involvement of the government in the affairs of the press. While it was not expressed by Epworth, the scene could be defined as "doing news in Indonesia."

The purpose of qualitative research is to "unpack" the meanings of social action (Anderson 1987, p. 268). Anderson poses the question, "What is the meaning structure governing the social action under study?" (1987, p. 269). The life history provides a means to answer this question through an examination of the elements of the scene. These elements include the actors involved in the scene, conversations which are held, news content, reporting methodology, and background data including the influence of the government officials. These elements can be used in the analysis to examine possible policy implications.

In this study, with the exception of one case study, the scene is "defending news practice and content to the government." The exception is the case study which outlines the media's role in the process of writing the Liberian constitution of 1984. The scene in this case study could would be described as "explaining Liberian constitutional rights in the media." By examining short accounts of encounters between members of the press and the government, when the press "defended" content to the government, the social and cultural content of news content can be examined to uncover the factors which contribute to the conflict between the press and the government.

The Selection Process

Anderson observes that the researcher must evaluate the research potential of the scenes which are selected and select those which will make the most efficient use of the researcher's time and energy (1987, p. 287). The selection process for this study was guided by three dimensions. First, the experiences focused on one or more of the Liberian determinants of patronage, secrecy, credibility or political stability developed in Chapter 2. Second, with one exception, the experiences were ones in which I was directly involved, or to which I was a party. By directly observing the situation I was able to listen to direct comments regarding the attitudes of the Liberian officials toward the media and media policies. I was also able to ask questions regarding particular policies or comments.

The only exception to this dimension is the description of the death of journalist Charles Gbenyon. I considered this an important experience because Charles Gbenyon was a nationally known and respected journalist. His death at the hands of government personnel would be tantamount to U.S. government personnel killing Dan Rather! While I did not directly observe this or was not formally briefed by Radio ELWA staff, or SIM Administration, I was party to the accounts of his death shortly after it occurred following the failed coup attempt of November 1985.

Third, with one exception, the experiences detail encounters with government officials regarding news content. Often during these encounters the officials defined the role of the press and the parameters under which the press

must operate. These encounters provided insight into the dynamics of the government/press partnership in Liberia.

The only exception to this dimension was the case study regarding the 1984 constitution. This experience was included as a contrast to the others. In this case study, the press and the government worked in partnership to accomplish a political objective.

The experiences that were selected occurred between April 1976 and September 1986. Politically, April 1976 through April 1980 were the final four years of the William Tolbert administration. Tolbert was killed in a coup on April 12, 1980 by Samuel Doe. April 12, 1980 through September of 1986 span the first six years of Samuel Doe's rule. Doe and his PRC government came to power in that coup of 1980. Doe became President of the Interim National Assembly (INA) shortly after the Constitutional Referendum of July 1984. He became President of Liberia in January of 1986, after narrowly winning what many believed to be a disputed election (see Liebenow 1987) in October of 1985.

As a result of the selection process, eight experiences were selected to be written into case studies. Most of the experiences that were selected occurred during the period between 1980 and 1986. Each case study was given a title for identification purposes. The titles of the narratives are as follows: "No They Weren't Arrested"; "This Is Your Last Chance"; "The Constitution: Rights Communicated"; "Fire Joe Mulbah Immediately"; "The Attempted Coup"; "Charles Gbenyon Killed!"; "The President Wants a Copy"; and "Engage in Development Journalism."

The Method of Analysis

Interpreting Social Action

Since individuals engaged in social action are part of a "semiotic system," the research should attempt to explain part of the semiotic system (Anderson 1987, p. 269). For this to be accomplished "episodic text (Anderson 1987, p. 292)" must be created which recounts the social action. Anderson notes that the performances of social action which are used in the production of this text can be interpreted using three "analytical metaphors" (1987, p. 272). Anderson (1987) uses the term "metaphors" because "Metaphors are interpretive devices in which we use our knowledge of one thing to understand another (p. 272)." The metaphors are a means to examine the social action to determine the manner in which the terms contained in the matrix influence that action.

Anderson (1987) cautions that the conceptual matrix developed from the literature must not "drive" the analysis of the research text (p. 288). He sees the researcher in the middle of two demands. He contends,

> On the one hand, the contribution to theory is based on the evaluation of the capacity of the theory to interpret the social action . . . On the other hand, the analyst cannot approach the scene with the terms of the theory as the resulting text will not be true to the social action. (1987, p. 288-289)

In analyzing the research text, the analyst, while attempting to relate the text to the conceptual evidence, must interpret the text from the perspective of the participants in the social action. This means that in this study, the terms in the matrix must be viewed from the perspective of the journalists and the government.

The first metaphor is "narrative." This metaphor serves as a fundamental model to understand the scene. We know the events which occur through narrative. Each part of the narrative is related in a logical structure which has a beginning, middle and end (Anderson 1987, p. 273). It emphasizes the relationship between the people and events of the narrative and the time frame in which these events occur. The second is the metaphor of "theater" which centers on the roles the actors play and the scripts they use for their performances to "audiences in various "settings" (1987, p. 278). The third metaphor is "culture." The metaphor of culture comes from organizational communication and suggests that culture is ". . . an arena for the development and maintenance of networks of shared beliefs, meanings, and symbols (p. 281)." Culture focuses on the structure of systems and the means by which meanings are generated and maintained (Anderson 1987, p. 281). Cultural content is often expressed in oral tradition such as myths, folktales, rituals, and sagas (Anderson 1987, p. 281). For example, a "ritual" which is part of the culture of journalism is the practice of presenting both viewpoints in a news story. This could be termed the "ritual of balance." The reason for this ritual is to communicate to the audience the value "fairness" which is an important value in journalism culture.

The texts in this study were created by using the metaphor of "narrative" to reconstruct the social actions involved in "defending news practice and content to the Liberian government." Anderson explains that,

> The narrative tells the story of the scene. A narrative has an internal structure which models our understanding of experience. The narrative structure implies that its paragraphs are to be understood as a whole, that the sentences within paragraphs justify one another, and that the elements presented stand in some meaningful relationship. (1987, p. 273)

A research narrative is a factual valid account of social action (Anderson 1987, p. 280) that frames social action from what Anderson terms an "authorial stance" (1987, p. 273). Social action can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. In any one narrative, Anderson writes, "It is fiction to believe that one has 'told it like it is'. It is rather, that a valid story has been told" (1987, p. 278).

The narratives were written from personal memory with the aid of personal interviews with SIM Administrative staff, magazine articles and reading correspondence. Many of these situations were quite vivid and were very easy to recall. For example, my meeting with Head of State Samuel Doe is an incident which continues to be vivid in my memory. It was a personal meeting with the man who was the top government official in Liberia and the one who had overthrown the TWP government.

When possible, I included in the research text specific details about the physical surroundings and statements made by those in attendance. The names of government officials, except for heads of state, have been omitted. They can

be identified, however, through the chronology given in each narrative. The names of Secret Security Service (SSS) personnel have also been omitted because they were not available.

The narratives are written from the authorial stance of an omniscient narrator. The narratives take a broad view of the situation. This is accomplished by summarizing large amounts of action into single sentences. For example, in Case Study Four, I summarized the discussion related to the decision of the wording for the letter of termination to Joe Mulbah as follows: "Following our return to the station, and after much prayer and debate, we decided to reword the letter written the previous day removing the references to the government." In a single sentence I summarized the action which resulted from hours of discussion. Anderson points out that in summarizing social action, care must be taken not "refine" the narrative so much that it excludes details which would support the interpretation 1987, p. 276). I have attempted to compensate for this through interviews with SIM administrative staff who were involved in the situation, and reading correspondence which contained such details.

Each narrative is preceded by a background section which contains historical and political data. This data provides "a concrete framework within which the social action under study is constructed" (Stoll 1983,p. 23). The data included in the background, as well as newspaper references and accounts contained in the narratives were constructed from primarily external sources. Due to the civil war in Liberia during the writing of this dissertation, it was difficult to obtain internal sources from Liberia. For example, the *Daily Observer* newspaper which housed extensive press archives was totally destroyed by fire in April of 1990.

One external source I heavily relied on for historical and newspaper data was Liebenow's (1987) work, *Liberia the Quest for Democracy*. I consider Liebenow's work a primary external source for three reasons. First, his book is written using primary internal sources such as quotations from newspapers. Second, it is written as a result of an extended period of time of observation in Liberia. This was the second book which Liebenow wrote about Liberia. He began his study in Liberia in 1960 (1987, p. xi). This places him in a position to observe the political changes in the government. Finally, since some of the events detailed in Liebenow's book occurred during the time I was in the country, I was in a position to evaluate the accuracy of the political details included in the book. His previous book, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* was accepted as accurate among Liberians including scholars. Liebenow writes,

> Even though some Liberians disagreed with a statement here and there or my interpretation of a specific situation or era, there seemed to be consensus regarding the trust of my major issues (1987, p. xii).

His book also serves as a source for external validity for the case studies because some, such as the firing of Joe Mulbah, are cited in his work, although not in the detail contained here.

The Conceptual Framework for the Study

One of the criticisms levied by Stevens and Garcia (1980) against historical research is that many studies lack a conceptual framework which relates the event or events to theoretical assumptions. While the case study narratives are the first level of analysis of life experience, they give us little insight into the meanings of these events. The readers are left to interpret the meanings on their own. Lofland (1978) notes,

> . . . human thought and action are best facilitated by disciplined alternation between the abstract and the concrete. To deal only at the level of the concrete is to be a prisoner of minutiae--not to see the forest for the trees. To deal only at the level of the abstract is to be limited to empirically empty concepts--to deal in floating airy, mental entities divorced from empirical reality. It is through the intimate interplay of the concrete and the abstract that knowledge, understanding, and action are most effectively developed (in Stoll 1983, p. 22-23).

According to Lofland, the researcher must deal with both the research text and empirical concepts found in the literature. Anderson defines this as the "ethnographic argument" (1987, p. 289). Through the ethnographic argument "the reader comes to understand the ethnographic text as seen through these constructs and to understand the constructs as enacted in the text" (Anderson 1987, p. 291). For example, Anderson and Pacanowsky (1982), used the paradigm of uses and gratifications to conceptually frame their research regarding the way that content from police dramas is integrated into the work of a policeman (in Anderson 1987).

There are two concepts which will guide the analysis of the case studies. These are news appeals (Barton 1990), and organic and technical form (Barton and Gregg in Benson and Medhurst 1984), which were defined in Chapter 2. These concepts provide a basis to describe factors that flow from the narratives which contribute to the ideological perspective of Liberian news content.

News Appeals

"News appeals are essentially rhetorical expressions representing orientations to policy assumed by the news coverage" (Barton 1990, p. 18). They represent ideological perspectives on news coverage and "can be described in terms of the political constituency they invite into the discursive frame and by the ways they define political issues and actors as 'legitimate' players" (Barton 1990, p. 18). Since each of the case studies focuses on news regarding political issues, the concept of news appeals will be used to examine the linguistic means that: 1) were used to draw people into discursive discourse; or 2) created the perception in the eyes of the government that the press was engaging in invitational discourse. These means include the word choices used in the story and the "voices" or materials which were selected for use in the story.

Barton (1990, p. 19) identifies six news appeals. These are "authority," "general public," "community guardians," "groups," "individuals," and "ideal social order." The news appeal of "authority" is an appeal to "uncontested authority" which includes the government. "General public" appeals to public opinion while "community guardians," appeals to a "sense of community needs and values." The news appeal to "groups" centers on appeals to groups which are organized

and have a "distinctive political 'culture,'" while the appeal to "individuals", focuses on "an individual's political conscience and sense of political commitment." Finally the appeal to "ideal social order" is an appeal to "encourage political discourse about policy across audience orientations and across national boundaries." Given the cultural and political context for the Liberian press system, I would expect the appeals of authority, community guardians, and groups to be prevalent.

Organic and Technical Form

In addition to the news appeals, the concepts of organic and technical form will be used in the analysis to examine the journalistic conventions which draw people into discursive discourse. Barton contends that

> . . . the form of the news is likely to be a contributing political voice in its own right; a political voice that imbues the news with meaning that shapes our understanding. . . . It appears that the context in which the voices are placed, the political 'spin' given them in the midst of news constructions is, after all, the significant factor in understanding the potential for meaning that the news brings to . . . political reality. (1990, p. 141)

This means that when the press places a political "spin" on political content, they are giving political meaning to the content. In the Liberian context, this leads to the question, "What are the journalistic conventions that promote invitational discourse in the Liberian media?"

An Example

As an example of this method, I will use a short segment of an interview Doe gave to Ray Ekpu in the November 20, 1991 issue of the Nigerian news magazine *Newswatch*. The setting for the interview was the Executive Mansion in Monrovia and was done prior to the scheduled elections of 1991, nearly a year following the start of the war with Charles Taylor. The interview centered on the challenges of Doe's presidency during the last four years. Since the interview took place at the Executive Mansion with Liberia's president, the scene could be described as "defending Liberia's press policies." The interview dealt with three major issues. First, was Liberia's relationship with the U.S. Second, was the upcoming election. The final issue regarded Doe's treatment of the press. For this example, I will quote a short segment from the series of questions dealing with the press.

Newswatch: Why is the government putting so much pressure on the press?
Doe: When the press is putting pressure on the government they don't talk of it. We don't put pressure on newspapers. You know, I believe in freedom of the press. But the journalists in our country, I don't know about your country, they are not fair to themselves.

Newswatch: But why are they not tried and punished through the due process of law (when they violate the law)?
Doe: Okay, who gave them the license to go and open the radio station? Is it not the same information ministry?

Newswatch: Yes.
Doe: If I come to you to collect the money you promised me for the first time, the second time I went back to you and say, look give me the money you promised me, and you say no, should I go to court to tell you to give me the money?

Newswatch: This one is different.
Doe: Let me tell you, it is mentioned in the guidelines in the published handbook by the ministry that if any of the newspaper or radio station refused to abide by

the laid down guidelines, the ministry of information has the right to close the station down.

Newswatch: It was said that the ELCM did not actually broadcast that 1,500 people died; in fact it was said that another radio station attributed the story to ELCM.
Doe: Why it is that the ELCM refused to get us the script? The ministry of information simply asked them to give us the script, they said no, they refused.

Newswatch: Detention, closing down papers for the past 2 years, it is deliberate?
Doe: If I don't want press freedom in this country I would have dictated to the PRC at the time, then there will be no position for press freedom in our constitution. So we believe in press freedom. But you see, some of the journalists aligned themselves with political parties and so they write the news of their parties and so they were classified as politicians. If neutral journalists genuinely interested in investigating and hearing the pros and cons, but any newspaper that is one-sided they will have no confidence. I have been supporting newspaper sometimes calling press conferences, some last for two and half hours. But these people they don't honestly need protection. They think if you are a journalist, you can say anything and go free. If you have proof, of course, you are free. But if you go and lie because you don't like me, I will deal with you. This is the problem with journalists in this country. It is either that you are not well-seasoned in their areas of specialization so they just report yellow journalism where people just write anything that they see because they want to make money.

This interview could be classified as invitational discourse because the journalist is challenging Doe's definition of press freedom. In the interview Doe is countering allegations of government "pressure" on the press by defending his press policies and the conditions under which there is "press freedom" in Liberia. At the beginning of the interview Epku alleges that Doe is putting "pressure" on the press. Doe responds to the allegations by explaining that the journalists "are not fair to themselves." This indicates that the journalists should be blamed for the pressure and not the government. Doe implies that the government also feels "pressure" from the actions of the journalists. He says, "When the press is putting pressure on the government they don't talk of it."

There are three areas which Doe mentions in his statement which are sources of "pressure" between the press and the government. These are not complying with requests from the Ministry of Information, the political orientation of journalists, and the perceived concern for financial gain over professional standards.

The continuity of the discussion plays an important role in understanding the government's position. After the initial allegations of "pressure" Epku directs the discussion to the apparent lack of "due process" afforded to journalists. This discussion sets the context for the remainder of the interview. Doe begins with explaining that the Ministry of Information grants radio licenses. Then, he gives an illustration of borrowing money and following this, he refers to "guidelines" for the press contained in the Ministry of Information handbook.

