Portland State University

PDXScholar

Dissertations and Theses

Dissertations and Theses

Summer 7-23-2013

Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia: The Participation and Recognition of Women in Politics in Liberia

Roland Tuwea Clarke
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds

Part of the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Other Political Science Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Clarke, Roland Tuwea, "Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia: The Participation and Recognition of Women in Politics in Liberia" (2013). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 1038.

<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.1038>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

"
"

"
"
"

Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia:

"

The Participation and Recognition of Women in Grassroots Politics in Liberia

"
"
"
"
"
"

by

"

Roland Tuwea Clarke

"
"
"

"
"

"
"

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

"
"
"

Master of Arts
in
Conflict Resolution

"
"

Thesis Committee:
Robert Gould, Chair
Rachel Hardesty
Aimee Clott

"
"
"

Portland State University
2013

"

© 2010 Roland Tuwea Clarke

ABSTRACT

Despite the remarkable contributions made by women to secure peace in Liberia, women's representation in politics is still low. The first female African President has been elected, as well as a few women to strategic government positions, but the vast majority of women remain invisible. The reliance on these few women in government is inadequate to produce the significant changes that will be required to bring equality for all women.

This study examines the recognition of women's relative participation and recognition in postwar reconstruction in Liberia. Differences between traditional and non-traditional women's participation in Liberia were found.

This study includes interviews and document review as methods for exploring how women, traditional and nontraditional, may or may not participate in Liberian political decisions.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all women. But no woman deserves this honor more than the women in Liberia. Their courageous fight against Liberia's warlords to restore peace and democracy in Liberia is priceless. I am sincerely honored to dedicate this study to them.

Acknowledgments

To my father, Johnny T. Clarke and my mother, Oretha Tetee Zabay; I could not have done this work without the unconditional sacrifices you made to get me through school.

To my three daughters, Grace, Rolyn, and Eleanor; and to my sisters, and brothers: I owe you all gratitude for unconditional support.

To my Advisers: Dr. Robert Gould, Dr. Rachel Hardesty and my committee members; your hard work is immeasurable. I also want to offer special thanks and appreciation to Dr. Aimee Clott for offering me her brilliant skills in research method and design. Additionally, my thanks to Dr. Barbara Tint for exposing me to western perspectives on gender study. To my mentors, Dr. Matthew Jaiah, Dr. John Innis, and Mr. Joseph Yeaney, I extend my sincere gratitude. To my friend, Machar Alu Baak, I owe you many thanks for the support and resources.

Finally, I hope the many whose names are not mentioned but who supported and encouraged me, will please accept my appreciation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figure.....	ix
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Liberia: Historic Overview	2
The Land, Occupation, and Migration.....	2
The Economic and Political.....	4
Government and Politics.....	6
Peace Process.....	10
Grassroots Political Recognition and Participation.....	14
Recognition of women.....	15
The History of Women’s Participation and Recognition.....	16
Traditional and Nontraditional Women.....	18
My Personal Story.....	18
Study Outline.....	21
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Conflict Transformation and Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia.....	22
Women’s Participation and Recognition.....	27
The Differences in Participation of Women in Wars and Postwar.....	34

Case Study 1: American Civil War.....	35
Case Study 2: Guatemala War.....	36
Cased Study 3: Cameroon’s Balikumbat and Bafanji Conflict.....	37
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY.....	41
The Purpose of this Study.....	41
Method Overview.....	41
The Indigenous Paradigm Model.....	42
The Elicitive Model.....	42
Research Design.....	44
Document Review.....	44
Interviews.....	45
Informants.....	46
Setting.....	47
Questionnaire.....	48
Procedure.....	49
Research Validity.....	50
Internal.....	50
External.....	50
Data Analysis.....	51
Chapter 4: RESULT.....	53
Phase I: Document Review of the 2005 Election Results.....	53
Voter Registration.....	53
Presidency.....	55

The House of Representatives.....	55
Senatorial Election.....	56
Phase II: Interview of Women in Liberia.....	58
Demography of Women.....	58
Pre-war Grassroots Participation.....	61
Post-war Grassroots Participation.....	63
Grassroots Political Recognition.....	65
Grassroots and Political Obstacles.....	68
Non-traditional Women.....	68
Traditional Women.....	69
Differences: Traditional and Non-traditional.....	70
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION.....	73
The Election.....	73
The Interview.....	76
Chapter 6: CONCLUSION.....	80
Recommendation and Suggestions.....	81
Limitations.....	83
The need for future study.....	85
References.....	86
Appendices.....	92
A: Interview Questionnaire.....	92
B: Abbreviations.....	93
C: Election Summary.....	94

