

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF NEWS VALUES IN THE
SELECTION OF NEWS SOURCES IN A CONTEMPORARY THIRD
WORLD NEWSPAPER: A CASE STUDY OF THE *DAILY NATION*
NEWSPAPER.**

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**by
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DEDICATION

To Kisuke, Ndiku, Kasui and Katunge

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ABSTRACT

News in our contemporary newspapers has come to be associated more and more with what the elites do and say. Both their deeds and misdeeds are treated as newsworthy events and in the process they become newsmakers, both actors and sources of news. Even when they are not directly involved in news events they are sought out by journalists to validate those events and to interpret the social reality to the readers as news sources. This study is about the selection of news sources in the *Daily Nation*, a contemporary, independent newspaper based in Nairobi, Kenya. In this study, I set out to unravel the complex processes that underlie newsmaking and source selection.

This study is informed by the theory of news values and the paradigm of the role of media in democracy. Based on qualitative interviews, observations and content analysis of the front-page stories, it investigates the process of news and source selection in front-page stories. Through these approaches, I established that news values are significant criteria that inform journalists in both the selection of front-page news stories and the sources of these stories. I also established that social values of the society in which this newspaper operates are heavily embedded in the news. For example, the journalists preferred male politicians as sources of news in the front-page stories to women, and the elites to ordinary people, and this reflected on the social structures and cultural norms that are prevalent in this society. This study, further, established that the news values of this newspaper share commonly with the Western news media in terms of journalistic conventions and ways of interpreting the social reality in the news.

Ideally, the newspaper embraces the principles of democracy in news reporting, but in practice it does not satisfactorily adhere to the full requirements of its democratic role in terms of source selection. The democratic principles in news reporting require, among other things, that the newspaper should allow a diversity of views in the news, representing various groups that are found in real society including the elites, non-elites, women, ordinary people and minorities. In the case of the *Daily Nation*, a tiny group of elite male professional politicians made up the largest majority of its front-page news sources.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Context of the study

1.1 News and source selection

Certain names have become well known in society because of their frequency in the newspaper front pages as newsmakers. Some of these newsmakers are more known for the positions they hold in society and what those positions represent. And others are known for their ability to capture people's attention due to their personalities. The regularity of the presence of these people in the newspaper pages and their association with news events have made them media personalities. Newspapers socialise us – the reading public – into familiarity with newsmakers to the extent that we take for granted their presence in the news content and what they say to be important to us. Indeed their importance cannot be underrated because in the news media world, they hold essential information that forms a significant part of the news content, and which reporters seek after to make news.

In newsmaking practice, newsmakers function in two ways – as actors and as voices in the news. Although the two functions are often equivalent and can sometimes be conflated within the same person or persons in the news, there are times when the sources are not key actors but their voices are still represented. This thesis is concerned with the selection of news sources – the voices in the news – in the *Daily Nation*. In this study, I looked at how news values are applied in the process of selecting front-page stories and the sources of these stories.

In keeping with the media's role in our social lives to help us make sense of the world around us, Zoch and Turk (1998) posit that newspapers have an important task of choosing from the millions of possible news items around the world those “pieces of information reporters and editors think are important” (1998:763) and which they assume readers will think are important. (See also Croteau and Hoynes, 2000). Turk and Zoch describe the news media as entities that define a frame of interpreting events in the process of selecting news. They turn events into news and define their interpretation largely through the statements made by sources of information.

From the arguments of the above scholars, news can be said to be those few events that journalists and editors select, coupled with who says what happened in those events, and how it is said and presented to us. This definition of news corresponds somewhat with Hall's (1978) perspective of what news is. Hall sees news as events, which are made to mean by the media (1978:54). To the extent that journalists employ the knowledge and articulation of sources in the process of construction of news, they make news to mean. We can correlate Hall's view of what constitutes news with the argument commonly brought out by media scholars and critics to the effect that what we read in the news media as news is not necessarily what happens but what the news source says has happened. "That means that the news doesn't happen until there is an exchange of information between journalists and their sources" (Zoch and Turk, 1998:763. (See also Gans, 1979; Golding and Elliot, 1979).

In newsmaking practice, journalists may begin with a clue of what events will make news but it is commonly what the source says that is treated as news. "In some stories we have an idea of what the story is and in some we don't, and it is very important that the source opens his or her mouth for us to get the real story" (Interview with J9, *Daily Nation*, 25/11/2003).

It may be easy, given our socialisation by the media, to assume the importance of news sources in giving voice to the news and therefore giving sense to the real story. But hardly ever, as readers of newspapers, do we ask the question: why do relatively few names in society, and not others, regularly get selected by reporters as news sources, and on what basis are they selected? This was the key question that motivated this thesis. Subsequently, other related questions followed: How do reporters and editors of newspapers sift out from the array of information those pieces they believe will attract the readers' attention and spark their interest? How do they go about selecting front-page news and those names that pervade their news content? What criteria guide this selection and the choices journalists make about who gets on the news?

In trying to answer the above questions, this study worked with three main assumptions. The first was that news values are an important consideration in guiding the selection of news sources. The second was that journalists in this newspaper are motivated by democratic principles in their news reporting practice, and that in selecting sources of news they ought to seek to represent diverse views in society in the news. The third was that the journalists tend to select news from among the elite in society.

In consideration of the role of news values in selecting sources of news on the front pages, I approached the questions by first investigating, through a qualitative method (semi-structured interviews and observations), the news values of the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper, and then related these values to the selection of news sources. I made the assumption that news values, which refer to the criteria that are conventionally used to assess the worthiness of information to count as news, serve also to influence the selection of news sources. Thus, journalists are, to a large extent, informed by the newsworthiness of stories in making judgments about the news sources they select for specific news items in the front pages. There is therefore a significant relationship between news values of a story and the news sources that get selected. In this study, I also sought to examine, through a quantitative study (content analysis), the categories of news sources that are predominantly selected for the front-page stories.

1.2 Research Methods

This research is about examining the process of selecting news sources, and how news values inform the process. To achieve this, I employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, observation and content analysis. These methods were used to complement one another in terms of achieving the goals of the study. The study has two main goals. One of them is to examine the selection process regarding news sources, and specifically the importance of news values in this process. The other is to assess these sources in order to tease out their characteristics in relation to media-democracy assumptions.

The first goal was achieved through observation and semi-structured interviews. These qualitative methods enlarged the scope of analysis from that gained by content analysis by offering explanations for the process of news and source selection and the basis for certain choices journalists make in the process of news gathering.

In order to achieve the second goal of this study, I utilised a content analysis technique of data collection and analysis. This technique provides a systematic and relatively objective means of assessing large textual data for purposes of quantifying and interpreting observable features within them (see Deacon et al, 1999:115 and Hansen et al, 1998:91-98). The use of content analysis in the study was intended to identify the types of news and sources that journalists selected for page one stories, and to expose their characteristics in relation to the media-democracy paradigm of the press. This was achieved by counting the frequency of occurrence of categories of stories and sources in the front-page stories and analysing them according to the study's delineated characterisation, i.e., story types, gender and social status of sources. The technique was able to produce relevant findings in relation to the theoretical framework underpinning this study. For example, through this technique of data collection and analysis, it was possible to attest to the theoretical arguments prevailing in media studies that the elites are the favoured news sources in contemporary newspapers (McNair, 1998:76-78). It was also possible to observe how the newspaper fared in terms of its application of democratic principles in source selection (see chapter four) and found out that this paradigm has been weakened by narrowing choices of news sources to a small class of people in society.

The quantitative method was limited, however, as Hansen et al (1998) explains, to giving indication of the relative prominence and absences of key aspects in the characteristics of news sources. For example, I noted the prominence of political and economic news in the front pages, and the comparatively minimised coverage of human-interest stories. Also registered was the predominance of elite male politicians as news sources and the scarcity of female and grassroots voices in the news.

By combining these research methods, I was also able to draw conclusions that questioned the performance of the *Daily Nation* with regard to adherence to democratic principles in regard to imbalances in its representation of views in the news. In particular, I noted preference for elite male politicians to give voice to the news of the front pages. The significance of both methods of data collection to this study is discussed in detail in chapter three.

The assumption that the journalists in this newspaper would privilege the elite in source selection was based on theoretical analyses drawn from different studies and arguments with regard to journalistic practice within independent news media in contemporary societies (see, for example, McNair 1998; Manning, 2001; Zoch and Turk, 1998; Kupe, 2003; Hall, 1978; Gans, 1979 and Golding, 1987). As the findings will show, journalists in the *Daily Nation* newspaper showed a heavy reliance on elite sources for news information for the front-page stories.

The study took as given the importance of media in democracy, reinforced by the claims of the newspaper chosen for study as indicated in the editorial policy guidelines of the Nation Media Group (NMG), the company that owns the *Daily Nation*. These policy guidelines give a broad perspective of the paper's commitment to democratic principles of the press as well as their application to the presumed democratic society in which it operates. The Editorial Policy guidelines apply to all NMG's news and information outlets, including the *Daily Nation* newspaper. To illustrate these democratic claims, a few clauses that are relevant to this study are partially extracted and quoted from the policy guidelines (The Nation Media Group Editorial Policy Guidelines and Objectives, 2002: 3, 9).

Regarding the coverage of news, the policy guidelines state in part that the "editorial content will be selected for its news values and not to appease or augment political, commercial or any other interests" (2002:3).

The editorial guidelines express support for "the principles of democracy as they are widely understood" in terms of "good governance, transparency and accountability" as well as support for human rights as they are applied in modern democratic society. This includes "the right to assemble and to express all views within the constraints of

the existing law” (2002:3). In addition, the NMG claims that its “publications will seek to be sensitive to gender issues and the interests of the rural populations and minority of any sort” (2002:3).

The rights of the press in a democratic society are also acknowledged in the editorial policy wherein the newspaper expects to be allowed various freedoms to carry out its duties, such as to facilitate the “free flow of information, free access to sources and open debate on any matter of importance to society” (2002:9). In this context, the policy lays a claim on the newspaper to “appeal to a wide readership within the context of their editorial and marketing parameters”, which means that “no one sector, community, professional or editorial objective will dominate the publications” (2002:3). The policy also expresses its commitment to ethical journalism and extends responsibility to the newspaper to carry “information, debates and critical comments on society” and to allow “different views to be expressed” (2002:9).

Within the paradigm of the democratic role of the media shown in the *Daily Nation* editorial policy, coupled with the arguments discussed in the next section regarding what a full democratic journalist ought to look like, I investigated the selection of news sources of this newspaper. While bearing in mind the context of the newspaper setting in a Third World country which can be described as an emerging democracy, this research was interested to find out how the democratic ideals of news reporting translated in terms of news values and source selection in a contemporary newspaper.

As can be seen from the editorial policy, the newspaper has made claims to its commitment to democratic principles. In practice, however, as the findings will show, when it comes to selecting sources of news in the front-page stories, the newspaper neglects a larger sector of society, which is made up of women and grassroots people. Their views in the news are overshadowed by those of the elite male politicians whom the journalists access more frequently and systematically as newsmakers – as both actors and sources.

1.3 The democratic paradigm of news reporting

Generally, the democratic model of news reporting, though Western in origin (Manning, 2001) has gained preference in the media in Africa (Golding, 1987; Ansah, 1988; Berger, 2002). Golding has argued that the Western model of news reporting gained entry in Africa as a result of professional and technological transfer from the former colonial powers, and this involved the transfer of an ideology that today, among other features of the news media, characterises news reporting practice in Africa. Overall, it is assumed that within the democratic principles, the news media have the task of gathering news and communicating news information to the public so as to sustain the political discussion and democratic process (Manning, 2001:1). Manning, arguing from the First World democratic perspective, further explains that there is an assumption within the democratic paradigm that “public choices between parties, individual or policy options, are an important element” (2001:1). He goes on to propose:

In the ideal model of the modern capitalist liberal democracy, ‘free’ and ‘independent’ news media are usually regarded as playing an important part in maintaining the flow of ideas and information upon which choices are made. However, this assumes first, that those groups which have something important to contribute to these processes of information circulation can secure access to the news media and, that the representation of their arguments or perspectives will not be unreasonably constrained or misrepresented (2001:1).

Manning goes on to highlight the importance of diversity in the presentation of views in the media. Thus, he argues:

One of the important issues to consider, then, in thinking through the relationship between the news media and democratic process in liberal, capitalistic societies, is whether or not the less powerful are significantly disadvantaged in the scramble to secure access to the news media. In turn, this will have an important bearing upon the question of just how diverse are the perspectives and interpretive frameworks that are present through the news media (2001:1)

Berger (2002) has given a more detailed argument in relation to the democratic significance of journalism and news media in contemporary times. His views are applicable in both First and Third World situations. He argues that, in its normative outlook, journalism has an “organic intrinsic link to democracy” (2002:82). This view of journalism places it in a role that makes it a powerful motivating force that can survive, regardless of all complications, in the media industry globally. It is a view

that, he says, serves as “an important standard by which the purpose and performance of journalism can be assessed” (2002:83). Within this paradigm, Berger identifies four broad versions of journalistic practice: liberal democratic, neo-liberal, social democratic and participatory. He says these operate largely in combination with one another despite minor contradictions between them. In the liberal democratic version, both journalism and the media are seen to play the watchdog role whereby journalists are expected to be “autonomous from political forces, owners and advertisers and other vested interests” (2002: 84), and to work within conditions that assure them of editorial independence. In the social democratic version, journalists and the news media play the role of public steward serving the citizen’s democratic culture. The neo-liberal version reflects pluralism and diversity. Here the media is seen to be promoting national debate by “providing information resources required for informed choices to be made in the ballot box”. In this model, journalists act “as neutral referees in the contest of political forces” (2002:85), while treating politics as a commodity that can be equitably consumed. The participatory role of journalism goes a little further from the liberal and neo-liberal one and extends pluralism to encompass the masses, including the non-elite grassroots people and women in a continuous participation. Its mission is to actualise freedom of speech among the masses. This version, Berger says, “is about the construction of a democratic community” (2002:86).

Assessed from the above democratic ideals, and for a fuller democratic role of this newspaper to be seen, it is to be expected that the *Daily Nation* performance, in terms of news source selection, would demonstrate a practice that allows free flow of information and ideas from across the broad diversity that is to be found in the real society.

As already mentioned, this study is interested in assessing the performance of the *Daily Nation* in terms of how the democratic ideals translated in terms of source selection. The study assumed that the journalists working for the *Daily Nation* newspaper are motivated by democratic principles in news reporting, and as such are, as in the liberal view (above), independent from overt influence of the powerful elites in society. It must be noted, though, that the issue of independence of influence by the elite becomes problematised by operating with the primary reference only to the elite.

A paper's independence vis-à-vis the elite may be maintained in narrow terms, but if it does not reflect other sectors of society, then that independence is rather circumscribed. On the basis of this argument, coverage of actors and sources ought to extend beyond the elite. This should translate to permitting diverse views in the news, representing not only the elite but also other social groups across the spectrum of society as per the participatory interpretation of democratic journalism.

Examination of the newspaper policy guidelines discussed above indicates an ideal commitment, in various degrees, to all four democratic versions discussed by Berger. However, in practice, as will be shown, journalists leaned more towards the liberal and the neo-liberal versions while sustaining traces of their role as public stewards and as enforcers of participation among the masses.

This assessment flows from the findings that sources of news in the front pages were predominantly male elites, and, particularly, a small group of politicians. Female sources were grossly neglected, and were only accessed in instances when the news agenda was said to belong to womenfolk, and the issues in the news to involve women as news actors (see chapters five, six and seven). This can be attributed to two main reasons. The first is that the journalists in this newspaper tended to skew news to those topics that favour professional party politics, as shown in the findings, which is an arena dominated by male elites, and in which the female participation is minimal. The second reason, as will be shown in the findings, has to do with the societal values that are embedded in the news, and which tend to exclude women when it comes to the public sphere and issues of public debate. Grassroots sources were very rare as sources of news except when they were involved in events described as disruptive to normal life. The findings have drawn various explanations elicited from different interview respondents for this scenario (see chapter five and six).

1.4 Study approach

This research examined news values in the context of a Third World contemporary newspaper. It used a case study approach (Gomm et al, 2000:3-10) to investigate the *Daily Nation*'s news values and their relationship with the selection of news sources in the specific conditions of Kenya in 2003.

The study draws generally from a sociological perspective of newsmaking, with reference to the particular theoretical framework of news values. The theory of news values has been highlighted in relation to the selection of news and the selection of news sources by several media scholars and researchers such as Gans (1979), Tuchman (1979), Golding and Elliot (1979), McNair (1998), Croteau and Hoynes (2000), Manning (2001), Zoch and Turk (1998), Sigal (1973) and Hall et al (1978).

By investigating source selection from the point of view of news values, this approach differs from other approaches such as the different dynamics that influence source selection highlighted by gatekeeping studies (Shoemaker, 1991), newsbeats analysis (Tuchman, 1979) and examination of the ethics of news professionalism (McNair, 1998).

Of relevance to this study is the remark that news is an "end product of a process that begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to professionalised news values" (Branston and Stafford, 1999:162). Thus, news values are seen to explicitly and implicitly guide newsroom practice regarding qualities of events that merit inclusion or exclusion.

From a sociological perspective, Croteau and Hoynes (2000), Manning (2001), McNair (1998) and Hall (1978) raise some key points about the newsmaking process and the process of selecting sources. One is that news does not occur in isolation; rather it is an end product of social interrelations involving journalists, news sources, external and internal structures within and outside the news media, and other factors in society. The other is that journalists and news sources are a product of socialisation, which shapes their understanding and response to media. Both often share some perceptions about what is newsworthy and this helps their understanding in the process of constructing news. Regardless of this commonly shared perception about

news values, sources do not get on the news haphazardly. This study found out that they are subject to a similar process that journalist and editors use to select events as news. It is a process that requires constant negotiations to arrive at a consensus that fits the professional definition of what constitutes news, i.e. news values (Tuchman, 1979:33-38). Thus, foremost in these negotiations are considerations of news values. These guide the judgements made about which sources are selected for particular stories.

In my interviews with the editors and reporters of the *Daily Nation*, and in my observations, it became clear that, in the process of selecting news and sources, negotiations among the journalists also take into account both external social structures of society and internal rules of the news organisations. It was also clear that journalists and news sources have developed some dynamic interrelations based on their shared understanding of what makes news, and this understanding made it easy in some occasions for some sources to initiate news through events that had high news potential, and for journalists to access them just as conveniently. Sources initiated news through news releases or press statements, and other times by making telephone calls to alert the media of potential news events.

1.5 Goals of the study

This research had two main goals. The first was to examine the selection process regarding news and news sources, and specifically the importance of news values in this process. The second entailed assessing the sources of news in order to tease out their characteristics in relation to media-democracy assumptions, with a view to making suggestions for the newspaper. As a point of entry and focus, I sampled the front-page stories of the newspaper. To get an overall picture, the investigation looked at the process of selecting these front-page stories. In addition, it examined how news values inform the choices of news sources in these stories. These sources were also examined quantitatively in order to uncover their characteristics.

1.6 Research context

I chose, as my object of study, the *Daily Nation* newspaper, a contemporary, independent, commercial Third World newspaper based in Nairobi, Kenya. I narrowed this choice primarily because of the newspaper's role, among other news organisations, in the democratisation of the press in Kenya in the early 1990s (Odhiambo, 2003), and its relative influence upon the reading public spanning the East African region.

The *Daily Nation* is published by the Nation Media Group (NMG). The NMG owns a number of other newspapers around the East African region, but the company's flagship newspaper remains the *Daily Nation*, which is claimed to reach three quarters of Kenya's newspaper reading population. It was founded in 1960, three years before the country attained its independence from the British. Its aim was to champion African nationalistic opinion in the fight against colonialism and to maintain an independent outlook in its news coverage (Nation Media Group report, 2000; BBC Country Profile, 2003).

In the light of the *Daily Nation's* role, among other media organisations, in influencing the democratisation process in Kenya in 1990s, it would appear, on the one hand, that journalists working for this paper are independent from overt influence of dominant politicians and powerful elites (Manning, 2001). In terms of the full democratic paradigm of the press, it is expected that the newspaper takes upon itself the responsibility of reporting news from a wide range of sources. This status could allow for diversity of views, for example, representing class differences, gender and minority groups, and ensuring interpretation of their views in the news.

On the other hand, the rise of elitist values in the news in the Kenyan media, such as noted elsewhere in Africa (Kupe, 2003), could suggest that the voices of "the dominant political and economic elites" (2003:5), such as those of government officials, professionals or politicians, are preferred in the media. This may be attributed partly to the fact that media ownership is concentrated in the hands of wealthy elite people, while a large number in the population is limited in terms of media reach by poverty and lack of communication resources (Kupe, 2003; Odhiambo, 2003). The extent to which the elites are privileged in the *Daily Nation*

newspaper was examined in this study with the findings being that elite sources, especially from a certain category of professional politicians, were the journalists' favoured choices for the front-page stories. The significance of this for democracy is discussed in the concluding chapter.

1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters. In this first chapter, I give a background to the study in which I include my motivation for undertaking it, and the goals of the study. In chapter two, I outline the theoretical framework and review of the literature that informed this study. In reviewing the literature, the chapter specifically expounds the theory of news values drawing from perspectives of several theoretical arguments advanced about the role of news values in selecting news. Insights from these theoretical arguments are used to relate news values to the selection of news sources. In chapter three, I outline the methodological approaches and techniques employed in the process of gathering data for the research. In it, I show how I drew from both quantitative and qualitative methods in this process. Specifically the methods of study were content analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations. In the chapter, I also explain how the study was carried out, the challenges I faced and how I handled them. In chapter four, I present the key findings of quantitative study in which the results of the content analysis of news sources on the front-page stories are summarised. In chapters five and six, I present the findings of the qualitative study by drawing from the responses obtained from the interview respondents and my observations. In both chapters, I show how news values are operationalised in the process of selecting page one stories and in selecting page one news sources. The findings are presented along with my interpretations, which are based on the interview perspectives and some of the related theories. In chapter seven, I evaluate and discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical framework and the literature, which inform this study. In chapter eight, I conclude this thesis report by discussing the study's findings in terms of the key issues that emerged from it.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is intended to review the literature underpinning the theory of news values, and to set the theoretical framework, which informs the study of news sources. The study focuses on the selection of news sources for the front-page stories of the newspaper of this research – the *Daily Nation*. It looks at this selection in relation to news values. It shows that news values, the criteria that are used by journalists to judge front-page stories as newsworthy, play a significant role in informing journalists about the news sources that they select for the front-page stories.

While newsmakers, as shown in the previous chapter (chapter one) are part of what constitutes the news content by what they do and what they say, this study recognises and distinguishes two roles that newsmakers play – as actors and as voices in the news. In newsmaking practice, newsmakers can play either one of the two roles in specific moments of news construction, and they can also play the two roles simultaneously – as both actors and voices in the news. This thesis is concerned mainly with the role of giving voice to the news and will apply the term news sources in reference to the people selected by journalists to give voice to the news. In some cases where news sources are also actors in the same news events, they will be recognised as news sources in this intrinsic role.

Chapter one of this thesis has given an overview of the context, goals and approach of this study. It has also highlighted the democratic paradigm used to assess the performance of the newspaper of this study – the *Daily Nation* – in terms of the role of the news media and journalism in democracy. This chapter looks at the theoretical arguments in connection with news values and their relationship to the selection of news and news sources. The chapter will be handled in five sections. The first section explores the theory of news values. The second section highlights the professional understanding by journalists of news values. It looks at how this understanding helps them in their daily newsmaking practice to select only a few items, from numerous

competing items that are potential news, which they consider newsworthy and as meriting inclusion in the newspaper. In the third section, the chapter looks at the criteria of news values and their importance in guiding the selection of news. In the fourth section, the significance of the front-page stories, which are specifically sampled in this study, are theoretically examined in relation to their newsworthy attributes and placement on page one of the newspaper. Finally the chapter outlines the theoretical arguments advanced with regard to the selection of news sources with particular reference to their newsworthy attributes.

2.1 An overview of the theory of news values

News has been defined as “an end-product of a complex process which begins with a system of sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (Hall et al, 1978:53). This involves, according to Hall et al,

selecting from the many contending items within any category, those that are felt to be of interest to readers. At the general level this involves an orientation to items which are ‘out of the ordinary’, which in some way breach our ‘normal’ expectations about social life (1978:53).

Hall et al go on to say that extraordinariness does not exhaust the list of news attributes. Other possible newsworthy items, as any newspaper will reveal, include: “events which are concerned with elite persons or nations; events which are dramatic; events which can be personalised so as to point up the essentially human characteristics of humour, sadness, sentimentalism; events which have negative consequences and events which are part of, or can be made to appear part of, an existing newsworthy theme” (1978:53).

In the process of newsmaking, these events are qualified for inclusion in the newspaper by journalists in terms of the characteristics of news values that they exhibit. In line with Cohen and Young’s (1973) argument, it is clear that, “far from being random reaction to random events, the selection of news is a logical outcome of particular ways of working and of a shared set of criteria of what makes material newsworthy” (1973:183). This material is therefore made newsworthy by the news values it embodies.

News values have been developed theoretically in terms of a list of attributes, which help to identify them both for analysis and definitions of what news is. The list has also been formalised and this formalisation has served as reference in the socialisation and training of journalists and for researchers. Galtung and Ruge (1965) came up with a pioneering list of interrelated factors that help to identify values in the news. They argued that events are likely to meet the criteria of newsworthiness if they satisfied the conditions of frequency, intensity, unambiguity (clarity), cultural proximity, relevance, consonance, predictability, unpredictability, continuity, composition, elite persons and elite nations, negativity and ethnocentricity (1965:53-60).

This list has been analysed further with a resultant additional factors advanced by Shultz (1976, cited in Staab, 1990) such as valence, dynamic, identification, status, political and geographical proximity and prominence. Others have included recency, brevity, extraordinariness, immediacy, novelty, sentimentality and 'fit' in terms of technical manageability (Golding and Elliot, 1979; Hall et al, 1978; Shoemaker, 1991). This formalisation of news values is important for identification in journalistic practice and for purposes of analysis. It serves as a basis for identifying the formal elements that constitute news. It also serves as a basis on which the professional ideology of newsmaking rests, which helps journalists in their practice to invoke those values in their grading and categorising of news in the selection process (Cohen and Young, 1973).

In addition to professional ideologies, Hall et al (1978) argue that there are organisational factors that affect news selection. These are the staffing and structure of the newspaper, and the moment of construction of the news story itself (1978:53). The authors state that these factors work hand in hand with news values in the process of selecting news. The moment of construction for example, involves presenting the news item to an assumed audience, "in terms which, as far as the presenters of the item can judge, will make it comprehensible to that audience, thus placing the news within a frame of meaning familiar to the audience" (1978:54). From this argument, it can be said that news values represent the social values that can easily be identifiable by the readers of news.

According to Hall et al, while the professional ideology of news helps in easily identifying those qualities that constitute what is newsworthy, the process of news selection is “located within a range of known social and cultural identification”(1978:54). The social and cultural identification within which the selection of news is located is further explicated by Gans (1979). He argues that news happens in social contexts and these contexts influence their nature and how they are gathered, and in this way the social factors in different contexts influence the sort of news values in the news.

Hodgson (1990) elaborates on these arguments. In his argument, he posits that news cannot be viewed as a rigid list that can be lifted and applied in all contexts. News values vary, and this depends on considerations given to the interests of the readers in particular countries and settings. According to him,

it can be argued that the disclosure of an event which makes news in one country, or in one area even, might not be considered newsworthy in another...It demonstrates an important characteristic of news –that there is no absolute value judgement by which new information is selected and published. It might be news by our abstract definition but it must be the sort of news that is likely to be of interest to the readers for a particular publication in order to be selected. The job of editors is to assess and choose news for their readers (1990:10).

Cohen and Young (1973) concur with Hodgson’s views. Extending it further, they explain that “news values continually play against on-going beliefs and constructs about the world which most of its readers share, and without this consensus knowledge our routine knowledge of social structures, neither the news workers nor its readers would recognise the foregrounding” of the news (1973:183). Accordingly, what is already known is therefore what the newspapers infer as present or absent. Again, what is already known adds to the common-sense constructions about the world. It further adds to the ideological interpretations about the world, which hold the society together in terms of everyday beliefs.

According to Gans (1979), society and nation have become the reference point to how news values have developed. Thus, “news values can be inferred from preference statements about society and nation, and major national issues” (1979: 41). He distinguishes two types of values – topical and enduring values. He says that “topical

values are opinions expressed about specific actors or activities of the moment which manifest themselves in the explicit and in the implicit judgments that enter into those stories” (1979:41), while enduring values can be found in different types of news stories over a long period of time.