The discussion regarding the borrowing of money seems as though it breaks the continuity of the discussion. Anderson reveals that the underlying meaning of an interaction is conveyed when "something occurs to break the normal flow" (1987, p. 265). Doe's illustration justifies the lack of due process for the government's direct intervention into the affairs of the press. He says that if a person borrows money and promises to repay it but doesn't when they are asked, "should I go to court to tell you to give me the money?" Since this illustration occurs following Doe's statement regarding radio licenses, the reader is invited to equate the illustration with that statement. This means that the radio licenses could be compared to the money, the press with the borrower, and Doe, the lender, with the Ministry of Information. The conclusion which could be drawn as a result of the placement of this illustration is that since the government grants radio licenses, it has the right to by-pass the legal process when conflicts arise.

The licenses, therefore, becomes a means that the government uses to control the media. The response by Epku of *Newswatch*, "This one is different," implies, that Epku also made this comparison and questioned it. This illustration outlines the basis for this authority which was defined in Chapter Two as the "Patron/Client Relationship."

There are two offenses that the press can commit that result in direct government control. The first is the failure to obey a government request. This is illustrated by the reference to the closure of ELCM. While the story is not mentioned specifically here, the context indicates that the incident being referred to is the closure of the Catholic station , ELCM, on June 15, 1989 for broadcasting a story regarding the deaths of 1500 people at the Liberia-Malawi soccer match. The official government account stated that only four people died. Doe implies that the station was closed not because of the content of the story, but for failure to provide the government with a "script" of the story.

The second is reporting which Doe perceives is unfair. He says that journalists sometimes "lie because they don't like me." To avoid government pressure, the journalists must have proof of their allegations.

Doe's statements suggest that there is an adversarial relationship between the government and the press. While Doe is probably not familiar with the concept of "invitational discourse," his statements imply that he is aware of the persuasive power of the press. Doe presented the press as working against the government which would justify the use of "pressure." This is evident in Doe's the word choice and evidence Doe used for his statements regarding press freedom. These statements reflected the use of the news appeal of community.

Doe's word choice highlights the adversarial nature of the relationship between the press and the government. Doe used the pronouns "we" to refer to the government and "they" to refer to journalists. For example, in the beginning of the interview he said that "**We** don't put pressure on **our** newspapers. He said at the end of the interview "we believe in press freedom."

Doe presents evidence which implies that the government supports press freedom while journalists abuse the freedom they are given. There are two reasons. First, they don't like Doe and second, journalists are interested in advancing their own interests rather than the interests of the country. Doe seems to believe that journalists have compromised their own standards of fairness and balance by expressing what he perceives of as individual political viewpoints. According to Doe journalists, "write news of their parties and so they were classified as politicians." He also suggests that some journalists are not well trained. As a result, ". . . they just report yellow journalism where people just write anything that they see because they want to make money." These statements imply that the news appeals that journalists are using are to individuals or to groups.

Conversely, Doe gives the appearance that the government respects press freedom. It is not the government which is the problem, but the journalists who "pressure the government." Doe says that he supports the press by having news conferences and implies that he might tolerate journalists who are "genuinely interested in investigating the pros and cons." These statements imply that press is free to appeal to and report on those items which better the Liberian community.

The Procedure

The analysis found in Chapter 4 will follow a similar pattern to the one above. The case study will contain three sections which are "background," "the narrative," and finally an "analysis" In the analysis, the data from the case study will be used to identify the journalistic conventions including elements of technical form, which create the perception that the press is engaging in invitational discourse. The political ramifications will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the personal narrative episodes will be done according to the model established in Chapter Three. Each case study will be numbered and presented in chronological order beginning with those that occurred in 1978.

Case Study 1: "No, They Weren't Arrested!"

Background

Throughout Liberian history, the United States has been one of Liberia's closest political allies and trading partners. In May of 1978, U.S. President Jimmy Carter paid a state visit to Liberia. This was an important day in the life of the nation.

The visit occurred during growing economic and political tensions in Liberia. Economically, Liberia was deep in debt due to the falling world prices in its chief exports, rubber and iron ore. It had also spent millions of dollars in

preparations for the Organization of African Unity Conference which it would host later in the year. The country needed foreign economic aid to bolster its ailing economy. Politically, opposition was growing to the TWP government from groups such as the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL). This visit was an opportunity to demonstrate that the government was in control of the situation.

The Narrative

It was one of the biggest news events which occurred during my tenure in Liberia. U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife were going to pay a state visit to Liberia. The state visit included arrival ceremonies at the airport and a working lunch with President William R. Tolbert Jr. Radio ELWA, along with ELBC and ELTV covered the event. Both radio stations provided live coverage, while ELTV recorded the events for the evening news.

I had the opportunity to be part of the Radio ELWA crew. The crew was divided into two teams, one at the airport and the other at the Executive Mansion in Monrovia. I was selected to be part of the airport team along with the Radio ELWA English Program Director, Sam Miller, a Liberian national. Carter arrived during the late morning at Roberts International Airport about 40 miles from Monrovia. Following airport ceremonies, he traveled by motorcade to the Executive Mansion for a working lunch with President Tolbert and other Liberian government officials.

The coverage went smoothly. The motorcade route was lined with people waiting to catch a glimpse of the American President. During the course of the day, Radio ELWA News Director, Moses Washington, observed some

students in Monrovia carrying signs protesting the Carter visit. He also observed that the police soon broke up the demonstration before Carter arrived in Monrovia. Washington, an experienced journalist, followed the police to the Central Police Headquarters and watched the police book the protesters.

During the 7:00 p.m. evening newscast on Radio ELWA, while reporting on the Carter visit, Moses also reported the arrest of the demonstrators. This story brought swift reaction from the Ministry of Information. The next day, the Minister of Information summoned ELWA's News Director and Broadcasting Director to his office where he told them that there was no demonstration against the Carter visit. He noted only that some "perpetrators" were temporarily removed from the situation." The Minister of Information said that the perpetrators" were never arrested or booked and were allowed to leave within a few hours. The News Director, who was familiar with police procedures, said that he had followed the police with the demonstrators to Central Police Headquarters and that he observed the demonstrators being arrested and booked. The Minister again replied that they weren't arrested or booked.

He then ordered ELWA to air a retraction to the story on its 7:00 p.m. newscast. This presented the Radio ELWA broadcasting management and news staff with a dilemma. The question was whether to compromise the integrity of Radio ELWA news or face continued repercussions from the Ministry of Information for failing to comply with the request to broadcast a retraction.

A few nights later, after much debate, ELWA aired a follow-up story on its 7:00 p.m. newscast which reflected the position of the Ministry of Information and attributed the details of the incident to the Ministry. This follow-up story seemed to satisfy the Ministry of Information officials.

Analysis

This Narrative contains a pattern which will occur in most of the case studies. The pattern is one in which a news organization airs a story, and the government, unhappy with the content, reacts to that story in an official capacity. In this narrative, Radio ELWA aired a story regarding opposition to the visit of President Jimmy Carter. This story embarrassed the government. The government summoned Radio ELWA management to a meeting regarding the story and asked the station to take action. This narrative illustrates that the wording of a news story is problematic to the government.

This story was embarrassing to the government and could be classified as "gossip" because it could be used for political purposes to demonstrate that there is political opposition to the U.S. in Liberia. Even though there was only a handful of protesters, this was evidence that there was some opposition in Liberia to U.S. policies. The presence of opposition could tarnish the relationship between the two nations which might pose a threat to further economic aid. This disclosure could fuel the fires of the growing political opposition in the country. It is obvious by the reaction of the government to the story that government officials perceived this story as provocative discourse which is defined here as "invitational discourse."

The government complained about the way Radio ELWA had worded the story. The problem centered on the words "demonstrators," and "arrested." In the context of this incident, these words carry political connotations. The word "demonstrators" carries the connotation of a political protest.

The wording of the story contributed to the government's perception that Radio ELWA was engaging in provocative discourse, which is operationalized here as "invitational discourse," because it revealed that not everyone was happy with the Carter visit or U.S. policies. This story could be viewed as a news appeal to "Ideal Social Order" because the students were engaging in political discourse across national boundaries. In a sense, this demonstrated to the world that there is freedom of expression in Liberia.. Radio ELWA's use of the words "arrested" and "demonstrators" gave the connotation, however, that the government does not tolerate such protests and the "demonstrators" were being punished for opposing the visit.

This connotation could be politically damaging to the Liberian government given Carter's stand on human rights, and Liberia's constitution which guarantees the right of free speech. The Tolbert government would not want to be known as a government that jails political demonstrators, especially those who are protesting the visit of another Head of State.

The government's use of the words "perpetrators" and "temporarily removed from the situation" was a news appeal to community guardians. The word "perpetrators" does not have political connotations. It means that the people were merely "disrupting" the Carter visit rather than politically protesting it. Also, these "perpetrators" were not "arrested" but "temporarily removed from the situation." Another word that could be used is "detained." The government was actually attempting to demonstrate that it was attempting to guard Carter from people who might attempt to disrupt the visit.

In response to its story, Radio ELWA was asked to air a retraction. By doing so, the government was asking Radio ELWA to deny the original story.

This posed an ethical problem for Radio ELWA because the station had broadcast a story that it believed was true. The story had credibility because it was based on Washington's observations of the scene and his years of experience as a journalist.

The question that faced Radio ELWA was how to broadcast a retraction and satisfy the government, without compromising its credibility. Radio ELWA enjoyed a high degree of credibility in the area of news which is attested to by statements from the general public such as "If it is on Radio ELWA then it must be true." Radio ELWA needed to engage the audience in invitational discourse regarding the government's position without compromising its own position.

The solution to the dilemma was to attribute the facts contained in the correction to the Ministry of Information. This is an example of a news appeal to authority. By doing this, Radio ELWA was engaging in invitational discourse because the "correction" did not deny the facts of the original story. The people had two viewpoints of the incident. One viewpoint was contained in the original story while a second was contained in the "correction" which attributed the facts to the Ministry of Information. The story also could be viewed as a challenge to the authority of the government because Radio ELWA aired a "correction" and not a retraction.

Case Study 2: "This is Your Last Chance"

Background

This narrative occurred near the end of Tolbert's presidency in 1979. By 1979, the Tolbert government was experiencing political difficulties due to the rise of opposition parties such as the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL). Political tensions spilled into the streets when on April 14, 1979, what began as a peaceful demonstration on the streets of Monrovia to protest the increase in the price of rice, turned violent and became known as the "Rice Riots." The riots lasted for about two days until the Tolbert Administration called for calm. During that time, both LBS and ELWA did not carry news from BBC regarding the riots. I recall listening to the 5:00 p.m. BBC newscast relayed on ELBC when, during a story about the situation in Monrovia, the transmission from London was suddenly lost due to "technical difficulty."

During those tense days, Radio ELWA followed the lead of the national station ELBC in its news coverage of the event feeling that the station was in closer communication with the government than we were. On Radio ELWA, news coverage of the situation was based on officially approved sources including government press releases.

During the summer of 1979, Liberia hosted the meeting of the Organization of African Unity. The cost of hosting the events included providing a meeting site, housing, vehicles, and food for the delegates, as well as rebuilding roads, and a new home for the national radio and television services. This placed

Liberia in deep financial debt. It is a speech about this debt given by a former government official which Radio ELWA broadcast that again sparked conflict with the government.

The Narrative

As a part of its public service programming, Radio ELWA aired speeches presented at the University of Liberia as part of its "Intellectual Discourse Series." These speeches sometimes centered on political issues facing the country. The government, however, continued to allow the station to air speeches from the series. One speech, however, nearly cost the station its license.

I was not directly involved in the meetings with government officials. Following the incident both at Radio ELWA and recently as I wrote this narrative, Dave Schult briefed me on the details. Dave was the Radio ELWA Broadcasting Director and took part in the discussions with government officials regarding the broadcast of this speech.

On March 14, 1979 Clifford Flemister, the former head of the General Services Agency, gave a speech as part of the Intellectual Discourse Series that focused on Liberia's debt. In the speech, Flemister revealed that Liberia's debt had grown to more than one billion dollars which was contrary to the figure in the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government publicly announced. In addition, Flemister also questioned the government's spending priorities. These claims were based on information obtained from the public financial records of the government.

Radio ELWA recorded the speech and broadcast portions of it throughout the next few days. On Thursday March 15th, a portion was broadcast on the programs "Good Morning Liberia," and "Palavar Hut." Neither of these broadcasts included comments from the government, only excerpts from the speech.

On Friday March 16th, Radio ELWA reporters interviewed the Deputy Minister for Fiscal Affairs to get the government's perspective on the speech and the debt. The interview was aired on "Palavar Hut" that evening.

On Saturday March 17th, excerpts from the speech and the government's reaction were carried on the "Week in Review" program. About twelve and a half minutes of the program were devoted to the speech. Of that, there was a four minute excerpt of the speech, and a six minute excerpt of the interview with the Deputy Finance Minister. The balance of the time was spent opening and closing the segment.

Following the broadcasts, various government agencies including the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) of the National Police Force, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Ministry of Finance all wanted copies of the tape Radio ELWA complied with all of the requests. During a live broadcast on his return from a visit to Cote d' Ivoire, Tolbert publicly refuted Flemister's charges and said that he would be held accountable for them.

On Monday March 19, Radio ELWA received a letter from the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications inviting the General Manager to a meeting at 10:00 a.m., the next day. At the meeting both the Minister of Information and the Minister of Postal Affairs were present along with other ELWA administrative personnel and personnel from ELTV and ELBC. The meeting began with a

reference to Radio ELWA's original charter to be non-political. The Minister of Posts felt that we had violated this charter by broadcasting the Flemister speech which might have caused the government to loose its credit rating. In a personal telephone interview I conducted with Dave Schult regarding the incident, Schult added that the ministers told him that Radio ELWA had just had its "last chance" (4 March, 1992). ELWA's license would be revoked if it continued to broadcast stories of this nature. Schult said that the major concern with the speech was that we had broadcast it. He said that the government did not deny the content, but, in his words "They [the government] were unhappy because we had spread it around" (15 March 1995).

About two months following the broadcast of the speech, Flemister paid a call on the SIM Area Director and Broadcasting Director Schult. During the meeting, the two men explained to Mr. Flemister the problems created by the speech and that the station attempted to abide by a non-political editorial policy. Mr. Flemister's reply was that to be non-political was to make a political statement!

Analysis

In this narrative Liberian government officials once again were disturbed with a story broadcast by Radio ELWA. In this case the conflict centered on the broadcast of a recording of a speech given by Clifford Flemister, a former government official, as part of the Intellectual Discourse series at the University of Liberia.

As in Case Study 1, following the broadcast of the speech the government summoned station management to a meeting. This time, however, it was at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, the agency which granted broadcast licenses. The location of this meeting is significant because it symbolizes the control the government as patron has over Radio ELWA. The government considered this story to be a political statement because they reminded Radio ELWA that its license agreement with the government stipulated that they remain "non-political." Rather than Radio ELWA being asked to air a retraction, the government warned ELWA personnel that they were being given their "last chance." This narrative reveals that the act of broadcasting becomes problematic to the government when the broadcast content contradicts the viewpoints of the government.

Flemister's speech could be regarded as invitational discourse because the speech challenged the government's position on the issue of Liberia's debt. In public speaking, two important factors which affect the persuasive influence of a message are credibility of the speaker, and the credibility of the evidence. In the case of the Flemister speech, the speaker was a former government official who was acquainted with the financial situation of the Liberian government. The evidence or supporting material for the speech was obtained from public financial records.

The public disclosure of Liberia's financial condition could be economically and politically damaging to the government. Economically, the government is dependent on foreign aid and international loans from other countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As the Minister of Posts

and Telecommunications indicated, the broadcast of this speech could possibly have led to a loss of the country's credit rating.

Politically, the content of the speech could further fuel the fires of the growing political opposition in Liberia. It could, therefore be defined as "gossip." The content of the speech came from public financial records, these records detail the past fiscal responsibility and spending priorities of the government. With prices of goods rising in Liberia, this information could be used by opposition parties to further question the future fiscal responsibility and spending priorities. During politically sensitive times, Flemister had uncovered sensitive information which the government seemingly was attempting to hide from the general public.

The purpose of Flemister's speech was to challenge the government's claim that the debt was under one billion dollars. Since the speech was held at the University of Liberia where there had been political activism, Flemister's news appeal could be viewed as an appeal to individuals and possibly to groups such as political opposition parties which were forming.

The problem, however, was not with the content of the speech, but with broadcasting it. This reveals that the financial condition of the country was information that the government did not want the general public to know because of the political and economic ramifications mentioned above. For example, it would not be beneficial to the Liberian community to loose their credit rating with the IMF.