D: Subject Consent Form.....	95
E: Subject's Spouse Consent Form.....	97
F: Human Subject Approval Document.....	99

List of Tables

Table #1: Demography Information.....	60

List of Figures

Figure #1: Voter Registration.....	54
Figure #2: House of Representative.....	56
Figure #3: Senatorial Representation.....	57
Figure #4: Transformational Frame.....	83

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The inevitability of global war has created a need to reconstruct peace and democracy in countries devastated by conflict. In many reconstruction programs in postwar countries, women's recognition and participation is limited or low. There are significant differences in the participation of traditional vs. nontraditional women. These differences remain despite collaborative efforts and contributions of women towards peace and democracy in Liberia.

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the specific case of Liberia. After fourteen years of civil war, women's efforts in grassroots politics and postwar organizing have been considerable. Yet despite some progress towards more representation for women in government, a broader recognition of women's achievements and rights is needed. It is important to examine differences between traditional and nontraditional women's level of participation in postwar reconstruction processes in Liberia and the relative differences in recognition these efforts have received.

Liberia is a useful case study. I reviewed the 2005 election results and conducted interviews with 10 Liberian women, including both traditional and nontraditional women. It is useful to provide a brief historical overview which looks at the land of Liberia. Migration, occupation, and economic and political storms led to a need for postwar reconstruction. Some definitions of key terms and concepts must be reviewed. I have offered my personal story to illustrate why this study is of interest and to suggest why such research is critical for the people of Liberia. Transformational structures and permanent institutions can create and support peaceful structures that promote awareness

and fundamentally redefine gender roles. Creative solutions will sustain progressive change once it is accomplished.

Liberia: Historic Overview

The turmoil that led to Liberia's worst nightmare in December 1989 began with the American Colonization Society-ACS, an organization established in the USA in 1816 to deport slaves. I begin with the land of Liberia.

The Land, Migration and Occupation

Liberia, located on the Atlantic Ocean in the southern part of West Africa, is bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. Liberia's population has grown to approximately 3.6 million people from 16 different ethnic groups. The Americo-Liberians, descendants of former US free slaves, make up 5% of the population. The official spoken language in Liberia is English, but there are 32 dialects used by indigenous Liberians. The country is a plateau covered by dense tropical forests. There are two main seasons in Liberia: raining and dry seasons. The annual rainfall is often 160 inches per year. Liberia is one of the smallest and least developed countries in Africa but with an intense and interesting history which is complicated by migration and occupation processes.

Liberia, which translates as "Land of Freedom" was founded by free slaves from the US during the period from 1816 to 1822. The nation was led by a racist organization known as the American Colonization Society (ACS). The ACS was heavily supported by the United States government. The ACS dominated every system in Liberia for many decades until William Tubman became president in 1944. Tubman made some changes in the Americo-Liberian led government's domination and oppression of indigenous

Liberians (Runn-Marcos, Kolleholon and Ngovo, 2005). But when the ACS attempted to enter Liberia they encountered unanticipated resistance and rejection from the indigenous population. The ACS occupation was challenged by increased costs and threats from the native population. The ACS turned to the US Government for help. US President Monroe ordered US Navy Captain Robert F. Stockton to the West Coast of Africa. Captain Stockton arrived in Sierra Leone, a neighboring country with Liberia, in a commissioned vessel named "The Alligator." Stockton entered Liberia with Eli Ayres, an ACS agent who negotiated for land (Runn-Marcos, Kolleholon and Ngovo, 2005). Unfortunately for the people of Liberia, the negotiations turned into force and warfare. Cpt. Stockton forced indigenous rulers in Liberia, at the barrel of a gun, to sign a treaty which took land from the indigenous people to give to the freed slaves. Africa during this era was viewed as a "dark continent" by the settlers (Gilbert, Erik and Jonathon, 2004). But in fact, Liberia was considered "free land." This was the beginning of free slaves' settlements in Liberia. The number of settlements rapidly increased. .

Gilbert et al (2004) stated that when the settlers arrived on the coast of Liberia, whether it was a free land and there were no occupants is debatable. In fact, other studies have shown that the region of Liberia was inhabited as far back as the 12th century. If this is so, then Liberia should not have been considered free land for the taking. The Mende, Bassa, Deys, Kru, Gissi, and Gola were the first to arrive on the land. The influx of these early tribes started when the Western Sudanic Mali Empire declined in 1375 and 1591 (Gilbert et al, 2004). There were many oppositions and much violence with the migrations of these new tribes along with the settlement of freed slaves from the US. Today, there are 16 recognized ethnic tribes in Liberia. The migration or formation of

Liberia was chaotic and seeds of hatred were planted early on. In spite of these obstacles, the free slaves became successful in occupying lands and overpowering the indigenous people. With the help of US government, they organized to govern and rule the country. Because of this difficult beginning, Liberia has had many forms of government including governments consisting of free slaves as well as other governments formed by indigenous people in interior areas. These governments had a variety of economic and political systems.