Gans goes on to show that enduring values affect what events become news. Indeed some are what make for the definitions of news. In addition, Gans argues that even though enduring values are not eternal and, admittedly they do change with time, especially with changes in society and contexts, they somewhat help to shape opinions about social values.

All the above arguments show a general consensus that news values cannot be separated from the social contexts in which the newspapers or other news media operate. As will be discussed later in this thesis, the societal values of elitism and gender dimensions have a bearing on how news values (and sources) are applied in practice.

In his study of *CBS*, *NBC*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, Gans grouped enduring values into eight clusters about the core and unquestioned values of American journalism: ethnocentric, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership. Though Schudson (1979:19) claims that these values are “commonly assumed, unnoticed background assumptions through which news is gathered and within which it is framed” in America, these background assumptions can be said to be present in most contemporary media, even though they may differ contextually.

All the different views brought out about news values in this section are important for my study of news values and the investigation of news sources of a contemporary newspaper context in a Third World country.

2.2 Journalism and professional understanding of news values

Journalists have to choose everyday from numerous contending items that are potential news everyday and come up with enough copy for the newspaper. That there are several items to choose from and the fact that they all cannot fit the space available in the newspaper or merit news gathering resources may explain why the criteria of news values become important.

Following Cohen and Young's (1973), and Gans' (1979) observations, it is easy to absolve journalists of deliberately formulating news values, although they do invoke them in their professional work to justify news. Journalists have a sense of news values, which they hold in a taken-for-granted way, but those values in the news are not necessarily those of journalists, nor are they always distinctive to the news. Some emanate from values and beliefs held by the society, the context in which journalists operate, as was argued earlier (Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1979; Cohen and Young, 1973). Some are extended in the news by the sources of news since sources share the same social context in which the news media exist. They also share many of the societal values and understanding of news values, which the journalists know (Gans, 1979; McNair, 1998:6-7).

To capture societal values in the news, "journalism is helped in its professional practice by the sense of the nature of external reality in society, and therefore gives reality judgments to events and people" (Gans, 1979:39). Though this is so, news does not only limit itself to reality judgments but also makes value or preference statements. This does not mean that journalism simply mirrors society; rather it constructs the representation of that social reality in the process of mediating social meanings to readers. Much news then tends to be about the violation of what is considered societal values: crime for instance, corruption by high officials, sexual harassment and so forth. In this sense, it reminds the audience of those values that are being violated, and assumes that the audience shares those values.

Gans goes on to explain that, even though the values in the news are rarely explicit, and can only be found between the lines "in what actors and activities are reported or ignored and in how they are described" (1979:40), nevertheless when a story deals with the undesirable and negative connotations, the story can be seen to implicitly

express a value about what is desirable and positive. For instance, news values and moral values have a relationship, in the sense that the news media will expose the doings of leaders or any person in a position of authority over illicit sexual relationships, or corrupt deals with the aim of deterring such behaviour. Thus, it is possible as readers of news and analysts to identify news values in the news content.

Ultimately in, terms of newsmaking practice, the values that make a story news are those held by the journalists. Although journalists do not deliberately insert news values in the news (Gans, 1979), they somehow are supposed to possess them. By virtue of their professional training and socialisation, journalists tend to have a sense of newsworthiness, which they, in a taken-for-granted manner, operationalise in their practice. It is this sense of newsworthiness that helps them to “select, rank, classify and elaborate a news item in terms of their stock of knowledge as to what constitutes news” (Hall et al, 1979:54). Cohen and Young (1973) put it that while journalists are supposed to possess an understanding of news values, the conceptions of newsworthiness may not be uniform among them.

Without any written rules news value, in their general conceptions are widely shared, not only among journalists, or within individual news organisations, but also between news organisations. In contemporary media arena, many of the news values that can be found in stories across different newspapers have acquired a universal currency (Manning, 2001:63; Hall et al, 1978:54). Lule (1987) points out that news values have a history and a present to contend with. He traces the historical underpinnings that have shaped news values of various parts of the world. He categorises news values into economic and political slots of three worlds: the First, Second and Third Worlds. He traces the First World news values from the 17th century formation conceived by entrepreneurs. He argues that these news values have continued to be shaped by economic factors. In the Second World, news values have been driven by ideological significance, while in the Third World, news values are characterised by diversity ranging from the colonial First World definitions and definitions that tend to suit their contexts (1987: 24-39). We cannot, however, generalise this perception especially considering the changing ecology of the media and its relationship to changes in the global arena. Neither can we ignore the distinctions found among, not only different countries, but also different media in the same country.

Inevitably, as the various theoretical arguments have revealed, news values are both general and specific, and operate as a set of common criteria while at the same time being influenced by particular societal context and social values. This complexity means that the task of identifying news values in the news and linking them to the selection of news sources for analysis is an intricate one. It is made more intricate by the fact that each story contains several news values. Thus, in selecting news sources, the values in the news must constantly be sifted and interrelated. The next section considers news values in the selection process of news.

2.3 News values and the selection of news

Due to the complexity involved in selecting news and sources of news, journalists have devised ways in which these processes can be made more convenient by referring to news values. A number of theories have been advanced to describe the significance of news values in the news selection process. For example, Hall et al (1979) describe news values as providing “the criteria in the routine practices of journalism which enable journalists and editors to decide routinely and regularly which stories are newsworthy and which are not, which stories are major lead stories and which are relatively insignificant, which stories to run and which to drop” (1979:54). News values are used in two ways, according to Golding and Elliot (1979). In one way, they are used as

the criteria of selection from material available to the newsroom of those items worthy of inclusion in the final product. In another way, they are guidelines for the presentation of items, suggesting what to emphasise, what to omit, and where to give priority in the presentation of the items to the audience” (1979:114).

The above authors see news values as implicitly and often expressly explaining and guiding newsroom practice. Such values can then be called working rules or a reference to shared understanding about the nature and purpose of news. They are used to ease the complexity of sorting, and defining, from the millions of happenings and potential identifications of happenings, the events that qualify as news.

In journalistic construction of news, events are given qualities. Their relative absence or presence recommends them for inclusion in or exclusion from the final news product. As Galtung and Ruge (1965) point out, the more such news value qualities a story exhibits, the greater the chances of its inclusion.

News values derive also from assumptions about such factors as the interest of the reader, the accessibility of the news item by journalists as well as its fit in terms of technological realities of the news organisations. Thus, an event may be newsworthy to the journalist but if it fails to capture the attention of the reader, or if its accessibility would require large amounts of resources in terms of money and time for the news organisation, or if it fails to suit the technological limitations of the news organisation, it may then fail the recommendation for its inclusion as news. Some of these considerations may account for the dropping of selected stories observed by Gans (1979:109).

2.4 Significance of front-page stories in relation to news values

One point is to be emphasised here that the selection of the main story on page one is not haphazard but the result of a crucial decision-making process which is undertaken by a group of editors who represent different news desks or news departments. In their assessment of decisions regarding the selection of the lead stories, Croteau and Hoynes (2000) show that their selection is based on its relation to newsworthiness. They observe that the front-page story “identifies the editors’ selection of the most important event of the day” which then influences “which stories will be the most visible” (2000:126). Page one is foremost the newspaper’s showplace, and additionally, a measure of the reporter’s success. Croteau and Hoynes point out that the decision to select lead stories is governed by newsworthiness criteria such as “timeliness of a story, impact on the community of readers, and prominence of the participants in the events” (2000:127).

Tuchman’s (1979) study has produced some valuable information about the selection of lead stories in a newspaper and its relationship to newsworthiness. In her observational studies of *Saeboard City Daily* paper, she found that at a daily editorial conference comprised of different desk editors, both the assessment of newsworthiness of potential lead stories and consideration of the most important story

of the day are accomplished. The process is one of negotiations in setting the boundaries of what can be considered important at that particular time. The final decision of what goes on the front page is accomplished by mutual agreement of the editors trying to maintain an interpersonal balance as opposed to dispute (1979:31-38). Sigal (1973) explains that the editors work with summaries from reporters that are submitted ahead of time. By the time of the story conference, many editors may have only the sketchiest idea of what their stories will contain. But the summaries help to provide some basis for evaluation of the news. To the extent that editors have shared assumptions about newsworthiness they can achieve coherence. Sigal acknowledges that each day's news report contains some stories that every editor can agree belong to page one.

Tuchman observes that the discussion of editors in the story conference can sometimes be heated, but they try to maintain a careful equilibrium, for dissonance interferes with the daily accomplishment of the group task. Thus, they perpetually judge the relative value of items of the day, which leads to daily-negotiated judgments that the editors make news together. Through this process of negotiation, editors in the editorial conference accomplish newsworthiness, which leads Sigal to conclude that "implicit understanding must have been perpetually re-accomplished by all editors to have found an ongoing symmetry" (1973:34-37). But in the final analysis, the newsworthiness of a story can only be explained in terms of its relation to other news stories, which were available on the same day (Staab, 1973: 437).

As this thesis is concerned with the news sources that get selected in the front-page stories, the next section will consider what role news values play in their selection.

2.5 News sources and their relationship to news values

The importance of news sources in the construction of news is indisputable. Journalists depend on them to validate information and also to identify and construct their stories. Though journalists can witness events first-hand and take their position as sources of news, this is a rare happening (Shoemaker, 1991:15). On most occasions, as McNair (1998) argues, though journalists construct their stories around their own values and beliefs, they largely depend for their information on the "contributions of a wide range of information sources that acquire the power of

becoming definers of journalistic reality” (1998:6). As a professional imperative to fulfil the rules of the much debated objectivity (Hall et al, 1978:57-60; McNair, 1998: 68-77), news sources have become important in helping to validate facts and in giving authority to facts in the news as well as “the way of understanding and making sense of those facts” (McNair, 1998: 6-7). In order to help in making sense of the news facts, McNair (1998:6) says that non-journalistic witnesses or actors have been mainstreamed in journalism to interpret issues, which in essence lends authority of information in the eyes of the audience

Even though many theories have been put forward *inter alia* (Hall et al, 1978; Shoemaker, 1991), regarding how and why the media selects certain news sources to interpret the social reality, they have not fully explained the role of news values in this process. The key question is what is the role of news values in the selection of news sources? The assumption made in this thesis is that news values have a significant role to play in this selection.

The story selection and that of news sources are inextricably related and both depend on journalistic judgments of what constitutes news. In most instances the news determines the sources selection, while in certain instances the news source may influence the story selection, even though not independently of journalistic newsworthy judgments. Although in the former instances, the news media may not explicitly show that news sources depend on the story values, but implicitly, through some gleanings from theories on offer, this appears to be the case.

News sources are selected on the basis that they enforce or add value to the news they speak to, and the news items they speak to are qualified on the basis of their newsworthy qualities. News sources are also selected because they embody attributes that are newsworthy. Thus, they are considered newsworthy in more or less similar terms that qualify a story to be newsworthy, and in this sense, the newsworthy attributes in them sometimes influence the selection of news. Croteau and Hoynes’ (2000) argument emphasises the definitions of newsworthiness as serving a multiplicity of constituencies, one of which is the constituency of news sources.

Larsson (2000) has observed that the relationship of journalists and news sources is rooted in the understanding of the consensual nature of newsmaking, which is based on shared values. It works in an emergent-shared culture and is grounded on agreement about the criteria of newsworthiness, albeit with different objectives and judgments about what constitutes a 'good' or 'bad' story. On their part, news sources judge a good story by the elements that constitute positive publicity of the source and what she or he represents. The journalists on their part judge a good story by its editorial quality, whether it meets most of the criteria of general newsworthiness. For news sources, negative publicity is equated to a bad story. But to a journalist there are no 'bad' stories in the topical sense, except those reflecting insufficient professional methods (2000:25).

The story selection and source selection go hand in hand, according to Gans' (1979) observation. He shows that, although at the point of story selection little may be known about the stories, sources relevant to the stories may be familiar. But the source selection depends on the journalists' judgments of news and the suitability of sources to the news. The journalists use certain qualities like past suitability, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulation to select the sources. With these considerations, Gans says that the sources must be available at the shortest time possible and be able to offer suitable information. These are some of the characteristics that describe news sources and they correspond with news values such as immediacy and proximity. Availability and suitability of news sources can somewhat explain why public officials are most frequent and regular sources of news. The reliance on public officials can also explain why news paints a picture of the nation and society, and how, in the process, Gans' enduring values are shown to reflect societal and national values, and come to be embedded in the news. This suggests that the nation and societal values that the official sources embody tend to focus the journalists' attention on the extant social order. In the process, the values they hold about society and nation are extended in the news.

The exception to this rule is brought about by breaking news as well as the extraordinary happenings such as disruptions in the social order. In these instances, journalists are free to find the most relevant source that can supply the dramatic quality of the news rather than the standard sources. Thus, in the circumstances, the less powerful can supply news information based on the news values of drama.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, news values in the news are not necessarily those of journalists. Gans (1973) shows that some of the news values emanate from sources of news that share many of the news values among journalists. Some sources, by virtue of their positions in society, knowledge of issues and skills of articulation become eligible for interpretation of societal values. Others may not occupy government positions but they acquire the skills and ability to interpret social reality. Such are those who represent ordinary groups through campaigns, advocacy by using news management strategies. Among these are environmentalists, feminists, trade unions etc (McNair, 1998:143-161). Ordinary people may become news sources by participating in events that are deemed extraordinary or disruptive to the social order (Hall et al, 1978). In each of the cases, whether they are powerful or ordinary sources, the news events they help to interpret must bear news values which journalists can use to qualify the events as worth covering as news.

The nature of newsmaking requires that journalists access news sources on a regular basis and a mechanism to select them. This insatiable need for news is well understood by some of the news sources, especially those from the elite ranks in society, which leads to their making themselves available. Apart from helping journalists to validate facts in the news, the sources also want visibility, and this has led to a symbiotic relationship between the news sources and journalists. The sources seek access to journalists and journalists seek access to sources (Gans, 1979:116). To describe this relationship, Gans uses a metaphor of 'dance', and says it is both simple and at the same time complex. It involves a power game and it is also consensual, each side seeking to control the terms of the relationship, the flow and control of information, and at the same time to cooperate.

But how do journalists and sources work around news values to gain access to one another? McNair (1998) argues that both the journalists and news sources are a product of socialisation in which the media plays a significant role. Again, there is a professional assumption among the news media people that some, usually institutional sources, are automatically newsworthy.

In addition to all that, sources who want to access the media have familiarised themselves with the factors involved in newsmaking. For example, McNair says that sources know that journalists “prefer material that conforms to prevailing conventions of what is news (news values) and which in an increasingly competitive news market, contains those elements of drama, conflict, etc., which audience expect” (1998:154). To some extent, as McNair observes, some sources use this knowledge to exploit journalistic hunger for news as campaign tool for their own benefit. This approach, which manifests itself in creation of newsworthy media ‘pseudo-events’, has been questioned in terms of its ethics, and many journalists deride the results that come out of it.

Gans has put forward an apt argument to explain how some sources, and not others, tend to dominate the media through ‘pseudo-events’. He says that the knowledge by sources of what is suitable for news makes those with the resources and ingenuity to create media events that are newsworthy to gain advantage. These fall under the category of publicity seekers, and are often resented by journalists (1979). This accounts for one of the reasons why poor and ordinary people lack access to news: they lack the resources and ability to know what it takes to contact the journalists, while knowledge and skill place the powerful in an advantaged position. It has meant that in contemporary societies, class structures shape the relationship of journalists and others within the social structures often creating barriers especially for people found within dissimilar social positions. This illustrates why journalists constantly make contact with the elite sources, because they are similar to them in class position and other characteristics, which define their social relations.

Theoretically though, it can be argued that sources can come from any class. Cottle (2000) notes that in contemporary news media, driven by liberal democratic theory and radical concerns, the importance of who gets ‘on’ and ‘in’ the news is at the core of democratic ideals. The concerns are that the liberty of the press ought to “be protected so that dissenting views can be aired and opinion formation facilitated” in the news” (Mill j. 1811 and Mill, J. 1859, in Cottle, 2000:428).

2.6 Elitism in news values and news sources

Generally, in contemporary news media, news values appear to be elitist. One partial explanation for this is that elite happens to be one of the news values, that journalists operationalise in a taken-for-granted manner in selecting news and sources. Another explanation is that, although news values in themselves are not elites, it is frequently the case that the sources on the news are still elitist. But elitism in the news and sources has become more intensified in contemporary newspapers. This is again because bringing such voices into the story inflates its newsworthiness (given that elitism is a news value), and also because societal values may privilege the proclamations of elites, who are respected sense-makers of news even when it is not about themselves.

In short, there is a complex synergy that tends to take place between elitism in news values and elitism in source selection and representation. This indeed is the focus of investigation of this study.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that news values are criteria used in newsroom practice to select, out of the several contending items that are potential news, only a few items that qualify for inclusion in the news. Journalists judge news events in terms of their news values quotient. It has also shown that news values, in addition to being seen as professional ideologies constructed by journalists, are exercised in augmentation with societal and national values, and that many sources representing societal values tend to extend them to journalists, and ultimately to the news. Though news values have acquired a universal currency, different contexts may explain why news values vary from one society to another.

The chapter has pointed out that the lead (front-page) stories are made significant in the news due to their level of newsworthiness. But their selection as the most important stories of the day is not easy. It calls for consensual decisions of several editors representing different news desks.

Finally, while the sources are evaluated in terms of their efficiency and suitability in supplying information, these considerations must be measured against what counts as news, whose selection must meet the criteria of newsworthiness, and that the sources are in most instances newsworthy. Journalists in this sense manage the sources in order to extract the information they want. They have a right in their relationship with the sources to screen the information offered in order to assess how it complies with the list of factors, which recommend sources for selection; for example, the ability to supply suitable information, geographical proximity and so forth. This list, which recommends sources for their selection, has implications for the type of sources that often get selected to speak in the news.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology used for the study of the selection of news sources in the *Daily Nations* newspaper. The discussion will focus on the research design and methods of collecting data, which will be discussed alongside the related literature and practical experience. The field of study, as Jensen (2002) suggests, requires a kind of formatting both theoretically and in designing a system and method of collecting data. He proposes that,

to design an empirical study is to identify and delimit a portion of reality – which is to be examined with reference to a theoretically informed purpose, or conceptualisation, and according to a systematic procedure of data collection and analysis (2002:237).

The highlights of the chapter are as follows: study design; methods of data collection; qualitative methods; quantitative technique; population of study; sample selection; data collection procedure; data processing and analysis, and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research Design

In designing this study, I first identified the field of study to be a contemporary newspaper in a Third World setting. Second, I chose the *Daily Nation* newspaper, a paper published in Kenya by the Nation Media Group as my case study. In this newspaper, I investigated through qualitative interviews, the process of news making and source selection in order to unravel intricate relationships between news values, cultural and commercial values, and how these are linked to the sources that journalists prefer for the front-page stories. I also carried out a content analysis in order to assess the characteristics of these news sources. This newspaper fitted my study objectives because of its self-professed democratic aspirations in one of Africa's emerging democratic countries as well as for its wide coverage of news in the Eastern Africa region.

Third, by drawing from theoretical wisdom provided by Jensen (2002), Deacon et al (1999), and personal experience as a journalist, I selected research methods that I considered appropriate for this kind of study, and that would yield optimum answers

to the study question and at the same time test the answers against my initial assumptions.

Fourth, in anticipation of the social reality and context of the newspaper of this study, I pre-structured to a certain extent, the social setting in which the methods chosen for my study would be applied (2002:237). This enabled me to work out a preliminary strategy for the study process. I started by discussing this strategy with my supervisor who gave me insightful suggestions. This included evaluating the period sampled for the study. As a key step to the overall strategy, my supervisor sent a formal letter to the management of Nation Media Group, the company that owns the *Daily Nation* newspaper, requesting for permission to conduct my study in this newspaper. This letter detailed the purpose of my study, time frame, the need to spend a specified time in the *Daily Nation* newsroom as an observer, and to conduct qualitative interviews among senior journalists and editors.

Fifth, I developed interviews questions, which were discussed and checked against the theoretical framework of my study. I then set out the timeframe for the study following permission and suggested dates by the *Daily Nation* management authorities.

Sixth, before embarking on the main study, I took four days in the field of study, in separate hours of each day, to conduct a pilot study. The pilot study proved helpful in assessing the validity of the interview questions, adjusting them accordingly and evaluating the receptivity of the reporters and editors to my presence in the newsroom. In the process of the pilot study I was also able to assess the social interactions and the structure of the staffing in the newsroom, which guided me in selecting relevant interview subjects and in making appointments with them.

Seventh, I planned to conduct interviews and carry on observations within a two-week period selected for the study. I tape recorded the interviews as well as took background notes in the process. Additionally, I took separate observational notes. In the course of the study period, I collected copies of newspapers selected for content analysis covering two weeks one of which was a section of the period the qualitative data was being collected. I then conducted content analysis.

Eighth, the data from interviews, observations and content analysis was coded and analysed for interpretation and write up of the thesis.

Last, in this research, I took a case study approach to investigate the news values and their application in the selection process of news and sources in the front pages of a specific newspaper based in Kenya, the *Daily Nation*. I undertook this investigation bearing in mind the context of the newspaper in terms of the specific conditions of the country in 2003. Brief mention is made here that the case study approach used in this research draws its theoretical argument and description from Gomm et al (2000). One of the views that the authors bring out about case study research, and which is relevant to my study, says that “the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalisation or for theoretical reference of some kind” (2000:3). The study sought to investigate, in considerable depth, one newspaper and one aspect of news reporting in this newspaper –the selection of news sources in the front pages – and to assess their characteristics.

3.2 Methods of data collection

In this research, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. In line with what Deacon et al (1999:3) propose, I mixed the study methods in an effort to generate data that could answer the questions I have about news values. In other words, I wanted my data to answer the whats, hows and whys of the process of selecting news in the front pages of the *Daily Nation* newspaper.

Deacon et al (1999) advise that when planning a research project one should always consider the likelihood of producing richer and more satisfactory account. With reference to communication studies, it is the view of the authors that “studying the production of mass communication requires a variety of methodologies” (1999:248-9).

The following illustration given by Deacon et al is insightful and applicable in the present study:

Suppose we want to find out how a newspaper arrives at a policy view on education, and how that influences its choice and treatment of stories? We could do some kind of content analysis of the paper's coverage. That would tell us about the character of its coverage, but not why or how it is produced in that form. Like all content analysis it is circumstantial evidence (1999:248-249).

Inevitably as was experienced in this study, using one single method was unlikely to offer the kind of data that was required to answer the pertinent questions about the complex process of newsmaking in a contemporary media organisation such as the *Daily Nation*, which this research set out to examine.

3.2.1 Qualitative methods

For the greater part of the study, I used qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews and observation which were supplemented by quantitative technique of content analysis that sought to analyse the characteristics of news sources on the front-page news stories. The two methods – interviews and observation – provided me with opportunity for independent assessment, explanation and descriptions (Deacon et al, 1999:256-258; Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Kvale, 1996:1; Lindlof, 1995:5 and Jensen 1882:240) of the phenomena in relation to my research question. In the following sub-sections, I discuss the justification for each of the methods and the process of its application in this research.

3.2.1 (a) Semi-structured Interviews

In line with the overall purpose of this study, I used semi-structure interviews in order to draw explanations from, and the perspectives of, the reporters and editors about their choices of new source. As Bower, 1973, cited in Jensen (2002) puts it, “the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them” (2002:240).

The semi-structured interview method is said to resemble everyday conversation, but it does not conform to its conventions such as fluctuation between different responses (Deacon et al, 1999:65). To sustain the discussion that would lead to responses relevant to my study purpose, I used an interview guide. Through the use of this tool, I was able to steer a purposeful conversation with the respondents, and to allow flexibility as well as to redirect the course of discussion whenever responses tended to fluctuate.

Overall, I was able to conduct my interviews in ways that gave me control of the terms of discussion as well as allow flexibility to gain maximum data. This was done in consideration of a number of things: the limitation on time and material resources on the part of the researcher, the availability of the respondents in relation to time constraints and demands of their work, the number of the news stories involved, and the number of journalists and editors sampled for the study. This type of interview also allowed adjustments and alterations of the sequence of the questions in order to accommodate the different respondents – key editorial decision makers and senior reporters – and to cater for the level of “comprehensibility and articulacy” among them (Fielding, 1993: 136; Deacon et al, 1999: 65-66). This type of interview technique also permitted further probing (Fielding, 1993: 136-40). The technique further helped in guiding the discussion in terms of the themes embedded in the study questions. Regarding this method of data collection, Deacon et al have observed that

Semi-structured interviews abandon the concerns with standardisation ... and seek to promote an active, open-ended dialogue. The interviewer still retains control of the terms of the discussion. The interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange (1999: 65).

Generally, qualitative interviews are said to be useful in establishing a “variety of opinions concerning a particular topic” (Fielding, 1993:137). Kvale further points out, “the very virtue of qualitative interviews is their openness” (1996:84). This openness, according to Kvale, permits many on-the-spot decisions, whether to stick to the interview guide or to allow for new leads into an interview situation as the “absence of prescribed sets of rules creates an open field of opportunity for the interviewer’s skills, knowledge and intuition” (1996:84).

In addition, qualitative interviews by their very nature elicit “rich descriptions” and explanations of processes in identifying local contexts’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10), and this sometimes may result in a subject providing answers to questions further down the list of the interview guide while responding to the first one (Fielding, 1993:136). About the outcomes of qualitative interviews, Kvale (1996) has this to say:

It should not be forgotten that interviews are particularly suited for studying peoples’ understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and

self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world (1996:105).

In keeping with these theoretical insights, I pre-tested the interview guide by first conducting a pilot interview exercise with three senior editors and one senior reporter before embarking on the more formalised study. This helped me to gather basic information, which I used to assess the validity of the questions and the duration they took. I then adjusted and refined them to make them more comprehensible and relevant to the study question and at the same time to time them appropriately. The pilot study gave me the ‘feel’ of the newsroom environment.

When applying the final version of interview questions among the subjects, I found out that it was not possible to adhere to a strict sequence in asking them. Depending on the circumstances of the day and of individual interview subjects, and the need to use different stories as examples by both the researcher and subject, the order and phrasing of the questions kept changing to permit optimum and relevant responses.

3.2.1 (b) Observations

Observational studies were carried at the same period that the interviews were being conducted. As pointed out, my qualitative method of collecting data combined observations and semi-structured interviews. The data for both interviews and observation were integrated in the final analysis. Elliot (1971, cited in Deacon et al, 1999) aptly points out that “one of the strengths of observation as a technique is that it implicitly includes within itself other methods such as interviewing” (Deacon et al, 1999: 277).

By being present at the news desk, I had the advantage of being able to witness events and processes of newsmaking as they occurred. Deacon et al have observed:

One of the strongest claims made by observation studies is about being there – actually witnessing the events or processes being researched. It gives one an opportunity to produce independent assessments of events and processes (1999:258-259).

Further more, “observational studies allow a flexibility of approach which permits researchers to modify their assumptions as they go along”, and, “the unusual can be understood in the context of the routine” (Deacon et al, 1999:259-260).

In my observation, I played the role of observer-as-participant (Lindlof, 1995). This technique of data collection, as pointed out by Lindlof, varies slightly from participant observation method. Deacon et al (1999:251) defines participant observation as a form of research method in which “the researcher takes part, to some degree, in the activities of the people being observed”. Lindlof defines the role of observer-as-participant as an approach whereby the researcher employs minimal participation, thus, observing without engaging in the activities of the subjects being observed, but being present in the field also lets his or her objectives be known to a few key subjects in the field. In my role as observer, I sat in the newsroom for a sustained two-week-period and participated by observing silently the selection procedures there and listened to the newsroom discussions. Thus, I employed minimal participation, whereby my chief aim was to record and understand the processes and behaviours that fitted the topic of my study. I was mainly observing what news items were being selected for the front pages of the *Daily Nation*, and which news sources were preferred for these stories. In the process I was able to listen to the conversations that went along with this selection process.

I had secured permission to attend the story selection conferences (editorial conferences), which were formally held twice a day, at 11 AM and 3 PM daily by a group of senior editors and chaired by the Managing Editor or in his absence his appointee. I attended a few morning sessions, which focused more on reviewing the day’s paper and presentation of story briefs from the various news desks. The afternoon session was more relevant for my study because that was the time the group discussed and selected the main stories for the front page. Except when I was involved in other activities such as interviewing particular journalists, I attended most of the afternoon story selection meetings.

During these conferences, I listened to the discussions, which were mainly geared towards selecting what was considered the main front-page stories of the day, and

observed the behaviour and interrelations of the persons involved in these discussions and how the discussions proceeded.