The content of the speech could be compared to content which is subject to the "do-not-talk-it" proscription in the secret society. The content must be communicated discretely using the "veiled code." Broadcasting the speech could be compared to a member of the secret society writing a letter regarding news of

the society without using the veiled code. When this is done, anyone who could read had access to the information.

Public speaking, however, could be compared to using the "veiled code." If Radio ELWA had not broadcast the speech, only those who attended the lecture at the university would have heard Flemister's claim. This would have minimized the possible political and economic repercussions of the speech.

This indicates that in this case, broadcasting is an invitational news form and public speaking is a non-invitational news form. There are three reasons for this. First, broadcasting the speech made the content available to anyone in the nation who spoke English and had a radio. Radio ELWA imposed a technical form on the speech by recording it and using excerpts on its news magazine programs. Second, excerpts of the speech were broadcast several times. At least two of the broadcasts did not contain comments from the government. On the first two broadcasts, Radio ELWA did not balance Flemister's viewpoint with comments from the government.

Finally, the perception of the broadcast of the speech by the government and the people was influenced by the credibility of Radio ELWA. Since Radio ELWA is a credible source of news and information, the government perceived that Radio ELWA was lending credibility to a message which contradicted the position of the government and one that was delivered at a venue in which there was anti-government sentiment.

Radio ELWA was providing the audience with content that meets their need for an alternative viewpoint which would help them make informed decisions. Since Radio ELWA is known as a "credible" source for news and public affairs programming, the audience is likely to assign credibility to the

content based on the Radio ELWA **broadcast** of the speech. The situations in which broadcasting is an invitational news form makes it a source for political empowerment as will be seen in Case Study 3.

Case Study 3: The Constitution. . . Rights Communicated

Background

By 1984 the legitimacy of the Doe government was being plagued by political "gossip." Liebenow (1987) notes that up until this time, Doe had been dragging his feet and had delayed the start of the process to return the Liberian government to civilian rule. The word on the streets of Monrovia was "Same taxi, different driver" (Liebenow 1987, p. 263). To satisfy his critics, Doe needed to demonstrate that it was not headed in the direction of a prolonged military government or one party state, but was serious about returning the country to multi-party civilian rule as promised. As a result, Doe initiated the process of drafting a new constitution for the Second Republic.

The Narrative

On April 12, 1981, Doe acted on his pledge to restore civilian rule to Liberia by creating the National Constitutional Commission. Doe appointed Dr. Amos Sawyer to chair the commission. Dr. Sawyer was the head of the Political

Science Department at the University of Liberia and was also a candidate for mayor of Monrovia in 1979. While the commission was responsible for drafting the new constitution, the PRC still retained veto power.

Even though the PRC retained veto power, the process of writing the new constitution was open and heavily involved the media. One of the first steps in the writing process was to invite members of Liberia's print and the electronic media to the Unity Conference Center outside Monrovia where the old constitution was read and explained to journalists. The Radio ELWA English and Liberian program producers were among the group invited to attend. As the men returned from the meeting, they were amazed at the rights which the TWP government had denied. As one person said to me, "We knew things were not like we wanted them to be, but we thought that this is just the way things were."

The use of radio played a key role in informing people in the interior about the old constitution because there are few rural newspapers and the literacy rate is under 30%. Radio ELWA was to broadcast the old constitution in English and each of the Liberian languages it carried. This was done through a series of broadcasts. The government paid the station a small stipend for the radio time and the work of the producers. This was the first time since the TWP took office that common citizens were informed of their rights through the mass media. Previously this was done clandestinely by pamphleteers such as Albert Porte. Liebenow (1987) writes,

> The publication of the suspended constitution in the *Daily Observer* oddly enough provided many Liberians with their first view of the document that had presumably governed their lives during the First Republic. It was a constitution that had often been honored only in the breach (p. 218).

Following the broadcasts, the constitutional commission held meetings throughout the country in major population centers for Liberians to express their views regarding the items to be included in the new constitution. The electronic and print media announced the location and time of each meeting.

When this process was concluded, the committee considered this public input as they drafted the new constitution. The draft was subsequently reviewed by Doe, the PRC, and by a 59-member Advisory Assembly. The review resulted in few substantial revisions from the original draft (Liebenow p. 220-221).

After the new draft of the constitution had been approved by the Advisory Assembly, journalists were again called to the Unity Conference Center, where it was read and explained. The draft of the new constitution contained few changes from the Constitution of 1847. For example, it still guaranteed the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The structure of the government also remained the same including the guarantee of a multi-party political system.

The draft of the new constitution was again printed and broadcast in English and the Liberian languages. Also included were details of the referendum vote which would take place on July 3, 1984. While I was not in the country when the vote was taken, the referendum passed 510,113 to 7,771 with 14,759 abstentions and 4,248 questioned ballots (Liebenow 1987, p. 222).

Analysis

This case study differs from the others because there is no conflict between the government and the media. Instead, the government and the media worked together throughout the process of drafting the 1984 constitution.

The media played a key role in the process in two ways. First, it served as a primary delivery system to inform the Liberian public regarding their political rights guaranteed in the old and new constitutions and it provided information regarding the referendum process. Second the electronic media played a political role by adding credibility to Doe's promise of returning the country to civilian rule. This Narrative reveals that the public communication of political information through mass communication channels is a source of political empowerment.

The news appeal during the process was an appeal to community guardians and to public opinion. In the process of writing the Liberian constitution, the Doe government wanted to the Liberian people to perceive that they were the guardians of the values of the Liberian community. At the same time, Doe also wanted to build legitimate authority for his government. He attempted to do this by appealing to public opinion to create the perception that he was the political "hero" who informs people of their rights. This was in contrast to the TWP who was the political "villain" that kept political rights hidden. This can be seen in the steps of the constitutional process.

First, the government invited members of the press to the Unity Conference Center for a reading of the 1847 constitution during which their rights under that constitution were explained. This represents a significant break from past tradition. During the days of the TWP, only those who were in political power in the TWP government had access to political rights. Since the TWP also controlled the access to and content of mass communication channels little debate on issues regarding public policy or political rights was permitted. This mechanism helped to maintain political stability under the TWP thus perpetuating the one-party state. Those who attempted to inform the people of their rights,

such as pamphleteer, Albert Port, were punished by the government and in some cases were accused of sedition. Thus, in the absence of information, the Liberian people assumed that the decisions which were made by the government were in their best interest.

The news appeal to public opinion soon became evident in the statements our staff made following the first briefing of their political rights under the 1846 constitution. Our broadcasters remarked that they could not believe they had those rights! While they did not like all the things which happened during the TWP era, as mentioned above, they thought that this is "just the way things were."

Second, the government permitted the rights under the old constitution to be broadcast in both English and the vernacular languages. Every Liberian that had access to a radio had the opportunity to hear the constitutional rights denied to them under the TWP.

Third, the government followed the broadcasts up with meetings in various population centers throughout the country. The 1847 constitution had no input from people outside of Monrovia, or even those outside of the political power structure. This further strengthened the appeal to public opinion. People were permitted to talk openly about their political rights.

Fourth, the government broadcast the draft of the 1984 constitution to the Liberian people. This document was not a "secret" document. Each person in Liberia, not just those who lived in Monrovia, or those who were literate, knew the political rights guaranteed by the constitution. With this political information the Liberian people were also in a position to judge whether the decisions and policies made by the government conformed to or violated these rights.

The broadcast and printing of the old constitution and the draft of the new constitution would be classified as invitational discourse. These broadcasts provided the Liberian citizens with content which would help them make political decisions regarding their political situation. This information could also be used to evaluate their past political situation under the TWP as well as future policy decisions that the government might make. The information regarding the referendum vote would be an appeal to individuals because it challenged citizens to become involved in the political process and told them how to do this.

The invitational discourse was a source of political "empowerment." Brydon and Scott (1994) note that "Empowerment involves not only achieving your goals but also helping your audience to achieve its goals (p. 167)." In a public speaking situation, for example, while the speaker may have as his or her goal to inform the audience regarding proper study habits, such information empowers the audience to achieve better grades through better study habits.

While the media does not have access to the resources of political power, they have the ability to empower their audience. There are three sources of empowerment. These are information or content, expertise, and identification (Brydon and Scott 1994, p. 167). In this case, the media had the ability to politically empower the Liberian people by providing content which engages the audience in invitational discourse. Also the media could be viewed as a source of empowerment for Doe through identification. The process of writing the new constitution models an ideal social order in which Liberian citizens can participate in a democratic society. Brydon and Scott (1994) note that when individuals identify with another person, that person has the ability to influence our behavior. In this case, Doe would be successful in building his authority if the Liberian

people identified the open presentation of constitutional rights with the Doe government.

The Liberian government under Doe had taken a bold step to open the process of drafting the new constitution to public scrutiny. Through the media Liberians were empowered with political information to accomplish their goal of civilian rule which is evident in the overwhelming ratification of the 1984 constitution. During the 1985 election, however, this move would cause political problems for Doe because the people had political information to pass judgments on government decisions and policies.

Case Study 4. "Fire Joe Mulbah Immediately"

The Background

Shortly after the constitution of 1984 was ratified, the political process began. During this process, political parties were formed. The first party to be certified was Doe's National Democratic Party (NDPL). Other political parties included the Liberian Action Party (LAP), the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the Unity Party (UP) and the Liberia Unification Party (LUP).

During the campaign it seemed as though we at Radio ELWA were walking a "tightrope" as we continued to attempt to remain politically neutral through fair and balanced reporting. During the campaign, we asked the Minister of Information his definition of being "non-political." He said that as long as news

reports were balanced, with both government and opposition views being reported, we were being "non-political." In response, we revised our news guidelines to help us make better decisions on what stories we would cover and how we would cover them.

Election Day, October 15, 1985 was an exciting day for all Liberians. For the first time in over 130 years, the people would have a choice. The national television service, ELTV was flying to each major population center to provide election coverage. ELBC was providing live coverage from election sites in the Monrovia area. Radio ELWA, however, was providing no special election coverage outside of regular newscasts. Our management and news team felt that we should give the national radio and television service the spotlight on this day when democracy was being "reborn" in Liberia. We also did not want to be accused of being political and having our microphones unknowingly used for political agendas. Also, our news staff told me that they didn't vote on election day for fear that someone would accuse them of supporting a particular political party. The news team, however, did visit polling places and recorded comments which were used on later newscasts.

To accommodate the long lines of voters, the head of the Special Elections Commission (SECOM) announced that the polls would be open until 11:00 p.m. rather than closing at 6:00 p.m. as previously announced. After the polls closed, Liberia's elections were proclaimed by international observers as free and fair. For example, Bernard Kalb speaking on behalf of the U.S. State Department said that any irregularities "were an exception to the general rule" (West Africa October 28, 1985, p. 2644).

Finally, the slow task of counting the ballots began. Exit polls taken by the Liberian Action Party (LAP) showed that LAP commanded a substantial lead. So substantial and reliable was that lead that American journalist Chuck Powell, commented on a BBC interview that LAP would win with 60% of the vote (Liebenow 1987, p 295). Vote tallies from SECOM that were witnessed and signed by party representatives and circulated by SECOM member Emmanuel Shaw confirmed the LAP lead. Shaw, however, was later arrested and charged with sedition (Liebenow 1987, p. 295). By October 16, the vote count was halted due to allegations of irregularities in the ballot counting.

LAP also reported election irregularities. Radio ELWA also became involved in the controversy by reporting those irregularities that were outlined in a press release from LAP and disclosed in a news conference by LAP. Little did I know that our report would lead to a face to face encounter with Samuel Doe.

The Narrative

On October 21, 1985 the Liberian Action Party (LAP) held what was to be a historic press conference to announce that election ballots had been tampered with. According to LAP, extra ballots had been shipped to the interior of Liberia after the election while others had been burned. LAP had photographs of ballots being transported as well as samples of marked election day ballots which had been burned.

Radio ELWA's Chief News Editor, Joe Mulbah, was among those who were present at the news conference. He brought samples of the burned ballots back to the studio as well as a press release from LAP outlining the alleged

offenses. This was a very politically sensitive issue. Since Radio ELWA reaches the entire nation of Liberia and much of West Africa through its short-wave facilities, our report could potentially tarnish the image of a smooth and fair election.

Joe broke the story of the burned ballots on Radio ELWA's popular half-hour prime time expanded newscast, "Window on the World." This newscast was monitored daily by the Liberian government. It contained actualities recorded locally as well as from BBC and VOA. The story regarding the burned ballots was the lead story that evening.

During the politically troubled times prior to and following the election, Radio ELWA attempted to maintain a low profile to avoid government criticism. For this reason, station management felt that it was unwise to break stories of a politically sensitive nature. As a matter of internal policy, the Chief News Editor was to consult with the Broadcasting Director concerning these types of stories. Copy for these stories was to be based on previously printed local newspaper accounts, not on interviews or coverage by ELWA's reporters. Once the story was in print, the ELWA reporter would follow it up through interviews or by attending press conferences.

For some reason, Mulbah did not consult with the Broadcasting Director about the burned ballots. He based the story directly on material from the LAP press release and the news conference.

After learning that the story had been broadcast, I began an internal investigation into the matter the following morning October 22nd. During the investigation I talked with staff who had contact with Joe and also asked for a transcript of the story which had been aired. By about 10:00 a.m. I had

completed that process except for interviewing Joe Mulbah. Since Joe would not return until 4:00 to begin his shift, I would have to wait until then to talk with him to interview him.

At about 10:30 a.m. I received a call at my home on the ELWA compound that an agent from the Special Security Service (SSS) was at the station to see me. We talked on the phone and he said that the Director of the SSS wished to see me in his office immediately. I asked if the meeting could be postponed until the afternoon. The agent radioed the Executive Mansion, where the director's office was located. He was told that this was an urgent matter and that the Director wanted to see me right away. The agent, who acted very professionally, said that we could take our own vehicle and that he would meet us at the mansion to escort us to the director's office.

After consulting with the SIM Area Director, which is common procedure in these matters, we both felt that the meeting was probably related to a news story. We decided that on the way to the mansion, I should attempt to locate Joe Mulbah and ask him to accompany us to the meeting. We explained our plan to the SSS agent, and he seemed satisfied.

Taking the English Program Director and another news reporter with me, we left for the Executive Mansion about 11:00. On the way, we attempted to locate Joe, but were unable to find him.

We arrived at the Mansion shortly before noon. An SSS agent met us and escorted us to the Director's Office. I had never been inside the mansion, but I knew that the Head of State's Office was on the sixth floor. We were escorted to the fourth floor. The Director met us at the door to his office and told us to have a seat in the hallway. This seemed to me to be highly unusual,

because I had been told by the SSS agent that this matter was urgent. I felt that if the matter was so urgent, he would have ushered us into his office immediately.

We waited for at least 15 minutes in the hall. The wait seemed like hours. The longer we waited the more uneasy I became. I had a feeling that we were not going to meet with the Director of the SSS, but with someone else.

Soon, my suspicions were confirmed. At about 12:15 we were given a body search and ushered into the presence of the Head of State, Samuel K. Doe. Doe was dressed in a business suit and sat behind a large desk in his fourth floor office. We were seated in a row of chairs just in front of the desk. I felt very uneasy at this meeting. I sat, along with my Liberian colleagues, wondering just what would happen. I kept thinking that I was sitting in the presence of the man who had overthrown the TWP regime, and, as polls showed, had probably been defeated in the presidential election. Since civilian rule had not yet been completely restored, this man still commanded all of the power in the Liberian government. I asked myself, "What would he do?" I also asked myself, "What did he want with us?"

A few moments later, the Minister of Information walked in. The Minister was walking with a cane. Doe asked him what the problem was. He said that he had sustained an injury a few days before. The Minister then took a seat just to Doe's right (our left) and the meeting began.

Doe began by asking who the Radio Manager was. I replied that I was the Acting Broadcasting Director. I explained that our Broadcasting Director was out of the country and that I had assumed his responsibilities. In a very terse and stern way he then looked each of us in the eye. Directing his remarks at me Doe said that ELWA was a religious station and should not be engaged in making

political statements. He said that several of our staff members have been using ELWA to make political statements. He added that if they wanted to do this, they should join a political party. Doe singled out Joe Mulbah specifically as the worst offender. He said he did not know if Joe was working for any of the opposition parties, but he didn't want this to continue. With his eyes still riveted on me, in a matter-of-fact way he said, "You are to dismiss Mr. Mulbah immediately." Then raising his voice he added sternly, "Do you understand?" As he continued to stare into my face I could see fire in Doe's eyes as those words echoed through the room.