The Economic and Political

When people settled in Liberia, they continued to practice kinship styles of leadership that were inherited from their former empires. The economy of the indigenous people heavily depended on agriculture and arts inherited from the Mali and Songhay empires. Gilbert et al (2004) suggest that when these tribal groups migrated, they brought with them skills like cotton spinning, cloth weaving, iron smelting, and the cultivation of rice and other crops. These tribal groups also instituted forms of economy adopted from the Mali and Songhay Empires. This barter system (the exchange of goods) worked well, since they had no official currency, but Liberia had precious resources which would change this system.

After 1847, which marks the independence of Liberia, the economy of the free slave- led government depended heavily on the exportation of iron ore and other minerals. The US continues to support this government with foreign aid. In 1926, the Liberian government opened up a concession for Firestone, the American rubber company, to start the world's largest rubber plantation in Liberia. Firestone investors helped negotiate some US foreign aid. Firestone created 25,000 jobs in Liberia and

rubber quickly became the backbone of the Liberian economy. Consequently, Liberia's trade contacts in Africa flourished. Liberia started trading with European countries: exporting coffee, rice, palm oil, palm kernels, piassava, sugarcane and timber (Gilbert et al, 2004). Liberia became a critical player in international relations due to their relationship with American industry.

During World War II, rubber was important, and Liberia assured the U.S. and its allies of all the natural rubber they needed. Liberia offered the US the use of its territory as a bridgehead for transports of soldiers and war supplies. The Americans were allowed to construct military bases, airports, and seaports for operations. As the result of US presence, Liberia's economy grew and thousands of indigenous laborers descended from the interior to the coastal region to seek employment with new companies. From 1946 to 1960, the Liberian government attracted \$500 million in foreign investment, mainly from the US. In 1971, this amounted to more than \$1 billion. Iron, timber and rubber exports also rose strongly. In 1971, Liberia had the world's largest rubber industry, and was the third largest producer of iron ore (Gilbert et al, 2004). In 1948, ship registrations became a large source of Liberian revenue. From 1962 until 1980, the US donated \$280 million in foreign aid to Liberia. In exchange, Liberia offered land free of rent for U.S. government facilities. These ties resulted were a boon for the economy. The Liberian economy, between 1847 and 1980, expanded from primitive agriculture and mining to include a large scale rubber industry. The nation became second in the world for iron production. Their exploitation of mineral resources and rendering of services, however, was often misused and mismanaged. Corruption was rife and often their financial resources were plundered by dishonest officials in the free slave led government. This

government included myriad political machinations which did not always serve the people of Liberia well.

Government and Politics.

Liberia's democratic system of government started with President Tubman in 1944. President Tubman elevation to the presidency opened some doors and marked the beginning of relationship-building between the free slave government and indigenous people of the interior. President Tubman eliminated the 40 mile boundary between people of free slave decent and the indigenous people of the interior. He introduced and implemented a national integration policy which removed all barriers and addressed human rights abuses that had been inflicted on the indigenous people by some leaders of the Liberian Government. As a result, indigenous people obtained the right to vote and better education. More and more people participated in grassroots movements and were better represented in the national government. President Tubman implemented an "Open Door Policy" which attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign investment. Thousands of jobs were created, not only for people of free slave decent but for indigenous people as well. He facilitated construction of major highways into the interior. The Tubman government stimulated economic growth on a large scale. In 1960, Liberia attracted \$500 million in foreign investment; exports rose from \$15.8 million to \$82.6 million. Government revenue rose from \$32.4 million to \$69.9 million. Liberia was able to assist other West African countries (Ghana and Guinea) to gain independence from colonial masters (Britain and France). Liberia is one of the original founding members of the United Nations, Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States-ECOWAS (Runn-

Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo, 2005).