But as has been observed by others (Deacon et al, 1999; Lindlof, 1995), this kind of observation hinders participation, as well as restricts analytical capacity which in essence means the researcher can “produce descriptions rather than explanations” (Deacon et al, 1999:256; Lindlof, 1995:147). However, Lindlof sees the method as having the strength of allowing “conclusions about communicative action to emerge over time”, and the result from its use being integrated into “regularities of behaviour or discourse” (1995:147). I was able to overcome the temptation to be caught up in the web of the newsroom culture by constantly referring to the purpose of my study and maintaining background notes based on the key research questions. I realised that to overcome this and to maintain analytical distance was not easy, it required sustained efforts.

3.2.2 Quantitative technique

Quantitative data was collected using content analysis technique. The process involved counting of the frequency of occurrences of the characteristics of news sources that are found in the front-page stories. Berelson (1952) points out that “content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952 in Hansen, 1998:94). Hansen further explains the purpose and application of content analyses.

Content analyses count occurrences of specific dimensions and they analyse the relationship between these dimensions. Although content analysis fragments texts down into constituent parts which can be counted, it re-assembles these constituent parts at the analysis and interpretation stage to examine which ones co-occur in which contexts, for what purposes and what implications (1998:98).

The concern for using this technique was to uncover the type of news sources that are embedded in the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper and to assess the characteristics of these news sources, and to see whether some types of news sources were preferred to others. The final analysis was to relate the findings to media-democracy assumptions of a contemporary Third World newspaper, and to make suggestions for the newspaper.

This technique was able to produce relevant findings in relation to the theoretical framework in place, but did not tell how journalists arrived at the items of news that appeared in these front pages, and why they selected particular sources for these stories. The answers to these questions were better elicited by my observations carried out at the main news desk, and during the story selection conferences, and the descriptions and explanations obtained from the interviewees.

3.3 Population of study

Although the Nation Media group owns several local and regional newspapers, this study took interest in its flagship newspaper, the *Daily Nation*, which is published in Kenya at its headquarters in the capital city, Nairobi. I focused on the front-page stories covering a duration of two weeks for each method of study employed, quantitative and qualitative.

3.4 Sample selection

In order to generate qualitative data, I used purposeful sampling (Dominick and Wimmer, 1987:72). I interviewed a total of ten respondents comprising of four senior journalists, four senior editors who were in charge of various news departments, including the main news desk, and the two most senior editorial decision makers. Although the selection criteria of these respondents was rather open-ended, these interview subjects were selected in consideration of their role in the news organisation in terms of their positions which renders them relative authority to influence decisions regarding what goes in and what goes out of the newspaper. They were also considered in respect to their wide and long experience in journalistic work and newsroom procedures. Thus, because of their experience coupled with the positions in the organisations was believed to give them a better grasp of newsroom practice and decisions regarding choices of news items and sources. Their perspectives into these elements would supposedly yield reliable information for my research. I intended to understand, from their own perspectives, the underlying criteria for selecting certain news items and particular news sources that constituted the content of the front pages of the newspaper.

As mentioned already, two weeks worth of data were collected in both quantitative and qualitative studies, by sampling front-page stories and by performing a content analysis of the sources found in them. The quantitative study examined copies of the newspaper produced from 18th November to 14th December 2003. The characteristics of these news sources were coded and analysed using the computer Excel programme. The findings are presented in chapter four.

I spent a sustained period of two weeks from 8th to 21st December 2003 while collecting qualitative data. But two interviews were conducted one day after my last day in the newsroom because the interview subjects were not able to get a convenient time during the time I was continuously in the newsroom. During the time of collecting data, I observed the process of news gathering and the decision-making processes regarding what news items were selected to go in the newspaper every day. I used the time of my observation to conduct the required interviews.

There were no specific theoretical underpinnings for the choice of the particular dates of this study; rather they were chosen for their convenience in terms of availability of the researcher as well as simple considerations of what would be seen as ‘normal’ newsroom climate.

3.5 Data collection procedure

I discussed my research project with my supervisor. He advised me on how best the research methods could be used to generate relevant data. For example, the tentative interview questions were discussed and checked against the theoretical framework of my study and changes were suggested. I was provided with a formal letter, which explained my research objectives. The letter was sent to the relevant authorities at the Nation Media group, which owns the *Daily Nation* newspaper. This letter was helpful in obtaining permission to conduct my study as an observer and to carry out interviews.

Before embarking on the main study, I conducted a pilot study in which I spent a number of hours in four separate days at the newsroom of the *Daily Nation* headquarters in Nairobi. The result of this pilot study was then discussed with my supervisor through email correspondence, and I received helpful suggestions on my

interview schedule. During the time of my pilot study, a number of senior editors were introduced to me by my host at the *Daily Nation* who was charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating my stay at the newsroom, and ensuring that I received the necessary help. The reason for my being at the newsroom was briefly explained to the news editors both individually and as a group during the first story conference I attended. This introduction was useful in the sense that it helped me to build cordial relationships with the interview respondents and to solicit for their availability and cooperation during the interviews sessions.

I was also provided with the editorial policy of the media organisation for my perusal, which contained the editorial guidelines for news reporting, and the overall professional philosophy of the newspaper. This instrument shed light on some significant practical issues regarding newsroom practice of this newspaper. It also shed light on the underlying professional ethos that guided the news coverage in the media organisation and the newspaper of my study.

All my interview appointments were made and conducted at the same time that I was present as an observer. I explained the purpose of my study to each respondent and obtained their consent in all cases.

Since I was seeking to elicit detailed qualitative data, I personally conducted all the interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded in order to capture details. I also wrote down background notes following key themes and topics of the study. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour depending on individual's ability to deliver precise information. One interview took more than an hour due to the fact that the informant was very enthusiastic to give detailed information. But with one respondent, I was not able to even go half way through the list of questions due to the demands of the newsroom work the person was required to handle.

3.6 Data processing and analysis

Informed by the literature regarding content analysis, particularly Hansen et al (1998), I was able to design a coding manual for processing quantitative data, which was later transferred into the computer Excel programme with the advice of and initial coaching from my supervisor. This programme was useful for obtaining a numerical count of the categories of news sources that were later analysed (see chapter four).

Qualitative data was also processed. This began with the transcription of all the interviews that were taped. The information for each interview was separately typed and later analysed by drawing on the statements, ideas, opinions and explanations which emerged as categories and formed the basis for thematic analysis. Since the data transcription and typing was done by a separate person, I had to listen to all the tapes alongside the typed text for verification and correction. While comparing the taped interviews with the typed outcome, I discovered a number of discrepancies, which meant making a number of corrections and editing to ensure accuracy.

Though I had initially used the typed interviews to code the statements of the interviewees on the left side of the margin and to record my comments on the right side, the discrepancies of the typed work made it difficult to be sure whether I was seeing the correct version of the outcome or not. I designed a new coding manual on computer using tables with three columns. I edited and retyped the questions and the responses for each interviewee, placing them on the left side columns of these tables. I then used the right hand columns for my comments. The answers of the various respondents were compared to capture the most frequently occurring themes. These were then used in the analysis and interpretations of the data. Using this summarised data the main findings of the research were captured, and the most significant quotes were used in the findings chapters for illustration.

3.7 Limitations of the study

A number of practical and methodological limitations were encountered in this study. First of all, in spite of the efforts by the host editor to introduce me to the news desk team, not all the journalists were present on the day of the introduction. That meant that my presence in the news desk was at first viewed with suspicion by a few journalists who reported on duty later. I took the initiative when convenient to

introduce myself once again to the reporters who frequented the newsroom and to explain who I was and what my purpose was at the news desk.

Eventually most accepted my presence as normal, and with time, others began to treat me with familiarity and to expect me to participate in the newsroom discussions and activities that went on. Some times there were requests to receive telephone calls from outside inquirers when the news editor was handling another phone call. At some point some journalists began to ask me to join them as they went out to cover some news events in order to experience the field. But I had to explain that my purpose was not to study the news events but to observe and examine the news desk decisions regarding the selection of news items and sources.

Deacon et al (1999) allude to such incidents as inevitable in observational studies and caution researchers on the possibility of the temptation to be “drawn into the view of the world constructed by those being studied” (1999:262), and eventually losing analytical distance. They advise that the researcher should note things before they become too familiar and become taken-for-granted by the observed. On the other hand, they note that, taking part in the work of the researched situation can not only give fresh insights to the researcher on “the meanings of those activities but also increase access to situations and further credibility of the researcher and cooperation with her” (1999:262). There were times when it became useful to take part in the discussions, which took place at the news desk. This gave me opportunity to pose questions that were relevant to the data I was looking for.

I had one disadvantage though; the role I took as observer-as-participant only permitted me minimal participation, and therefore limited possible increase of trust and access to many aspects of the newsroom activities. This method became obviously forbidding in specific cases. For example, I observed that a few times some discussions about some sensitive stories and news sources were held away from the news desk where I sat in order to keep me from eaves-dropping on the conversation or asking questions of clarity as I occasionally did. One journalist had earlier jokingly nicknamed me ‘government inspector’, and this made me realise that some of the journalists still viewed me with suspicion.

In another incident, during my interview with one desk editor, I was not able to get specific information about a story that was scheduled for the day because I was perceived as a stranger and, especially since the story was viewed as breaking news, it was feared that I could leak it to the competitors. One journalist was candid and said, “I hope you will not get a job there and leak our ideas”. These experiences are theoretically captured by Deacon et al (1999):

Perching on the edge of some ones’ desk asking awkward and intrusive questions about what they are doing, or simply looming around, can be a somewhat disorienting addition to work place. It is possible to generate suspicion as an interloper from another possible rival section from whom confidence must be withheld (1999: 264).

In every situation I attempted to assure the journalists and the editors with whom I interacted that my purpose was solely to do research and I had no interest in their competitors, neither was I looking for a job opportunity, nor was my research interested in another media organisation. This situation entailed using greater personal communication skills on my part and to check my conduct against the various attitudes that occasionally signalled suspicion. By the time I was into the second week, majority of the journalists had developed relative trust towards me, and many had relaxed enough to speak openly in my presence.

In the beginning of my interviews, I also noted that a few of the interviewees were very keen to defend the newspaper when probed further on some of the issues that practically ran counter to the editorial ideals highlighted in the policy of the news organisation. In these cases, I tried to encourage them to distance themselves from the organisation and talk about their practical experiences and observations. In this way I was able to make them understand that it was not for negative purposes that I was asking these questions but to understand newsmaking from their perspective and that they were playing the role of teacher to me.

Time constraints on the part of the selected interview subjects was a common feature in the newsroom. It was common to keep rescheduling interviews many times before a convenient time could be agreed upon. There was a case where after starting the interview with one subject it was not possible even to get halfway through the list of interview questions owing to the demands of the newsroom work the respondent was

handling. Even though this interview appointment had been made early in the week and scheduled for a Sunday morning when the subject advised it would be a 'calmer' day and time, it proved to be one of the most difficult to adhere to. I made several attempts to get another appointment with this subject but was unsuccessful. Instead I had to resort to an alternative interview subject. In another case, I only succeeded in getting the attention of the interview subject during the late hours of the evening.

In spite of these practical challenges encountered and limitations of the methodological approaches pointed out, the study was successful and all the respondents gave me more than enough cooperation and relevant information to answer my research questions, and to probe into the salient problems observed in their newsroom practice.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodology used for the study of the selection of news sources in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. It has outlined the specific methods and techniques used to collect the data and the process of analysing these data. It has also highlighted the limitations of the methods, the challenges faced in researching this field and how the challenges were handled. Overall, this study was conducted successfully.

CHAPTER 4

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CATEGORIES OF NEWS SOURCES FOUND IN THE FRONT-PAGE STORIES OF THE *DAILY NATION* NEWSPAPER

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at assessing the news sources that are embedded in the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. To achieve this aim, the chapter uses the quantitative technique of content analysis. Content analysis was conducted as part of an overall study whose aim was to investigate how news values are operationalised in the selection of news sources, and to look at the resultant news sources which were found in the front-page stories.

Specifically, the quantitative study was applied in counting the frequency of occurrences of the characteristics of the news sources in the lead (front-page) stories of the newspaper in order to assess whether in this newspaper, some types of news sources were more privileged than others.

The chapter examines the gender and status of news sources, and considers these variables in terms of the thematic (e.g. social, political and economic) and hierarchical presentation of stories in the front pages. As elaborated in the text, the dimension of gender in the news has a bearing on demographic representation. Again, gender and status are relevant variables because they impact on how representative the news is of the wider society. All this information has a bearing on the relationship of news values to news sources, and will help to investigate whether the news values in this newspaper are gender and status free. It will also help to uncover which voices are in the news in this newspaper in relation to the democratic principles outlined in its policy, of ensuring a diversity of views in the news regardless of, for example, gender and class.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section highlights the scope of the study and the coding frame with the view to presenting a logical framework that guides the assessment into achieving the key findings. The second section

presents a categorisation of news in the front pages in terms of their thematic and hierarchical presentation. This process is used to guide in the assessment and analysis of news sources in the next section. The third section presents a brief summary of key findings in terms of story themes and hierarchical presentation, and relates these to the kind of news sources that are selected. The fourth section offers an overall analysis of the proportional representation of each status of news sources according to the different categorisation of the stories as indicated in the second and third sections. This section also contains the concluding remarks of the chapter.

4. 1. Scope of study and coding frame

4.1.1 Scope of study

The quantitative study was conducted within a period of two separate weeks in the months of November and December. The selection of November 8th to 14th, was based on the commonsense prediction that the period offered a ‘normal’ news climate, a time of the year when there are no major National holidays in Kenya, nor quiet news periods. The week of December 18th to 24 was chosen for its convenience as the dates fell within the period of conducting the qualitative part of this research (chapter five and six). During these periods, all the news sources were counted.

4.1.2 The coding frame

The coding frame consisted of two components. The first was a coding manual whereby all the front-page stories were recorded and their specifications in terms of title, topic and reporter were also shown. The news sources for each story were listed and their specific names written out as they appeared in the story. This listing and naming helped in identifying the specific gender and status of the news sources.

Although the names of sources made the identification of gender sources much easier, this did not work in a straight-forward way in identifying the status of the news sources. To identify the status of each of the news sources, I relied on the descriptions used in the stories to qualify a news source either by a title, work or position of responsibility in his or her job. Thus, hierarchical position according to occupation was the key indicator to what status a news source belonged. This technique of identification of status of a news source helped in so far as making inferences and arriving at basic interpretation was concerned, but not to make claims for replicability.

For example, in cases where a news source was referred to as a boss or chief in a certain firm, I made an assumption that this referred to persons in executive or leadership positions. A sample list of identification of social status of sources is shown in Appendix 1.

The second component in the frame was a coding schedule, which was developed using the computer Excel programme. The coding schedule was designed to guide the classification of certain categories for analysis, which were considered appropriate for identification of news sources in terms of their characteristics. The coding schedule was restricted to four main categories. These were: type of story, date of coverage, gender of news sources, social status of news sources. The first two categories were used to guide in the identification of the news stories and the dates these stories were run. The other two categories helped to identify the gender and social status of the news sources selected in the stories. Appendix 2 shows this coding schedule.

4.2. Typification of news and categorisation of news sources

4.2.1 Types of news

The study classified news into two broad categories of news types. One category looked at them thematically as social, political and economic news. In categorising news types, this study was informed by definitions commonly used in the *Daily Nation* newsroom. In this study, social news types can be defined as news items whose constituent values impact directly on individual persons or groups in terms of their basic or secondary needs such as security, family, love, work, money, education, gender, law and order, health, social relations and interactions, food, shelter and so forth. According to some journalists interviewed in this study, such news is classified as human interest stories (Interview with J17/12/2003).

Political news was defined in the newsroom as stories dealing with issues of governance and management of political affairs. They include: governing the affairs of the state, delivery of services to the citizens, political and government leadership and its effects on the citizens, political campaigns, elections, parliamentary issues, constitutional matters, structures of political constituencies, party leadership and political personalities. These issues constitute key elements in the content of political stories.

Economic news constitute stories whose content can be said to contain largely government financial structures, economic planning, budgets and spending, the running of private and state businesses that have a bearing on society in general.

News types were also defined in terms of their hierarchy as shown in their placement on the page. The classification in this category followed the newsroom method of ranking lead stories in order of their perceived importance. Thus, journalists gave the lead stories some form of hierarchy. The most important story was referred to as the main lead or splash, the second most important as second lead, and the third most important as third lead (interview with J5/11/2003). This study utilised the newsroom method of classification in an effort to understand, in the context of the study, some key definitions used by journalists that would contribute to relevant data for analysis and interpretation process. The categorisation of news into types in this study, however, does not suggest that the study is concerned with types of news found in this paper. Rather, classifying news in this way helped, technically, to identify whether news types are linked to the choices of news sources.

4.2.1 (a) Social, political and economic news

The newspaper tended to typify news according to topics that were deemed important in terms of news coverage. Thus, on any given day, news tended to cover social, political and economic issues.

While it would be fruitful to break the social issues into many other sub-categories and look at such news types as crime, health, education, gender, legal and so forth, it is beyond the scope of this study to do so. As stated earlier, the study is concerned with the types of news sources that are found in the front-page stories, rather than the type of news that are covered, and the typification of news was used here only to help in identifying the correlation between news types and the selection of news sources.

To identify a news item as either falling within the social, the political or economic sphere, the titles and the slant in the coverage was first assessed. Thereafter the broad subject matter was considered in terms of its emphasis in the news content.

It is difficult, however, given the dynamics of news presentation, to find a news item that is a 100% social, political or economic in nature. Indeed almost all the news stories contained elements of each of these aspects. But the study considered the weighting of each aspect in each news story in order to assign a specific type. And as already mentioned, it also considered the broad subject matter the news addressed. In cases where the content of news shared all these aspects in a mixed or unclear manner, the study used 'other' category as a unit of analysis.

4.2.1 (b) Hierarchical status of news

As explained earlier in this chapter, stories in the front pages are graded and ranked in their order of importance. Journalists give a hierarchical status to stories according to perceived newsworthiness. According to one editor interviewed, being important in the context of news coverage means that a story has many elements of newsworthiness such as interest to the public, out of the ordinary, importance, negativity, conflict, resonance and so forth that merit prominent positioning in the newspaper (Interview with J5/26/11/2003). In the hierarchical status of news, the most important story is ranked as grade A (news splash), B (second lead story) and C (third lead story).

News types were categorised into their hierarchical order in order not only to identify their importance but also how these bear on the type of news sources that are selected. The hierarchical classification of news is also useful in evaluating the newsworthiness of the story. The newsworthiness of the story resonates with the objective of the overall study, which is to examine the role of news values in relation to the selection of news sources. But owing to the limitations of this quantitative technique, this hierarchical classification does not generate much depth in the analysis. Such depth will be captured in the qualitative part of the research (chapter five).

On average the newspaper ran three front-page stories per day. There were few cases where only two stories made front-page stories. During the days selected for quantitative study, there was not a day when one single story made the front-page news.

As an analyst and not an insider to the process of selection, it was important to find out the criteria that were used to qualify some front-page news items as more important than others – those deserving to be called the “news splash” – while others were referred to as the second or third lead stories. Whereas generally all stories in the front page are considered to be the most important stories of the day, it was observed that their levels of importance are ranked. The study was guided by the size of headings and positioning on the page to identify this ranking. For purposes of analysis, the study used this guideline to grade the stories as A,B, and C, whereby A referred to the “news splash” or the most important story of the day, and B and C referred to the second and third most important story of the day respectively.

The classifications of stories into news types, i.e. their thematic and hierarchical status are shown in Appendix 3A and 3B of the coding frame. The next section explains how gender and status of news sources were identified in the front-page stories.

4.2.2 Status of news sources

News sources were analysed according to gender and status. Source status in this context refers to social class acquired by virtue of official occupational position in a recognisable organisation or proven expertise in certain fields of knowledge or being in a recognisable leadership position in society.

Those sources who have acquired a social status by means of expertise in certain fields of knowledge and those representing official organisational or government interests by their occupational positions are referred in this study as professionals. Some sources do not have to have expertise in certain fields of knowledge or occupational position but have acquired social status by virtue of social, economic or political power and influence. These are given the term elite in the study. The media has tended to view persons within these social strata as credible sources of news. While this social classification can be generalised by observing the social structures of the society in which the newspaper operates, it should be noted that my categorisation of the social class of sources came by inference following how the journalists in the *Daily Nation* treated and described different sources. The grassroots sources were placed at the bottom of the social strata by journalists and considered to be of less

importance in the news in terms of credibility and impact. They were often referred to as the man or woman in the streets, ordinary source or as a member of the public.

It was not difficult to identify the gender of news sources because names of news sources were used in speaking about or quoting sources in the stories. In the gender category, sources were coded as either male or female and where names were not used the study used 'unspecified' as a unit of analysis. In addition to gender, news sources in this study were categorised into three main social references: elite sources, professional and grassroots as shown in the coding schedule.

In their presentation of news stories, journalists often indicated the status of the sources by simple descriptions of what role a source played in society. They also used titles to indicate their positions in their occupations. Often these descriptions appeared to point to the reason why a certain person was selected as a source of news.

The study revealed that, much as most front-page news sources were selected in connection with the subject of the story, their occupational seniority, power and influence in society tended to be used as qualifiers for their selection. This helped the study in making assumptions regarding those sources, which could be referred to, as elite sources.

In this study, sources who were described as being within recognisable occupations and playing important roles in society, and yet not wielding substantial power or influence or whose responsibilities gave them a certain level of seniority yet not operating at the helm of power and influence, were relegated the status of professional. For example, while the mayor of the city can be referred as an elite source, a councillor in the same city can be seen a professional. Using a similar judgement, a university lecturer can be seen as a professional, while a chairperson of the University Senate qualifies as elite. The same would apply to a police man or woman in charge of a local police station as compared to a senior police chief or deputy police commissioner. In the former case the policeman or police woman becomes a professional while a senior police or deputy commissioner of police becomes a measure of elitism (see Appendix 1).

As discussed in the foregoing, these inferences were based on assumptions of who, in terms of the larger social strata, was seen as more powerful or influential. Beginning from the apex, the assessment was able to trace the rest of the news sources down the ladder of the occupational and social strata to gauge the grassroots sources. The descriptions of news sources and the process of assigning them social status by journalists are discussed further in the qualitative chapter (chapter six) of this research. The process of how they went about identifying and justifying the selection of particular news sources will also be discussed in the same chapter.

In this study, occupations were first listed in the coding manual alongside each news source. Classification of occupations was then used to distinguish the status of those news sources, for example, considered to be elite from those seen as professional or those in the professional category from the grassroots/ordinary and so forth. In cases where a news source did not fit these classifications or when a source was either nameless or unidentified, an 'other' unit of analysis was used. The presentation of this information is found in Appendix 2.

4.3 Summary of key findings

4.3.1 What types of news sources are found in the front page-stories?

During the period sampled for this study, the quantitative study counted a total of 38 front-page stories. There were a total of 174 news sources selected in all these stories.

In the context of the entire social spectrum, it can generally be said that, a variety of news sources, from grassroots to high-ranking personalities both male and female potentially qualify as news sources. However, they may be expected to feature in different proportions as will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Overall this assessment made it obviously clear that when it comes to front-page stories, elite sources are preferred. The following two sub-sections present a summary of the overall analysis specifically covering gender of news sources.

4.3.1 (a) What gender is more privileged in the front-page stories?

Out of all the 174 news sources counted, there were a total of 137 male sources, 10 female sources and 27 unspecified news sources. Out of the 38 stories that were

carried, male sources constituted 100 % representation in 14 of the stories. In ten of those stories both male and unspecified sources were selected. In eight of those stories both male and female sources were selected but as the study shows, female representation accounted for 10% to 50 %. Interestingly in one story all the news sources were female.

Generally, this analysis reveals enormous disparities in terms of gender representation in the news. Male sources are predominant in the front-page stories, constituting 79% of all the news sources counted. Female sources, as can be seen, are grossly under-represented with only an overall 6% score. The sub-section that follows below deals with the hierarchical status of news sources.

4.3.1 (b) What status of news sources is privileged?

Out of the overall 174 news sources counted, the study found out that 134 of them were elite, 24 were professional, while those from the grassroots category were eight, as were those from unspecified category. These proportions translate to 78% elite sources, 12% professional sources, 5% grassroots and 5% unspecified sources. Elite sources, therefore, tended to be the preferred ones in the front-page stories.

The following sections are focused on the classification of news into themes and hierarchical status, in an attempt to see whether this classification correlates with the kind of sources that were selected.

4.4. News sources found in different types of news

News sources were also assessed according to story types – social, political and economic – and according to hierarchical status of the stories in order to see if the choice of such a source was related to the type of story that was selected. For example, would news sources in the category of professional increase numerically when the story covered an economic theme? Or would more grassroots sources be selected because the news story was ranked grade C? Apparently, by typifying news, the number of news sources did proportionately lessen in each case. Yet while the numbers of news sources may, in theory, lessen as a result of the typification of news, in practice a similar pattern seems to be the result when looking at gender and status of news sources. The sub-sections that follow next present the analysis.

4.4.1 News sources according to thematic news types

4.4.1 (a) News sources in economic news

There were 12 news items in the economic category of news, 19 in the political and seven in the social categories. The proportional representation of news types shows that economic news scored 32%, political news 50% and social news 18%. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it was difficult not to identify aspects of each category of stories in all the news types. In the case of economic stories particularly, there was enough political material in the news content to the point where the stories could almost be described as economic political stories. But for purposes of analysis, the title of the story and the slant that suggested it to be more economic news was used to categorise a story as being economic in nature. In some instances, however, the proportion of the two aspects in the content was close to equal. In this case I gave a 0.5 representation unit in the analysis. This mixture of economic and political substance in the stories in the front pages will be discussed in detail in chapters five and six. These chapters show that the front-page stories were largely of political nature and that had implications for the kind of sources that were selected for the front-page stories.

A total of 53 news sources were counted in the category of economic stories. Of this total, 31 were found to be male, while four were female sources and 15 could not be specified as either male or female. Overall in this type of news, male sources were predominantly represented making up 79% of all news sources, while the female source constituted a mere 6% and unspecified sources 15%. Interestingly, though, in one of the news items, the female sources scored a 100% representation.

The hierarchical status of news sources showed 134 elite sources or 78% out of the total news sources. The professional sources were found to be 24 and grassroots sources eight. These last two categories are represented by 12% and 5% respectively.

4.4.1 (b) News sources in political news

The study further examined news sources in the category of political news. In terms of gender representation here, it was found that there were 80 male news sources, five news sources were female and ten were unspecified. The proportion of representation in terms of gender therefore shows that male sources constituted 84% while female

sources constituted a mere 5%. The unspecified category scored 11%. This was higher than the female representation in these news items.

When the news sources were assessed in terms of hierarchical status, quite like in the gender representations, the elite sources totalled 83, making up 83% of the total news sources in the political type of news. Professional news sources were only 13 and constituted 13%. There were no grassroots sources in this type of news. The rest of the news sources, totalling four, belonged to the 'other' category with a 4% score.

Thus, not only do the elite sources in political stories have the highest representation in the front-page news, but the gap between this category and the others is equally very wide.

4.4.1 (c) News sources in social news

In this type of news, 32 news sources were counted and 28 of them were male. This constituted 88% of all the news sources. Female source were only two, and accounted for 6%. The other 6% of news sources were unspecified.

In this category, elite sources formed a majority, constituting 53% of source representation. Notably, in the social category of news, nine grassroots sources, although significantly few compared to the number of elite and professional sources, were selected. They constituted 29%. Apparently there were no grassroots sources in the political and economic stories. It seems, therefore, that there were efforts to select sources from across the social spectrum of the society in the social type of news.

4.4.2 News sources according to hierarchical status of news types

In the hierarchical status of news, both grade A (news splash) and B stories appeared in all the 14 days of the study. But the grade C stories appeared only in ten of them.

The "news splashes" had a total of 77 news sources constituting 44%. Grade B stories had 60 sources and in terms of percentage constituted 34%, while grade C stories had 37 news sources constituting 21% of the total news sources.

Comparatively there was no significant proportional change in source representation between news types in terms of their hierarchical status. The overall picture remained similar when examining gender and status. For example in the ‘news splash’ stories, male sources were 70 and constituted 90% of the source representation, while female sources were only three in number, making up 4% of the total news sources.

A similar pattern was found when it came to elite news sources. This category of news sources had 73 in number and made up 95% of source representation in the splash. In ten of the 14 total ‘news splash’ stories, it was found that news sources were elites. There were three professional news sources making up 4% of all news sources in the news splash, while only one news source was found to be from the grassroots category constituting 1% representation.

In grade B stories, male sources were 49 while female sources were 4. There were seven sources, which were consigned to the unspecified category. The male category of news sources in grade B stories constituted 82%, female sources 7% and unspecified news sources 12%.