Then there was a deafening silence in the room which seemed to last for hours. I wasn't sure how to respond. I wondered, "Should I defend our story and our policies? Should I apologize for what had been aired? Should I remain silent?" I had never been in this kind of a situation before. I continued to ask myself, "What do you do when the head of a military government gives you a command like this one?" Finally, I shook my head that I understood what he had asked me to do.

Following this exchange, the Minister of Information attempted to speak on our behalf. He was immediately stopped by the Head of State who said that he had heard enough and that he was finished with this matter. Since Doe was unwilling to listen to his own Minister of Information, culturally, I knew I had made the right decision to listen and say nothing. At about 12:20 p.m. we were ushered out of the room and left the mansion. While we had been with Doe only about five minutes, it seemed like hours.

The trip back to ELWA was shrouded in silence. We were all in shock as if someone had died. We informed the SIM Area Administration by radio that we

would like to have an immediate conference on our return. Since anyone who had a radio could listen to this conversation, we did not mention the nature of the meeting at the Mansion or that the Head of State had been present. All of us in the car agreed that we would say nothing of the meeting to other ELWA staff or SIM personnel except for the Area Director. We would make a statement to the staff and SIM personnel only after consulting with the Area Director.

At the station, we briefed the SIM Area Director regarding the meeting with Doe. They were just as shocked as we were, and puzzled over what to do. Yet, after prayer and discussion, we felt that we must carry out the Head of State's request, since we were guests in the country. This request by the Head of State abruptly terminated my investigation into the matter. I had no choice. I had to take immediate action.

The SIM Area Director, Assistant Area Director and I drafted a letter of termination that I would give to Joe stating that "the government of Liberia" requested he be terminated. As is customary in labor matters of this nature, we followed the procedure of referring this matter to our lawyers who usually reviewed all letters of termination. We felt that even though these were unusual circumstances, this procedure should still be followed. During the afternoon, another Liberian staff member and I met with our lawyers. We informed them of our meeting and shared the letter. After about 90 minutes, and some slight rewording, we returned to ELWA with a final draft. It was after 4:00 p.m. when left the lawyers office to return to the station. Since I knew Joe would be at the station at any moment, I asked someone to meet him when he came.

The SIM Area Director and Assistant Area Director met Joe in my absence to explain the situation to him. When I returned to the studio shortly

after 5:00, I briefed the SIM Area Director and Assistant Area Director regarding the meeting with the lawyers. Following the briefing, I found Joe and informed him that we had a meeting in Monrovia with government officials and they were upset about the story we ran the previous evening. I did not tell him at that time that our meeting was with the Head of State, but did not deny that I had been to the mansion when he asked.

I said that we were going to have to take some action and that the final draft of a letter outlining our actions was being edited on the computer. I asked Joe to wait for that letter, but also told him not to go on the air.

Joe asked if he could return the next day for the letter because he and other ELWA reporters were being followed by SSS agents and he feared for his life. Reluctantly, I agreed and Joe walked out into the night. I hoped I would see him again the next day to complete the Head of State's request.

After Joe left, I went into the news room only to find it empty. That evening I prepared and presented the 7:00 p.m. newscast, plus an abbreviated edition of "Window on the World." I wanted to give the appearance that things were normal.

The next day, the SIM Area Director suggested that he and I visit to the U.S. Ambassador and the Ministry of Information. Since the Ambassador was unavailable, we talked with the Political Officer. After we explained the situation to her, she reprimanded me for going into the Executive Mansion alone. She said that politically Doe was like a caged animal with nowhere to go. He was striking out at anyone. He knows that he was defeated in the election, yet he wanted to remain in power. She recommended that if this happened again, I was to inform the Embassy and someone from the Embassy would go with me to the mansion.

She also suggested that instead of firing Joe, we keep him off the air for awhile until Doe cools off and then discretely begin to use him again. She felt that this would satisfy Doe. The Area Director and I talked about this suggestion privately, but rejected it because we felt it was deceptive.

Next we went to see the Minister of Information who was present at our meeting with Doe the previous day. While waiting to see the Minister, we read an article from the *Star* regarding the dismissal of Joe Mulbah. During the meeting, the Minister of Information confirmed that our story regarding the burned ballots had prompted the meeting with Doe. We also informed the Minister about our internal news guidelines and felt that if they had been followed, this story would not have been aired. The Minister seemed pleased about this.

When we returned to ELWA, we were informed that the SSS had visited again. They wanted to see if we had carried out the Head of States' order to fire Joe Mulbah. Since we were not there they left a message. The message stated that in the letter of termination the Head of State was not to be mentioned. After discussing the situation we felt sure that if we didn't comply, certain repercussions could possibly result. We asked ourselves, "What should we do? How could we not mention the government in the letter of termination since we were taking the action as the result of a direct order from the Head of State?"

Again, I headed into town along with some key Liberian staff members. Our first stop was to see the Minister of Information. We told him about the message from the SSS. We asked him on what grounds we should terminate Joe? We said that we were doing it at the request of the Head of State.

The Minister then asked if Joe had violated any of the station's news guidelines. I said that in cases of politically controversial stories the Broadcasting

Director was usually briefed. In the case of the story regarding the burned ballots, I wasn't briefed. I told him that I was conducting an investigation of the matter but that the Head of States' order superseded my internal investigation. The Minister felt that because Joe didn't consult me regarding the story before it aired, that we had just grounds to fire him.

Referring to our conversation that morning regarding ELWA's news guidelines, he said that we should say in the letter of termination that Joe has violated certain "guidelines" of the station. He added that there was a feeling that ELWA was in danger of becoming too "political" and he didn't want to see us involved in political issues.

We asked the minister what he meant by being "political." He said that a story becomes political when it contains only the opposition's point of view. A story is not political when it covers both the opposition and government points of view equally and fairly. In his judgment, the story based on the LAP press release did not adequately reflect the government's response to the allegations of ballot burning. This story would, therefore, be classified as a "political " story.

Following the meeting with the Minister, we went to the lawyer's office once again to ask for their counsel on the wording for the letter of termination. The lawyers advised us not to change the letter. They felt that there would be no political repercussions. Following our return to the station, and after much prayer and debate, we decided to reword the letter written the previous day removing references to the government, and instead state that the reason for termination was the violation of our news "guidelines."

When we delivered the letter to Joe he was very surprised. After much discussion with him regarding the matter, we told him why the letter must be

worded in this way. We also attached a blind post script to the letter that stated we were going to pay him severance. In Liberia, when an organization pays severance, it means that there was really no solid grounds to terminate the individual. In this way, the station vindicated itself for an act which might be perceived as an illegal termination.

In the days that followed, I briefed Radio ELWA Liberian staff and SIM missionary staff regarding the situation. The Liberian staff agreed that in the presence of the Head of State I had no right to speak, and had very little choice in how to handle the situation. The staff was also relieved to learn that Radio ELWA could still broadcast news. They thought that at the meeting with Doe we were told that the government was forbidding ELWA to carry news. This is why they had not shown up for work for two days following that meeting with Doe. They were afraid that there might be government repercussions against them if they were on the air.

The press also carried the story about the termination. The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) was critical of our actions. Mr. Kenneth Best, the President of the Press Union met with us about the matter. The PUL urged us to reconsider our decision. A portion of their press release noted,

> The Committee understands that all media organizations are under pressure at this critical time in the history of our country. Nevertheless, media institutions should realize that if individual journalists working for them are under pressure, the managements are under similar pressure, and ought not therefore to save their own lives, while sacrificing the people working for them. (PUL Press Release October 24, 1985, p. 2)

The station was also severely criticized in the press. Although there were subtle references in the same article that left the reader wondering whether there was something ELWA was not able to say about the situation. Since Radio ELWA is known for the fair treatment of its employees, the press viewed this action as very uncharacteristic of ELWA.

A Post Script

Joe Mulbah became another in a series of political pawns in the hands of the Doe government. Western observers felt that Mulbah was doing a fair and balanced job of reporting. The action taken by the government was a political move to rid the airwaves of a critic. As long as the station complied, we could continue to broadcast. I would not like to speculate what might have happened if we had not complied.

Following the incident the Radio ELWA news room returned to normal and continued to cover the election. Due to growing allegations of irregularities in the vote count, the head of SECOM appointed a special 50 person committee to count the votes. This action violated election procedure that had been announced to the general public prior to the election.

While the committee was to be nonpartisan, it did not include members from any of the three opposition parties (Liebenow 1987, p. 296). The final results were announced on October 29 proclaiming Doe and his NDPL the winner with 50.9% of the vote. Radio ELWA broadcast the results live from the Unity Conference Center. Our news team later told us privately that as the Head of State's car drove through the streets of Monrovia, people lined the streets in

silence as though a funeral procession was passing by. It appeared that their silence was sending a symbolic message, that October 29, 1985 was the day democracy died in Liberia.

Analysis

The events in this narrative are similar to the events in Case Studies One and Two. The government became disturbed over a news story that Radio ELWA had broadcast and summoned management to discuss the details of the story. In this case, the story was regarding alleged irregularities in the October 15th elections the details of which were based on a press release from the Liberian Action Party (LAP).

There are, however, two important differences. First, ELWA management personnel were summoned to report to the Executive Mansion rather than the Ministry of Information. The summons came indirectly from the Head of State, the highest ranking government official. The second major difference is that although a news story sparked the conflict, the discussion and action to be taken centered not on a specific news story, but also on a specific journalist, Joe Mulbah and his political viewpoints. In the meeting Head of State Doe noted that he felt that political groups might be attempting to use Radio ELWA for their purposes and that Joe Mulbah had become too political in his reporting. This statement indicates that Doe perceived that Joe was engaging in provocative discourse which is operationalized here as "invitational discourse." Doe reminded us that the station was a religious station and should not be used for political purposes. This statement indicates that Doe was familiar with the

non-political nature of the station's charter. By broadcasting this story, the station was violating the charter. Doe, therefore, in this case, was directly intervening in the operation of the station by exercising his authority as Patron to influence the employment practices of Radio ELWA. This narrative reveals that the government equated the editorial viewpoints expressed by journalists in their stories with their personal political viewpoints.

In the meeting Doe associated Mulbah with the political opposition. He speculated that Joe might even be working for a political party. Based on this, the news appeal could be classified as an appeal to groups or to individuals. While Doe did not mention the story of the burned ballots, this story gave the Liberian people an alternative perspective on the election and the involvement of the government, especially Doe's party, the NDPL in the political process. While this story would be classified as hard news, Doe perceived it as Joe Mulbah's political perspective on the election.

There are four reasons that would support this perception. First, the source for the story was a press release from LAP, the opposition party that most international observers felt won the elections. According to exit polls, LAP was leading Doe's National Democratic Party (NDPL) in nearly every Liberian county.

Second, the data for the press release was obtained through a LAP investigation. The technique of investigative reporting would be regarded as an element of technical form. This reporting technique could be equated with Collier's concept of "gossip." Gossip is information which is used for political purposes. As noted in Chapter Two,

> People thus seek out all the scurrilous information they can obtain and eagerly pass it on to allies (emphasis mine). And to the degree people act on such information, gossip harms its victim (emphasis mine) (1988, p. 124-125).

The words "allies" and "victim" carry the political connotation that the "allies" are persons who engage in gossip to mount political opposition against the "victim," who could be an individual or a government.

The burned ballot story could also be considered "gossip" because the disclosure of this information could lead to political ramifications. This story alleges that there were irregularities in the October 15th elections. This allegation challenges the government's claim that there were free and fair elections. It implicates the National Democratic Party (NDPL) which is Doe's party. Since this election was being monitored by international observers, these allegations could have political consequences. Also, since media content is a source of empowerment, the Liberian people had information to judge the fairness of the election. Doe in his meeting with us associated Mulbah with the political opposition, or "allies" who passed on this "scurrilous" information.

Third, at the time the story was broadcast, there were no comments included from Doe, the Election Commission, or the NDPL. For some unknown reason, Joe did not balance his story which is a fundamental journalistic convention. According to our follow-up meeting with the Minister of Information, when the opposition view and the government viewpoints are placed together in a story, it would be regarded as non-political. Since the story did not contain the government viewpoint it would be considered political, or invitational.

Finally, Mulbah's reputation as a reporter added credibility to the content of the story. As Liebenow (1987) notes, and I would echo, professionally, Joe

Mulbah was considered to be doing a fair and balanced job of reporting according to western observers. He was also well respected in the Liberian press community and by the general public. One might say that he would be equivalent to one of the anchors on a major TV network in the U.S.

Doe equated the viewpoints in the story with Joe's own political viewpoints. This indicates that Doe perceives that Joe stepped out of his objective presentational role as a news reporter and allowed his personal political viewpoints to he heard. By breaking the story about the burned ballots, Joe engaged in invitational discourse which invited the general public and opposition groups to focus on election irregularities which could be traced to the NDPL and the Liberian government. The news appeal in this case would be an appeal to either groups or individuals. This is in contrast to the position taken by the government that the election went smoothly except for some difficulties during the early hours of the vote count.

Based on this evidence, Doe is identifying Mulbah with the political opposition. Based on the statement from the U.S. Consular Officer, Doe knew he was politically defeated and was beginning to strike out at the opposition. One way to minimize the effect of this news story, was to remove Mulbah from the air which is what Doe ordered us to do.

At the beginning of the meeting, Doe reminded me that ELWA was a **religious** station and should not be used for political purposes. In this case, Doe is taking on the role of the patron by reminding me of the conditions of our license. While the government as patron has the resources to directly control the media, in this case, direct control would not be politically advantageous. If it were announced publicly that Doe ordered ELWA to fire Mulbah, he might be accused

by opposition parties and members of the international community who were monitoring the election, of attempting to muzzle the press and restrict press freedom.

Doe needed to make Mulbah's termination appear as though it was done for professional rather than political reasons. This was accomplished by sending the SSS to instruct Radio ELWA to keep the head of state's name out of the letter of termination. The Minister of Information said that in our letter we should say that Joe has violated some of the "guidelines" of the station. The guidelines gave the station the authority to terminate Joe. The reference to the guidelines, could be compared to a news appeal to community guardians. These were guidelines that Radio ELWA developed as part of the "journalism community." They are professional standards which govern the station's journalism practices. This makes it appear that Joe was breaking standards set by members of the journalism community, rather than offending the government.

Joe Mulbah was a credible journalist. Joe had not been disciplined during the time he was on the air. A press release from the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) received after the incident notes,

> The [Executive] Committee finds it difficult to believe that ELWA could summarily dismiss a man who has faithfully served that organization for well over seven years without granting him the elementary benefit of an investigation; especially so when the dismissed journalist has never been suspended before. (PUL Press Release October 24, 1986, p. 1)

The members of the press identified with Mulbah's fate. In the press release, the appeal is to community. The release states that "all media institutions are under

pressure." This implies that the PUL was urging Radio ELWA to stand together or identify with the other members of the press who were experiencing pressure from the government. Also, following the incident, our staff was afraid. This was an indication that the staff believed that this could happen to them.

While it might appear that Doe may have been successful in his attempt to make Mulbah's termination appear as though it was for professional reasons, Liebenow (1987) in his reference to the incident records,

> Following the coverage of electoral fraud during the October 15 balloting, the government brought pressure on ELWA, the Protestant-owned radio station, to remove its chief news editor, Joe Mulbah. . . (p. 258)

Since Radio ELWA was known for its fairness to employees, the way this termination was handled was unusual. Given Radio ELWA's history of fair treatment of employees and Mulbah's employment record, the Doe's plan failed. This indicates that the audience perception of the credibility of the media institution and the journalists plays a key factor in the interpretation of content.

Case Study 5: The Attempted Coup: A Battle for Control

Background

An uneasy calm settled over the city of Monrovia in the weeks following the election. The opposition parties, however, were not going to give up. Many continued to comment on the election and some who had won seats in the new legislature were refusing to take them.

The longer I lived and worked in Liberia, the more I began to realize that every decision to report or not report a story had political implications. In a society in which all is political and conformity to political views is required, the political ramifications of reporting news can create difficult decisions. This was made clear to me on November 12, 1985, the day of the attempted coup by Thomas Quiwonkpa. The struggles of the events of the attempted coup of November 12th clarified the need to report such events accurately and discretely.