Grade C stories reveal that male sources made up 57% representation. They were 21 in number. Interestingly the male sources constituted 100% representation in nine of the eleven news items in grade C stories. The female sources were two, constituting 5%, and unspecified sources were 14 constituting 38% of all the news sources. Interestingly too, in this category, as can be seen, the number of news sources in the unspecified category had a higher representation than in either A or B stories.

Elite sources were 22 in number and made 58% of all the news sources in this type of news. Unusually, in two of the stories there were no elite sources. Professional sources were nine and constituted 26%, while 3 of the news sources were from the grassroots category and constituted 8%. The ‘other’ category constituting 8%.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to identify the sort of news sources that are selected in the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. Using a coding framework to count these news sources, the study has demonstrated that male news sources tend to be predominantly selected for the front-page stories. Even though the study reclassified the front-page stories by typification of news as well as classifying them into hierarchical status, evidence shows that there is no significance difference between this category of sources and the female sources when it comes to front-page source selection.

The study has also revealed that elite sources, whether male or female, are more preferred for front-page stories. Professional sources ranked second in preference and they are represented in all the types of stories examined. Although the number of professional sources is significantly small compared to elites sources, it appears larger when compared to grassroots sources whose selection in front-page stories seems to occur only on rare occasions.

To sum up, it appears that the newspaper either tends to be keen on selecting male elite sources for the front-page stories, or on the other hand, these categories of news sources have acquired power to speak to the news.

While it is clear that, in principle, all categories of news sources have the potential for being selected, and to speak to the news, female sources and grassroots sources are largely under-represented in the news, and thus their voices are rarely heard. In fact these two categories of news sources constitute a small minority among the news sources that are selected.

The quantitative study did not look into the reasons why this is the case. The qualitative study which examines the relationship between the news values and the selection of these sources will attempt to answer questions regarding such phenomena.

It would seem that when it comes to the front-page stories the newspaper's selection criteria runs counter to the democratic principles it highlights in its editorial policy. The *Daily Nation*'s editorial policy overtly expresses commitment to allowing different views to be expressed in the news by, among other things, selecting the editorial content for its inherent news values and not to augment political, commercial or other interests.

The study recognises, however, that each news organisation brings its own professional ideologies and values in determining who speaks to the news, and in regard to this matter this study does not attempt to establish the structure of power relations in this organisation. But the findings reveal the obvious imbalances that go into selecting news sources for the front-page stories, and their impact on the overall editorial content of the newspaper. The challenge is one of weighting male elites and the possible stereotypes that result from male elite voices in the news, and which do not necessarily represent the aggregate views of the overall society.

This study does not delve into the complex process of meaning making; neither does it concern itself with the hierarchical structure relating to decisions and influences that might contribute to the choices of news sources. Nor does the study cover other news genres such as news features, news analysis or weekly news. It does, however, acknowledge their significance in gaining comparative analysis of news sources, which will be important for consideration in future, research in this or other newspapers in similar contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS ON THE SELECTION OF FRONT-PAGE STORIES

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings and interpretations drawn from the study about the selection of front-page stories in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. This chapter brings out part of the major findings relating to the overall objective of my research. The overall objective of the research was to investigate the relationship between the news values of stories on the front pages of the newspaper of this study and the selection of the news sources for these stories. The presentations in this chapter focus on the importance given to front-page stories in relation to their level of newsworthiness and their placement on page one. The examination of news values of front-page stories gave the grounding on which to relate news values to the selection of the sources of the front-page news. The findings are based on my observations and the perspectives brought out by the respondents to the interviews carried out among senior journalists and editors from 8th to 22nd December 2003. Before presenting the findings, I give a brief background to the study along with some of the theoretical debates that inform it.

5.1 Background to the study

This investigation was carried out through qualitative methods of data collection, which combined semi-structured interviews and observation. The methodology and process of data collection and analysis have been articulated in chapter three. All the interviews were conducted at the *Daily Nation* newsroom premises. There was informed consent in all interview cases whose views are presented in this study. I explained, before each interview session, that my purpose for the interviews was to collect data that would be used in writing of a thesis. I also sought to obtain their permission to tape the interviews. In cases where selected interviewees had difficulties of sitting through the interview, due especially to time constraints, I was able to get an alternative respondent. All the respondents gave their consent to be interviewed and cooperated by way of giving me the time and attention that I needed

throughout the interview sessions. In all cases the interviews were conducted successfully in terms of my objectives of the study.

While most of the interview subjects expressed openness in terms of their names being revealed in the final outcome, as a mark of confidentiality promised to the newspaper management beforehand, the interviewees' names are withheld and replaced with a numbering system, which I specifically devised for clarity and consistency. Basically this system helped me to identify individual interviewees and the date of interview for purposes of data analysis and for differentiating their various responses to the interviews.

Mention is here made that the majority of the news room staff of the *Daily Nation* are male, even though there are a number of senior female news editors. In order to try to reduce the likelihood of an all male perspectives in the study outcome, the few most senior female news editors of the newspaper who were available at the time were selected as interview subjects and their views are included in the data analysis, interpretation and presentation.

The presentation of the findings and interpretations are mine. Though based on the interview outcomes, they are all prone to personal perceptions. It has been pointed out that interpretive outcomes of research, unlike the positivist's claims to objectivity, are not value free (Deacon et al, 1999:4). Deacon and his colleagues have highlighted the inescapable possibilities of the researcher's judgments, which enter especially into qualitative studies, basically because there are particular questions to be pursued. For example, having assumed in this study that the front page stories are selected on the basis of their level of newsworthiness, Deacon et al signal that, "you will undoubtedly be able to dig out examples to bear out your theory" (1999:276). The authors concede that:

There is no magic formula to avoid this very human process. Judgments and discretions are inherent in qualitative, and especially observational methods, where the researcher and research are so intimately identified (1999:276).

To minimise the possibilities of subjectivity on my own part, I have been sensitive to possible distortion in the way I used the interviewees' quotes to support my interpretations. My awareness of the possibilities of biased interpretations was guided

by theoretical insights regarding methodologies selected for the study (Deacon et al, 1999:62-80, 248-277). This helped in designing the interview questions, which were open-ended, and in implementation during the data gathering.

In keeping with Deacon et al's (1999) advice, and as pointed out in my methodology chapter (chapter three), I tried in my semi-structured interviews to guard against pushing interview subjects towards desired statements or shared evaluation. This was done in an effort to gather information in terms of the interviewees' "own interpretations, their own frames of seeing, speaking and understanding" (1999:288). This effort was enforced by the format of the interviews.

The interview subjects consisted of selected reporters, news editors, editorial management staff and other decision-makers in charge of various desks (see chapter three for the rationale behind the choices of interview subjects). I interviewed a total of ten subjects. In addition, there were four others who were interviewed during a pilot study carried out prior to conducting the more formalised one. As highlighted in chapter three, I gathered basic information during the pilot study, which helped to assess the validity of the questions and the duration they took to answer. I discovered that some of the questions were not clear to the respondent and others did not offer relevant data. As a result I was able to adjust and refine them to make them more comprehensible and relevant to the study question. The pilot study gave me the 'feel' of the newsroom environment and, hence, allowed me to re-evaluate my own preparedness. I have used some of the insights drawn from the pilot study, which I found informative and significant to the study. For, example, from one editor, I gathered that 'layers' (Interview with J11, 27/11/2003) in a story meant the same thing as news values. I also gathered from another editor that newsworthiness was not a matter that was decided once and for all in the two main formalised story selection conferences of the day, but was something that went beyond the formalised meetings to involve continuous negotiations and consultations between editors and reporters.

In the presentation of the findings and interpretations in this chapter, I have integrated data obtained from observations made at the main news desk and those made during the story selection conferences. Largely the data for this chapter have emanated from the interviews.

The two methods that were used (semi-structured interviews and observation) to collect the data helped in gaining insights into the considerations that are made by the news editors and reporters in qualifying stories for page one treatment. The insights are important in relating the choices of these stories to their placement on page one.

Guided by the qualitative methodology of interpretative studies (Miles and Huberman, 1994:56-7; Strauss and Gorbin, 1990:101-121), and the goals of the study, the interview data was analysed thematically (see chapter three for explanation). The analysis brought out key themes and categories, which were then extracted, and condensed to guide the presentation of the findings.

As a point of entry and focus for my investigation, I sampled the front-page stories of the newspaper in tandem with the interviews, and have put the two together in my interpretation of the findings.

5.2 The process of selecting front-page stories

There are underlying theoretical claims that, in newsroom practice, the selection of front-page stories is premised on the level of their newsworthiness. These claims were confirmed in this study as the findings will show. Croteau and Hoynes (2000) point out that the selection of the front-page story “identifies the editors’ selection of the most important event of the day” which therefore influences which stories will be most visible (2000:126).

According to Staab (1990), the distinctions made in regard to whether lead stories have a high level of newsworthiness can only be measured against the other stories, which are available on the same day (1990:437).

The selection of front-page stories calls for a daily editorial conference involving a group of editors whose task is to mutually negotiate judgments of these stories and accomplish newsworthiness together. That the selection of lead stories requires a collective decision signals the significance placed on such stories (Tuchman, 1979; Sigal, 1973). By comparison, stories which go inside the pages of a newspaper may require only one news editor’s decision, or at most less than a few news editors’ judgments.

During my observations, I found out that in the course of the day potential news items kept streaming into the news desk, many of which were listed on the news docket while others were discarded. By mid-day, or at best in the afternoon of any day, a number of editors and some senior journalists had a rough idea of which stories were likely to go on page one for the next morning's paper. The senior news editor, however, was more informed and more certain than most of the rest at different times of the day about which story would likely qualify as a "splash". This editor was at the centre of moment-by-moment decision-making as the stories streamed into the news desk.

Two regular editorial meetings, referred to as story selection conferences or simply editorial meetings, took place on a daily basis whose participants comprised of the managing editor as the chairperson, the senior news editor and other editors in charge of different news desks. One of the meetings took place at mid-morning and the other at three o'clock in the afternoon. In these two meetings, various editorial businesses were conducted.

At both the morning and afternoon meetings the main business was to select major stories for the next day with specific emphasis on the lead stories. In these meetings heads of news desks also presented their briefs of stories that were planned for the day and any news events in the pipeline that would be considered newsworthy. At the mid-morning meeting the day's newspaper was evaluated in light of its performance in the market and some editorial issues were discussed too. In the afternoon the meeting focused more on finalising decision about the anticipated "splash" (first lead) and other lead stories for the next day's paper.

As I learned from the one editor, a few other rather informal meetings took place in the course of the day. Two of the most significant of these concerned key editorial decisions. One of them took place as early as eight o'clock in the morning before the newsroom was flooded with reporters and other workers, and the other in the early evening hours before the newspaper went to the press. I gathered that the early morning meeting in which a few selected senior journalists participate has a particular news agenda, and that is to discuss ideas for what was termed exclusive stories.

Exclusive stories involved investigative work and were usually assigned to these selected journalists whose “calibre and competence” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003) has been proved to give them the capacity to engage in investigative journalism.

The stories that are generated through investigative work are part of what makes for lead stories in the *Daily Nation*. They are based on topical issues that are considered to have high news values within the course of the week. I gathered later from my interviews with some key editors that the bulk of the front-page stories in the *Daily Nation* come from these exclusive stories. These stories were part of what was classified as “enterprise news”, that is, news generated by innovation and creativity on the part of journalists that go beyond the diary assignments (Interview with J7 and J10, 22/12/2003). The stories were never recorded in the news docket. The main reason for that, as was explained by one editor, was to guard against them being leaked to the competitors. A story in this category was deliberated on during the story selection conference with such secrecy that the only reference to it would be XYZ, or simply “our story”. An observer like me would have great difficulties trying to unravel what the story was all about.

These types of stories were judged in terms of their newsworthiness and in comparison with others in the news docket. All stories from the list in the docket could also qualify for front-page placement. “As a media you don’t titillate people with exclusives. You have a duty to give them a chronicle of what is happening around them. Sometimes they might not be the most interesting things, but to judge what is important you have got to keep this in proportion with events around you” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

The early evening meeting was an interactive consultative one whose purpose was to evaluate and scrutinise stories that had already been passed for final editing before they are sent to the production section. The managing editor is primarily in charge of the final process of editing, checking and scrutinising these stories. Sometimes he consults with the editorial management team to ensure that the selected stories do not lend themselves to inaccuracies or libel problems.

I gathered that in this final process of scrutinising stories, decisions concerning newsworthiness of the front-page stories still get evaluated once again. Some of these

stories may be discarded and replaced, some may decrease or increase in value depending on the managing editor's judgment, and in that moment their placement on the front page may be altered. At such moments too, breaking stories may cause this alteration and other late news events may yield news with higher news values.

I observed that, apart from the aforementioned meetings and consultations, continuous informal consultations among the senior editors and between them and the managing editor take place throughout the day as often as would be deemed necessary. These consultations are part and parcel of newsmaking and they help to guide the continuous judgements of news values of the stories that keep streaming in the newsroom. They also help editors form opinions and judgements that are incorporated into the overall considerations of what finally goes on the front pages.

I participated as an observer in the main story selection conferences, which took place at mid-morning, and in the afternoon. I soon discovered that the afternoon meeting was more beneficial to my study as this was the time when the final decision about what goes on to the front pages was made. I therefore concentrated more on the afternoon meetings.

It became clear, during my observations and interviews, that what seemed at the afternoon meetings like a final decision regarding the front-page stories was not really final all the time. Sometimes, as I found out, on some of the mornings following the final story selection, a different and completely new story would turn out to be a "splash". In the same way, a story that had been thought to fit an inside page category would suddenly seem to have popped up and become a lead story.

I gathered that decisions made at the story conference were only meant to guide the editorial team in the planning and grading of potential lead stories, and to help them reach a consensual decision about what were considered the most important stories of the day. The decisions could be altered any time of the day, as already said, depending on the managing editor's scrutiny and subsequent decision. They could also be altered depending on what else was happening in the news world, that is, what news events were taking place with what consequential effects in the newsmaking process. My

interviewees offered various perspectives regarding what makes stories qualify for page one selection and this is my focus in the sections that follow.

5.3 Selecting the “big story” in the *Daily Nation*

The newsroom staff at the *Daily Nation* referred to the front-page stories either as big or important stories. The stories were at most three on most of the days, and they consisted of the “splash” or the main lead story and two others, one of which was the second lead, and the other the third lead. In some of the days, the newspaper carried only one or two stories.

According to one editor, news that goes to the front pages is graded hierarchically. “Grading of stories” (Interview with J5, 27/11/2003) is a routine process that goes on throughout the day, to gauge from among the news items that keep flowing into the newsroom, which stories would be considered for the front page. The most important story is graded as first lead or “splash”, followed by the second and third lead in that order (see also chapter four for detailed analysis of this).

What happens is that at eleven o’clock, we are working at our session reports to let us know what we are doing. At three o’clock we pare them down, and out of 150 stories on average you get in a day, you have to come up with at least three stories that are important enough to be considered as page leads, or the “splash”. I work with three stories for the “splash”, and the importance of this is that you know what is topical, what is the greatest news of the day, which will go wider and sell more (Interview with J4/ 17/12/2003).

In this process of grading, stories can accelerate or decrease in newsworthiness. This can happen during the two main formalised editorial conferences, or it can happen late in the evening as informal consultations keep going on between the managing editor and other decision-makers. It can also happen through a momentary decision made solely by the managing editor.

It became obvious that one cannot pin down a specific criterion to the selection of page one stories. However, the explanations given by some of the news reporters and editors pointed to dynamics of newsmaking such as news breaks, comparisons of stories with others and so forth.

It depends on many things. Sometimes it could be a story was not big enough, like on Sunday when we have fewer big stories, we take out of the two biggest, maybe bigger, maybe more important. News has no hour. So at three o'clock we would have had that and by five an event or something important comes up. Let's say this is tomorrow's paper, this is what is going on, then at three o'clock this is happening, at four thirty, there could be an explosion, maybe a plane crash. All this becomes less newsworthy. News is really a reflection of what happens because you are reacting to what happens. If what is moved on page one is still considered of value, it would be moved to fifth page or some other story may be moved. News is fluid. I don't think you can put a finger on any of the factors (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

As the quote above shows, breaking news is considered highly newsworthy. A plane crash for example, is considered "big" news as it can easily contain such news values as tragedy, consequence, drama, unexpected, extraordinary, immediacy, intensity, importance, disruption, relevance, geographical proximity, identification, immediacy and so forth. It appears from this list, that breaking news satisfies conditions that Galtung and Ruge (1965) have argued would qualify an event as newsworthy.

In spite of this seemingly obvious way of identifying news values in a breaking story, there is no doubt that in ordinary newsmaking process there is difficulty in unravelling the elements that make a story merit page one treatment. The above perspective does in a sense reveal the difficulty there is of pinning down any specific criterion on the selection of page one stories. This view is shared by others across the board among several editors and reporters who consider certain factors crucial to their profession.

I was told, for example, that not only are there professional imperatives to guide the selection of news, but sensitivity to societal values become unspoken working rules that are put into consideration during story selection. The newspaper, for example, is

keen to guard against being seen to fuel conflicts between diverse ethnic or religious groups. If a powerful leader quoted in the news says to Luos, fight the Kikuyus, the people will definitely fight because of the immense influence that certain leaders wield. If he says that, *Nation* will not publish that story (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

Whereas news events which involve fighting and powerful personalities contain some of the elements in the news world that tend to yield high news values, the societal values against social conflict significantly undercuts these values. This thinking among the newspaper staff echoes the observation by Gans (1979) that news values reflect societal values. However, some of these values, Gans says, are enduring, and as such help to shape opinions about social values (1979:41). In addition, Cohen and Young (1973) state that news continuously plays against on-going beliefs and constructs about the world which most of its readers share (1973:183).

Other values in the news are topical. Gans explains that these are opinions expressed about specific actors or activities of the moment, which manifest themselves in the explicit and implicit judgments that enter into those stories. The assertion from the above interviewee, that a seemingly inflammatory statement in the news from a leader would lead to a decision to drop a story, reflects both enduring and topical values.

Apart from the above considerations, stories can accelerate in value within moments of their scrutiny by the final decision maker because of fast changing developments.

We always say that in the news world, one minute can cause the whole difference. Sometimes at three o'clock, we may think that a certain story is important, but another element of that story comes up and you either relegate it or even promote it further so that what was supposed to be story number three could be story number one. It happens both in the acceleration and in reverse. The news editor and the managing editor who at eleven o'clock only heard a briefing may see it and then decide, oh! It is not that important because of this, or oh!, we thought it was story number three but it is significant and more important than this. This reflects on the dynamism of the news world (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003).

The dynamics of the news world suggests that there a significant amount of consideration is paid to the qualities of newsworthiness of stories that get selected for inclusion on page one. The perceptions that came out of the interviews with the editors and journalist of the *Daily Nation* correspond with theories (see chapter two) advanced about news values and the selection of page one stories by Croteau and Hoynes (2002), Galtung and Ruge (1965), Golding and Elliot (1979), Shultz in Staab (1990), Hall et al (1978), Gans (1979), Tuchman (1979) Sigal (1973) and others. Their perceptions reveal general as well as contextual understanding of news values and their relation to the selection of page one stories. Here, Golding and Elliot's (1979) example will suffice for an illustration to describe the professional perception of news values and their role in story selection:

News values are used in two ways. They are criteria of selection from material available to the newsroom of those items worthy of inclusion in the final product. Second, they are guidelines for the presentation of items, suggesting what to emphasise, what to omit, and where to give priority in the preparation of the items for presentation to the audience. News values are thus working rules, comprising a corpus of occupational lore which implicitly and often expressively explains and guides newsroom practice (1979:114).

I found out that decisions to include or exclude news items are also affected by other internal and external factors that form part social values. Sensitivity to religious issues is one of them. This issue may lead to decisions either to include or exclude potentially newsworthy stories. Religious factors are not confined to local news events but are considered as much if they touch on the global issues that have strands of political differences as is the case in Israel and Palestine. "If you carry views of Israel today, tomorrow you must carry the Palestinians also. And if you think it will drag you into their differences then better do without the story altogether" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). Religious issues in the context of Kenyan news seem to be more pronounced when it comes to the Catholic Church and Muslims.

You must be sensitive to religion and the various views in the sense that when you are using news items, if it offends say the Catholic Church, you must be very sensitive. The other is Muslims. Muslims are very sensitive (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003).

It was explained that such issues are formulated in the newspaper's editorial policies, to guide decisions on news selection.

There are also other aspects in the editorial policies which relate to the newspaper's assumed democratic role with regard to the government of the day.

We also have an editorial policy that says: we shall support the government of the day as long as whatever it is doing is for the common good, and we shall criticise the government of the day as long as whatever it is doing is not for the common good. Then the ownership. You must be guided by these. Every day, you have to keep thinking about that (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003).

Within the precepts of these policies, "the editorial board takes a position on sensitive issues and the Nation Media Group takes a position, then there is journalistic instinct" (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

There are legal considerations too, one of which touches on libel. For example, decisions about stories considered libellous can be either altered at the last minute or dropped, or postponed.

This story, for example, which should have been on page one was suppressed because we didn't have evidence. If we are challenged in court to 'produce it' we would not produce it. Whoever is writing must be sure to back his facts. It must be a hundred per cent true. I tell you something about the *Nation*, it is professional (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

Related to the above considerations are ethical issues. These are upheld as an important part of journalistic practice in the *Daily Nation*.

You can sometimes get crazy stories, like scandalous stories. We know scandals sell. But then if you overlook professionalism you will end up even messing the credibility of the paper. We are obliged by the professional ethics, for instance not to name the people in this story, and in fact, at the *Nation*, professional ethics is a major consideration (Interview with J12, 14/12/2003).

All the above dimensions do not necessarily undermine the factor of news values as the basis on which stories are considered for page one selection. The dimensions work as guideposts or warning signs to protect the newspaper's credibility and, additionally, the social and ethical values that the newspaper and its staff find themselves obliged to uphold. Journalists and editors interviewed emphasised news values as the most important criteria that lead them to select stories for page one. They brought out various but interrelated views about this factor as the next sections demonstrate.

5.4 Qualifying stories as big and important

As was pointed out earlier, any of the potential page one stories was briefly described by journalists at the *Daily Nation* as “big story” or “important story” (Interviews and my observation conducted on 18-24/11/2003 and 8-21/12/2003). This reference to a page one story as “important” ties in with Croteau and Hoynes' view that the placement of stories on the front page implies a level of importance and newsworthiness (2000:126). But the concept of an “important” story fails to flesh out the components that constitute “importance”.

What an important story or big story concept does is to essentially describe which stories become the “splash” or the main lead, and to separate it from others that are usually required to fill the standardised space allocated on page one. As was observed in this study, describing a story as important or big proved essential to the news editors. It was an essential label to help them in the process of grading stories in terms of their newsworthiness and their inherent attraction to the assumed audience. This study sought to uncover the basis on which stories were qualified as big or important.

I realised during the interview sessions that the task of disentangling what was termed an important story from its constituent news values was daunting for many journalists. Important news to them is instinctively identifiable from the scores of news items that find their way into the news desk. “There are stories that you don't have to think about because they are definitely important” (Interview with J4, 16/1/2/2003).

Apart from the taken-for-granted instincts in journalistic practice – “a nose for news” or “the gut feeling” (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003 and J10, 22/12/2003) – a more

concrete perspective of what constitutes an important story was given by a few senior editors. These editors could articulate their understanding in more precise ways than others, and thereby demonstrated that the number of news values found in a story is the key to their qualification for page one treatment. In addition, through the probing during my interviews, many journalists were able to give perspectives that yielded “rich descriptions” (Geertz, 1973 cited in Deacon et al, 1999:7) from which the categories and themes emerged for assembling into thematic analysis.

One journalist told me that an important story “should contain many things, it can be very informative, very educative, very corrective and very interesting. It has everything you want to tell a reader” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). An important story, according to this interviewee, is judged by putting it into some kind of preferential list.

It’s like economics, where you have a list of preferences in your house. First I think it is the consequence of the story, and then there is what you call proximity. I told you like in your house, if you don’t have sugar, you don’t have bread and you don’t have milk, it is your choice here, what would you buy first? That is just a list of preferences. I think the story that gets here [front page] is the one with the greatest consequence, it is the one with the most interest: public interest. It has impact. For example, if you are exposing a scandal, it will help stop that scandal and that would be assisting society (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

The views from this interviewee reveal news values of consequence, proximity, relevance, interest, impact and negativity as important in qualifying a story for page one. Similar views were expressed by another editor who pointed out additional values. He described page one stories as those news items that consist several layers of newsworthiness, examples of which include drama, intensity, out of the ordinary, excitement, and interest to readers (Interview with J11, 27/11/2003).

But these layers are only said to be basic in terms of general criteria of judging what news is. In what is seen as a deeper consideration of news coverage, a page one story would require what he called “news makers” – people who make news – to capture the editorial page one treatment. Some news items may contain many news attributes

but may lack one or two elements that are considered more significant for page one treatment.

In terms of page one story judgements, the assertion that “people make news”, as I gathered from the above editor, is not always a description of a human factor in the news in the ordinary sense. Although the human factor is usually a consideration in judging what constitutes news, this assertion refers to people described in terms of their social class whose statements and activities tend to become newsworthy material. Where conventional newsmaking is concerned, ordinary people are given a rather less prominent coverage and rarely feature in the front page stories. For example, there was a story covered on the inside pages about a child who was mauled by two dogs. This news item contained what would be described as drama, unusual, disruption, unpredictability, relevance, proximity and consequence. According to the one editor, the story was highly newsworthy and could qualify for page one placement except for lack of ‘newsmakers’ and resonance. For example, “if the two dogs belonged to president Kibaki, it would add another layer of newsworthiness. It would be meaty, it would create substantial interest among readers” (Interview with J11, 27/11/2003). This perspective implies that there is an important attachment of newsworthy stories to highly placed personalities in society and hence the news values of elitism, which I found to constitute a common feature on the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation*.

Another example was a story about a four-year old girl who was raped by a man and women members of parliament went to visit her in hospital. After their visit the event received page one treatment not only because the women MPs visited the victim of rape, but because they had reacted with anger and emotional outbursts. The editor spoke of the story as having a number of layers.

When the women MPs visited the hospital where the raped four-year-old was admitted, they wept. There are four layers here: MPs visit, their screaming, demanding punishment for the culprit, and weeping in public. There is sentimentalism, it is sensational (Interview with J11, 27/11/2003).

Even though the subject of this story centred on the child and the rapist, what were apparently absent in this story initially, according to this editor, were the actions and voices of newsmakers. When the elite, consisting of members of parliament, came on the scene, the story shifted focus to them. They became the actors and the voices in the story, and this heightened its newsworthiness so that it received prominent treatment on page one.

On the day of my interview session with this editor, there was an angle to the above story that was being pursued. The angle focused on the rapist. The rapist had been arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. The story had been listed for subsequent coverage on the following day's paper. This editor did not anticipate this follow up event would receive page one treatment. As far as his judgment went, "this is only one layer, a single straight story, one column treatment perhaps" (Interview with J11, 8/12/2003). The reason he gave for thinking that this story would be given a less prominent treatment was that the rapist was an ordinary person and his being imprisoned for life was not so much out of the ordinary compared to other criminal cases. In fact, at the news desk, a reporter was being instructed to call a certain source to get information about how many prisoners in Kenya were serving life sentences. The main concern was to do a news analysis on the topic regarding life imprisonment, which would obviously supplement this story in the inside pages.

On the following day, however, this story was covered on page one as the second most important lead story with an additional centralised large picture of the rapist with shackled hands and a police man guarding him. The priming of this story on page one could be attributed to what some of my interviewees termed "fluidity of news" (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003) and "dynamism of the news world" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). I did not manage to secure an explanation on how the story came to be placed on page one. It may have been that news events on that day may not have yielded higher news values, and that the MPs layer of the previous day had elevated the values of the story in general.

On scrutinising the page, I noticed the story that made the "splash" on that day concerned a meeting of the Kenya's Foreign Minister with the US envoy to create understanding on procedures of alerting the country on international security matters.

In this story, the US envoy is said to have gone to major hotels, a week earlier, and warning staff of likely terrorist attacks. This action was perceived to have the potential of causing panic among citizens and to scare away potential investors. It was also considered irregular in terms of international foreign relations. According to the news report, the action had sparked angry reactions from the Kenyan security officials. Even though in this story, one can identify news elements of recency, elite persons, out-of-the-ordinary, consequence, consonance, political and geographical proximity, and perhaps conflict involving an elite nation, the elements of drama, and out-of-the-ordinary news values are not as strong compared to the story involving the arrest and imprisonment of the rapist.

The third lead story was about withdrawal of state funding from schools associated with the former head of state. Much like the story described above, the dramatic elements in it, or intensity in terms of cutting across a wider spectrum of society were not as strong. But one can glean news values of negativity, elite persons and conflict. This follows what one editor told me: that news values may accelerate or decrease in value depending on new developments. It can happen at the point when the news editor or the managing editor, who during the story conference only heard briefings, may note certain elements in a news item that cause it to merit a more prominent treatment (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003). This seems to have been the case with the story about the imprisonment of the rapist. It contained elements of drama, negativity, sentimentality, human interest, tragedy and so forth.

Just as Cohen and Young (1973) put it, in the *Daily Nation*, news values continuously play against on-going beliefs and constructs about the world in which most of its readers share. Thus, the interviewees demonstrated strong considerations regarding the interest of the readers when choosing stories for the front pages. Reader interest was pegged, sometimes, on newness of facts in the story, issues of public interest for which national debate would be enhanced in the news, the consequence and impact of the story on them, and the resonance of personalities involved as actors and sources in the news.

When I am talking about a big story, you basically think of reader interest. Readers tend to get interested in stories that are investigated, that have fresh facts, exposing secrets. And if they are about individuals, name recognition and or institutions because institutions are gate-keepers of public interests and they touch many people across the board. Important stories have more news values. We select stories that are important within the parameters I have explained; stories we think are interesting from the sales point of view, which expose issues in which there is public debate. They have more news attributes definitely (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

The above interviewee gave an illustration of one of the stories on page one which he considered to have many of these attributes.

This one touches on the farming community. The farming community is very big especially in Western Kenya, and this company, the seed company is the largest seed manufacturing plant, branching all over the country. Because of the fortunes (the economic benefits accrued from its products), it engages very many Kenyans across the board (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

Even though it seemed like most of the editors had uniformity of understanding regarding the elements that constituted an important story, and while many knew instinctively, by way of professional practice, that what they described as important stories contained certain levels of newsworthiness, a few others viewed the concept of “importance” as relative and skewed to personal views and biases. One editor contested assumptions that the selection of page one story could be consensual at all.

Sometimes you see disastrous mistakes because it is a very personal thing, personal treatment which is a mixture of expertise, personal interest, awareness of political interests of the paper, the proprietor. Yourself, you have prejudice. I mean like this story on a divorce matter. It is more interesting than any other. Before we get another more interesting one we tend to bring out prejudices. It depends on the editor (J11, 27/11/2003).

Similar views were expressed by another editor who thought that even during story selection conferences where a consensual decision about lead stories is supposedly reached, personal bias is still prevalent.

The question you might want to ask at that particular time of story selection is, important to whom? To the journalist, to the country, to a section of society or to whom? Who is it related to? I would try to establish this importance this way. Again it is a matter of perception. People are human beings. At the end of the day we all fall prey to personal objectives, everybody wants to put their views (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

Except for these two editors who viewed the selection of the front-page story as primarily influenced by personal prejudices, the majority, as reflected in some of the views already brought out, felt that news values which are instinctively held by them played a major role in selecting front page stories. It is likely that even those who argue for prejudice as central would still concede that this factor operates within the parameters of minimum news values. I have attempted to extract some of these news values from some of the quotes from interviewees to explicate the dominant perception that these values guide the newsroom staff in coming to relative agreement on what counts for page one stories.

5.5 Stories on page one resonate

Even though it is clear from the perspectives of the editorial team of the *Daily Nation* that the news values determine a story's placement on page one, it is also clear that these news values are considered by virtue of how widely they are thought to resonate with readers. This covers the anticipated interest the news will attract, the impact of that news and the consequence that comes with it.

Of importance to this perception is that news resonates within the context of the readers in the particular society which they live; it is what the readers do, what they aspire to be, what their beliefs and values are. "We do not operate in a vacuum, we are operating in a society, you must have the society that you are serving at the back of your mind so that the dynamism of that society is reflected in what you do" (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003).

The newspaper assumes this context in relation to how it presents the news to them and tries to represent this social reality in terms that the audience can identify with.

We put it in context. You consider the society, what do they do? For example if there is a strike by *Mathree* [local public taxis] you know it will affect everybody and their dog. If there is fuel increase how many people will be affected? Almost everybody. It also means the factories will also increase the price of their goods. You make it relevant to the reader. They may not get it in perspective but it is your business to make them realise that fuel increase will hurt them, not the big companies only. We will tell you what it means, we interpret it for you. We need to know who are our readers, and what is it that they do, and where it will hurt or what happens (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

This quote captures the idea that stories chosen for page one must resonate. The idea often translates to news values of human interest, sentimentalism, personality, impact, intensity or even consequence. It is reflected in the examples the interviewee uses such as the impact of a fuel price increase, of a strike among public transport workers that would adversely affect many people in the society.

5.6 News of national importance and issues in the news

National importance was cited by many interviewees as an important element that drives issues in the news. The “issues in the news” which “drive a story” (Interview J7, 22/12/2003) are inextricably related to newsworthiness of stories in page one. These issues may not likely resonate with readers in ways that human interest stories do, but are considered, on the basis of social responsibility, to have far reaching implications for society. Stories that questioned leaders’ integrity, in terms of moral values and leadership credibility, and political and economic issues led in this category. “Sometimes we can just give a story for the good of the whole society, three quarters of the time we sell, but you know many times our stories help correct society” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). Such stories were also chosen and treated in ways that would spark and extend national debate as was pointed out by one journalist. “Sometimes we do things to get people to think and talk and discuss issues” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003). McNair (1998) refers to this view as agenda-setting approach. He argues that “agenda-setting confers on journalists the important function of watchdog on the public behalf: warning of dangers as they arise, and facilitating discussion of possible response and representing public concern to the politicians” (1998:51). As can be inferred from the perspectives of many

interviewees, the *Daily Nation* operates within the extra news value of relevance to democracy.

Although my findings, which I detail in the next section, show that political and economic topics tended to dominate the news agenda in the front pages of the *Daily Nation*, a few human interest stories also came on to the front pages. One or two of these received prominent coverage. In one of these stories, the event was one in which a number of MPs were exposed for allegedly being involved with prostitutes at night in an infamous Koinange street. K-street, as is popularly called, is known for attracting not only ordinary commercial sex workers, but a sizable number of young university and college students during the late hours of the night, who hang around in search of wealthy business men and others who frequent there for purpose of soliciting for commercial sex.

This story alone took up the whole of page one. It created a lot of excitement in the newsroom and obviously sparked intense debate which was picked up by other media houses, churches and various social institutions. This is one example out of the many that I witnessed as illustrative of some kind of stories that are deliberately set up to attract national debates. This sometimes happens when the newspaper personnel think or glean that there is an issue in society that has certain elements which contravene social norms and require attention of the leaders and the society as whole. The phenomenon aptly fits the media studies' view of "a variant of agenda-setting" which

asserts that journalistic media play a role in defining as problems those phenomena which we – and which the forces of law and order in society – become concerned about. In this sense, news alerts us to the existence of problematic reality and thereby generates public anxiety which in turn generates official response (McNair, 1998:51).

The explanations given about the choice of this story suggested that news issues of moral behaviour reflect on the beliefs and values of society which are expected to be symbolised by the behaviour of leaders especially. Several interviewees told me that prostitution is illegal in the country, and thus, by priming this story the news was alerting the government of a breach of the law of the country by those involved. It was especially exposing the top leadership as having failed in their moral integrity. It called them to public accountability. It was also pointing the government to its role in

addressing the financial difficulties facing the university students which are seen as the cause of their soliciting income by such means. There was another issue in this news story which touched on the consequence of illicit sexual behaviour. Altogether these elements yielded news values like negativity, sex, deviance and so forth, and also others such as consequence to elite persons and society:

Like this case of Koinange Street, for example, a consequence of prostitution is the spread of Aids. And by exposing the MPs, it will be warning the prostitutes, and at the same time the MPs not to do it and those business people who are involved. The people want to know what is happening to their leaders, what are they doing? Are they making roads, do they value families? Because this is a leader we elected, he is supposed to come here and help us build schools, show us the values of a family. Then he goes, leaves his family at home and sleeps with prostitutes! This is funny. They are supposed to be the epitome of good behaviour, good morals (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

As breaking news, the story had news values that reflected on enduring societal values as can be gleaned from the interviewee's own interpretations of the issue of prostitution and involvement of members of parliament. It also had many news attributes some of which journalists were able to identify as consequence, impact, national importance, scandal such as exposing secrets of highly placed individuals in society, elite personalities, interest and proximity. This was an exclusive story which resulted from a combined effort of police and journalistic investigation and so it had the added value of novelty.

In this story, the news value of elitism is predominant, and it makes plausible the argument that "newsworthiness accrues to the doings of elites" particularly where these doings amount to what is seen as adding to the news values of deviation, "even if they have done nothing which might reasonably or statistically count as deviation" (McNair, 1998:78). Such news values are prevalent, as has been observed, in contemporary news media and include "deviation from social, cultural norms of behaviour and morality, particularly sexual" (1998:77). The significance of the elite personalities as actors (newsmakers) in the news, as was pointed by J11 (27/11/2003), contributed to the layer that made the news event even more prominent. On the

contrary, if this event involved less prominent people in society, there is doubt it would have attracted such enormous interest. This is supported by what one interviewee says:

If it is just an ordinary Kenyan who was caught, it should not have been important to know. It might have been important in a circle of friends or neighbours, but this is an MP, the whole country needs to know. It would have been better if it had been a bishop (J6, 16/12/2003).

This example is not suggesting that the newspaper is very keen on covering sexual scandals. Indeed one of the authors of this story and a news editor himself told me “it is unlike *Nation*” (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003) to cover such stories. According to this interviewee, the *Daily Nation* is wary of sensational stories. However, he explained that because of the moral values believed to be held by majority in the Kenyan society, it was important for the newspaper to raise the issue in the news as it also touched on the expectation laid upon political leaders to have high moral values.

There were other news stories that took prominence in the front pages more often than this kind of news. I noted especially news stories covering the constitutional review process that was taking place in the form of a conference at the time. This topic was mainstreamed in the news for several days when I was conducting this research, sometimes with several angles of news events that were selected as the “splash”. This topic in the news was qualified for what the respondents referred to as the national importance, impact and consequence the constitutional review is anticipated to have on the nation as a whole.

In most of the news events that I witnessed taking prominence on the front pages, elements of elitism with regard to sources and actors in stories tended to be preferred by the journalists. Elitism also became the basis for how the front page stories were covered and how their subsequent follow-ups were treated. For example, in the story concerning street prostitution, one editor put it that, “the MPs gave us the faces on which to launch the story” (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003). The prostitutes themselves, even though the main spotlight to the subject of that news, and who were

mentioned intermittently in the story, were largely mute. The members of parliament took more prominence in the news as actors and sources of the news event.

It emerged, through my observation and interview interactions, that issues in the news are both implicitly and explicitly related to the type of news sources that get selected for specific stories on page one. However, this chapter will not go into this detail which will be the focus for chapter six. This chapter is limited to the ways in which news values inform journalists in the selection of front page stories. In the next subsection, I will present the ‘issues in the news’ that I found most prevailing and contributing to the largest news coverage at the *Daily Nation*. They are issues related to politics and economics.

5.7 Politics and economics are news of national importance.

The most frequently covered news in the *Daily Nation* was markedly of a party political nature. The second was of an economic nature. Economics as a news agenda had its own news dimensions but was intrinsically related to the politics in the news. Both topics were pursued by the newspaper in a manner that suggested that they defined the context of the newspaper, or even the general media context, and the society in which news values and news sources come to be interlinked in the front page stories.

What happens in our media industry and is very sad is that politics is seen to be the best selling news content whether you are looking at television, radio or print or newspapers or even periodical. Within that politics, not everyone that sells - it is certain individuals that sell (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Adding to this view was another editor’s elaboration:

Siasa, siasa [politics, politics] make sense in this country. If you try a newspaper without politics you are done for (Interview with J4, /17/2003).

As would be expected, political news entails engaging political newsmakers, most of whom belong to the elite social class. According to the lead editors, politics is one of the topics in the *Daily Nation* which is important news. It is deemed important and

highly newsworthy, and the selection of political news entails engagement of names of people who are relevant to the subject of politics. Without this political menu in the news and the intrinsic relationship of this kind of news and elite news makers, as was pointed out, the newspaper would not survive. “Politics make sense” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003) and, “if you ran a headline that does not have a recognisable name you would be at a disadvantage” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003). The significance of this is that the news values intrinsic to politics (conflict, drama, intensity, impact) are largely confined to when these qualities can be coupled with the news values of elitism.

That apart, there is an underlying professional and ideological reasoning for covering political news and hence engaging newsmakers with high political inclinations:

Another reason is because in any country, 60% of news comes from the government. It is like that everywhere, whether in UK or wherever, if you flip through the pages it is the relationship between the government and the governed, and it is these people who personify government. People will worry about what they have done, because what they do impacts on their lives directly. We don't build around the decisions they make, it is issue-driven and the person together. In Kenya we don't get entertainers, we get politicians and leaders (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

Economic news was the second most prominent news found in the front pages. This type of news was driven more by events that promised a better economic climate in the country: exposing financial scandals and corruption, and revelations about the financial performance of the previous regime. It was viewed as newsworthy in terms of its impact on the ordinary citizen. Put in the context of a long period of economic crisis that had prevailed in the country during the previous political regime, these revelations were seen as giving hope to these ordinary citizens, hence their news values of predictability, interest, relevance, impact, proximity, consequence, consonance, national importance, national leadership and so forth.

In the context of Kenya, in 2003, politics and economics have a very close link. “There is a relationship between politics and economics in this country” (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003). The linkage was explicated by one interviewee:

This government came into power on a platform of change. And this change, as far as our people are concerned, was meant to translate into more money into their pockets, a better lifestyle and economic progress. This is the context in which we discuss economics, but you can't separate politics and economics (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

The most elaborate perspectives made about the concentration of politics (understood reductionistically as the professional politicians as actors) as front page news concerned its inherent relationship with the economic dynamism of the society in which the newspaper is operating.

Politics is what we live and eat in this country. We can't move away from politics. It defines our views, our news agenda, it defines our vision as a newspaper and media platforms. You need to look around and see the justification of it at the political arena. We have spent the whole of this year discussing nothing but politics. Whether we are looking at the constitution, whether at the composition of the government, whether we are looking at how we are going to configure our political landscape, it is all politics. You bring economics, it has to do with politics. Our religious leaders themselves are better political animals than they are religious leaders. It is as simple as that. The media must reflect that obsession and that is what you are seeing, we are just reflecting the obsession at the national level. Values of the society have become politics and economics (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Whether these values are always the values of a society is contended by Iyenga and Kinder (1987, cited in McNair, 1998:50) who observe that:

By priming certain aspects of national life while ignoring others, news sets the terms by which political judgments are rendered and political choices are made... When the news focuses on a problem, the public's priorities are altered and altered again as it moves to something else (1987:33).

While this argument may not be strongly refuted, the interview respondents contended that politics that is found in Kenyan news has its own uniqueness and news dynamism, and this dictates the kind of political stories as those about professional politicians that are selected as current material for news.

It has something to do with the nature of politics in this country. Politics in this country have become more dynamic. We are still in the hangovers of one party regime and we don't know whether we should have coalitions or not (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

There is also what the paper sees as its identity and mandate to its audience. The *Daily Nation* newspaper, it emerged in this study, has entrenched itself into a long tradition of how it is identified. “*Nation* itself has been identified with political stories, because in the Kenyan society most things revolve around politics” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003). To a large extent, it is also what the paper has proved to interest its readers over the years. “The person who buys this paper knows he is buying it because it has got political stories” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

To this end, the assumed audience is presumed to want this kind of news. But on the other hand, the presumption works out to systematically feed the audience with what makes the newspaper sustain itself. Without politics (albeit only in elitist form), it seems, as already expressed by some editors, the newspaper would cease. One common explanation given for this belief was that political news has a relationship with commercial viability of a newspaper. One editor put it thus, “politics sell, and it resonates quickly” (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

The perspectives offered by the interviews suggest that politics goes hand in hand with high news values in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. First, as was pointed out in the introductory chapter, the country can be described as an emerging democracy in terms of putting in to practice a relatively strong multi-party system of government. Again, the *Daily Nation* played a key role as a media organisation in championing the democratisation in Kenya (Odhiambo, 2003). The role of the newspaper in this context is therefore viewed as one that serves the democratic process in the country especially that of circulating news information to the public so as to sustain the political discussion and democratic process. This democratic role also includes ensuring checks and balance and accountability within the government. Additionally, as the interviews showed me, the country is experiencing a political transition following a democratically elected government recently, and which, as some interviewees have said, came into power on the platform of change. Thus, politics is

seen to be given great emphasis in the news in Kenya both in general terms and in the context of Kenya in 2003 due to the anticipated performance of the new government by the public.

Even though political news per se does not have to be elitist in nature and nor does an elite readership only need to know about elite politics, nevertheless, politics seem to be of special interest to elites in Kenya, as reflected in the *Daily Nation* coverage of the front-page stories and as some views from the editors and reporters interviewed show.

Related to this view is the fact that the *Daily Nation* itself is traditionally associated with political news. The importance placed on political coverage can be traced as far back as the newspaper's stated purpose at inception. "This newspaper started as an African voice, championing the African voice fighting for independence in 1960" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). With time, however, the political view of the 'African voice' has tended to translate to that of the newspaper and that of the elite politicians and readers of the newspaper. According to one interviewee, coverage of elite politics in the news have been tested over a long period of time and, "it works and has been seen to succeed" (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003). It works because the audience is "upmarket" (remark from J7, 22/12/2003), which one editor described as the "intelligent middle class readership" (Remark made during an editorial training session, 27/11/2003, during my observation). Again this points towards the elitist nature of the news and the intrinsic news values found in the lead stories of the *Daily Nation*.

There is also a commercial interest underpinning this systematised coverage. The *Daily Nation* operates on business terms and this means soliciting advertising from the business sector which consists of elite persons. This reality may affect how some of the stories, especially those focusing on economic news, are covered. The quote below captures some of these factors more vividly:

Politics sell, but it depends on who is loudest in politics. You see a lot of political heckling in the first page. It resonates quickly and mostly Kenyans have views on such issues. Again the reason we get them on the first pages, even though this is

becoming narrower, is because there is a relationship between politics and economics in this country. And another thing is the relationship between business reporting and advertising, very strong in terms of competition (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

As can be seen, elite newsmakers are in positions that are of interest to the upmarket audience. The perception is that the audience will not only be more inclined to buying the newspaper because there are names that correspond to elitism, they are also part of those who give advertising to the newspaper for its business survival.

We are a very elite society and the newspaper reading public is very interested...it is a large group of Kenyans defined by education who think alike in terms of occupation, politics and economics, and I think that drives the news values to a very large extent it. It is a reflection of what the elite want (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

Not everybody at the *Daily Nation* accepts the traditional and historical explanations offered by some respondents as justification for narrowing of values of the news content in the lead stories to elite politics.

Sadly it is one of those things that I have a problem with because I think there are other things that are more important than politicians chasing one another with a *rungu* [club]. There are other things that I feel should be important and this brings now the whole business of commercialisation (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

These sentiments reveal a certain level of dissatisfaction among a number of editors regarding the concentration of elitist political coverage on page one, and is a reflection of a concern to reconsider how the balance in news topics can be achieved. "That is a debate that has gone on for a very long time in this establishment" (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003). But change has not been forthcoming because of the uncertainty associated with the newspaper's ability to sustain especially human interest stories profitably. There is envisaged danger that, if human interest stories were mainstreamed on a regular basis, the newspaper would not survive in the market. "I think the problem with human interest stories is that nobody has ever done it sustainably. It can be fantastic if you had to sustain it" (Interviews with J6, 16/12/2003).

There are inclinations among some editors towards human interest stories.

“Personally I am a fan of human interest stories. If I had my way I would have a human interest story everyday, but I don’t make the decision alone, there is a team” (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003). This inclination contributes to the logic of changing the topics as often as possible. “We do change the menu though, so that we have a political story, economics and human interest. I would love to have a human interest story on a daily basis. In fact I target a human interest story every day, but it is not always successful” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

From the tone of these respondents, it is suggestive that human interest stories are deemed highly newsworthy but they lack the capacity, in a contemporary commercially driven newspaper, to sustain the market required in a competitive news environment. The tendency is to privilege political news, which in turn is interpreted in elite politics terms, concentrating on the actor and voices of professional party politicians.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used the perspectives given by various journalists and editors to demonstrate the process of selecting the front-page news stories, and how these are qualified as important and meriting front-page treatment. I have also shown what kind of stories are referred to as important, or rather highly newsworthy, and on what basis they are qualified as important. In the process I have also shown how news values of the *Daily Nation* have tended towards elitism by the way elite persons are mainstreamed as news makers in the front page news stories. I have finally given some attention to the importance placed on political and economic stories in terms which were explained as relating to national interest but primarily which fit the elite news values and their intricate relationship to the commercial goals of the newspaper.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS ON SELECTING NEWS SOURCES FOR THE FRONT-PAGE STORIES

6.0 Introduction

In chapter five, I indicated that the purpose of the overall qualitative study carried out at the *Daily Nation* newspaper was to investigate the relationship between news values and the selection of news sources in the front-page stories. Specifically in chapter five, the purpose has been to unravel the news values which are considered in the selection of page one stories. I have attempted to demonstrate, from the interviewees' perspectives and my own observations, the process of selecting the front-page stories, and to analyse the news values that elevate these stories to the level of newsworthiness that accounts for their placement on page one. At the core of news judgments is what the interviewees called 'importance' or 'bigness' of a story. I have then tried to unpack the notion of 'importance' and 'bigness'. This has been by identifying, through citing examples of stories covered during the study, and by using quotes from interview responses, some of the news values which the journalists implicitly invoke in a taken-for-granted manner in order to qualify stories for page one treatment.

In this chapter, I will give attention to the choices of news sources and how these choices relate to the news values of the front-page stories. Through the perspectives drawn from interviews and my observations, the chapter attempts to answer the key research question in this thesis: What role do news values play in the selection of news sources in the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper? This question was fore-grounded on the assumption that news values are an important factor in this selection. The chapter demonstrates that the selection of news sources on the front pages of the newspaper is a process that goes hand in hand with the selection of news stories on these pages. In both selections, newsworthy qualities are an important factor that goes into journalistic judgments about inclusion or exclusion of news and sources in the newspaper. The news values criteria that relate to the choices of news sources were investigated during the same time that those of page one stories were

investigated (see chapter five), and the same methods and procedures of investigation were used to carry out this study.

The findings and interpretations presented in this chapter are based on the perspectives gained from the interview subjects and my own observations. As was pointed out in chapter one and two, it should be noted that this study has delimited news sources to the voices in the news, while bearing in mind that actors in the news often at the same time become sources, and at times sources speak in the news where actors are different. Thus, there may be cases where the actors are not the sources. Again, for purposes of clarity, my study did not deal with documentary sources whose information also accounts for news and therefore are classified as news sources in conventional news gathering process.

This chapter is considered within two broad themes which are broken into specific sections. It first looks at the emphasis put on name recognition as a parameter for judging the suitability of sources of news for the front-page stories. These parameters range from newsworthy attributes of the source to professional ideology of the newspaper. It then brings out, within the second broad theme, the factor of the subject (and related actor/s) of the news in considering the selection of the news sources, and how this factor signifies the link between the news values of the story and the selection of the news source. From these broad themes, the chapter is divided into eight sections following specific themes and categories that emerged during the interviews. The following sections outline the presentation of the findings of this chapter: highlights in selecting news sources; sources have a recognisable name; newsworthy attributes of a source; personalities which resonate with readers; role of source in society and representation in the news; particular personalities drive the news agenda; elite sources; expertise in the news content.

6.1 The highlights in selecting news sources

For a general definition, this research takes Gans' (1979) perspective of news sources as people "whom journalists observe or interview, including interviewees who are quoted, and those who only supply background information or story suggestion" (1979:80). Furthermore, these sources may provide information in contact with members of the newspaper as a news organisation, but the newspaper staff will also

choose those sources it deems suitable for its readers. This process is therefore reciprocal. It is a sort of exchange in which the newspaper is also chosen by sources who want to transmit information to the readers by way of press releases, press statements or telephone calls. Following the distinction made between actors and sources (i.e. the voices in the news) in chapter one and two, this chapter encompasses voices in the news that may either function as both actors and sources at the same time or who may function separately as news sources where the actors in the news are different.

From Gans' perspective, it can be noted that sources are not mutually exclusive from the audience of the newspaper. He observes that as the allegiance of the audience "must be maintained" by the news organisation, "its reading behaviour affects, to some extent, the choices by journalists" (1979:81). At different levels, the newspaper audience is both recipient and source of news as well as income for the news organisation. Moreover, together with the journalists, sources of news co-exist in a social system and this facilitates their access to each other. The highlighting of these interrelations in this chapter provides the anchoring to the process of news gathering and they have implications for how judgements are made about who gets on the news as a source.

As the findings will show, there is an intrinsic relationship between news values of the stories on page one and the sources that get selected for these stories. This relationship can be seen in two aspects. First, the subject of the story and its relative news values play an important role in guiding journalists towards selecting specific types of news sources. Second, due to the considerations made about the importance of page one stories in terms of their level of newsworthiness, news sources for these stories are largely judged on the merits of their newsworthy attributes, which include consequence, proximity, controversy, elite persons, individualism, prominence, national leadership and so forth. I make mention here that the second aspect has implications for the tendency to skew source selection towards the elite in society. The two aspects will be dealt with in detail in the presentations that follow. But first, I will deal with the general perspectives obtained from the interviewees about how people become qualified to be considered as sources.

In newsmaking, the significance of newsworthy events and actors and news sources work together to complete the picture of what qualifies as news. According to one editor, as soon as one has the idea of what topic of a story in the making is, its principle news source or sources are already known. “That’s why you are an editor” (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). Adding to that, one news editor put it thus, “it is basically knowing what subject, sometimes it is not what is out there, it is what you have gathered, what you have gleaned” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003). Observations made by Gans (1979) support this view (see also chapter two). Gans makes the point that story selection and source selection go hand in hand:

Source considerations come into play at the start of story selection, when little is yet known about the stories but the sources relevant to them may be familiar and can be evaluated. Even so these considerations are always applied with others, especially story suitability (1979:128).

When I asked the journalists working on the *Daily Nation* why they selected a particular source of news for the front-page stories, the most obvious answer obtained from many was, because of name recognition. In terms of news, one editor had emphasised that “people make news” (see chapter five). This emphasis has implications for not only our understanding of news as representation of events and actors and voices in these events, but for the dual role certain people, and not everybody, in society play as both actors in and sources of news.

Several interviewees pointed out that people make news as actors in terms of what they do which translates into newsworthy events, and people also make news by what they say either in these events or simply by their utterances which may become newsworthy. In other words, these people act and say things that turn out to be newsworthy. In this process, sources speak to the news or the subject of news and by doing so; they implicitly and explicitly speak to the newsworthiness of the news stories. Again they speak to the news, as was found in this study, mostly because they are newsworthy.

The claim by newsworthy sources to speak to news does not rule out other less newsworthy sources from being selected in the news. Witnesses to news events such as in breaking news, in disastrous happenings and victims of misfortunes are many

times prioritised in the selection of news sources. My observations confirmed this in a number of news events, and the interviewees reinforced it. It means that, regardless of who is speaking to the news, there is an intrinsic relationship between the values attached to the news and the sources which are selected to speak to them.

However, news values notwithstanding, my findings also showed that the notion of “name recognition” in the *Daily Nation* newsroom has become conventional in both actor and source selection. The notion is packed with diverse meanings which all describe certain characteristics a source is expected to possess in order to qualify for selection. I sought to unpack these characteristics from the various interviewees.

6.2 Sources have a recognisable name

Several interviewees described name recognition as an acquired status. This is acquired either through attaining a leadership role in society or exists by virtue of, for example, professional, business or political achievements and the fame that may come with them. These views correspond with McNair’s argument that “people defined as important by their position in government, or their fame or fortune, are automatically newsworthy” (1998:78).

However, not everyone who could be described in terms of this social stratum can qualify as a news source.

You can’t compare Raila with somebody like Michuki. Who knows about Michuki? He was propped up by his ministerial post. The buck stops with what is newsworthy and a newsworthy person. Just because a person has spoken, even if he is an MP does not find his way into the newspaper” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003).

My observations revealed that the buck tends to stop with those people who get into the circuit of recognisable names, and who get systematically selected as front-page news sources in the *Daily Nation*. To get to this point, however, their actions or statements must be judged as newsworthy in terms that describe what makes news.

For example, Father Wamugunda is a very famous priest. He is not just an ordinary priest, I think he is a national name, it makes the story newsworthy. He was carjacked

with a Cabinet minister at midnight. What were they doing at midnight? And the cabinet minister is not just a city council *askari* [security guard]. She is a very senior person in the country. Then the carjacking. Why were they carjacked? (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003).

Once in the circuit of newsworthy names, the name more often than not, becomes more important to this selection than the event itself.