The Narrative

This uneasy calm of the weeks before the election was broken early in the morning of November 12, when Brigadier General Thomas Quiwonkpa attempted to overthrow the Doe government. I received news of the coup attempt at 6:00 when the morning announcer on the English service of Radio

ELWA cheerfully said, "Good Morning Mr. Shope. Did you hear about the coup?" This message would change the course of my entire day.

In the next few minutes he informed me that he had heard on ELBC that Brigadier General Thomas Quiwonkpa and his forces had surrounded the city of Monrovia. Part of Quiwonkpa's message stated.

> Fellow citizens, this is general Thomas Quiwonkpa. The Patriotic Forces as of now have seized power. Our forces have completely surrounded the city. Samuel Doe is in hiding. There is no excuse for him. I call on the men and women of the armed forces, the police force, and the security agencies to join force in the liberation of our people from fear, brutality, and bloody tyranny. I call on the students, the workers, and all patriotic citizens to stand with us as we do battle against the forces of injustice and corruption. All patriotic forces of the armed forces of Liberia are hereby ordered to arrest all ministers, deputy ministers and all security forces (as heard) of the republic of Liberia, the former chief of staff of the armed forces of Liberia, Lt. Gen. Henry Dubar, all other officials of the deposed government of Samuel Doe and bring them to the Executive Mansion, immediately. (*West Africa* 18 Nov. 1985: 2439)

Quiwonkpa was Doe's former commanding general and one of the original members of the team led by Doe which carried out the 1980 coup. The radio message read by Quiwonkpa added that Head of State Doe was "in hiding." It declared that Quiwonkpa was now Head of State. The message concluded by asking people to listen to the radio for more information.

After hanging up the phone, I turned on my radio to listen for myself. The message was on a continuous loop tape and was repeated almost as soon as it had ended. There was no music, no other announcements or programming, just that message. After getting dressed, I informed the SIM Area Director of what I

had heard and headed for the Radio ELWA studio building for what would prove to be a very long and tense day.

After arriving at the studio building I met with the morning announcer of our English Language Service who had phoned me just a few minutes before. He asked if we should play the message. This was a difficult decision. There were two factors to consider in this decision. The first was the political implications. The taped message said that Thomas Quiwonkpa had taken control of the government and that his forces encircled the city of Monrovia. It added, however, that Head of State Doe wasn't dead, but was "in hiding." With the memory of my encounter with Doe over Joe Mulbah still fresh in my mind, I knew that playing the message could be regarded as a political statement supporting the coup attempt. Not playing the message, however, could also be interpreted as a political statement. If Quiwonkpa's forces had indeed surrounded the city and were heading for the Executive Mansion in Monrovia, not playing the message could be interpreted as support for Doe.

The second factor to be considered was how to inform the listeners in Liberia's interior of the military activities taking place in Monrovia. Since ELBC's short-wave transmitter was not functioning properly only those in the greater Monrovia area heard the announcement of the coup attempt. ELWA's short-wave transmitter could reach the interior with the news that there was trouble in Monrovia. The problem was how to do this discretely to avoid political repercussions from both sides.

At about 6:30 A.M. I told our announcer to continue with regular programming until we heard from the coup leaders. I said that since ELWA could reach the entire country, Quiwonkpa forces would come to the station demanding

that we play the tape. I thought they would probably do this at gun point, as happened in the coup of 1980. I reminded the announcer that there would not be repercussions from this since we are a mission organization with no way to defend ourselves. We would be playing the tape under duress.

As the announcer returned to the control room to resume his duties, I went to my office to contemplate what I would do next. The immediate problem would come at 7:00 a.m. when we would be scheduled to relay BBC news. I wondered if they would have received news of the coup? Should we broadcast this, or not? I did not want to take a chance that BBC would have news of the coup.

Again I began to ponder the details of the message. Two thoughts came to mind. First, I could not conceive of a force large enough to surround the city of Monrovia, which exceeds 20 square miles. A second thought continued to haunt me. According to the message Doe was not dead! I wondered what this could mean? I mused, "Could Doe still command forces? Is Doe being attacked?" I forced myself not to think about this and returned to my original problem which was how I could inform the people in the interior of the events occurring in Monrovia without making a political statement.

With 7:00 quickly approaching, I made the decision not to carry BBC news. Although I had monitored the BBC frequencies and heard nothing of the coup, I still thought that there was a chance that they might carry it in their 7:00 a.m. newscast. Preceding BBC news at 6:55 was five minutes of Liberian news. I decided to continue with this newscast, but not to include any stories about the Doe government. Then following the local newscast we would announce that we were unable to carry BBC news. Hopefully the listeners would interpret this as

"technical difficulties" because there were many mornings that we were not able to relay the news due to poor reception caused by atmospheric conditions.

I instructed the announcer to continue with music instead of the news and regular programming. I told him to play "band" music, a term that refers to marches. In many West African countries including Liberia, march music is played after a military coup. For example, after the coup in 1980, the radio stations played military marches to signal a coup had taken place and the TWP had been overthrown. While we as a station were not saying that a coup had taken place, it was a musical signal that there were problems in Monrovia. Also, the "band" music probably would not be offensive to either side in the conflict.

About 7:30 a.m. a group of men some of them armed walked into the radio station and demanded that we play the cassette that they were holding. They were not harsh, but remained calm and business-like. A couple of the men were dressed in business suits, while the remainder had military attire. While none of the men directly pointed a gun at me, they were armed and I knew that I must comply.

They instructed me to play the tape several times. They also instructed the station to make an announcement that all of the Radio ELWA Liberian language program producers should report to work to translate and broadcast the message into each of the Liberian dialects we carry on the station. We were also to monitor the FM service of LBS for further announcements and to stay on the air for 24 hours. The men instructed us to record and broadcast the announcements as soon as they were received. I assured the men that we would cooperate and immediately broadcast the tape and the announcement requesting

the Liberian Language program producers to report to the station. Soon the men were gone but left no troops to "guard" the station.

After the men left, I met in my office with the Director of the English Section, who was Liberian. I expressed to him the concern that Doe wasn't dead yet and that we still could have a visit from Doe forces. He felt that may not be likely since Doe was "in hiding" and Quiwonkpa forces were surrounding the city. I told him that I wasn't so sure about that. We felt, however, that we should stay in touch throughout the day.

About 9:00 a.m. messages listing new government appointments and policies were being broadcast on ELBC-FM. We recorded these on cassette and broadcast them as soon as they had been recorded. We also continued to play military music. Shortly after 9:00, the Liberian language program producers started to arrive. I briefed them on the situation. They told me that there was "dancing in the streets" as a result of the news. I cautioned them about becoming too excited and that we had a job to do as broadcasters and that we should do it professionally. Each of them went to their desks and began translating the tape and messages into their own language.

During the morning, I was in constant communication with our SIM Area Director, who lived in a house not far from the studio. The American Embassy was also in touch. This is usual procedure in emergency situations. The embassy wanted to make certain that American personnel were safe. They advised that we stay indoors as much as possible since fighting could move in our direction.

At noon, I left the studio to eat lunch with my family. During that time there was a change of shift on the English Language Service. Following lunch, I

went to the Area Director's house for a consultation on the situation. Shortly before noon, BBC had broadcast a news story about the coup and said that Doe would hold a news conference about it later in the day. We weren't sure what to believe at this point. It appeared to us that Doe was losing the battle, but the newscast indicated that he was still in control of the country.

At about 1:00 my worst fears became reality. I received a phone call from our announcer on duty who said nervously, that military personnel loyal to Doe were at the studio urging us to play a tape stating that Doe forces were taking control. She said that they were asking for the radio station manager and asked what she should do. I told her that I would come to the studio right away.

The walk to the studio seemed long. I was praying much as I walked, knowing that men with guns would be waiting for me. I was met at gun point and asked if I was the station manager. I acknowledged that I was. A gun was pointed in my back, but later removed when it was determined that I posed no threat. I was asked to play the tape by the military personnel who had come. I said that I would go to the control room to make the necessary arrangements.

This decision also could have political implications. These implications came out in the ensuing discussion I had with the announcer on duty. She was afraid to play the tape because Quiwonkpa may think that we are loyal to Doe and since he was in charge, he may take action against us. I added, however, that we still didn't know for certain that Quiwonkpa was in charge. According to the morning message, Doe was still "in hiding." He may still have the opportunity to command troops, a battalion of which was stationed at Camp Schefflin, about 5 miles from ELWA. I added that there were soldiers loyal to Doe in the lobby with guns waiting for us to comply with their request.

She feared for her safety if she played the message. I told her, that we had no choice. We had no weapons. I told her that I would take full responsibility for playing the message. If she was questioned, she could reply that the station manager ordered her to play it.

By this time, one of the soldiers peeked into the control room wondering why the message had not yet been played. I replied that it took a few minutes to cue it and make sure it was ready. Satisfied with that response, he returned to the lobby. I told the announcer on duty that we would play the message once and wait for further instructions. The message was played and we returned to march music.

I went to the lobby where the soldiers were waiting. They were pleased that we had obeyed their request and said that we should play the message every 20 minutes. They also said that they would leave some troops behind to "guard" the station, which is something the Quiwonkpa contingent hadn't done.

After briefing the SIM Area Director, I went to my office to wait for further instructions. During that time, we heard a rumor that a contingent of Doe forces was getting ready to battle Quiwonkpa forces near ELWA. ELWA was cut off from the downtown area. We waited and prayed, but nothing happened. Then about 3:00 p.m. ELBC-FM suddenly went silent. The announcer in the Radio ELWA English Service who was monitoring ELBC-FM for messages from Quiwonkpa wondered what to do. She asked if we should go off the air. I said that we had received no further instructions and that we should continue to play the message and march music. The station returned to the air about 30 minutes later with the message that the station was in the hands of Doe forces. The message added that the coup attempt had been foiled and Doe would give a

televised statement regarding the coup attempt at 7:00 p.m. on national television.

Again, we waited for confirmation from Doe forces. There was none. We thought that if this message was real we would be given a tape to broadcast. None came. We continued to broadcast march music and the tape we had been given by the Doe forces at 1:00 p.m. Meanwhile, a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew had been announced. Anyone violating the curfew would be shot. This is standard practice in situations such as this one.

After consulting with the SIM Area Director, we decided to monitor national television and record Doe's message. We felt that if we saw him on television that the story would be true. We decided that if no other tape came, we would broadcast the audio portion of the televised statement.

Shortly before 7:00 p.m. the national television station, ELTV, came on the air. The only programming it carried was the short statement by Doe saying that the coup attempt had failed and that he was alive and in control of the government. I tried to identify the location, but the shots were so tight that little background was visible. I could see, however, that Doe was heavily guarded. After the brief statement was made indicating that he was in control and that the coup attempt was foiled, Doe stated that that Quiwonkpa was still at large. Following the message, the station concluded its broadcast day. Part of Doe's message stated,

> My fellow Liberians, fellow friends within and outside our borders, greetings. This morning, at around 0615 our national radio station ELBS announced through the purported (as heard) voice of former commander General Thomas D. Quiwonkpa that there had been a coup by a so-called patriotic force under his command. Fellow Liberians, I take this opportunity to inform the nation that the coup has failed. I am still the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Liberia and head of state. I call on all Liberians, men and women of the armed forces, the police, and the security forces to stand firm and continue to remain loyal to the government. Do not permit these dissident forces to intimidate or influence you. (*West Africa 18 Nov., 1986, p. 2439)*

I recorded the TV audio and as soon as the broadcast concluded, ELWA rebroadcast the message. We also broadcast announcements regarding the curfew and then returned to regular programming.

This, however, was not the end of my day. About 9:30 p.m. I received an international phone call from a reporter from CBS Radio News in New York. The connection wasn't good, so we were forced to shout at each other. He asked me if our station had broadcast a message from Doe saying that he was again in control of the government and that the coup plot had failed. I acknowledged that we had done so about 7:00 p.m. The reporter asked if I could play the tape for him to use as an actuality on a CBS Radio newscast. I declined. I didn't know if the Doe government would want the tape released to the outside media. The reporter continued to insist that I play the tape. I finally said that it was not technically possible at this hour and than he should call again the next day. He asked if ELTV would have a copy. I suggested he call them to see if they would release the tape. I felt if I released the recording I would be giving information to a foreign broadcast service that the government might not want to release which could have political repercussions.

I wondered why CBS had called ELWA. Why didn't they call ELBC. A few days later, I learned that Voice of America (VOA) was monitoring our short-wave signal in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire and were quoting our transmissions. As I listened to VOA, they attributed the information to Radio ELWA, rather than from a transmission from Radio ELWA. Again, it appeared that we were giving information to the outside world directly. I told the Counselor Officer at the U.S. Embassy of my concern and asked if she would inform VOA not to quote us directly, but to attribute the information to a broadcast. The request was ignored. I waited to see if this would present problems, but it didn't.

It was a number of weeks until the situation returned to normal. This was the first time I had experienced an attempted military coup. I hope it will be my last. The memories of the uncertainty of that day will not soon be forgotten.

Analysis

In this narrative, while Quiwonkpa's forces posed a military threat to the nation. It also affected Liberia's political stability for nearly twelve hours because the power structure has been threatened by military force. This raised questions of authority and control.

One of the main weapons in this war was the electronic media. Through radio, both sides waged an "information war" to capture the minds of the Liberian people. Without this key weapon, Quiwonkpa's coup attempt might have been foiled sooner. This narrative reveals that invitational discourse in mass communications content is interpreted according to the perspectives and past experience of the audience.

In most military coups in West Africa, the first military objective is to take control of the national radio station. This is what the Quiwonkpa forces did before 6:00 a.m. on November 12th. By occupying the national radio and television services, the Quiwonkpa forces could control the flow of information to the Liberian citizens. This strengthens the legitimacy of the military effort.

Quiwonkpa's original message could be regarded as invitational discourse because it contained information which caused the audience to evaluate the current political situation. In the first three sentences of Quiwonkpa's initial message, the news appeal was to authority. Those sentences established the fact the Quiwonkpa was in control and that Doe was out of power. He refers to Doe's government later as "the deposed government of Samuel Doe."

After the first three sentences, the appeal changes to community guardian. Quiwonkpa needed to demonstrate that this military action was one which was in the best interest of the Liberian community. He calls on the armed forces, police and security agencies to "join force in the Liberation of **our people** [emphasis mine] from fear, brutality, and bloody tyranny." In the next sentence he calls for help from students and "patriotic citizens" to "stand with us." Further, Quiwonkpa identifies Doe and his government with forces of "injustice and corruption" which implies that Doe's government is hindering the establishment of an ideal social order in Liberia. To add further credibility to the message, it was played on a continuous basis on the national radio station and later on Radio ELWA.

While this seemed at first to be a similar situation to the 1980 coup when Doe toppled the TWP government, it wasn't. There was still doubt as to who

really was in control. The question was how to interpret the appeal to authority. The reason for the question was the phrase in the message stating that Doe was "in hiding." This phrase could be interpreted in two different ways. Each of these interpretations was based on previous experiences.

The first interpretation of the message was that the coup attempt had been successful. Quiwonkpa had defeated Doe and his forces and there was a new government in Liberia. This interpretation was based on the past experience of the 1980 coup in which a similar sequence of broadcasts occurred. Many Liberians held to this interpretation of the message. This was evident in the celebrations in the streets of Monrovia, the excitement of our staff, and the reluctance of the afternoon announcer to play a tape from the Liberian military. It was reinforced by further announcements throughout the morning by Quiwonkpa regarding military and government appointments and the dissolving of the Doe government. Again, a similar series of announcements were made by the Doe government following the 1980 coup. Quiwonkpa also called for the Liberian language program producers at Radio ELWA to report to work and translate these messages into the various Liberian languages. This was the interpretation that Quiwonkpa intended. Quiwonkpa wanted all of Liberia to know that he was in charge. If the Liberian people perceived that Doe was defeated and that he was in power, they might be politically motivated to get involved.

While the Liberian citizens believed that a coup had taken place, I, however, interpreted the message differently. I was not in Liberia during the 1980 coup. My knowledge of the coup was second-hand through missionaries who had gone through it. The words "in hiding" raised the question in my mind as to "Who <u>was</u> in power Doe or Quiwonkpa?" If Doe was not dead, he might still be

able to command loyal forces and defeat the coup attempt. I, therefore, interpreted the tape from the perspective that Doe was still alive.