Name recognition is a major thing, like Biwott or George Bush. That is probably because we give a lot of prominence to people, the news source, rather than sometimes the events in the news. A quick name recognition makes it easier for the reader to recognise what somebody has done and what not (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003).

The journalists explained that name recognition means that the source has a name which resonates across the broad spectrum of society. From my observational studies and interviews, and as explained earlier in this section, it occurred that people with name recognition are those associated with either important positions of leadership in government or a profession, or fame for one reason or another. But to acquire the status of name recognition, the media has to play such a person frequently in the news. One editor validated my observations by stating that the “media creates these people and then the audience has certain perceptions of them” (Interview with J7, 21/11/2003). By implication, these names are recognised by the readers of the newspaper because of the visibility the media has given them, combined with their positional authority, and following that, issues they are associated with in the news such as expertise and social values.

If somebody by virtue of their office or standing is viewed as an expert or an authority you can take their views as important in terms of their office and the power they wield. We also consider the number of people the source represents. For example, Archbishop Ndingi. You want to believe that when he speaks he has followers behind him and they generally agree with him, maybe not unanimously but to a large extent (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003).

Principally, although any person could potentially be a news source, the significance placed on name recognition by reporters makes it rather impractical in many instances in conventional newsmaking process for certain groups of people in society to qualify easily as news makers or news sources. This study found out that, just as the selection of front-page stories tended to give preference to elite news actors, the selection of both actors and news sources for the front-page stories of this newspaper tended towards a small group of elites who comprised of mainly politicians, business leaders, professionals and heads of other organisations either social or otherwise. Gans has something to say about this phenomenon. He says that “while in theory sources can come from anywhere; in practice their recruitment and their access to journalists reflect the hierarchy of nation and society” (1979:119).

These are the kind of names that make news both as actors and as sources, and often at one and the same time, and the media tend to put them in the headlines because they exhibit certain attributes of news values. In addition to exhibiting attributes of newsworthiness in their actions and in what they say, these sources are said to drive issues in the news, thereby adding value to it. Thus, the source selection “depends on what the story is, who is relevant to the story in many ways” (Interview with J7, 21/11/2003). The story’s worth in this instance becomes the focal point in relation to which a news source is weighted. But to give weight to the issue in the news, there are certain criteria to refer to:

We are constrained by professional imperatives to look to certain people. News in Kenya is about heroism, tragedy, drama. News is instinctively about stars. We use people to drive the issue in the news, elite people, prominent people, politicians, to drive public attention, to create weight, for significance. People with stature, to influence, then for purposes of raising sales, and for political weight (Interview with J7, 21/11/2003).

As the above interviewee shows, sources are linked to the story in terms of professional definition of what constitutes news. Name recognition is one of these considerations. The question to ask regarding this consideration is what the significance of the name would be in relation to the news agenda, and the recipients of the news or the assumed readers. From the reporters and editors interviewed, I

obtained a variety of responses regarding these inter-linkages between name recognition and the professionalised practice of selecting news sources.

By employing the concept of name recognition, the interviewees reinforced the belief that only certain groups of people, especially the elite sources are significant to front-page news stories in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. “Elite sources” according to McNair (1998:76), “are the favoured sources of journalists”. The journalists chose particular sources for what were considered important stories by judging, first, the relevance of the source to the story, and second, the newsworthiness of the source in terms of the consequence of what they say on the wider society, and what that amounts to in terms of sales of the newspaper.

At the general level, the main attributes given for why the newspaper chose to engage sources with name recognition in the front-page stories ranged from: the interest they elicit among readers; the consequence attached to what they say in the news to the larger majority in society; ideological positions they embrace; representation of groups or organisation; their role in society; selling the newspaper; respectability and reliability, among others. All these attributes are important in judging the relevance of the news source to the news items considered worthy of front-page coverage. A few of these attributes are highlighted below to illustrate the link between the choices of sources to news values in those stories.

6.3 Newsworthy attributes of a source

A widely quoted source in this newspaper, and for different topics in the news, was the head of the Catholic Church in Kenya. He was described as a person who embodies several newsworthy attributes. Foremost of these attributes is that he “commands a lot of respect because of what he professes” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). There is a level of importance attached to the religious and moral values which the head of the Catholic Church professes that tend to be seen, in a sense, in some social aspects as the ideal values for the society and for which stance he has earned respect. One of these aspects relates to sexual morality, particularly his emphasis on abstinence amidst concerted HIV/Aids campaigns to offer alternative choices for the prevention of the scourge. “What Ndingi says has a lot of morals. He subscribes to the issue of abstention, not condoms, and that is the highest level of

morality” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). In addition, he is often chosen for his ability to deliver reliable and timely information, and to articulate knowledge on various issues in the news. This implies a newsworthy source who can speak to news values of immediacy, proximity, relevance and importance:

Ndingi, he is quick, and by the way, he is reachable and has no hang ups. He will comment on about everything, he has an opinion about everything. He is well respected across the board, irrespective of whether you are a Catholic or not. If Ndingi says it is wrong, I will use the word ‘wrong’. I need to look for people whose opinion matters to the greatest number, to diverse numbers or groups of people as possible, whether they love to love you or love to hate you (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

The above is augmented by Gans’ (1979) observation that sources must be available at the shortest time possible and be able to deliver suitable information. Suitable information relates to the values attached to the story at hand. Accessibility of news sources and quick delivery describe newsworthy factors of immediacy and proximity. On the other hand, some sources, as Gans has elaborated, by virtue of their position in society, knowledge of issues and skills of articulation, become eligible for interpretation of societal values. Such sources embody certain enduring societal values which are extended in the news. The head of the Catholic Church in Kenya embodies all these attributes.

6.4 Personalities that resonate with readers

I observed that during the period I spent at the newsroom of the *Daily Nation*, that names, more than titles of the news events, filled the news diary. These names consisted of politicians; leaders of political parties; and heads of large social and financial institutions (both governmental and private ones). Occasionally there were also leaders of grassroots social organisations and NGOs, religious organisations and ad hoc groups.

There are some personalities that feature in the news very often as sources for different reasons. Most of these, I found out, were selected from among politicians and government leaders although other leaders who resonate with the same attributes

could still become eligible for selection. From the government circles and political arena, a source is chosen for a number of reasons.

First, consideration is put on the role that government leaders are perceived to play or they are playing. This role is linked to issues in the news which were described as bearing elements of national importance.

Kiraitu comes in the newspaper quite often because he is involved in the constitutional review. Constitutional review is very important in this country. We want to make a good constitution and one way or other maybe he is blocking it. That is why he is featured. Also I think he is involved in the judiciary and of course you know judiciary is very important in the fight against corruption. Corruption hurts everybody and we have to portray that corruption is bad. (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

There is an underlying expectation both in the newspaper, and presumed by the journalists, that because of the role the government sources play as leaders of the people, they should keep the electorate and the public informed by speaking in the news. Apparently leadership comes with elitism, and for the journalists, the two statuses add to newsworthy criteria. McNair corroborates this by stating that “for those who govern us, elite status comes with political and moral authority which endows their actions and statements with enhanced newsworthiness” (McNair, 1998:78).

One editor put it this way: “There is another reason, you hold yourself up as the leader of the people. You stand before *umati wa watu* [mass of people] and push yourself, pretend you are a leader. So there are certain things we expect of you” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003). The presumption underlying this respondent’s assertion may seem to suggest a commitment to permitting every government leader to speak to the news. But as already expressed earlier by one interviewee, ‘the buck stops with newsworthy sources’ – people with name recognition.

Those are the names we tend to put in the headlines, even if others are put there. (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

The newspaper has elevated these names to the level where their statements and actions are perceived to have significant impact among the readers, and are anticipated to have similar effect across the society.

Second, consideration is given to personality attributes. While in the circuit of recognisable names, some people seem to have been endowed with natural attributes in their personality that tend to attract media attention. Such a source is seen to resonate quickly and the media plays on that element of the source's personality with the belief that readers want to hear them or about them, and this in turn increases the potential for higher sales of the paper. These personalities also encompass many attributes of newsworthiness like elite personalities, resonance, prominence, impact, identification, human interest and national leadership.

Third, a source is chosen to enhance social and political debate in the news. Raila Odinga, a cabinet minister, exemplifies one such source. He combines all the three aspects of consideration. First, he has a role in government as a cabinet minister holding a roads and public works portfolio, which role is considered to be of national importance. Second, his power resonates. He is said to have enormous influence over a large section of society and what he says tends to have significant impact across the society. Third, he has a personality inclination to controversy, a newsworthy quality the media likes to prey on to enhance political and national debate and to increase sales of a newspaper.

In addition to being a senior cabinet minister holding the transport and public works portfolio, Raila has a political history that goes beyond his current position in government. His late father, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, was a veteran politician who became Vice President during the early years of Kenya's independence. But he was soon dropped by President Kenyatta, the first president of the country, for allegedly promoting communism ideology. Later in his political career in early 1990s, he championed a successful major political movement calling for change of the constitution to permit multi-party system of government. His son, Raila, who played one of the key roles in the leadership of this movement, was perceived to embrace his father's political inclinations in his early days of his political career and was detained

several times under the previous regime of president Moi (Retrieved March 14, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.kenya740.tripod.com.raila.html>).

Interestingly for all his political life, Raila has been associated with oppositional politics and a tendency to agitate the masses against the government in power. But in the latter part of his political career, especially since Kenya embraced a multi-party system of government, Raila's political approaches have changed drastically. He has tended to foster a coalition type of relationship with the ruling clique, something that has earned him respect and a large following among both the elite and the masses across the country. Recently he won the hearts of many Kenyans as a force behind the downfall of the long ruling party, KANU, and being the key player in the current coalition of parties that make up the present government. In addition to his political prowess, Raila is one of the ministers whose leadership is acclaimed to be of integrity. His actions and statements elicit a lot of excitement among journalists and are quickly picked by the media because they are deemed to be of great impact and consequence among the masses and the political leadership of the country (Personal experience and interviews with journalists J2, J7 and J17, 18-24/11-12/2003).

Obviously there are other sources that feature in the news often for similar reasons. But I found the name Raila intriguing in the way he was often quoted in the front-page news and in the way his name came up so often on the news desk. He was also prominently sourced for different issues in the news and many times within a week. During the interviews, this source was said to elicit several attributes of a news source, ranging from newsworthy aspects of controversy, interest among readers, national leadership through to reliability. Because of his role in society, personality, actions and the kind of things he says, he was among a few other sources that demonstrated similar attributes, perceived to be an attraction to news media. Most of my interview respondents used the name Raila more often than they used other names as an example of sources whose statements and actions were perceived to carry great weight in terms of attracting wide readership when they are played in the front-page news stories. According to one interviewee, different personalities and what they do bring in a diversity of news values that are required for page-one stories.

There are some people that anything they do is of great interest to a lot of people for different reasons. Ok, like Raila, he is not a darling of the media, people love to hate him and there are those who love him. Another thing is, he attracts diverse emotions, it is good, I mean controversies sell and so forth. And Moi (former president), as long as he is on the receiving end of something he sells. Then Ouko (assassinated former foreign affairs minister) will always be a very emotive story to a lot of people for many different reasons. Kalonzo (Minister for Foreign Affairs), it is because he thinks he can challenge Kibaki (head of state), and some people are saying he is running too fast on this. So those are the dynamics of political re-alignment (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

The above quote reveals that a person's reputation may qualify him or her as an actor and/or source of news because of the controversy associated with his or her personality in terms of attracting both negative and positive reactions. The names cited in the quote above and the actions associated with them elicit elements that constitute newsworthiness such elitism, conflict, controversy, status, continuity, interest, sentimentalism, national leadership and predictability. These values are considered important for qualifying stories for front-page selection, and for which certain people become viable and relevant for selection as simultaneously actors and sources or as sources talking about other actors or issues.

6. 5 Role of a source in society and representation in the news

Leaders are mainstreamed in the news partially because of their perceived influence among the ordinary people whom they are assumed by the newspaper to represent. Furthermore, this representation is viewed to be a socio-cultural reality on the ground. The argument put forward by the interviewees with regard to this representation was that the social structure has tended to put people within different interest groups, with a leader who represents their interests. The news media therefore capitalises on this structure to ease their newsgathering process, and especially when choosing sources. There is an assumption that by selecting leaders in these groups the newspaper is gauging the thinking, aspirations, values, beliefs and opinions of those whom the leaders represent. It is also believed what the leaders say has more weight in terms of direct impact and influence on those they lead. "If Ndingi says you can use condoms, what consequence? If Raila says something, at least majority of people will tend to

agree or to do what he is doing” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). Consequently, the source’s statements have implications for the numbers affected by it, and how the news agenda is seen to influence the readership of the newspaper.

For example, what the president says is not like what a councillor says. When he speaks he speaks on behalf of the 30 million Kenyans. Also somebody, like Raila, is a key figure in government and he is somebody you can’t just ignore. He has many MPs following him, so you don’t think he is talking on his own behalf. Whatever he says has an implication on others (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003).

The above view is shared across the board among the editorial personnel. But the respondent below captured the views of most:

Ordinary people must be represented, but they can talk if you do a vox-pop on the streets and we have a forum for that. But, basically how am I going to gauge the opinion of the 30 million Kenyans? I can go through the things they have set up to be represented of themselves; women groups, church groups, youth groups. This is also cultural; it is like in a family, the head of a family is supposed to represent the family. Again, there is no way anybody is going to meet their bloody deadlines and at the same time get the opinion of everybody and their dog in this country. I need an opinion now, who is the representative of Kenyans? She (representative) will say what she thinks the majority think or will think or she will make them think (J4, 17/12/2003).

6.6 Particular personalities drive the news agenda by their action or lack of it

In my observations, I noted that controversy was treated with excitement, and if a source elicited such a news element he or she was likely to drive the news agenda. This was illustrated by this interviewee: “These are the guys, confrontations, fantastic. That’s why they interest everybody” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003). This interviewee pointed out that such types of sources “sometimes determine news”, and “it is their action or lack of it which is newsworthy” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003). This notion that some personalities make news by their action or lack of it was exemplified by the source called Raila once more:

For example, Raila saying he is going to revoke all the allocations in the by-passes and he is the minister of roads. You know he has the capability and the ability, and we know he is unstoppable when he decides to do something because that is his nature. I wouldn't have taken any one else seriously, it depends on the personality" (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

It follows that such elites have high news values due to their association with other news values such as drama and impact. And, it follows further that in qualifying as newsworthy, they are likely to qualify automatically sources whose voices are reflected on this basis.

6.7 Elite sources

The kind of readership the newspaper caters for has also influenced its choices of both news and the kind of sources that tend to dominate page one stories. Some editors believe that the newspaper is reaching the ordinary people, the public in general, as this view would suggest: "We as editors, we try as much as possible to be pedestrians. As much as possible, we think of the pedestrian reader, we must give the ordinary readership what resonates with them" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). This "pedestrian reader" however, tends to still belong to a relatively elite social class which is defined by the newspaper's preference for some types of topics of news stories above others, and the type of sources that go with these choices. For this reason, there is an overarching agenda that tends towards the elite social class. During my observation of an editorial training session used to induct new journalists into this newspaper, the following remarks brought out some significant points to demonstrate this assertion.

Nation is a paper for the intelligent, middle class readership; three million readers, and covering East and Central Africa. Headlines reflect on news punch line. A group of donors meeting tomorrow have to do with several issues of newsworthy considerations: dealing with corruption. Aid was stopped three years ago and the condition for resumption was pegged on fight against corruption. There are signs that this condition is seen to be fulfilled – security and attraction of investment (remarks made during a training section during my observation on 27/11/2003).

Another editor agreed that the elitist readership influences both the choices of front-page stories and of the related news sources.

I haven't looked at the figures lately for comparison, but the people who read newspapers in this country have completed university since the 60s, and the reading public is still a very elite society (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

6.8 Expertise in the news content

During the time of this study, most experts were sourced from among lawyers, police, some politicians, church leaders, heads of financial institutions and other professionals. To illustrate this, one editor explained that, "you identify a source in terms of speciality. If we had a first test-tube baby in Kenya, you would have to talk to the doctors or the Kenya Medical Research Institute" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003).

Adding to this are sources that are selected by virtue of having first-hand information which not many others have. They are said to be privy to specific information that is newsworthy. "They have the information, they are insiders like in this donors' meeting, the sources were ministers themselves. They must be involved in the event" (Interview with J9, 25/11/2003).

Other sources include those who stage events to attract the news media and to seek publicity. They have the expertise in that they hold private information they want to relay to the news media in order to promote their own agenda. I gathered, though, that reporters are generally wary of publicity seekers. "You have to be careful not to fall into the trap of someone setting an agenda for the newspaper. It is for me as the news editor to judge from experience" (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003). Admittedly, as some editors pointed out, sometimes publicity seekers can succeed by setting an agenda with newsworthy events, and, in this way, they become sources of the news in this context.

You can stage an event that makes it impossible for the media to ignore. You can do that, and it becomes an occurrence of such magnitude that even if the journalists wanted to ignore, they have just to focus on it (Interview with J7, /22/12/2003).

I found out that non-elite people become sources in the *Daily Nation* only in cases where they are considered as direct witnesses to extraordinary events such as disaster, disruption of normal life, and if they were involved in an event of such magnitude as to lend themselves difficult to ignore by the news media. Strikes, including one in the transport sector and another involving university lecturers, occurred during the time of this study. Both received wide coverage in the front pages on the first day they occurred.

I observed that the bulk of sources in these events included grassroots sources, lecturers, ordinary workers, police, government ministers, and nameless sources. The main thread in the news covering public transport crisis was the introduction of new laws by the government in order to enhance safety on the road, failing which the owners of the vehicles would not be licensed to operate publicly. At one point in this story the head of state was the main source of news because he reiterated that the laws that had been introduced and which had sparked the public taxi strike would be adhered to. The actors in this story were mainly the public taxi operators/drivers and their conductors, while the sources of news were: the head of state, the minister for transport, the police and the leader of the association to which the public taxi owners subscribe their membership. All these sources were elites. Then one or two commuters were interviewed for their comments about the outlook of the city without public taxis. But the sources that carried much weight in this particular news story were the head of state and the leader of the public taxi association. The coverage of the story excluded the taxi operators in terms of seeking their views.

6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the news sources that the journalists tend to select for the front page stories are considered primarily on the basis of their relevance to the news agenda and their attributed newsworthiness. What the newspaper staff considers relevant to the stories has to do with the subject of the story which translates into its newsworthy qualities. The chapter has worked with the notion of name recognition which was often used to describe the criteria used to qualify the selection of both actors and news sources for the front-page stories. By unpacking this notion of name recognition, I have shown that it refers to the newsworthiness of the source in

relation to how the name is perceived to resonate among the readers. Ultimately this notion has worked to entrench elite sources in the front page stories, which further is intended to strengthen the newspaper's business capacity and increase the copy sales. There are running themes that show that many of the qualities of sources have similarities to news attributes like identification, elitism, relevance, proximity, importance, impact, consequence, controversy, conflict, immediacy, sentimentalism, interesting, national leadership and so forth. Thus, to a large extent, news sources are selected because they possess many of the qualities which describe news values essentially, and secondly because these sources are relevant to the considerations made about newsworthiness of the stories.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter brings out salient points that came out of the findings of the study of news sources for discussion. I present the discussion in the light of my research aims and objectives, and the theoretical framework informing it. Specifically the findings of the study relate to the selection of news sources for the front-page stories in relation to the news values. In this discussion, I draw upon a paradigm of the role of media in society in terms which obligate the news media in democratic societies to seek the widest possible views in the news.

7.1 News values are significant in source selection

The research question in this thesis sought to investigate how the criteria of news values which qualify stories as important news meriting page one placement, related to the choices made about the news sources. Thus, by examining the process of selecting the lead stories, the study investigated how newsworthy qualities also served to inform journalists in their selection of sources. Chapter two of this thesis outlined the theoretical perspectives underlying news values, the qualities which are used as guiding rules to judge stories as meriting inclusion or omission in the newspaper as news. It also highlighted the significance of front-page stories in relation to news values and their placement in the front pages.

In newsroom practice, and as was demonstrated in the findings of this study, this process involves corporate editorial decisions involving a group of senior editors whose task is to judge, in a consensual manner, potential page one stories by applying the conventional newsworthy considerations. The findings also expounded on the considerations which go into sources' selection, and established the significance of newsworthiness in this selection. Thus, the study demonstrated that the selection process of front-page stories goes hand in hand with the selection of the related news sources, and this process involves assessment of newsworthy criteria in both cases. In the *Daily Nation* newsroom, conceptual terms such as 'importance' and 'bigness' are

used by journalists to describe potential page one stories, while ‘name recognition’ is used to describe a potentially important source. All these concepts, the study found are implicit references to newsworthy criteria or the news values.

In the *Daily Nation* newspaper, these conceptual descriptions had acquired certain professional and ideological meanings which led to the tendency of the journalists to skew the selection of page one news stories towards certain types of news topics and actors, and hence to skew the selection of news sources (inasmuch as these may be distinct from the actors), towards a certain class of people. It emerged, at the specific time of this study, that the news values of page one stories were more closely related to political issues than to other topics, and this furthermore influenced the choices of sources largely from the political elites.

7.2 Journalists are committed to news values and not to distinctions of sources

The challenge to account for other groups in news practice in order to bring out a balanced representation of views hovers around newsroom practice. Journalists in the *Daily Nation* demonstrated their motivation, in terms of democratic principles of the press, to select sources of news from a variety of groups according to their social and demographic representation. However, it seems like the application of this balance in source selection was more complex in a commercial newspaper context than would be envisaged in the ideal situation. And of course this was evident in this study. Many of the editors interviewed in this study expressed more than just an awareness of the flaw of having primarily political elites entrenched on the front pages, and made practical efforts towards influencing a wider selection which means obtaining views from a wide range of Kenyans. But these efforts seemed to be in sharp competition with several other factors. These included the conventionalised ways of newsmaking which the reporters have internalised and commercial goals of the newspaper, coupled with the external social reality such as the political environment, social structures and cultural norms prevailing in the country.

It has been observed elsewhere that the idea of seeking wider representation in news reporting is not something that journalists prioritise. The starting point for them is making news in terms that prioritise news values above other considerations. Studies conducted in Israeli newspapers by Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig (2003) revealed the

difficulty of considering, for example, gender particularities in newsmaking. Their findings show that “those who take part in news production think of their occupation as a commitment to the news first and foremost” (2003:11). Their findings, they say, “support the claim that no significant ‘otherness’ exists among news editors in their professed news values, nor in their news selection practice” (2003:12). In this regard, they agree with scholars like Van Zoonen (1994) who argued that “news production in its very essence is professional and non-gender specific”, thus, “news is news and does not involve gender” (Van Zoonen cited in Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig, 2003:4). Indeed some editors of the *Daily Nation* echo Van Zoonen’s observations.

News for us is not determined by whether the news source is itself a man or a woman. There is nothing like that at all. It is the value of that news, it doesn’t matter who is generating that news, or where it is coming from or who is associated with it (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

It brings us back to the claims of this study of the significance of news values in selecting news and news sources. Hard to de-link from the practice of news reporting are external social contexts as well as organisational and professional imperatives constraining journalistic choices in news reporting. Van Zoonen (1994) emphasises the importance of organisational and group factors which she says shape the news item and its level of newsworthiness. This view is extended further by Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig who concluded that the national context of where news is produced has an impact on what sort of news is prioritised. For example, they say that in Israel, the very existence of the nation in terms of, for instance, its security “drives and controls the newsworthiness scale and leaves no room for any genuine expression of gender-based preferences” (2003:9).

Empirical findings in this study demonstrate that a similar situation envelops the *Daily Nation*’s efforts in trying to conceive of enhanced diversity of views in the news. Reader interest was clearly emphasised by several interviewees who argued that the news is based on the social context in which its readers are found and this implies highlighting issues in the news that touch on national importance. These priorities make journalists not see the issue of balancing representation as a key priority in news

reporting. One editor asserted to me that one does not set out to publish a democratic newspaper where you balance the representation:

Representation is a secondary consideration. It is important but secondary. The first thing is really capturing the audience, and secondly delivering the news you think will be appropriate for your audience both in terms of significance and interest. Then you ask yourself, what happens? In doing that am I perhaps featuring only men? Then you say, hey! Wait a minute, I think we should get stories from Asians, or we need some *Wazungus* [whites]. Only then can we do that. Then in our particular case, refugees, but it will be driven by reader appeal. If it is an issue, it has to be important and interesting. That is one thing academic media analysis forgets. If you put out a paper that is so democratic, that is just issue driven, and you think it is an issue of appeal to your audience, you will die (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

We may infer from the foregoing arguments that news values are the most important factor in journalistic choices of news and news sources. But with the same breath we need to scrutinise the journalistic choices by enlisting the argument brought forth by Croteau and Hoynes (2000) who observe that the news values do not exist of and by themselves. Croteau and Hoynes contend that “newsworthiness is socially constructed. It is not a property inherent in events but is instead something that is attached to happenings of journalists” (2000:132; see also Hall, 1978; Golding and Elliot, 1979).

News values, according to the views of the above scholars, can be shaped by the editors’ and journalists’ focus on particular interests in society, and thus, influence the sort of sources that are selected. I observed, in this study, that by giving priority to certain issues in society, news values could be influenced to suit politics and economics topics, and through male lenses, to privilege male political elite as news sources. The *Daily Nation*’s front pages bear witness to this observation (see chapter 4).

7.3 Some sources drive news issues

Certain personalities have almost become synonymous with the lead stories of the *Daily Nation*. These personalities seem to fit the description offered by McNair (1998:7) of actors and/or sources who have acquired “power to make news”. They acquire this power through their position in society, knowledge of issues and skills of articulation which lend them eligibility for interpretation of social reality. Sometimes they emanate with news because they share many of the news values among journalists (Gans, 1979). It was my observation too, that in some cases in the news selection process, it was almost unthinkable for journalists to talk of news without talking of certain personalities in society. This observation found explanation in the views given by a number of editors. For example, one of them explained that in newsroom practice news making is “driven by the issue and the person together” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003). Newsmakers, as was pointed out by one editor, easily fit the description of the persons who drive the issues of news.

In some instances, personalities considered as newsworthy can drive the news by their action or lack of it. They have been elevated in the news media to the circuit of recognisable names. From this pedestal they can “make themselves into news attraction” and what they say and do or fail to do “resonate quickly” and qualify as newsworthy (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003 and J4, 17/12/2003). It is the view of some interviewees that the newspaper has given these personalities prominence to a point where it has become difficult to ignore them because journalists believe that “people want to listen to what they are saying” (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003). Such individuals are typically both actor and source in the news.

7.4 News events may determine the choice of source

Regardless of a recognisable name, I found out that a source can sometimes be selected on the basis of newsworthy ingredients found in a story. In breaking news, for example, the story counts more than the source, and it is the nature of the event that guides the selection of the source. “An event like terrorist bombing is more important than somebody telling you I heard, or something like that” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003). In such instances direct eye witnesses often feature as news sources by supplying information based on news values of drama (Gans, 1979).

News breaks, depending on their magnitude, can also turn a person without a recognisable name to a newsworthy source by what they say about the news event. “If somebody comes and tells you, I planted the bomb that killed ten people, that immediately becomes more important than ten people dying” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003). Such news sources have been viewed by Hall et al (1978) as ordinary people who become news sources because they participate in events that are deemed extraordinary or disruptive to the social order. Whichever way one looks at such sources, one thing stands out: that the event they participate in is deemed newsworthy and therefore, in that instance, what they say is judged as newsworthy.

Clearly from the findings of this study, whether we are considering conventional news or breaking stories, the running theme in selection of news sources is the news values.

Regardless of the source, you must weigh it against the background of your news item, against what is worth. You must weigh it against the standards of what makes a news story (Interview with J5, 26/11/2003).

Because of the newsworthiness factor, sources are not arbitrarily chosen. Zoch and Turk (1998) in their study of source selection remind us that “it is the individual reporters who pick news sources, decide what questions to ask, which quotations to use and which ones to ignore and what tone the story should take” (1998:762). This point leads us to consider the journalistic sense of news values that guides source selection, and their basing this selection on the relevance of the source to the story, or on the additional value the source brings to the story.

7.5 A Source must be relevant to the news

Whereas this study has revealed that the majority of news sources consisted of a very small group of people said to have recognisable names, there is a strong emphasis among the respondents of the significance of the relevance of the news source to the specific story line as the following quotes illustrate:

Definitely you don't talk to somebody who is not related to the story. News sources validate the story because, it proves that this is not something you sat down and dreamt up, somebody is giving you value and saying, yes this is XYZ. It depends on

the story the source is talking about on, the event or on what the news source is saying (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

The above was given further emphasis by others, and particularly J2 and J5 who argued that news sources must be relevant to the story in view of the background of the story. They are considered privy to information that is being sought by the reporters.