This perception was evident in the programming decisions I made as Acting Broadcasting Director of Radio ELWA. I did not want our programming to be perceived as political support for one side or the other. I accomplished this by being sensitive to the technical forms I used throughout the day in our broadcasts. There are two examples of this. First, I asked the morning announcer to play military march music instead of running the risk of a direct disclosure of the coup attempt on BBC. The military march music was an indirect way to alert those in Liberia's interior that there were problems. The military music was successful because the meaning was generated from past experience. Since Radio ELWA normally did not play military music at this time of day (or any other), this music generated an organic meaning that there was a problem. It could again be compared to using the "veiled code" in the secret society.

Second, the Radio ELWA listeners heard a balance of tapes and announcements from both sides in the conflict. They heard announcements from Quiwonkpa in the morning, and from Doe's forces in the afternoon. They also heard the TV sound of Doe's brief announcement that the coup had been foiled and that he was still in power. Finally, I did not give a tape of Doe's message to CBS news. If I had done so, it might have given the impression that I was supplying information about the coup attempt to a foreign news agency. I felt that there was a chance that the tape of this message could be misinterpreted due to the poor audio quality of the connection between New York and Radio ELWA.

These conflicting perspectives regarding the situation posed problems by 1:00 p.m. when Doe forces came to the station to deliver a tape. According to

the announcements on the tape, the Doe forces were proclaiming that he was in control. Again, as in part of the original announcement of the coup, the news appeal was to authority. This heightened the information war. There were now two appeals to authority one from Quiwonkpa, and one from Doe. All morning Quiwonkpa had proclaimed he was successful and Liberians believed him fueled by their previous experience from the 1980 coup. Now, the Doe forces claimed victory! This left the Liberians in a quandary, which was evident from my conversation with our afternoon announcer.

Doe's message was not confirmed until 3:00 when ELBC-FM went off the air briefly, and came on the air under the control of Doe forces. While Radio ELWA did not receive a tape of this broadcast, we recorded the TV audio of Doe's short statement at 7:00 on ELTV. The news appeal was again to authority. The camera shots were tight. Doe was dressed in military attire and was heavily guarded. Also, all of the media installations which were taken earlier, were back in government hands.

Doe's message had the same news appeals as Quiwokpa's first message. Doe began with an appeal to authority, stating that he was in command and that the coup had failed. He then appealed to community, urging people to not be "intimidated" or "influenced" by the rebel soldiers and to remain "loyal" to the government.

In conclusion, Quiwonkpa's "information war" based on news appeals to authority and community worked for two reasons. First, Quiwonkpa was able to gain control of the entire mass communications system for a few hours. At the time of the attempted coup, there were no other viewpoints being carried by the national media. It was not until the middle of the morning that international

broadcasters such as BBC and VOA carried stories about the coup attempt. Since most Liberians listen to radio as their primary means of news and information, Quiwonkpa's announcement of the coup went unchallenged throughout the country for nearly seven hours.

The second reason for Quiwonkpa's success was that the receivers of mass communication content interpreted it according to their perspectives of the situation which was based on their past experiences. Given the political climate following the questions raised regarding October 15th elections, and the past experiences of the coup of 1980, the Liberian citizens perceived that Quiwonkpa's military effort had been successful.

Case Study 6: Charles Gbenyon Killed

Background

In the days following the November 12th coup attempt, the Doe government began to arrest and in some cases kill those who were involved in the coup attempt. One person they came after was LBS journalist Charles Gbenyon.

The Narrative

While I was not personally involved with the incident, I was professionally acquainted with Charles and respected his work. I was also in the country at the time of his death, and attended the meeting in which Doe briefed diplomats and religious leaders about the events surrounding his death. This case study narrative is based on an article by Tunde Agbakiaba in the December 23-30, 1985 issue of *West Africa* magazine. It reflects the account of Charles' death which circulated privately among members of Liberia's press.

On November 15, 1985, just three days after the coup attempt, Doe went to LBS to make a statement regarding the capture of the coup leader, General Thomas Quiwonkpa. Gbenyon was outside the building working with a videographer when Doe arrived. Seeing Doe, Gbenyon and the videographer headed toward him. With his microphone in hand, Gbenyon was prepared to ask Doe some questions of his own. When Doe spotted Gbenyon,

> . . . the smoldering bitterness which Doe had felt for the electronic media's imagined betrayal during the brief takeover, boiled over and Doe screamed obscenities at the startled reporters. . .'Aint's you the one supporting Quiwonkpa? Take him away.'(Agbakiaba 1985, p. 2679)

Gbenyon was ushered into a Jeep and taken into Monrovia. According to Agbakiaba (1985), people on the street saw Gbenyon in the Jeep in Monrovia (p. 2680). While being held at the Mansion, Gbenyon was able to contact then Education Minister, George Boley. Boley, who was related to Gbenyon, was able to get him an audience with Doe.

Gbenyon did not believe he had done anything wrong. Doe accused him and the Action News team of being "political" in their reporting. He explained to Doe that all that he had done was to carry out his "professional responsibilities." Doe was still angry and

> What would have appeased Doe at the time was a servile supplication for mercy and unreserved admission that Gbenyon committed a cardinal sin by conferring respectability on a miscreant like Quiwonkpa. (p. 2680).

This did not occur. Following Doe's questioning, Doe told the guards to "go fuck with him" (p. 2680). Gbenyon was taken to the second floor where he was beaten unconscious by the guards and then bayoneted to death (p. 2680). Following his death, Doe would not allow Gbenyon's widow to give him a decent burial.

Following Gbenyon's death, the Press Secretary to the President released an official report on Gbenyon's death. According to the report, while being taken by security personnel to the Executive Mansion Gbenyon tried to shoot SSS personnel with a gun. During the struggle for the gun, Gbenyon shot himself. While Gbenyon's death was a shock to the entire working press, those who were acquainted with him knew, however, that he would never use a gun to kill anyone.

A few days later Doe held a meeting with diplomats and religious leaders to brief them about the capture and death of Quiwonkpa. He also responded to allegations that prominent political leaders, including the LAP candidate for president, Jackson Doe, had been killed. Doe said that,

> . . . . . there had been no secret executions, 'except for the journalist, Charles Gbenyon, who died right here' (meaning the Executive Mansion. (Maja-Pearce 1990, p. 60)

Doe followed his "slip" with the official account of Gbenyon's death.

I recall watching the ELTV news the night the official account was broadcast. The television reporter read the account with a great deal of sadness in his voice. I recall the evenings that Charles Gbenyon had sat in that chair reporting the news. That evening the reporter closed the newscast with a request, "Please pray for us." Liberian journalism had suffered yet another attack from government. One of its own had fallen.

The Analysis

This narrative in many ways is similar to Case Study Four in which the government was unhappy with the work of a journalist. Doe, as Patron again exercised direct control that affected the life of a journalist. In this case, however, Charles Gbenyon died. This narrative reveals that the rights of the press are subject to direct control by the government.

There are two instances of invitational discourse in this narrative. The first was during Doe's meeting at the Executive Mansion with the diplomats and religious leaders. Doe, in his "slip," used the words "secret executions" to refer to the death of Gbenyon. He said that Gbenyon "died right here." These words in the same sentence implied that Charles Gbenyon had been killed in a "secret execution" at the Mansion. To cover his slip, Doe immediately gave an official account of what had occurred. While this appeared to be an unintentional "slip"

by Doe, it was an example of what Barton (1990) defines as "disjunction." Disjunction is,

> . . . a coorientation that facilitates judgment expressing alternatives to existing political arrangements and processes. The news can present information previously unknown to the politically active news audience. (Barton 1990, p. 28)

Doe's unintentional leak implied that there were details of Gbenyon's death which were not known before. After making the slip Doe gave the official account of what had happened. It appeared as though he had assessed the political damage of his statement and was retreating so that he could avoid further damage to his political credibility.

The second example of invitational discourse occurred in the ELTV newscast after the official account of Gbenyon's death had been presented. The news anchor said "please pray for us." This was a news appeal to the general public for divine intervention. While the news anchor did not say specifically what to "pray" for, Agbakiaba (1985) I believe suggests an interpretation for this statement. The statement invites the audience to identify with members of the electronic media and to consider what can happen as they carry out their professional responsibilities.

Agbakiaba (1985) writes that when Doe saw Gbenyon and the videographer, he said that "the smoldering bitterness which Doe had felt for the electronic media's betrayal during the brief takeover, boiled over. . ." (p. 2679). This seems to imply that Doe identified Gbenyon with all of the members of Liberia's electronic media. Gbenyon and the videographer symbolically

represented elements of the technical form used to create meaning in news content. This could include radio because Gbenyon had a microphone in his hand as he approached Doe. Gbenyon symbolized news reporters who through investigations obtained information for the content of their news stories. Gbenyon also wrote news copy. Case Study Four reveals that Doe equates the editorial viewpoints in news copy with the political viewpoints of reporters. In this case, Doe accused Gbenyon of supporting Quiwonkpa during the November 12 coup attempt. Doe perceived that Gbenyon and the Action News Team were expressing alternative political viewpoints in the news content.

The videographer symbolized the electronic means to record pictures of news events. Gbenyon's microphone could have symbolized radio. These are the tools which broadcasters use as elements of technical form used to package news content for the audience.

In his defense before Doe at the mansion Gbenyon said that he was just carrying out his "professional responsibilities." This response could be viewed as an appeal to community guardians. The word "responsibility" implies that Gbenyon viewed his job as a reporter as one which was beneficial to the Liberian community. The word "profession" refers to the community of journalists who are news professionals and who carry out their responsibilities according to conventions established by their profession.

During the questioning, Doe wanted an apology from Gbenyon for what he had done. He wanted Gbenyon to apologize for carrying out his "professional responsibilities." This apology would be symbolic of an apology for the entire media for carrying out their professional responsibilities of informing the Liberian people regarding the political situation in the country.

When Gbenyon didn't apologize, Doe told the guards to "fuck with him." This is a term of sexual violation. Whether this occurred, we're not told. The connotation of this statement is that Gbenyon's rights were violated. Doe was giving the guards permission to "mess around" with him. Symbolically, this implies that Doe can use his power to "mess around" with the electronic media when he perceives that their content is political.

Just as the human rights of Charles Gbenyon were under Doe's control, the rights of the press are also subject to the whims of government. Since Gbenyon's execution was a "secret" execution, it was out of the scrutiny of the justice system. The reason for this is that the government perceives the role of the press as a servant of the government. Those members of the press who do not meet the expectations of the government are dealt with as political opposition. The government, therefore, may use any methods it deems necessary to "keep the press in line." These include forcing a station to air a retraction (Case Study One), threatening to revoke a station's license (Case Study Two), and forcing a station to fire a journalist (Case Study Four). Each of these actions is designed to protect the political stability of the country. The rights of the press are constantly under scrutiny by the government.

The press, on the other hand, perceive their role as professionals serving the Liberian people, not just the Liberian government. They called on the citizens of Liberia to "pray" for them as they walk the very fine line of serving the people while being loyal to the government. The media through this phrase engaged the audience in invitational discourse about their situation through a news appeal to community.

Case Study 7: The President Wants a Copy!"

Background

This Case Study took place on April 5, 1986 which was nearly four months following Doe's inauguration as President. During this time political tensions continued between Doe and the opposition parties. Several parties joined together to form what was known as the "Grand Coalition." The coalition was composed of LUP, LAP, UP, and UPP. The June 27th edition of the *Daily Star* newspaper quoted the head of the coalition, Gabriel Kpolleh, as saying, "There can never be peace among politicians in the country until re-elections are held" (Liebenow 1987, p. 314).

The Narrative

About 12:30 p.m. on April 5, 1986, I received a message that an SSS agent was waiting to see me at the ELWA Studio building. When I arrived at the studio, the agent kindly told me that President Doe sent him to obtain a copy of a taped interview which had been aired that morning on the "Week in Review." The interview was with Gabriel Kpolleh. In the interview, Kpolleh was responding to allegations from the Minister of Justice that the opposition parties had called on Libya and Cuba to fight the Liberian government so that the opposition parties could take control. This incident became known as the "fake coup" (Liebenow

1987, p. 310). Kpolleh said that this was untrue. He said that the opposition parties had no interest in overthrowing the government. They were just interested in a constitutional government for Liberia. The interview did not contain, however, the government position on the issue.

This was not the first time I'd been approached by a government official for a tape of an interview program. In late 1985, one of the government ministries had made a similar request. As a result of this request, Radio ELWA had instituted a policy that tapes of programs could only be released if the request was in writing and signed by the person making the request. We had four reasons for this policy. First, even though the civilian government had come to power in 1986, Decree 88A, which was passed by the military government was still being enforced. We did not want to be guilty of reproducing copies of tapes which the government would classify as rumor or disinformation. Second, we didn't have the staff or facilities to duplicate such program material. Third, the news section policy forbids the release of original unedited copies of news interviews. We viewed these tapes as the property of the station. Finally, we also had suspicions that in some way the government could use these interviews to build cases against persons who criticized the government.

I informed the SSS Officer regarding our station policy. He said, emphatically, that the "President" was making the request. I replied that I understood, but that I needed to follow procedure. He said that he would call the Executive Mansion on his radio regarding my request.

Meanwhile, I returned to my office and contacted the SIM Area Director regarding the issue. Since this matter involved the highest level of the Liberian Government, he contacted the American Embassy. He also suggested that if the

SSS Officer signed for the tape, we could release the program containing the interview we had aired.

I relayed this to the SSS Officer and also told him that the program would be re-aired at 4:00 p.m. and that it could be recorded then. He said that he would also relay that information by radio to the Mansion. After returning again to my office, I contacted the SIM Area Director. The Area Director told me privately that the American Embassy was sending a Consular Officer and the Information Officer (with whom I was acquainted) out to the station because I could be arrested for non-compliance.

The SSS Officer said that the President was still insisting on a copy of the interview. Recalling my previous meeting with Doe, I knew he meant business. A few minutes later, the Press Secretary to the President rushed into the station. I personally knew him. He was a welcome sight! He told me that he had been listening to the entire conversation on his two-way radio in his car. He had no problem with signing a release for the tape. He said that ELBC, where he was formerly employed, had a similar policy.

He explained that he usually recorded "Week in Review" for the President, but was unable to do so because he was out of town. As the tape was being prepared, the Consular Officer from the U.S. embassy and the Information Officer from the United States Information Service (USIS) arrived. I briefed the two women of the situation and said that things were under control.

The press secretary also told me that the SSS Officers had no reason to call on me and if happened again, I was to contact him. The officials from the Embassy and the Press Secretary to the President left together. The Information

Officer and the Press Secretary were going to get together to talk about press matters.

After everyone left, I instructed our Chief News Editor to erase any unused interview segments in case the news room was ever searched. By doing this we could, in good conscience, tell anyone who inquired about an interview that all we have is what has been aired. Following the incident, we went to the Justice Minister to get his reaction to Kpolleh's statement. This also served as a good reminder that the government was constantly listening to our news broadcasts.

Analysis

In this narrative the government was interested in a copy of an interview which had been aired on Radio ELWA's "Week in Review." There are, however, two important differences, between this Narrative and the others. The government had not expressed dissatisfaction with the content of the interview. They were interested in obtaining a tape of the interview because the government considered the person being interviewed a member of the political opposition. The second major difference was that the request for the tape had come from the President, and not the Minister of Information. This was significant because the incident took place during the first few months of civilian rule. This is another example of Doe acting as the patron attempting to directly intervene in press affairs. The question was, "Would Radio ELWA continue to recognize Doe's authority as the patron who has the right to directly intervene in the affairs of the media under a civilian government?"

The swift reaction by the government indicates that the interview could be regarded as invitational discourse. This narrative reveals that even during civilian rule that the media is problematic to the government when it challenges the authority of the government.

This interview with Kpolleh was aired in response to a statement issued by the Justice Minister during the week which alleged that the opposition parties were encouraging a takeover of the government. This interview was invitational for two reasons. First, the station did not air the Kpolleh's sound bite with a sound bite of the Justice Minister. The technical form contributed to the perception that this was invitational discourse because without the sound bite of the Justice Minister, the story appeared to be one-sided.

Second, the news voice of the interview was political. The actor involved was the leader of the coalition of opposition parties. The subject matter of the interview involved a discussion about allegations of military action and constitutional rule. In the interview Kpolleh gave to Radio ELWA, he denied that the coalition was involved in any plot to overthrow the government. In the statement in the *Daily Star* newspaper, Kpolleh said that the coalition wanted constitutional rule in the country. The news appeal could be described as an appeal to the "ideal social order." and to community. The memory of the irregularities of the October 15th elections were still fresh in the minds of the Liberian people. Kpolleh wanted people to know that the opposition parties wanted constitutional rule, not violence. They wanted what was best for the Liberian community which was constitutional rule. They also wanted the people to be able to participate in their political system without the interference of the government. This statement would be considered invitational discourse because

theoretically there was already constitutional rule in Liberia under Doe and the NDPL.

Since Kpolleh's statement focused on a possible threat of military action, the President requested a copy of the interview. This was evidence that the government, even under civilian rule, was monitoring news content in the electronic media. Doe's direct request for a copy of the interview suggested that the patron/client relationship was still in place under civilian rule. Rather than going through established channels such as the Ministry of Information, or his press secretary, he sent the Special Security Service (SSS) directly to the station to obtain a copy of the tape. The government expected Radio ELWA to comply. This, however, is not what occurred.

During the latter months of 1985, Radio ELWA had instituted a policy in which a signed release was required to obtain copies of recorded program material. This policy was designed to protect the credibility of Radio ELWA as an independent source of news and information. By asking that the President sign the release, we were challenging the authority of the government. In this case the station was now establishing conditions under which information could be obtained. This means that the station is assuming the role of the patron while the government is assuming the role of the "client."

It becomes evident that the government is uncomfortable with this role reversal. The SSS agent who came to the station was irritated that I would make such a request to the President. He said, "You don't understand. The President wants a copy!" The SSS agent informed me that the President could not sign the release. I responded to the agent that he could sign the form. Both of these

requests were denied. This indicates that the President was unwilling to submit to my authority as the Acting Broadcasting Director of Radio ELWA.

Finally, however, the government complied with the station's request. The Press Secretary to the President signed the release because he understood our need for it. This had been the procedure at LBS where he had worked for many years. The press secretary was a "friend" of Radio ELWA which means he respected the job we were doing as a station and the procedures we followed. He was able to mediate in the dispute because he had both credibility with Doe and credibility with Radio ELWA. In conclusion, the credibility of Radio ELWA, played an important role in the successful challenge to the authority of the patron/client relationship.

Case Study 8: "Engage in Development Journalism"

Background

The final case study occurred on June 4, 1986, nearly four months following Doe's inauguration as President of Liberia. In March of 1986, as the result of a cabinet shake-up, Doe appointed a new Minister of Information. Within a few weeks after he was appointed, I paid the usual courtesy call. He also spoke at a meeting of the Press Union of Liberia that I attended. Then I received a written request to appear before him on June 4th. I was also requested to bring our broadcast license with me.

The Narrative

I thought that with the new civilian government my problems with government regarding news content would have ended. I guess I was wrong. On June 4, 1986, I was requested to appear before the Minister of Information and to bring our radio license with me. As was our custom at Radio ELWA, I brought several of our Liberian radio staff members with me to the meeting. In addition to the Minister of Information, several assistant ministers were also in attendance, one of whom was a former Radio ELWA staff member.

The Minister began the meeting by reading from our broadcast license emphasizing the fact that ELWA's license to broadcast stipulated that the station was to be "non-political." I asked him to define what he meant by that term. He said that to be "non-political" meant that we were not to place the government's view beside the opposition view.

He also added that we should engage in "development journalism." This meant that our news stories should focus on the positive things that the government was doing for the country and the positive events which were happening in the world. He further asked us to avoid the controversial issues such as court cases which may tend to divide the people. He told me that what prompted the meeting was a call from one of our reporters asking for the government's position on a court case. If we need to report on those issues, we should rely on government sources instead of sending our own reporters to cover those events.

The Minister also criticized our international news regarding the overthrow of the Philippine government. He said that this kind of news gives people "too many ideas" of methods which could be used in Liberia.

Following the meeting the Radio ELWA staff members seemed a bit confused by what the Minister had said especially the term, "development journalism." I explained to them that the Minister wanted us to restrict the viewpoints which are heard on the station. We were no longer to report both sides, but were to report those stories which were not controversial and presented government policies in a positive perspective.

After returning to the station, I informed the Area Director about the meeting. He suggested that I write a letter to the Minister of Information thanking him for the advice and request that he put these new "guidelines" regarding "development journalism" in writing. I did so, but, even after repeated requests, I never received a reply.

The Analysis

Once again, this time just six months into the Doe presidency, the government was unhappy Radio ELWA's news coverage. In this meeting the Minister outlined news "guidelines" he wanted Radio ELWA to adopt. These guidelines were based on the principles of "Development Journalism." As a student of international mass communication, I felt privileged to be able to hear these explained by a government official in addition to reading them in a textbook. Due to my prior knowledge on the subject, I had insider information that I was

able to later use to explain the Minister's comments to my staff. This narrative reveals that invitational discourse structured around the guidelines of development journalism are perceived by the government as a means of promoting political unity while invitational discourse about controversial issues using the journalistic convention of balanced reporting is perceived by the government as promoting political disunity.

The Minister's comments implied that he perceived that Radio ELWA was engaging in provocative discourse, which is operationalized here as "invitational discourse" which could be used for political purposes. This was evident from his request to see our station license. He opened the meeting by reading the statement in the license which said that the station was to be non-political. By reading the conditions of the license, the Minister is referring to the conditions under which the government as Patron granted Radio ELWA the right to broadcast.

The basis for the Minister's perception is seen in the two areas of criticism he levied against Radio ELWA's news content. He criticized the selection of news stories, and the perspective from which the stories were written.

The Minister suggested that Radio ELWA avoid stories which focus on controversial issues and concentrate on stories which focus on the positive things the government is doing for the people. This means that the news appeal should be structured as an appeal to community rather than to individuals or groups. The ministers comments imply that the government wanted to be perceived in a positive way as a community guardian.

Two examples of controversial issues which the station should avoid are court cases and international stories which focus on political unrest. Specifically, the Minister mentioned our coverage of the overthrow of the Philippine government. He said that this story "gives people too many ideas of what could be used here." This implies that this types of content could be classified as "gossip" because it could be used for political purposes to fuel the fires of political opposition in Liberia. Should, however, the station feel the need to report a controversial issue, they should use government sources, rather than their own reporters. This implies that the news appeal should be to authority.

These examples indicate that the Minister of Information wanted the station to select stories based on whether we perceived that the Liberian people had a "need to know" its content. The Minister implied that the Liberian people needed to know the "positive" things that the government was doing for them, while they did not need to know stories which were controversial.

The second criticism was Radio ELWA's use of "balanced" reporting. The journalistic practice of balance in a news story could be considered technical form which is based on the journalism value of fairness. When a story is balanced, both viewpoints on an issue are equally represented in the story. By balancing the story, the journalist is attempting to be fair to both viewpoints.

Radio ELWA's use of balance in news content was evident from the comment the Minister made regarding the call he received from one of the station's reporters. The reporter wanted the Minister to comment on a court case he was following so that the government's viewpoint could be included in the story.

Radio ELWA practiced balanced reporting for two reasons. First, it is a common journalistic practice which is taught in schools of journalism, including classes at the University of Liberia. Second, because the former Minister of Information said that if our stories were balanced, it would be considered "non-political" (see Case Study Four). The new Minister of Information, however, took the opposite view. When a story is balanced, it is "political. This is evident in the statement he made saying that the government's viewpoint was not to be placed next to the opposition viewpoint. In addition, when reporting controversial issues where a second viewpoint was needed, the reporter should only use government sources rather than sending our own reporters in the field.

Two guidelines are suggested by the Minister's criticisms. First, "Stories selected for newscasts should stress the positive actions of the government." Second, "The viewpoints expressed in news content should conform to the viewpoint of the government." The guidelines suggest that "truth" is being defined in terms of "conformity" to the position of the government. These guidelines can be compared to the principles used to communicate information regarding the activities of the society. In the secret society information regarding the activities of the society is made available to members who "need to know" through the "veiled code. In this case, political information is only made available when the government perceives there is a need to know, and will be presented only from the government's perspective.

Using these guidelines would favor news appeals to either authority or to community. In controversial issues, the press should appeal to the authority of the government by not practicing balanced reporting and including only the

government opinion. The government hopes that this would close off debate on controversial issues and avoid political confrontation.

The result of imposing these guidelines would be what Barton (1990) terms, "domestication." Domestication is one of four mediated forms of news discourse which involves news appeals and an individual's judgment based on a particular political orientation (p. 28). Domestication involves news consumers negotiating international news that is framed in domestic contexts" (p. 29). News appeals may take the form of appeals to nationalism, and defining external threats to internal policy (p. 29). Barton notes,

> In certain situations, the definition of an external 'threat' might be exaggerated in order to enhance domestic political power, or to divert attention from domestic or foreign issues that threaten the credibility of the administration in power. (1990, p. 29)

This is what occurs here. The Minister is concerned that the content of controversial issues, such as the overthrow of the Philippine government, or court cases might pose a threat to the authority of the government which could threaten political stability. By appealing to community and authority the government hopes to enhance its image and to appear to the Liberian people as though the government's top priority is the welfare of the Liberian people.

It would appear as though these "guidelines" were only a suggestion since the Minister never responded to my request to put them in writing. As a result, Radio ELWA was still free to choose whether or not to engage in "development journalism."

Summary

The Narrative episodes in this chapter are snapshots of the working relationship between the press and the government. The conflicts between the press and the government confirm that the government perceives that the press is engaging in provocative discourse which is defined here as "invitational discourse. With the exception of Case Studies Three and Five, there is a cycle which describes the encounters between the press and the government. The government reacted to a news story which contradicted its viewpoints by either issuing a strong warning to the press, or imposing sanctions. There are two reasons for this reaction. The first is that the government considers broadcasting as a threat to their authority (Case Study Two). Case Study Three further suggests that mass media content is a source of political empowerment.

The second reason is that the government perceives that the editorial viewpoints contained in broadcast news content are a reflection of the political viewpoints of the journalist who wrote and aired the story (Case Studies Four and Six.) and the media institution (Case Studies Two, Four and Eight). As Clifford Flemister commented in Case Study Two, in Liberia "everything is political."

There are three elements of technical form which contribute to the government's perception that Radio ELWA and other members of the media were engaging in provocative discourse which is operationalized here as "invitational discourse." The first, is the choice of words used in the story. For example, Radio ELWA's use of the use of "demonstrators" and "arrested" sparked the conflict in Case Study One. The government wanted the wording changed to

"perpetrators" and "demonstrators." Another example was the use of the word "billions" of dollars to refer to Liberia's debt in Case Study Two.

The second is the attribution of the details of a story. In Case Study One, Radio ELWA attributed the details of the corrected story regarding the arrest of the students to the Ministry of Information. While this satisfied the government, it still would be regarded as invitational discourse because the station did not retract the original story. In Case Study Eight, the Minister of Information wanted Radio ELWA to attribute the details regarding controversial issues to the government.

The third is the choice of news stories. This is evident in statements made by the Minister of Information in Case Study Eight. The Minister suggested that stories should stress the positive things which the government is doing and avoid controversial issues. This is also evident in Case Studies One, Two, Four, and Seven. In each of these Case Studies the conflict with the government could have been avoided if that story were not broadcast.

The final element of form which contributed to invitational discourse was "balance." When news stories did not contain both viewpoints, they were perceived by the government as being "political" or provocative discourse which is defined here as "invitational discourse." For example, in Case Study Four, the story of the burned ballots contained no government reaction. It was also absent in Case Study Seven during the first two broadcasts of the Flemister speech. While it would appear that balanced reporting might be equated with non-invitational discourse, in Case Study Eight the Minister of Information recommended that the viewpoints should not be balanced. The government viewpoint should not be placed next to the opposition viewpoint.

These elements of technical form suggest four news appeals which are present in Liberia's news content. These are appeals to authority, community guardians, individuals and groups. When news appeals are directed toward individuals and groups, the government reacts. This is especially evident in Case Study Four. The government wants such appeals balanced with appeals to authority or community. This is evident in Case Studies One and Eight. While Barton (1990) indicates that appeals to authority generally "tend to close-off" or "limit" political discourse (p. 19), this does not appear to be the case in Liberia. Appeal to authority are still invitational because of the audience's political perception of the government as revealed by the two perceptions of the phrase "in hiding" in Case Study Five. Doe's appeal to authority did not close off debate regarding the circumstances surrounding Charles Gbenyon's death. The media engaged the audience in invitational discourse about the matter by saying "please pray for us."

The presence of invitational discourse in Liberia's news content indicates that there is press freedom in Liberia. This, however, is not without a price to journalists who broadcast them. The journalistic practices provide the means to structure invitational discourse through the news appeals. The divergent news appeals are evidence that two viewpoints were present in Liberian broadcast media content. This indicates that there were two patterns of broadcast press freedom which existed in Liberia between 1976 and 1986.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Invitational Discourse as an Indicator of Press Freedom

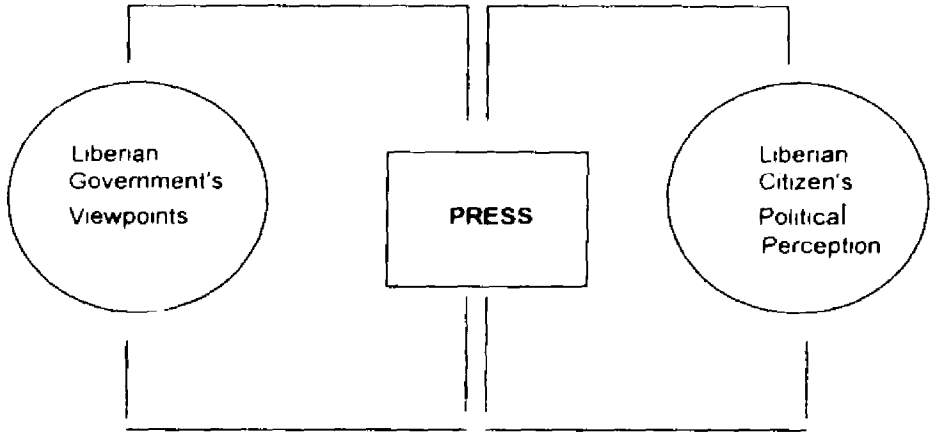
The purpose of this study was to determine what patterns of press freedom existed in the Republic of Liberia between 1976 and 1986. The answer to this question lies not only in the political and cultural framework for the press system but also in the examination of the working relationship between the press and the government. The case studies reveal that the government perceived that the press was engaging in discourse through threatened power which is defined here as "invitational discourse." Invitational discourse engages the audience in political discourse regarding national and international issues and provides the audience with information which will help them consider "alternative possibilities to present social circumstances" (Dahlgren 1981, in Barton 1990, p. 26). There is also some evidence to suggest that there are times that the press did indeed construct its stories in a way that led the audience to question the authority of the Liberian government. For example, in Case Study One, ELWA did not broadcast

a retraction to the story, but a correction attributing the details to the Ministry of Information. Thus, the station was able to maintain its original viewpoint.

The Press as a Mediator

The presence of invitational discourse suggests that rather than the press being in "partnership" with the government, the press is actually acting as a "mediator" between the government and the Liberian people. This role is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1
The Liberian Press as Mediator



In Liberian society it is common to have a person who serves as a mediator in a dispute. The mediator provides a means for both parties to listen to each other. The press accomplishes this task by publicly communicating both the government

and opposition viewpoints. This indicates that the press not only has the responsibility to communicate the government's viewpoint to the Liberian people, but the Liberian public expects the media to publicly voice the political concerns that shape their political perspective.

For example, in Case Study Two, Radio ELWA acted as a mediator when it broadcast Flemister's speech which claimed that Liberia's debt was over a billion dollars. The broadcast of the speech exposed the nation to the reality of Liberia's financial condition. The government was no longer able to hide behind its position because the facts were contained in public financial records. Also, in Case Study Four, Radio ELWA brought to the attention of the Liberian people claims of irregularities in the vote count. This made any government plan to cover them up difficult.

The government also depends on the media to voice its position. Case Study Three is a good example. Also, the call for balanced reporting by one of the ministers of information is an indication that the government expects the media to fairly represent its position.

The Patterns of Press Freedom

The representation of alternative viewpoints in Liberia's media indicates that there are two patterns of press freedom which exist in Liberia. These two patterns of press freedom are built around two pairs of news appeals which are evident in the case studies. The first pattern I will define as the "Patron's Press" which is characterized by news appeals to authority/community guardians. The

second is the "Journalist's Press" which is characterized by appeals to particular individuals and groups.

The Patron's Press

This pattern of press freedom is based on the government's need to control information for the purpose of maintaining political stability. It's theoretical basis is in the term "patronage." Through the patronage system, the government grants access to the channels of mass communication. This provides them with the authority to directly intervene in the affairs of the press.