Definitely you must go to the people who are relevant to what you are writing about. Like this business of roads, definitely you cannot go to the minister for Cooperative Development, he would not know anything. You want to go to people that are privy to what you need to write about (Interview with J2, 16/12/2003).

Being privy to information must be matched by knowledge of the issues in relation to the anticipated news. In this way the source validates the story by giving it a quality of believability by the audience.

7.6 Sources improve the story's worth

Sometimes sources are chosen to “add value to the story” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003), or improve story values which in turn elevates it to page one treatment. This can be achieved by adding more sources to a story that may initially have looked less important. In the process the journalist also achieves a degree of balance and an image of objectivity. One journalist sees this as a mark of “professionalism” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). All these considerations explain why some stories in the front page tend to contain an array of sources.

Although there is no rigid rule to this, I found out that stories perceived to have the potential of impacting on many readers in diverse ways received multiple source treatment. Examples of these included stories with a controversial news line.

In a controversial story, for example, when a person is accused by others, like this one where people are plotting to remove Muite as chairman, you end up having even more than five people. First you go to Muite, and you go to the people who want to remove him, and those supporting him, and to the speaker of the National Assembly.

We like to give people a right of reply for purposes of balance and accuracy. If you are a person accused, we will come to you and tell you this and that has been said about you, then in the process the person may end up giving you more information (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003).

This goes together with the notion of fairness and objectivity, which works, in a sense, to absolve reporters from potential accusations from readers of bias.

Because you are the main character in the story and you haven't spoken, all we have from others may be hearsay or speculation. If you didn't speak then everybody reading the story may say; so and so didn't speak, so what are you talking about? You are just speculating. You have to prove to the reader that you are not doing that. For instance, in this story of Martha Karua, by hearing her side of the story, it made our story much better. At least we heard from the horse's mouth. Before that we were going by reports from other people. Even if she had said 'no comment', we had taken it from the source (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

At the same time, additional information works to improve the story's worth in issues where the newspaper wants to sustain national debate. "Sometimes you have to look specifically for that person because he will improve the story. Like on that day I was under pressure to get Uhuru Kenyatta to speak on the coin because he is the official leader of the Opposition" (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). This particularity in the choice of a source is more or less reinforced by the news media's own agenda of the news. It leads to Cohen's (1963) argument, expounded by Zoch and Turk (1998:763), that the media "selects for dissemination, from the array of available information, those pieces of information reporters and editors think are important, the media's agenda of salient information". This assertion was confirmed by a number of interviewees, in addition to the one below:

I think as opinion shapers, we spark debate. Like if the government introduced a new law saying, shoot all the criminals on sight. That means the issue will go to *Mbunge* [parliament], and MPs will debate whether it is fair or not (Interview with J4, 15/12/2003).

What is noticeable in all this, however, is that “balance” and “debate” seems to be interpreted within the horizons of the elite. In some instances, some news sources are required to fill missing factual gaps in the news content and this “depends on what parts of the story” a news source gives information to.

In this particular story, of street prostitutes, some members of parliament volunteered to come and deny what nobody had accused them of because they are guilty. In this case they added value to this story. They gave us the faces on which to launch this story (Interview with J1, 16/12/2003).

That news sources are linked to news in its various aspects of newsworthy aspects is no longer in doubt in this study. But it is also clear from the findings, and highlighted in this discussion, that these news values can be constructed to suit certain choices both in news items and sources. This is clear from examining source selection and the exclusion of females and ordinary sources.

7.7 Exclusion of female and ordinary sources undermines the democratic space

This study uncovered certain perceptions that cut across the news room, regarding the absence of news sources from among the female and ordinary people. Reporters felt that women are mainly left out in the process of source selection for what was viewed as their own inability to speak to the media. Some reporters termed them “media shy” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003), while others believed they are constrained by the patriarchal nature of family relationships, as well as the social structures in society. These constraints were believed to make it rather risky for them to get involved with news people. “There are also cultural constraints, for example, if I am seen with a woman MP in a bar, people would think we are having an affair” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

As convincing as these perceptions may seem, much research drawing mainly from feminists perspectives have challenged these claims. They argue, for instance, that universal access, which in this sense means the media being a public sphere where different groups can be accessed and their views can be debated, was constructed through the significant exclusion of women (Landes, 1988; Fraser, 1992; Pateman, 1988 and Ryan, 1992 cited in Carter et al, 1998:72-79). Scholars working from this

perspective are inclined to suggest that the news media is a gendered structure. The views they express are significant in terms of scrutinising the news media within the paradigm of democratic ideals. Taking into account the arguments that support the media as a public sphere, which is seen as a foundation for democracy, Carter et al (1998) and Van Zoonen (2000) have made a significant contribution in this regard. From their views one would infer that the selection of sources should include accounting “for the participation of women in various public spaces” (1998:72-76) and this should include offering their views in news. But it is not the case with the *Daily Nation* newspaper. It seems that this media, although ideally acting as a public space, does not count female perspectives in source selection as equally important to the news agenda as those of men. Many interviewees in this study blamed the social and cultural structures for this inequity in source selection, which they argued has constrained the women’s public perspectives in the public sphere. For example, one put it this way:

May be because of the way our society is built, it still sees a man’s point of view or a man’s argument as being more valid than a woman’s. This is the way society tends to think. In relation to news, let me give you an example, when there was attempted coup d’etat in the early eighties, the radio news broadcast station chose a man to break the news although there was a senior news anchor. It is psychological, it is stupid, but that is what it is. People still talk of a father figure. It is so much patriarchal which is annoying. For me, it is not a matter of who said it, whether a man or woman, I don’t care (Interview with j6, 16/12/2003).

This view was also corroborated by many others, for example, J10, who pointed out that cultural norms designate men with authority to speak even when it is within a home setting and these bear on what news look like. Thus, it will appear in the news as if a man’s voice has more impact than that of the women. “It has a lot to do with our culture. If you go to a homestead, the first face you will see is that of the man. He is the one with the opinion” Interview with J 10, 22/12/2003). From the findings of this study, however, there is another element that constrains the female voices. This has largely to do with the newsroom staff perceptions about women as the following quote will demonstrate:

I think the bigger problem is that women themselves don't do enough to change those circumstances – to bring themselves to the front-line of newspaper reporting if you like, to be the main news sources. They concentrate too much on philosophical issues. Last week women were complaining about gender insensitivity in the parastatals. For me that is not a story at all. I think they have locked themselves out of the mainstream media reporting, if you like. I think they need to refocus on things that find a lot more popularity, say, policy issues, health matters. For example, the other day we had a story about this guy who raped a four-year-old child and there was hullabaloo by parliamentarians. But most of these parliamentarians were women and I think they generated enough newsworthy content to deliver them to the front page (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

As many interviewees have demonstrated in this study, there are not only questions of cultural dynamics but the issue of news values that seem to work against female participation in the public sphere of news. In other words, the skewing of news values to elitism and societal values reflect on how female sources are represented in the important news of the day – the front-page stories. Thus, in the elite real world, news values are applied in an unrepresentative way, while in terms of societal values women's actual score on things like impact is less than men's.

As with female sources, ordinary sources are initially treated with suspicion and dismissed as having no knowledge of issues in the news. They are not considered credible sources as this interviewee shows:

Maybe they are telling a half-baked story or speaking from a very narrow perspective, maybe they don't know the full story. I don't know which facts he has and it depends on who else was around in the event who can corroborate the story and say it is true. When we get the bigger picture then the narrow perspective is not important any more. The most obvious thing is about issues. The press will look for somebody who has authority (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

In terms of the role of the press in democracy, the *Daily Nation* seems to have ignored the importance associated with what is viewed as true diversity in democratic societies. In more contemporary terms, Carter et al (1998) suggest that the public space that media offers to citizens should be a "space in which differences are

predominantly managed today... and “this might be referred to as ‘media event space’ filled with groups and interests that require representation through the communication media”. These groups “would not seem to exist in the absence of media representation” (1998:73).

One may want to look at the *Daily Nation*’s performance in regard to the selection of news and news sources from the point of view of a strand of the First World model of democracy which views the news media as a commercial entity. In this model, the news media is said to be governed by commercial non-ideological pressure whose aim is to reach the largest audience possible (Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig, 2003). The primary standard that measures the success of the newspaper operating within this model is its audience share. This implies, according to Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig, that news values are a function of audience interest, a factor that was emphasised by majority of the reporters and editors interviewed in the *Daily Nation*.

True to this status, news values would therefore be influenced by the reality on the ground whereby issues of national importance would reflect audience interests. Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig show in their findings that a press driven by commercial objectives would be expected to present “issues which are a subject of public controversy and debated values”. Moreover, in this model, the media “requires the construction and ranking of a mix of news topics which appeal to the average reader, male or female alike” (Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig, 2003:18).

The *Daily Nation* newspaper, moreover, has made overt claims to a pluralistic outlook in terms of its intended news perspectives, as can be gleaned from its editorial policy guidelines. These claims open it up for research scrutiny, particularly regarding its tendency to skew the selection of front-page news sources to a tiny group in society who do not represent the views of majority in terms of social and demographic representation. The implications are many but one important one is that readers may construe that the newspaper defines news values in terms of class and male politics, or what Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig term as gendered politics in the news.

7.8 Political elite values are privileged by social structures, which inhibit diversity

It has become clear from the findings of this study that in the *Daily Nation* newsroom, elite personalities, and particularly the political elites, tend to be represented from many angles in the front-page stories. They are often actors in news events, sometimes they are subjects of stories as newsmakers and their social and political perspectives dominate what constitutes the ‘diversity of views’ of source. In as far as the newspaper’s editorial policy perspectives are concerned, this small class of people should not cloud other views in the news. This should explain, to some extent, why the editorial management team has begun to be wary of them and now treat them as the “usual suspects, the more noisy ones” (Interview with J, 10, 22/12/2003), because they make themselves a news attraction and reporters tend to systematically access them.

This practice on the part of reporters does not differ with what has been examined theoretically. Zoch and Turk (1998), for example, cite Stempel and Culbertson who observe that “a source’s assertiveness, credibility (as determined by the journalist), accessibility, and quotability can affect both a source’s prominence (frequency of mention) and dominance (tendency to be quoted rather than paraphrased or just written about) in news coverage” (Zoch and Turk, 1998: 764).

The current type of ‘diversity’ of news perspectives that now defines the *Daily Nation*’s front-page news sources has already been noted with dissatisfaction by some of the top editorial decision-makers. One of them observes that “it is a very dangerous proportion for the newspaper” (Interview with J10, 22/1/2/2003). The awareness of this danger has led to efforts, albeit with minimal success, to broaden news perspectives:

When we are sending reporters now we give them a very clear break; I don’t want any comment from a,b,c,d. I want diversity, a wide range of diversity, not just diversity. I want a cross section of Kenyans. We have realised and seen for ourselves that even when we tout our policy and ethical journalism, we are not helping ourselves in terms of the way we just concentrate only on one kind of politicians and ignore all else. We have started now withdrawing from them altogether, and de-

emphasise them, so today you will find very little of the few politicians (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

The difficulty of effecting changes in the newsroom in terms of seeking a wider diversity of views in the news, in the face of the what seems like a differently structured social context within which news reporting is done, is inevitable. One senior editor argues that there are government structures to contend with in the sense that the political elite dominate the decision-making group, and it is from them that important material that translates into news comes from. “Look at the make up of our society especially the decision-making level. There are factors that drive our news and a good deal come from decision-makers in government” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

Another reality to contend with is the commercial arena that is important for the existence of the newspaper. Various journalists do not see the effort to de-emphasise elitist values in the front-page news succeeding in the face of commercial goals of the news organisation. Many years of operating in this context have attested to the role of elite sources in enhancing the commercial viability of the newspaper. Their prominence means the paper will sell because the sources resonate with the purchasing public. Because they can sell the newspaper, there are times when these sources set the news agenda. The following quotes support this claim:

There is a unit upstairs that does research and they tell us which kind of stories are popular and which ones don't sell. It does also define some names of politicians which we put on the headlines like Kiraitu, Raila fighting Muite, you put those on page one and they sell the newspaper. There are some names which sell the newspaper (Interview with J9, 25/11/2003).

One of the challenges reporters must deal with every day is being able to meet the set deadlines so that news can be delivered within the quickest time possible. It requires that the raw material of this news must be accessed just as fast. Elite sources offer journalists the convenience they require within a short span of time in the newsgathering procedures to get the information they need. It is one of the reasons that tend to turn reporters to the same people for news information. “We talk to the

same individuals because they are more organised and they will give you the quote you are looking for” (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

For the journalist, there is another added advantage in selecting elite sources. Journalists, being mainly part of elite themselves, share the same social space and level of articulation with this social sector. Research in source selection demonstrates that “reporters repeatedly go to sources who are like themselves and tend not to select sources or to quote sources who refute their own ideas” (Zoch and Turk, 1998:764). In the case of the *Daily Nation*, reporters look for qualifiers such as ‘name recognition’ that make sources viable for selection.

By their tendency to access the elite for news information, journalists confirm their cultural assumptions about source credibility (McNair, 1998) which is “reinforced by the convenience of accessing some sources over others” (1998:76). McNair’s view in this regard is that preference of some sources to others does not happen as a matter of professional practice and organisational constraints; rather it is the cultural assumptions that the elite are credible sources. This assumption paints news with the “main elite-established views” (1998:76). It was the assumption in this study that elite established voices are preferred in the *Daily Nation* newspaper. This status has been found to hold with regard to the news media in contemporary Africa (Kupe, 2003). Kupe observes that

the print media, both state and privately owned tend to cater and very much be a voice for the dominant political and economic elite. To that extent in terms of content, they often are not pluralistic and diverse and do not represent the widest possible of views existing in society. Rather they tend to reflect the consensus of the elite (2003:5).

Similar observations are made by McNair (1998). He postulates that, “journalistic definition of who is and who is not an important or legitimate validating source” is reinforced by their accessing some over others, and this “may lead to the exclusion of voices which have something relevant to say on the issue” (1998:76). This study confirmed McNair’s suspicion. The findings show that, on one hand, female sources are severely diminished as sources of front-page news even when they can offer valid information. Ordinary sources, on the other hand, are dismissed on the claims of lack

of credibility and consequence. “What would they say that is credible? Look at it this way, the way they say it does not have far reaching implications” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003). These two categories of potential news sources are seldom chosen for what is considered important national news except in what is termed human interest stories. For ordinary people, the possibility of getting on the front pages on a regular basis as news sources is seen to be a far fetched dream.

Many of the views of the ordinary sources are not catered for on page one because I think this is catered for in our *Sunday Nation* because most of the things they will be saying is not what will make news for page one. We also get vox-pop. You go and get the views of the ordinary persons. We normally do that that when it is a major event, but it can never be done on everyday basis” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003).

Female sources seem to be associated with sensational stories in which the subject of the story happens to be female, and in stories that are normally categorised under human interest. “It depends on what kind of story. Like the rape story, many sources were women because it affected women” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003). In other cases when females are chosen as sources of the front page stories, it reflects elitism. “I am not surprised that when you hear a woman, you will be hearing about her because she is in politics” (Interview with J 8, 18/12/2003).

7.9 The democratic paradigm and the role of the news media

This study was interested in assessing the *Daily Nation*'s performance in source selection in view of the paper's role in a Third World context of democratic ideals of the press. Scholars working in this field see these as ideally applicable in contemporary news media, notwithstanding the shortcomings in Third World societies (Berger, 2000; Odhiambo, 2003; Kupe, 2003; Ansah, 1988 and Manning, 2001).

Ansah (1988) points out that the democratic model of news reporting, though western in origin, has gained preference in Africa, and Berger (2002) notes that in this democratic paradigm, journalistic practice can be identified within four broad versions, namely: liberal, neo-liberal, social responsibility and participatory. Though the Kenyan society in which the *Daily Nation* operates can be described as an emerging democracy, the newspaper's editorial staff, as was found out in this study, and by perusing the newspaper's editorial guidelines, demonstrated commitment to

several aspects of democratic ideals in news reporting. One of the aspects is shown by their belief in being the public watchdog within which they constantly engaged the politicians and other leaders in society on diverse social, economic and political issues and evaluated their performance in terms that called for public scrutiny and accountability. Their claims to educate and inform the public on salient issues at the national level were part of their adherence to the democratic ideals of the press. This view is expressed more aptly by one editor:

There is a role that the media plays that people do not see – that is of being a watchdog and also to guide society. The main responsibility is to educate, inform and entertain. The constituency of our MPs have a right to know what kind of leaders they elected (Interview with J12, 14/12/2003).

These expressions create certain expectations by the readers and media analysts to see that those the leaders represent can have a voice in the news, and in the interest of democracy, in ways that express their own perspectives. On the contrary, the systematic selection of a few male politicians as sources of news of the front page stories, which was seen to be the case in the *Daily Nation*, does not satisfy the claims to democratic representations. Instead there is a gross exclusion of other potentially important sources in society, which again denies the public the widest views there could possibly be in the news issues of the day.

7.10 Conclusion

This study has shown that the relationship between the sources of page one stories and news values are inextricably related. The study has revealed that editors and reporters are conscious of this relationship. This awareness obligates them to assess news sources within the framework of newsworthiness in terms of both the story and the source. By using descriptions of stories as ‘important’ and ‘big’, editors accomplish newsworthiness which elevates a story to page one placement. By using the term ‘name recognition’, they also accomplish newsworthiness, this time qualifying a source as suitable for page one stories.

The newsworthiness accomplished by judging sources on the basis of name recognition has, however, narrowed the views in the news to those of elites. It has

worked to over-emphasise the male elite as sources to the exclusion of other potential sources in society. Ordinary sources are seldom featured on the front pages as news sources except when the magnitude of the story, exemplified by breaking news, dictates the choice of sources as eye witnesses, or when the editorial staff see the need to broaden the views on a national issue by extending debate to the ordinary citizen. In these instances, the sources do not necessarily have to be in the circuit of recognisable names. Whilst the ordinary sources get selected in the news in those circumstances, female sources get rare chances of being selected except in news events that suggest the subject of the news belong to women issues. The study has shown too, that news topics on the front pages have been narrowed to politics, and this has influenced the kind of sources that are selected: elite politicians.

The interest of this study to assess the *Daily Nation* within the paradigm of media and democracy ideals, was motivated by the knowledge that the newspaper played a pivotal role among other media organisations in influencing the democratisation process in Kenya in 1990s (Odhiambo, 2003). In democratic societies, journalists are assumed to be independent from overt influence of dominant politicians and powerful elites (Manning, 2001). This relative independence should lead to allowing diverse public views on the news agenda, and it would be reasonable to expect that news sources would not be so limited as to reflect the perspectives of very few people in society. Findings in this regard have revealed a different picture. In terms of ethics of journalism and the paper's editorial policy mandate, we are obliged to question the logic of entrenching a tiny segment of people in society in the most important stories of the day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up the key issues that arose out the study of the selection of news sources, and relates this to the goals of the research. The research set out to investigate how news values are operationalised in the selection of news sources in the front page stories of the *Daily Nation*, a contemporary Third World newspaper, based in Nairobi, Kenya. It also examined the type of news sources that are preferred on the front-page stories. The research took as given the role of media in democracy with the assumption that the journalists working in this paper are independent from overt influence of the politicians and powerful elites (see chapter one and two). In this regard, it was argued that meaningful independence would mean that the selection of sources would represent the widest views possible in society.

By employing three research methods in this investigation (content analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations (chapter three), I established that news values are a significant consideration in the process of selecting news sources. Having established this factor, the study went on to examine the kind of news sources that were preferred for the front pages. The findings in both the quantitative and qualitative studies (see chapters four, five and six) show that there was a preference for selecting male political elites for the front-page stories, selections which were influenced, to a large extent, by the elitist kind of political stories that predominated on the front pages. This then begs the question: to what extent are democratic principles put to work in this newspaper? This is one among the key issues this thesis is interested to highlight. The sections which follow sum up key issues in the findings and conclude with some suggestions for the newspaper. I also raise issues for further research.

8.1 Name recognition leads to narrow perspectives in the news content

When reporters in the *Daily Nation* use the term ‘name recognition’ to justify the selection of sources it serves, to a greater extent, to privilege the elite class. In essence, this gives the news sources a certain leverage to determine the news agenda, and in the process to influence the news content in ways that reinforce the views of the elite. In other words, what the editors and reporters consider salient information or issues of national importance draw their interpretation from a small minority in the public, while other views are largely neglected. By emphasising elite sources and particularly the concentration of political elite in the front-page stories, the newspaper also seems to have defined for itself a view of newsworthiness that is very narrow.

We create these politicians, by giving them undue publicity and in time they become monsters and they grow to such proportions that we cannot ignore them anymore. When they open their mouths anywhere, you are there. People want to listen to what they are saying, and it has been going on for many years (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Due to the preponderance of political, followed by economic, news types in the front-page stories, journalists are obligated in terms of consideration of news values to select those sources relevant to the topic of the news. Regardless of that obligation, it does not seem to augur well with the expressed commitment to the public interest to repeatedly elevate some sources as favourites of the newspaper even if one were to argue for politics as a valid news subject. These sentiments are also expressed by some among the interviewees. For example, one felt that selecting few personalities repeatedly undermines attempts to seek diversity in news reporting. “If we were all very open and came up and said, let us talk about it frankly, there would be no particular person who will become a darling of the press more than the others” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

Interviews in this study showed that some editors have begun to be frustrated by the tendency on the part of journalists to narrow sources to the few familiar sources and are challenging the news team to shun ‘laziness’ and look wider, to bring not just diversity but a wide range of diversity. But the idea of bringing a wide range of diversity is confronted by the need to increase sales, the latter which is believed to be

enhanced by selecting elite actors and sources in the front-page stories. How to equitably balance the act between bringing diversity and increasing sales is the present dilemma.

Some respondents viewed the commercial goals of the newspaper as having primarily shaped the news outlook and the choices of sources that are mainstreamed on the front pages. In other words, the business objectives of the newspaper make it imperative to operate within the social and economic context that enables the newspaper to operate profitably. This context is perceived by some to have a bearing on what kinds of news are selected for front-page coverage and what sources in relation to this are chosen. It is a context that may not promise much diversity in news choices in the short-run.

We are constrained by the nature of the society we are dealing with, very small elite operating in urban areas setting the agenda. And I think the other is about commercial reasons. You focus on those resources; your ability to do what you are saying is narrowed by those commercial reasons. These leaders set the agenda, they have the money, so they give you advertising – so what they are likely to say is likely to constitute what you are likely to engage, which colours your judgement. But it is a weakness on the part of journalists. We have failed to broaden the news perspectives (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

With reference to the structure of the society in which the newspaper operates is another social aspect that defines the newspaper's readership. This is also a factor that paints the news content with an elitist outlook.

I tell you the newspaper readers are defined by the structures we have articulated here – a small elite group. And because of their interests, they have driven us to one direction. It is true we are not talking to these other groups (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

Thus, while some of the editors identified the emphasis on a few sources in the newspaper as something that is influenced by social structures and the commercial goals of the newspaper, others in the top editorial management group felt there was also a form of laziness among journalists which inhibits them from looking at news sources with wider lenses. The taken-for-granted professional ideologies of

newsmaking, which lead journalists in this newspaper to justify sources from what looks like a list of 'who is who' among the myriad of potential news sources, have also led to a tendency for journalists to chose sources largely from within a closed circuit of the familiar names.

People tend to gravitate towards the people they are familiar with, and it is a function of laziness on the part of the reporters. We don't want to exercise our minds too much, you call your friend and he gives you the quote you want and you do your story. What it does, actually, is to reflect on the newspaper as a very narrow-minded one, in the sense that its sources of information or comments are limited to one, two, three, four people. Happily for us, there has been a deliberate effort, at least in this particular company, but a slow one, to try and move away from that – de-emphasise the significance we give to these politicians (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Despite this seeming frustration with the reporters' 'mindset' that gravitates towards the politicians, the above respondent is still optimistic that there are possibilities that can permit the newspaper to turn the tide by spreading out wider in the selection of news and sources.

What the editor ought to do is steer these reporters and journalists and guide them in a different way so they bring diversity. But again happily for us, it is something we are noticing and therefore we are trying as we can, even as we are moving slowly (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

In addition to what was pointed out in the discussion section of this thesis, these expressions are evidence that some of the editors have identified narrowed news content in this newspaper as something that does not match up to the democratic ideals of a contemporary press. In this study, I identified some gaps in source selection that have resulted from skewing the selection of sources to a clique of politicians.

8.2 Imbalances in source selection

Even though the *Daily Nation* editorial team is keen to judge stories and news sources in terms that meet the criteria of news values, the preference for the elite news actors and sources has consequently affected the way these news values can be interpreted: those of class, male and elite politics. In this study, I noted that a few male politicians' voices dominated news of all kinds, ranging from social, economic, legal, business, to political news. The second group that came up in the news, albeit in limited ways, was that of male professionals. That means that news values in this newspaper are intrinsically related to, and unevenly skewed towards elitism and male-dominance.

The voices of the grassroots people and those of females in the front-page stories were rare. Often when these two categories came on the news, they tended to represent specially selected human interest issues. Although some reporters insisted that these groups are also represented in designated pages in the newspaper, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine the types of sources that were chosen in those pages. Perhaps a comparative study where all categories of stories in this newspaper are examined might answer this question.

Attention was given to this particular issue of under-representation of views of female and grassroots sources in this study (see chapter four) because of the social and demographic significance of their contribution to society, and the assumed importance of media in democracy ideals to which the *Daily Nation* subscribes, as can be gleaned from its editorial policy guidelines (see chapter one). The editorial policy expresses commitment to select news content for its inherent news values and not to augment political, commercial and other interests. There were also indications that the journalists and editors should be motivated by the need to promote diverse views in the news regardless of, for example, class, gender, race and so forth, which promises a picture of a wide range of diversity. Manning (2001) argues that there is an assumption in democratic societies that a free and independent news media plays an important role of maintaining the flow of ideas and information upon which groups of people make choices. This assumes first that these have views to contribute to the process of information circulation, and that their perspectives will not be constrained. It is a standard upon which diversity of their perspectives and interpretive frameworks that are present through the news media is weighed (2001:1).

Whereas this study noted the role of the news media in communicating news information to the public in order to sustain the political discussion and democratic process, generally the performance of the newspaper proved unsatisfactory with regard to the selection of news sources in terms of allowing diversity of perspectives from across various groups in society in the news.

Some of the journalists interviewed in this study came up with professional justification for the rarity of the presence of female and grassroots sources on the front-page news. Some respondents raised the question of social structures and cultural norms, as well as commercial paradigms of the newspaper as the main inhibitors of achieving reasonable diversity in source selection. A number of senior editors were optimistic that with the awareness of the newspaper's restricted outlook in terms of its news values, more efforts are being directed through editorial guidance towards achieving a wider diversity of views on the front-page stories.

8.3 Grassroots sources do not undermine news values but they have no consequence

It is interesting to note that grassroots sources are dismissed easily as not critical to front-page news. Several reporters, however, were of the view that grassroots sources are generally represented in the news. At one level, they are represented by the views of the leaders in society who often get selected as news sources for the lead stories, and are assumed to represent their interests and views. Of course this argument is hard to prove given the dynamics of class interests in society. At another level, they can represent themselves in designated forums such as vox-pop, opinion pages and letters pages. There were also views to the effect that the views of the ordinary people on the front pages do not have a significant consequence on the newspaper readers.

There are some occasions when grassroots sources get selected as prominent news sources where they, more often than not, make news as actors and voices in disruptive categories of news events including strikes and demonstrations. Reporters that were interviewed argued that ordinary sources get selected to speak to the news when they are directly involved in breaking news as first witnesses to the event. In this study, I observed that on two occasions where news events were fraught with strikes, one

involving university lecturers and another involving public taxis, sources of the news were selected from across different classes of people, including grassroots sources.

Some reporters argued that ordinary sources are generally excluded in the front-page stories due to lack of expertise that is required to make news of the front pages. More than that, they are often generally viewed with suspicion.

Some times it is because they are not experts. I must check the information with experts. If an ordinary person called here and told me the house next door has caught fire, I don't know whether you are a mad man, a drunkard. I will say thank you, but now I need to go and find out from somebody else independently what is really going on. If I had written every story that somebody just told me, I would forever be in law courts being sued for this and that (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003).

Another view holds that “a newspaper is not a notice board. We are not a clearing house” (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003). That means not everybody can be accessed for their opinion.