Since information can be used as a source of political empowerment, the government must control the subjects of political discussion in the media. It also must control the perspective from which the story is written.

These two controls result in a news voice which appeals to either authority or community. Under the patron's press, invitational discourse is limited to a discussion of the positions of the government and its positive accomplishments. For example, in Case Study Three, the government exercised control over media content by stipulating that the media could read the old and new constitutions to the Liberian people, but could not comment on them. This reading, however, still engaged the audience in invitational discourse because it gave them information to compare the present and past political situations. The government was also hoping to dispel the perception that the Doe government was "same taxi, different driver."

The Journalist's Press

The second pattern of press freedom is defined as the "Journalist's Press." This pattern reflects the need of the Liberian people to have an alternative political viewpoint. It has its theoretical basis in the term "credibility."

Just as power has two dimensions, the case studies suggest that credibility also has two dimensions. They are "competence" and "character." These dimensions are rooted in the practices which are needed to "do journalism" in Liberia. Since the press routinely engages in them as part of the culture of journalism, they could be called the "Rituals of Liberian Journalism."

The Rituals of Liberian Journalism

In Liberian traditional religions, rituals are not only a means to acquire power over someone, but they also demonstrate that an individual recognizes the authority of those in the hierarchy. The performance of rituals can also "be a powerful source of social change" (Bourgault Nov. 1991, p. 9). Bourgault notes that rituals

> . . . strengthen solidarity by reminding performers of their place in the cosmos, their connection to universal forces, and their ties with one another. (Nov. 1991, p. 5)

This study demonstrates that journalists also perform rituals. These rituals bind the journalists and members of the audience together as a community and enable

them to carry out their professional responsibilities of constructing content which is a source of empowerment for the Liberian community.

There are two rituals which Liberian journalists perform. These are the rituals of "constructing news content," and "defending news content." The ritual of "constructing news content" is the performance of the journalistic practices such as balance, attribution, word choice and investigative reporting. These are all part of the news culture of Liberian journalists which strengthen the social solidarity of the Liberian journalism community. These practices are communicated through the "oral tradition" of journalism education and are reinforced through organizations such as the Press Union of Liberia. Both the press and the government rely on these practices to shape mass communications content. Each however, views the use of these practices differently. The government viewed them as a means to shape content which supports its position. The news appeal, as mentioned above is to authority/community. The same practices, however, can also be used to publicly voice the political concerns of the Liberian people thus providing them with an alternative political viewpoint. When the press uses these to voice their political concerns, the audience considers the press credible because they are meeting their need for an alternative political viewpoint.

The second ritual is the ritual of "defending news content" is often performed in the offices of government officials. In the case studies (with the exception of Case Study Three) both the government and the press engaged in this ritual. The ritual began with a summons from a government agency (usually the Ministry of Information) to a meeting with government officials. These officials could include the Minister of Information, the Minister of Postal Affairs, and the

Head of State. At the meeting the officials detailed a problem with media content then outlined and defended the position of the government. The government's defense was followed by an opportunity for the representative from the media institution to respond. The exception was when the meeting involved the Head of State. Then, the media's response was at his discretion. For example, while Charles Gbenyon was given the opportunity to respond with an apology, it would have been inappropriate for me to respond to the Head of State's request to fire Joe Mulbah. After the response, the official who called the meeting suggested a course of action which should to be taken. At the conclusion of the meeting the representative of the media institution thanks the government official for his time. The final part of the ritual occurs days or weeks later when the media institution either takes the action or waits for clarification. In this step, the government may follow-up to see if the action was taken.

When the press defends media content it enhances its credibility. While defense of media content is not publicly expressed in the media, the audience knows about this process through interpersonal communication. The "grapevine" is very active in Liberia. In fact, there is a saying which states, "Liberia has three radio stations. There is ELBC, the government station, ELWA, the Christian station, and EL-They-Say, which is Liberia's most powerful station." There is evidence to suggest that those who defend press content and challenge the position of the government are remembered. They become the "legends " of Liberian journalism. One such legend is Albert Porte. Even though he risked being arrested, he printed and distributed pamphlets outlining the constitutional rights guaranteed by the 1846 Liberian constitution. Charles Gbenyon will I'm sure be remembered for the stand that he took. The reason for this is that the

journalists is willing to place his own personal freedom on the line to provide the audience with an alternative political viewpoint. This indicates that symbolically, the journalist is identifying himself or herself with the audience. Returning to the Practical Matrix of determinants which consist of Patronage, Secrecy, and Credibility developed in Chapter Two, the term "ritual" would be one appropriate term to describe the dynamics of press credibility in Liberia.

Implications for the Future

If change is to occur in the Liberian press system, information must be viewed as a means to enhance freedom rather than a means of political control. Individuals must be able to express ideas contrary to the government without fear of political repercussions. This leads to three implications.

First, social responsibility must be redefined. As noted in Chapter 2, many African leaders equate social responsibility with loyalty to the government. Social responsibility in Liberia, however, must be not be defined in terms of the of patron/client relationship. but in terms of the people of Liberia. This means that the "state" must be equated with the people of Liberia and not the party in power. The government must allow the members of the press to determine the subjects for news stories and the perspective from which they are written without direct intervention by the state.

Second, journalists must exercise responsibility in reporting. During my tenure in Liberia I observed instances of substandard reporting. Much of this was due to zealous, but untrained reporters. I believe that some of the criticism leveled against the press for unprofessional standards is justified. In Liberia there

is little training offered to journalists. Although the University of Liberia has a journalism program, it is under staffed and under funded. Some reporters studied abroad. Others, such as ELWA reporters, were trained "in house."

Allen (1990) rightly places an emphasis on training "on site" rather than sending reporters abroad. Training in the country maintains the cultural sensitivity of the reporters. By increasing support for programs such as the one offered at the University of Liberia, reporters can be challenged to raise their standards of professionalism. Through increased training the press can better realize that with freedom comes responsibility. It was this lack of standards that led the minister of information in the 1986 Press Union Meeting I attended to call for the "registration" of journalists.

Finally, Liberia must continue to empower the Liberian people by openly communicating their political rights. This process could be modeled after the one used during the writing of the 1984 Constitution. This process included the government, the media, and the general public. It permitted constitutional rights to be openly shared through the media and it allowed the general public to participate in the process through town meetings.

Implications for Research

The purpose of this dissertation was to uncover the political and cultural context for the relationship between the Liberian government and the press. This was a culturally sensitive approach to press system research. Rather than attempting to place the Liberian press system into a western model, the matrix of political and cultural determinants developed for this study reflect elements of the

West African worldview and practices found in traditional African political systems. The method used to analyze the case studies was qualitative rather than quantitative. This provided a means to examine the principles involved in "doing journalism" in Liberia which are rooted in social action. This model could be used as a method of analysis in other nations to describe what Altschull (1995) calls the "variations" on the symphony.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several areas for future research. The first is a need for a comprehensive theoretical and historical overview of the Liberian press system. In the absence of such a work, students studying mass communications in Liberia are forced to rely on western models. This leads to the temptation of placing the Liberian media system into one of these models. This work, as well as the work of others including Rogers (1986) and Burrowes (1994) are a step toward meeting this need. There are other works which also contribute. What is needed is a work which synthesizes this into a volume which could be used in mass media education in Liberia.

The second is locating other forms which can be used to engage the audience in invitational discourse. Bourgault (Nov. 1991) has noted the connection between drama and ritual which can be used as an agent of social change. This suggests that drama can also be used as a forum for social comment. In Liberia, a drama series recorded by the "Our People One People" drama group dealt with issues such as government corruption, Liberianization, and finding work. The dramas were broadcast on ELBC during the early 1980,

and were openly sold in markets in Monrovia with little government interference. The question which could be posed, therefore, is "What is the difference between social comment using popular cultural form, such as drama and newscasts as a forum for social comment in African society?"

Finally, because of the numerous political changes across the African continent, there is the need to update the mass communications literature. For example, works such as Sydney Head's (1974) *Broadcasting in Africa* are out of date. While journal articles give a fresh perspective of these changes, the integration of these into a single work would allow the reader to appreciate the changing perspective of the press in Africa.

I count it a privilege to have been able to work in the media system of a developing country. This is something that many can only learn about from a textbook. From that experience I have gained insight into the complex relationships between the government and the press. I have come to appreciate the difficult choices and sacrifices that managers of media institutions in a developing country such as Liberia must make. Yes, that April morning in 1976 was the beginning of an exciting and somewhat trying chapter of my life; and if given the opportunity, one that I would relive again.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"After the Abortive Coup." *West Africa* 25 Nov.: 2456-2458.

Allen, William C. 1990. "Soaring Above the Clouds of Mediocrity: The Challenges of the Liberian Press in the Nineties." *Liberian Studies Journal* XV (1990): 74-84.

Agbakiaba, Tunde. 1985. "How Quiwonkpa and Gbenyon Died." *West Africa* 23-30 Dec. 1985: 2679-2680.

Atwood, Rita. 1980. "Communication Research in Latin America: Cultural and Conceptual Dilemas." A Paper Delivered to The Intercultural Division, International Communication Association Convention. Acapulco, Mexico, May 1980.

Altschull, J. Herbert. 1995. *Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy*. White Plains, New York: Longman.

Anderson, James A. 1987. *Communication Research Issues and Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Andoh, Isaac Fritz. 1986. "A Ghanaian Covers East Africa." Cited in Martin, L. John and Hiebert, Ray Eldon. 1990. *Current Issues in International Communication*. New York: Longman.

Barton, Richard L. and Gregg, Richard B . 1982. "Middle East Conflict as a News Senario: A Formal Analysis." In Medhurst, Martin J. and Benson, Thomas W. *Rhetorical Dimensions in Media: A Critical Case Book*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

- - -. 1990. *Ties That Blind in Canadian/American Relations: Politics of News Discourse*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bellman, B. 1984. *The Language of Secrecy*. News Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Best, Kenneth. 1990. "Stand by Us!" Editorial. *The Daily Observer* 27 April 1990: 2.

Blau, Peter M. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

- - -. 1974. *On the Nature of Organization*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bourgault, Louise M. 1991. "Press Freedom in Africa: A Cultural Analysis." A Paper Delivered to The Conference on African and African-American Studies. New York, Oct. 1991.

- - -. Nov. 1991. "From Ritual to Theatre: Village Based Drama for Development in Africa." A Paper Delivered to the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association. Saint Louis, Missouri, November 1991.

Burrowes, Carl Patrick. 1994. *Press Freedom in Liberia, 1830-1970: The Impact of Modernity, Ethnicity and Power Imbalances on Government-Press Relations*. Diss. Temple University.

Brydon, Steven and Scott, Michael D. 1994. *Between One and Many: The Art and Science of Public Speaking*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Collier, Jane F. 1988. *Marriage and Inequity in Classless Societies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Dahlgren, P. 1981. *TV News and the Suppression of Social Reflexivity*. Cited in Barton, Richard L. 1981. *Ties That Bind in Canadian/American Relations*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Denzen, H. 1970. *The Research Act*. Chicago: Aldine.

DeFleur, Melvin and Ball-Rokeach, Sandra. 1989. *Theories of Mass Communication* (Fifth Edition). White Plains, New York: Longman

Epku, Ray. 1989. "Being President is a Challege by Itself." *Newswatch* 20 Nov. 1989: 40-42.

Epworth, Marsden. 1988. "Why Chernobyl was a Nonstory and Other Tales of Indonesian Journalism." Cited in Martin, L. John and Hiebert, Ray Eldon 1990. *Current Issues in International Communication*. New York: Longman.

Fredrick, Howard H. 1993. *Global Communication and International Relations*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Gay, John and Cole, Michael. 1967. *The New Mathmatics and an Old Culture. A Study of Learning Among the Kpelle of Liberia*. New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1967.

Gibbs, James L. ed. 1965. *Peoples of Africa*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Grant, Douglas. 1965 "Television in Liberia: A Sturdy Newcomer." E*BU Review* (Geneva) 90B(1965): 20-22.

Hatchen, William. 1990. "African Censorship and American Correspondents." Cited in Hawks, Beverly G. ed. *Africa's Media Image*. New York: Praeger.

Hawks, Beverly G. ed. 1990. *Africa's Media Image*. New York: Praeger.

Head, Sydney W. 1974. *Broadcasting in Africa*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Kelvin, Peter. 1970. *The Bases of Social Behaviour*. Great Britain: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, U.K.

Liberian Diaspora. 1990. "We Cry for Liberia." Vol 1 July-August. Diligent Asociates Monrovia, Liberia. N. pag.

Liebenow, J. Gus. 1987. *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Laflin, Michael and Mackie, William E. 1989. *The Liberian Rural Communications Network*. Artlington Virginia: United States Agency for International Development and The Institute for International Research. N. pag.

Maja-Pierce. 1990. "Liberia." *Index on Censorship* June/July 1990: 58-66.

Lofland, J. ed. 1978. *Interaction in Everyday Life: Social Strategies*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Martin, L. John and Hiebert, Ray Eldon 1990. *Current Issues in International Communication*. New York: Longman.

McQuail, Denis. 1987. *Mass Communication Theory* (Second Edition). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Merrill, John C. 1983. *Global Journalism: A Survey of the World's Mass Media*. New York: Longman.

- - -. 1989. *The Dialectic in Journalism: Toward Responsible Use of Press Freedom*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press.

Mitchell, Robert C. 1977. *African Primal Religions*. Niles, IL: Argus Communications.

Mosco, Victor. 1988. "Toward a Theory of the State and Telecommunications Policy." In Martin, L. John and Hiebert, Ray Eldon 1990. *Current Issues in International Communication*. New York: Longman.

Parrinder, Geoffrey. 1962. *African Traditonal Religion*. New York: Harper and Row.

"Patronage." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 1961 ed.

"- - -." *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*. 1967 ed.

Press Union of Liberia [PUL]. 1985. Press Release, 25 Oct. 1985.

"Quiwonkpa's Appeal to 'Patriotic Citizens.'" *West Africa* 18 Nov. 1985: 2439.

Rogers, Momo. 1986. "The Liberian Press: An Analysis." *Journalism Quarterly* 63 (1986): 275-281.

Ravault, R.J. 1987. "International Information: Bullet or Boomerang." Cited in Paletz, David L. ed. 1987. *Political Communication Research: Approaches, Studies, Assessments*.

Schult, David. 1992. Personal interview. 4 March 1992.

- - -. 1995. Personal interview. 15 March 1995.

"Sedition." Oxford English Dictionary. 1961 ed.

Stakemen, Randolph. 1982. *The Cultural Politics of Religious Change: A Study of the Kpelle of Liberia*. Diss. Stanford U. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1982. 8301274.

Stevens, John D. and Garcia, Hazel Dicken. 1980. *Communication History*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stoll, Edwina Luverne Hinton. 1983. *A Naturalistic Study of Talk in the Classrooms*. Diss. The University of Utah. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983. 8311094.

Steyne, Philip. 1989. *Gods of Power: A Story of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists*. Houston: Touch Publications.

"*West Africa* Silenced in Liberia." *West Africa* 16 Dec. 1985: 2625.

Zaffiro, James J. 1986. "Political Legitimacy and Broadcasting, The Case of Zimbabwe." *Gazette* (Amsterdam) 37(3): 127-138.

- - -. 1988. "Regional Pressure and the Erosion of Media Freedom." *Journal of Communication* 38(3): 108-120.

VITA

Ronald Joseph Shope is a native of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in 1970 with a diploma and in 1975 with a B.A. in Communications. Dr. Shope completed an M.A. in Communications at Wheaton College in 1980 and a Ph.D. in Speech Communication at the Pennsylvania State University.

Dr. Shope and his family were missionaries with the Society of International Ministries (SIM) working at Radio Station ELWA in Liberia, West Africa from 1976 through 1986. Dr. Shope's duties included Director of Program Training, Assistant Director for the English Program Service, and Acting Director of Broadcasting.

After leaving Liberia, Dr. Shope went to Grace University, formerly Grace College of the Bible, in Omaha, Nebraska where he currently serves as Assistant Professor of Communications and is the Chair of the Communications Department.

Dr. Shope is a member of the International Communications Association (ICA) and the Religious Speech Communication Association. During his time in Liberia he wrote training materials for Radio ELWA which have been used by other organizations. Dr. Shope and his wife Gerri live in Omaha and have two children Jeff and Karen.