In spite of the notions coming from some of these interviewees, there is no denying among the journalists that grassroots sources do not undermine the story's worth if their opinions are used in the front pages. The following view partly illustrates this: “When we went down to the people about their being asked to contribute money towards *Madaraka* [right to self governance commemorated on June 1st] day celebrations, that is when an ordinary person spoke, and he spoke very powerfully, and the story was on page one” (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

Based on the underlying factors that guide news selection and news sources, one editor emphasised that “it is the value of that news, it doesn't matter who is generating that news or where it is coming from or who is associated with it” (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Taken together, the above two quotes suggest that the most important consideration in source selection is the value of the news, and that any one, regardless of class or gender, that generates relevant information to the news under consideration becomes a

relevant source. That notwithstanding, the obvious belief among many journalists in this newspaper is that, owing to what is considered the impact on the readership, ordinary sources would not resonate.

What consequence does what the source say have on the majority? If Ndingi says use condoms, what consequence? If Raila says something, at least the majority of people will tend to agree or to do what he is doing. If this ordinary man in the streets says the same thing no one will take him seriously (Interview with J3, 15/12/2003).

The conclusion in this section is to point out that ordinary sources are not considered newsworthy in terms that describe conventional ways of newsmaking, but can become front-page news sources only when they are entangled in news events of negativity and tragedy and are witnesses to these events. At another level, ordinary sources, as was shown in the findings chapters (chapter five and six), can become news actors in potential front-page stories. In these instances, as one editor explained, the stories in which they act would require a new layer of newsmakers – elite sources to enhance the news qualities required for page one treatment. This was clearly demonstrated in the coverage of the breaking news about K-street sex scandal involving MPs (see chapter five) where the news sources of this seemingly ‘big story’ were mainly elites, and the voices of the ordinary women involved in the stories, and other grassroots sources were generally neglected.

8.4 Why female sources are rare in the news

The news sources in the *Daily Nation* are an arena for male elite sources as was revealed by my observation, content analysis (chapter four) and views that came from interviewees. When the question of exclusion of female sources, even among the female elite, was raised, responses among many journalists and the newspaper management pointed to the issue of cultural norms and socialisation. Consequently the newspaper, according to some editors, tends to look at news with male lenses in setting the news agenda, which is something attributed more to the historical factors that have shaped the gender proportion in the staff than to an ideological factor. As was noted in this study, the present editorial staff positions reflect a strong male-dominated news organisation. Despite a notable number of senior female editors in this newspaper, and a good number of female reporters, it seemed like male

perspectives arguably set the trend for thinking and selecting news sources. Questions of whether an increase in female journalists in the newsroom and in senior decision-making positions would affect the outlook of the news content in terms of changing news values and accessing female sources have been addressed in several feminist-oriented studies (Van Zoonen, 1988, 1994; Lavie and Lebman-Wilzig, 2003; Zoch and Tuck, 1999) with the conclusion that there would be no significant difference. The main outcomes of these studies are that journalists are committed to news values in ways that are not gender specific. Thus, news must be seen as news regardless of who writes it and who gives voice to it – the source of news.

Although some of the *Daily Nation* editors felt that the historical development of the newspaper has tainted the news outlook with the male perspectives of issues, they still maintain this does not undermine news values as the criteria that guide the selection of sources, and that these news values are not altered by the kind of sources who speak to it, whether male or female. It can therefore be said that journalistic sense of news is important in the final decision regarding source selection. This would tie well with the argument brought forth by Gans (1979) that the journalists consider the news values first and foremost, and the sources function is to validate or enhance those values. Since journalists and editors are responsible for the final outlook of news, it can be said that they can construct stories that favour certain topics and, consequently, certain sources. It means that, ultimately, sources do not influence the application of news values to the stories but their actions and statements are used by journalists to enhance the news values of the stories. This was confirmed in some situations by the editors interviewed in this study. It was pointed out that even in occasional moments when sources attempt to influence journalist for their views to be entrenched in the news, the outcome of their views are scoffed. The *Daily Nation* has taken a rather strong stand in this regard in orienting the journalists against such overt influences in news and source selection. “The journalists who tend to be weak can be controlled by the news subjects as we call them. This is wrong, it is unethical” (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003). However, the findings in this study also showed that through the notion of “name recognition”, the status of a source can indeed alter how news values relate to story selection and placement.

Owing to some theoretical points raised about societal values being imbedded in the news (Gans, 1979), and to some extent, the issue of media public sphere having been shaped with the exclusion of women (Carter et al, 1998), it may seem like the male social values were influential in the news in the *Daily Nation*. This would be so given the historical development of the newspaper, as a male-dominated media organisation. However, several editors insisted that news values are not affected by the gender of a source.

The *Nation* has always been a male-dominated media house. So the agenda of the news has always been crafted by these chauvinistic male editors. We are coming to that realisation rather late now in the development of the company. But when trying to address the balance, forces have been slow. We do not go out of our way to maintain the balance. It has also to do with our culture. If you go to a homestead, as in this story, the first face you see is that of the man, He is the one with the opinion, one who complains, and one who seems to be aggrieved. But that is not to say that if the situation was reversed and it is a woman we would ignore and insist on talking to the man. It doesn't work that way. We don't judge news through that narrow prison, we don't at all (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

If news reflects what is happening in society, then it is the social and political structure of that society that puts the man on a pedestal as a newsworthy source to the exclusion of female source in the news. This is reflected in what was put forth by J7:

Look at the representation of women in government, in the corporate world. It is very much a reflection of the imbalance that there is, it is the proportion that is reflected (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

In addition to the above views, there is a general view among many journalists in this newsroom that women have also restrained themselves from speaking in the news and the few that feature in the news do so by virtue of their political or leadership positioning, which again explains the preferences for the sources:

I think the women agenda had been stolen by these vicious groups, the FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers) types. They are the ones who have decided we are the ones who set the agenda for gender question. I think just like we

said, these are very small organisations, urbanised, male-dominated. I am not surprised that when you hear about women, you will be hearing about Ngilu, Nyiva Mwendwa, not because they are women but because they are in politics. It is in my judgement, but I think the tendency is that we play up organised groups so that the sources that are selected will be captains of industry, associations, and business organisations. I don't think it is necessarily right, but I think you take an editorial position (Interview with J8, 18/12/2003).

While some journalists see the under-representation of women in the news agenda as partly influenced by the social structures, others seemed to put the blame on women's inability to rise up to the occasion in the news. "Women shy away from commenting on news, I have seen it many times" (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003). Some others believe that women are responsible for extricating themselves from the cultural fetters, "I think the bigger problem is that women themselves don't do enough to change those circumstances, to bring themselves to the front line of newspaper reporting if you like, to be main news sources" (Interview with J10, 22/12/2003).

Additionally, women sources lack the knowledge required to be in the mainstream news.

Women sources don't know how to use the media to their benefit. Others can speak but this is reduced to very few and in specific aspects. It is elitism. And a lot of them want to see before they comment. I actually talk to a lot of them if I think there is need for them to take an initiative and make it easy for them to call. They don't want to push themselves, they don't want to be seen to be critical, and for fear of repercussions; getting themselves involved in politics. It is how they have been socialised (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

In spite of the commercial, social and cultural realities that are perceived to undermine representation of the widest possible perspectives in the front-page news, some in the newspaper management raised the concern of the need to change the outlook. For example:

There are things we are questioning and we are conscious of that. At some point it has to stop, it is perpetuating stereotypes. It is not that you should say, ok, how many

stories do we have on such and such a group? I don't think anybody thinks of the gender of the news sources, or says, I need two women for my story, or I need a crime story. You think of who has the information. But where there is need to appeal to these groups we make very hard journalistic and commercial decisions. Sometimes there are issues we cover that may not be necessitated by commerce. For instance, the Horizon pull out. We don't get advertising for it (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003).

News in the *Daily Nation* does indeed reflect social values, as was shown in this study. This may be the reason why many interviewees insisted on the social constructs in society as the constraining force behind the kind of news types and sources/actors that continue to saturate the front pages of this newspaper. But some theoretical analyses already show that news values do not exist of and by themselves, nor are they inherent in events; rather they are journalistic constructions of the social world (Croteau and Hoynes, 2000; Hall, 1978; Golding and Elliot, 1979). From the quotes of the interviewees cited in this thesis, there are inclinations among journalist and editors to absolve news values and blame society, a society dominated in many spheres of leadership by male elites. That notwithstanding, it seems likely that if news values did not put such a premium on elites, then news would not be pointed so much towards male actors or male sources.

8.5 Import of news values from Western Societies

This study has uncovered some issues about news values that lead to the conclusion that the news values in the *Daily Nation*, to a greater extent, bears similarity to those of the Western media societies. Thus, the import of First World news values, as has theoretically been highlighted (Golding, 1987; Lule, 1987), to the Third World contemporary newspapers is seen to be in large part responsible (despite some contradictions) for the elitist source selection the *Daily Nation* newspaper. Lule raises the point that, in spite of the contextual differences both regionally and in terms of media organisations in the First and Third World, journalists continue to select from each in creating news values of their own, but also to find common ground among news values. For example, he notes that some news values in the Third World are quite similar to those of the First World such as recency, proximity, unusual events, human interest, conflict and so forth. An analysis of media professional development

in the Third World by Golding shows that the Western World, from which Third World countries refer their colonial past, has been responsible for much of the training of Third World journalists and with that the transfer of technology and the professional ideology of news reporting. It implies that the development of the journalistic profession which includes the ways in which journalists make news judgments is “nothing more than their increasing integration into a community of sharing values and standards developed by the Western news media” (Golding, 1987:305). In terms of news judgments and source selection, the *Daily Nation*'s picture of the front-page stories resembles McNair's (1998:75-81) view of structured bias which emphasises elitist news values and political elite status in source selection. In consideration of the changing ecology of the media and its relationship to changes in the global arena, it is very much likely that journalism will continue to be integrated into a global community of shared news values. Even then contextual differences will continue to shape news of different Worlds and different media situations. But if the *Daily Nation* is anything to go by, there is more in common than separates its news values and societal values from its Western counterparts.

8.6 The significance of the study for the news values theory

This study was premised on the theory of news values. It began by an assumption that news values are an important consideration in guiding the selection of news sources. It based this assumption mainly on theories that have emerged from studies about the newsmaking process, and the emphasis given to the importance of news values criteria in this process. Key among these theorists are Gans (1979), Hall (1978), Cohen and Young (1979), Golding and Elliot (1979), Galtung and Ruge (1965), Tuchman (1979) and Lule (1987). By examining the process of selecting news stories for the front pages of a selected newspaper – the *Daily Nation* – the study sought to uncover the interrelations of story selection and source selection and found the criteria of newsworthiness, complemented by genderised societal values, to be the key consideration in both cases. It occurred from the findings that many attributes of news that qualify a story for page one inclusion bear similarities to those of the sources, such as resonance, human interest, impact, consequence, elite personality, controversy, proximity and so forth. Thus, news has to be “driven by the issue and the person together” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003) to qualify for front-page treatment.

The news values that are found in the *Daily Nation*, as has already been pointed out, have much in common with those of a First World contemporary news media. For instance, the social and moral values of society in which the newspaper operates seemed to have notable influence on the treatment of news. For example this study showed that leaders were expected to demonstrate high moral values and those perceived to have sexual engagements outside their marriages were treated with disrespect. It also emerged that in the *Daily Nation*, rather than have entertainers as front-page news sources as is the case in Western news media, politicians made more sense in the process of selecting sources, and in Kenya they parallel entertainers in the First World in the ways in which they are covered in the news and in how their views are treated in the stories.

Overall, news sources are basically chosen for their newsworthy qualities and especially in so far as they are relevant to stories on offer for page-one treatment. Whereas there are other social factors and internal rules which in some cases guide, and may some times constrain, the inclusion of certain news sources in specific stories in the process newsmaking, this does not undermine the criteria of news values being the foremost consideration which journalists apply in source selection.

There were two additional assumptions made at the beginning of this study (see chapter one). One was that the sources of news of the front-page stories in the *Daily Nation* are predominantly selected from among the elite group in society. This study confirmed this to be true, and went further to establish that this group comprises of a tiny group of elite politicians that are systematically entrenched in the lead news. Theoretically though, it has been shown that cultural assumptions among journalists about who is a credible source leads them to access some sources over others, and many times this means accessing the elite, thus painting news with the main elite-established and notably male-based views (McNair, 1998; Kupe, 2003; Hall, 1978).

The other assumption concerned the role of the media in democracy. This assumption was premised on the expectations in this paradigm of a news media that facilitates the flow of information that is free of influence by powerful interests, and to do so fully permits views in the news that are representative of diverse groups in society. It was highlighted in this study that the newspaper subscribes to the democratic ideals, and in

many ways has shown itself to practice aspects of it in news reporting. However, with regard to creating a public space for diverse views in the news, the performance of the *Daily Nation* does not match up to this aspect of its democratic role. This scenario has been the result of preoccupation with elitist male politics as the favoured news agenda of the newspaper. It is a scenario that has constrained the ideal variety in news and source selection, which should include other topics of interest to society, and a wider representation in actor, and source selection. Two main social groups that were notably neglected as sources of news even when they were actors in the news events that made to the front-page news are women and ordinary citizens.

8.7 Recommendations for the *Daily Nation*

This research has established that there are imbalances in actor and source selection, pointing to lack of consideration of the importance of female and ordinary sources in the front-page stories of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. There are far reaching implications for the *Daily Nation* newspaper, but three key issues are worth mentioning here. First, it may seem to the readers that other groups in society are irrelevant and relatively unimportant in terms of offering valuable information in a democratic society, which is a particular point of view. Second, it may appear that the *Daily Nation* perpetuates views of a certain class of people with political power, while still claiming to be representing different perspectives in news reporting independently of political influence by powerful elite in society. There may be independence from particular elites, but not from the elites as a whole. Third, the newspaper, by narrowing news sources to such a small sector of society, does not satisfactorily give a rich picture of the social reality which is made up of diverse groups of people that are representing varying views and interests.

It may be true, going by the statement given by one editor, that a news organisation may not set out to have something called a “democratic newspaper balancing representation” (Interview with J7, 22/12/2003) in source selection. Nevertheless, there are demographic and social factors and its own policy that should obligate the paper in terms of its watchdog and social responsibility mandate, and its intended pluralistic ideals, to reconsider its editorial outlook in terms which widen views in the front-page news. My suggestion is that this can be achieved by demystifying source selection from some constraining concepts like ‘name recognition’ which, to a large

extent, at the time of this study, had come to mean either Raila, Muite, Kalonzo, Kiraitu, Ngilu or Ndingi, and going further than only carrying 'different views' from around a small clique of political elites. Without this, the newspaper will continue to marginalise some potential news sources that could offer valuable information. In turn, some important information that the wider society may need in order to make political and social choices will continue to be unavailable.

The *Daily Nation* newspaper may not have to necessarily amend its primary news values, although the weighting given to elitism could be reduced. It can then, accordingly, adjust the pattern of representation of the views to reflect the social diversity found on the ground. Being an independent news medium motivated by the ideals of democracy within a context of an emerging democracy of a Third World country, the *Daily Nation* seems to be in a position to appraise its own performance in terms of the issues that confront the society such as poverty, health, problems of globalisation and commercialisation, and political entrenchment of the powerful elite in society and their perceptual impact on the less powerful. This may entail a shift in prioritising issues in the news and the angles they take. One way of doing this is by approaching these issues with greater weighting on the news values of human interest which involves not only engaging the political elite in the national debate but others across the board. This was noted in this study to work in some cases, where the newspaper covered human interest news of national importance without loss to the commercial appeal of the newspaper.

It was noted in this study that there was a gross gender imbalance in source/actor selection in the news. Female sources were found to be very rare in the front-page stories, and this does not reflect a true picture of society in terms of demographic representation in the news. There was recognition, however, among many senior journalist and editors of the need to widen the scope of news coverage to include female actors and sources. In practice, though, efforts to balance the source/actor selection in the news were said to be curtailed by the social, cultural and political structures in society. Other constraining factors to female source/actor selection were identified among women themselves. Women were said to be generally media-shy, and in addition, to have little knowledge of what it takes to get involved in the mainstream news agenda. A few editors identified the commonsensical approach to

news reporting as another factor that hinders journalists from approaching news reporting from a wider social terrain in terms of news and source selection. These editors felt that journalists tended to select sources from only those they are familiar with, and this translated to sourcing news information from a small circuit of elite male politicians. These male elites happen to be those already elevated to the circuit of recognisable names in society. Journalists on their part felt that the routine demands of the daily news coverage gives little room for the actualisation of such a wide outlook in terms of source selection. These routine news practices tend to point journalist towards selecting source/actors from representatives of organised groups and government official channels. Given the social structures of society, which reflect male dominance in positions of authority in many of these organised groups and the political arena, it would necessarily lead to more male sources/actors being accessed by the news media.

However, from a number journalists that were interviewed, I gathered that sources are cultivated by journalists, and that the media indeed creates the sources and actors in the news. J6 put forth the following argument: “Every source is important, every source is useful for a story, I don’t care whether it is a woman or a child, that is the person to cultivate. There is also the question of what to cultivate, where to cultivate and whom to cultivate” (Interview with J6, 16/12/2003). This argument was corroborated by J2 who pointed out that “the media creates these sources” (Interview with J2, 10/12/2003). Adding to this, another editor pointed out that the journalists have to make deliberate efforts to access female sources. “We try to deliberately look for women groups or women lobbyists. I try to develop a directorate of women sources, even though there are social and family constraints” (Interview with J4, 17/12/2003).

From the foregoing, there is a general agreement among the editors and journalists of the *Daily Nation* that, within the democratic paradigm of news reporting, the news media ought to present a truer picture of society in terms of selecting news topics and source/actors in the front-page stories. That means widening the scope of news and source selection to include female source/actors and ordinary people in the news. Following the arguments that journalists do cultivate sources, and that indeed, it is

upon the news media to create them and bring them to the circuit of newsmakers, it leaves the media with fewer excuses for not accessing female sources.

8.8 Areas for further research

This study delimited the investigation of news sources to the front pages of the newspaper. It used the theory of news values and gained insights that reflect the relevance of this factor in source selection. Having assessed a number of studies concerned with news sources, and various theories within the sociology of news, which deal with source selection, I found that generally, many have preferred other theories to investigate the selection of sources and only touch scantily on news values criteria. Studies that use the theory of news values do so more often in examining news selection procedures. As far as this kind of research is concerned, I am not aware of any other case study done in a Kenyan newspaper that uses the criteria of news values to investigate source selection.

Whilst this study obtained important insights about the significance of news values in source selection, these findings are important in as far as they are related to the front-page stories and the importance placed on them in newsmaking practice. It should not be assumed that a variety of news sources is also missing on other pages of the newspaper. To gain more extensive insights into the newspaper's news actors and sources, a study that looks at the sources of the entire newspaper may bring out a different picture.

This research only investigated source selection from the point of view of the journalist and observations conducted within the newsroom, with an additional content analysis. Further study could expand this to include the views of the sources themselves. Such a study may want to find out how and why they become sources and what they intend to achieve with what they say in the media. Another study could be focused on the audience of the newspaper to find out their perspectives about the entrenchment of the elite male politicians as actors and sources in the newspaper.

Finally, a comparative study sampling a number of media houses may bring interesting insights into the general outlook of the media practice and point to possible areas of transformation.

8.9 Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that, by and large, news reporting in terms of selection of front-page stories and the related news sources in the *Daily Nation* is powerfully influenced by considerations of news values complemented by societal values. The resultant news content, however, reflects the world view of the political male elite in society. This scenario derives from the tendency by reporters to systematically engage a small class of politicians as both news actors and news sources in the front pages and consigned the rest in society to the periphery.

This has narrowed news perspectives in this newspaper to those of the elite class with a reduction in the democratic role played by the paper. The study has given recommendations to the newspaper for re-evaluation and possible adjustments that can lead to more diversity in source selection. The study has also highlighted issues for further research. Lastly, it has drawn together a range of Western theoretical insights and applied them to an empirical case study in Africa. It is to be hoped that the insights of this exercise will expand our knowledge and understanding and contribution to theory that may be of value elsewhere.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Identification of Social Status of News Sources

Elite Sources

Government official/Spokes person

President

Politician

Cabinet minister/Assistant minister

Member of Parliament

Ambassador

Speaker of the National Assembly

Judge/Judicial commissioners

Leader

Manager/Public relations officer/Communications expert

Wealthy businessman

Religious head

Journalist/Editor

Celebrity

Doctor

Pilot

Army Captain

Director

Police commissioner/Senior/Deputy police commissioner/commanding officer

Mayor

Judge/Lawyer/ Judicial commissioner

Chairperson

University Principal/ Vice Chancellor

Academician/Professor

Professional Sources

Member of the Law society/University Senate

Business person

Lecturer

Researcher

Teacher

Nurse

Councilor

Civil servant

Secretary

Police woman/man
Army officer
Pharmacist
Army personnel
Personal Assistant
Priest
Pastor
Entertainer

Grassroots/Ordinary Sources

Student
Youth
Foreigner
Girl
Woman
Man
Passer-by
Witchdoctor
Mother
Mass of people Faithful
Members
Domestic worker
Street child/ren
Villager
Citizen
Typist
Parent
Worker
Farmer
Child/ren
Child minder/servant
Staff
Attendant
Cook
Driver

APPENDIX 2

Gender and Status of News Sources in all Stories

APPENDIX 3 A
Types of News Sources according to Story Themes

3 A (i) Types of News Sources in Social Stories

3 A (ii) Types of News Sources in Political Stories

3 A (iii) Types of News Sources in Economic Stories

3 A (iii) Types of Sources in Economic Stories

DATE AND YEAR			LEAD STORIES	TYPE OF NEWS	GENDER OF NEWS SOURCES										NEWS SOURCES BY CATEGORY/STATUS																												
Date	Month	Year			Totl Soci	Totl Polit	Totl Econ	Totl Other	Totl all	%	M	News source 1	News source 2	News source 3	News source 4	News source 5	News source 6	News source 7	News source 8	News source 9	News source 10	Totl M	Totl F	Totl Unspecified	Totl all	%	Elite	News source 1	News source 2	News source 3	News source 4	News source 5	News source 6	News source 7	News source 8	News source 9	News source 10	Totl elite	Totl Prof	Totl Grassrt	Totl Unspecified	Totl all	%
19	11		B	Econ			1				M	1	1	1								3	0	0	100	100	Elite	1	1	1								3	0	0	0	100	
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																								3	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																						3	0	0	0	0	
21	11		B	Econ			1				M											0	0	0	100	100	Elite											0	1	0	0	100	
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof	1									1	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp	1												1	1	100	100	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																									1	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																						1	0	0	0	0	
22	11		A	Econ			0.5				M	1	1			1	1					4	0	0	100	100	Elite	1	1	1	1							4	0	0	0	100	
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																								4	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																						4	0	0	0	0	
23	11		A	Econ			1				M	1	1	1	1		1					5	1	0	83	100	Elite	1	1	1	1	1	1					6	0	0	0	100	
											F												1	1	17	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																								6	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																					6	0	0	0	0		
24	11		B	Econ			0.5				M	1	1	1	1							4	0	0	100	100	Elite	1	1	1	1						7	0	0	0	100		
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																							4	0	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																					7	0	0	0	0		
24	11		C	Econ			0.5				M	1	1									2	0	0	67	100	Elite	1	1	1							3	0	0	0	100		
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp		1											1	3	33	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0
																								3	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																					3	0	0	0	0		
8	12		A	Econ			0.5				M	1	1	1	1	1						4	1	0	80	100	Elite	1	1	1	1	1					5	0	0	0	100		
											F													1	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																								5	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																					5	0	0	0	0		
9	12		C	Econ			0.5				M											0	0	0	0	0	Elite										2	1	0	0	67		
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										1	0	0	0	33	
											Unsp		1	1	1									3	3	100	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0
																								3	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
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10	12		A	Econ			0.5				M				1	1	1					3	0	0	100	67	Elite									1	2	0	0	33			
											F												0	0	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt										0	0	0	0	0	
																								3	0	0	0	Other										0	0	0	0	0	
																																					3	0	0	0	0		
10	12		B	Econ			1				M											0	2	0	0	100	100	Elite	1	1						2	0	0	0	100			
											F	1	1											2	0	0	0	Prof										0	0	0	0	0	
											Unsp													0	0	0	0	Grassrt															

APPENDIX 3 B
Types of News Sources according to Story Status

3 B (i) Types of News Sources in Grade A Stories

3 B (ii) Types of News Sources in Grade B Stories

DATE AND YEAR

DATE AND YEAR			GENDER OF NEWS SOURCES										NEWS SOURCES BY CATEGORY																								
			News source 1	News source 2	News source 3	News source 4	News source 5	News source 6	News source 7	News source 8	News source 9	News source 10	totl M	Totl F	totl Unsp	totl all	%	Elite	News source 1	News source 2	News source 3	News source 4	News source 5	News source 6	News source 7	News source 8	News source 9	News source 10	Totl elite	Totl Prof	Totl Grassrt	Totl other	Totl all	%			
18	11	2003	M	1	1	1							3			75	Elite	1	1	1									3					0	100		
			F										0			0	Prof											0						0	0		
			Unsp							1			1			25	Grassrt											0				0			0	0	
													4			100	Other															0			3	0	
19	11		M	1	1	1							3			100	Elite	1	1	1								3							100		
			F										0			0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp										0			0	Grassrt											0				0			0	0	
													3			0	Other															0			3	0	
20	11		M	1	1	1	1						4			100	Elite	1	1	1	1							4							100		
			F										0			0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp										0			0	Grassrt											0				0			0	0	
													4			0	Other															0			4	0	
21	11		M										0			0	Elite	1									1								100		
			F										0			0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp	1									1			100	Grassrt											0				0			0	0	
													1			0	Other															0			1	0	
22	11		M	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8			100	Elite	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		8							80		
			F										0			0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp										0			0	Grassrt										1	1			2				20	0	
													8			0	Other															0			10	0	
23	11		M										0			0	Elite										0								0	0	
			F										0			0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp	1	1								2			100	Grassrt											0								0	0
													2			0	Other	1	1													2			2	100	
24	11		M	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7				100	Elite	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		7								100		
			F									0				0	Prof											0							0	0	
			Unsp									0				0	Grassrt											0								0	0
												7				0	Other																0			7	0
8	12		M	1	1	1		1				4				80	Elite	1	1	1	1	1					5								100		
			F									0				0	Prof										0								0	0	
			Unsp				1					1				20	Grassrt											0								0	0
												5				0	Other															0			5	0	
9	12		M	1		1	1					3				75	Elite		1								1								25	0	
			F		1							1				25	Prof			1								1								25	0
			Unsp									0				0	Grassrt	1			1								2						50	0	
												4				0	Other																0			4	0
10	12		M									0				0	Elite	1	1								2								100		
			F	1	1							2				100	Prof											0								0	0
			Unsp									0				0	Grassrt											0								0	0
												2				0	Other																			2	0
11	12		M	1	1							2				67	Elite	1	1								2								67	0	
			F									0				0	Prof			1								1								33	0
			Unsp				1					1				33	Grassrt													0						0	0
												3				0	Other																0			3	0
12	12		M	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9				100	Elite	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		9							90	0	
			F									0				0	Prof											1								10	0
			Unsp									0				0	Grassrt												0							0	0
												9				0	Other																			10	0
13	12		M	1								1				50	Elite	1	1								2								100	0	
			F		1							1				50	Prof											0								0	0
			Unsp									0				0	Grassrt											0								0	0
												2				0	Other																			2	0

3 B (iii) Types of News Sources in Grade C Stories

APPENDIX 4

List of Interview Questions

1. How are you able to judge, out of all events that take place around the world, which ones qualify as news in this newspaper?
2. How do you judge only three or less stories to be more newsworthy than others in the inside pages and meriting front-page inclusion?
3. What makes you sometimes drop some stories at the last minute and replace with others in the front pages?
4. Does what you consider as newsworthy match with what your readers do/expect to see?
5. In your view what is the significance of page one in relation to stories you put there?
6. Could you explain why on most days the newspaper carries either political or economic stories?
7. What do you consider most in qualifying one as a news source for any of the stories on page one?
8. Would you say news sources have any relationship to the newsworthiness of the stories?
9. Could you explain in what type of stories you select multiple sources?
10. Why are some particular sources so critical so that when such sources decline to give information you may suspend, or change the angle of the story? And why can't you use an alternative source?
11. Which of the two elements in the news content influences the choice of the other – the story or the source? Please elaborate.
12. There is an emerging scenario that very few and mostly powerful elite politicians determine what becomes newsworthy and meriting inclusion on page one. Can you explain why this is so?
13. What constrains you from selecting sources from across the broad spectrum of society, for example ordinary people or people in other classes for page one stories?

14. What would happen in terms of newsworthiness of stories if such sources were mainstreamed on page one stories?
15. In view of your editorial policy indications to represent different views in your news, how do you think this narrow choice of sources from especially few politicians affects your editorial content?
16. Could you explain why majority of your news sources are male from the elite class?

Thank you very much for your time.

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