Despite these economic and political successes, Liberia was experiencing growth without sufficient internal development. This meant that the massive income acquired did not fuel such development as was required in Liberia. In addition to this economic downside, the government was accused of blatant political repression (Runn-Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo, 2005). From 1955 to 1971, President Tubman and his political party ran the country on a one party system in an atmosphere of fear which included numerous human rights violations. President Tubman died in 1971 in London and was succeeded by William R. Tolbert who was Vice-President. Tolbert declared that he was bringing a new day in the political life of Liberians. President Tolbert began his presidency by eliminating much of the massive political terror and economic corruption of the past. In attempts to reform the defunct political system he had inherited, political events and inattention to developmental concerns overwhelmed him. These factors eventually destroyed him and his presidency. But when President Tolbert set out on a public campaign to rid the government bureaucracy of corruption, his nation realized massive increases in economic growth. Liberian imports rose from \$69.9 million in 1971, to \$156 million in 1977; exports rose from \$246 million in 1971, to \$536.6 million in 1979. In the midst of these changes, President Tolbert launched "Rally Time," a fund-raising campaign that was intended to raise \$10 million, to assist the government in speeding up rural development projects (Runn-Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo, 2005). Despite these economic and political successes, poverty was on the rise in Liberia. Statistics show that about 83 percent of the Liberian people did not have any utilities, and only 5.9 percent had indoor running water, plumbing, and electricity. About 74 percent of

the Liberian people earned less than \$50 per month (Runn-Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo, 2005). Education was limited to the elite who mostly were of free slave descent. As the result of this poor governance, increased opposition was led by the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). And the Progressive People's Party (PPP) organized an intense opposition toward the administration. Grassroots hatred towards the government increased drastically. This vitriol and resistance led to a violent military coup on April 12, 1980 which was led by Samuel K. Doe and his military junta. The coup was successful but the struggle continued.

With the introduction of the new military regime, slogans like, "power to the people" and the "struggle continues," were sung and became government sponsored messages. The priorities of government had clearly changed. In 1984, about 19.4 percent of Government's revenue was allocated to national security to build military strength and the US dollar was replaced by Liberian currency. The military government was accused of massive human rights violations against the Liberian people and the excesses of government officials literally wrecked the economy. Some critics accused the administration of misappropriating about \$50 million in United States aid to Liberia. The national debt rose from \$551.9 million in 1980, to \$1.1 billion in 1989. This economic mismanagement was followed by political terror and more abuses of human rights. Once again, antagonism towards the government was widespread. This resulted in a rebellion in December, 1989. Mr. Charles Taylor who served as the Director General of the General Services Agency and as Deputy Minister of Commerce under President Samuel Doe was a primary instigator of this insurrection. When this new conflict began, one Liberian newspaper, "The Daily Observer," reported that Liberia was in mortal danger,

both politically and economically.

By 1996, Charles Taylor had amassed a vast fortune during the war through the sale of Liberian timber, gold, diamond, iron ore, rubber, and other resources. In a hearing before the United States Congress on June 26, 1996, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William H. Twaddell said that Charles Taylor (who had control of the most lucrative areas in Liberia) could have had upwards of \$75 million a year passing through his hands. Between 1990 and 1994, Mr. Taylor was reported to have stolen over \$422 million. Corruption was the order of the day. Taylor was accused of invading and staging wars in neighboring countries (Sierra Leone and Guinean) and of myriad human rights violations. In 2003, Taylor was taken into exile in Nigeria due to pressure from the International community. The civil war had a devastating effect on the entire country. Most major businesses were destroyed or heavily damaged, foreign investors and businesses left the country, iron ore production stopped completely, and this inspired UN sanctions on timber and diamond exports. The leaders of the nation had once again betrayed her people.

The creation and formation of Liberia was clearly chaotic and problematic. This unstable foundation led to disunity and discrimination. Those who resided in Liberia came from different parts of the world, spoke different languages, and were accustomed to different forms of leadership and variable traditional practices. The government of freed slaves, which had led for many decades, was not inclusive. According to Steven Radelet (2008), Liberia's fourteen years of brutal civil turmoil had destroyed more than 270,000 lives, displaced over 500,000 refugees, and crippled all social, political, economic, and government systems.

Radelet's view is supported by Runn-Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo (2005) when they point out that Liberia's two civil wars (1989-1996 and 1999-2003) had devastated and displaced hundreds of thousands of Liberians and other nationals. These two wars are seen to have paralyzed the political, educational, social and economic systems in Liberia. These realities created a need for a peace conference. This conference was held in the West African country of Ghana. The conference aimed at gathering some permanent African and UN leaders, three warring faction leaders, religious leaders, and various political parties together in order to begin discussions about workable solutions for restoring peace and nurturing democracy in Liberia. The road to peace was neither smooth nor sure.

Peace Process

In 2003, African leaders in both Nigeria and Ghana saw the need to address the Liberian conflict and put an end to the civil war. This plan was supported by the United States and backed by the UN General Assembly. Nevertheless, peace and democracy remained elusive and many obstacles had to be overcome.

The Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord document on Liberia (2003), indicates that the following actions to facilitate the peace negotiating process took place. Charles Taylor was granted political asylum in Nigeria and there was early deployment of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) military intervention force. The ECOWAS Mission in Liberia was backed with extensive US and UN assistance to end heavy fighting and alleviate a worsening humanitarian crisis. The ECOWAS military force had to monitor and securing the cease-fire and facilitate the delivery of relief aid. These tasks included preparing the way for the U.N. Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

UNMIL, authorized by the UN Security Council, was deployed on October 1, 2003. Subsequently, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) took office on October 14, 2003. ECOMIL was dissolved and its military forces absorbed into UNMIL. UNMIL carried out diverse peacekeeping, civilian policing, and socio-economic assistance functions in support of Liberia's transition (Ghana, 2003). Today, UNMIL's presence continues in Liberia until the democratic government completes the reconstruction of security agencies. This remains a fragile peace.

Article XVII and IX of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Ghana (2003) outlines the formation and organization of a postwar reconstruction process in Liberia which would lead to a democratic election. The Agreement was signed by warring factions: Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) (then government army), and the Armed Forces of Liberia, or the deformed government army. Additional signatories were political parties and Social and religious institutions (The Government of Liberia-GOL, Liberia People's Party, National Reformation Party, Labor Party, Liberia Unification Party, Liberia Action Party, People's Democratic Party, National Democratic Party, Free Democratic Party, All-Liberian Coalition Party, Reformation Alliance Party, the True Whig Party, United People's Party, and Liberia National Union for Equal Rights Party and Progressive Peoples for New Deal Movement Party). Witnesses to the agreement included, the Inter-Religious Council, the Mano River Women for Liberia Peace Network-MARWOPNET, and the Liberian National Bar for Liberians in the Diaspora Association. The Liberia Leadership for Civil Society Forum Movement for Liberia, the Mediator for ECOWAS, the United Nations, and African

Union were also witnesses.

The peace agreement called for the creation of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), and allocated leadership positions within it. The NTGL was mandated to re-establish functioning government authority and prepare for national elections in October 2005. The NTGL consisted of an executive branch, presided over by a Chairman, and an interim parliament, the National Transitional Legislative Assembly. The transitional government faced many challenges. The main challenges were related to the extremely destructive effects of many years of war in Liberia. Others challenges included the dominant role within the NTGL of three former armed factions which had been prone to internal rivalries, political discord over the allocation of state positions and resources, very limited state capacities, and reported public sector corruption (Accra, 2003). But the transitional government had to lay the foundation for a democratic election in October, 2005 according to terms of the peace agreement. Due to this mandate, an election was conducted for the Presidency, Senate, and House of Representatives. A presidential run-off vote was held on November 8. The presidential race pitted George Weah, 39 years of age, a former professional soccer player, against Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, 67 years of age, a Harvard-trained economist and former Liberian finance minister who had served as a United Nations and World Bank official. On November 15, 2005 the National Elections Commission (NEC) declared Johnson-Sirleaf the winner with 59.4% of votes against Weah's 40.6%/. This made her the first female president in Africa (NEC, 2006).

Nicolas Cook (2005), a Specialist of African Affairs at the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division in the US, stated that the postwar election in Liberia was

ground-breaking for economic, educational, political, and democratic reconstruction in Liberia. According to Cook, this election fulfilled a key goal of the August 2003 peace accord in Ghana, which ended the civil war and created the framework for postwar reconstruction, peace, and democracy building. But this path would not be easy.

Ellen Sirleaf and Steven Radelet (2008) in their article titled, *The Reconstruction and Development Framework in the Good News out of Africa*, indicated that Liberia's new postwar government faced a huge challenge in rebuilding a country from the ashes of war. To be successful, the new government needed to reconstruct and implement policies aimed at political and economic recovery and stability. The government needed to simultaneously rebuild institutions to promote human rights. These opportunities had to be inclusive and equitable for all Liberians, especially in creating more opportunities for the women who had been under-represented in politics. Women's participation in postwar reconstruction in Liberia was important. But recognition of women's grassroots efforts was paramount in sustaining peace and democracy in Liberia. There is some evidence that gender may have more than a casual relationship with propensities for agendas which include equality and equal justice. Ellen Sirleaf, President of Liberia, said "Women are more concerned about people...They are in the homes carrying the burden of the home and the family. From that experience, women bring a sensibility, sensitivity, to those things which bring peace." Sirleaf suggested that if women demonstrated a facility for reconciliation in their homes, they needed to be given more opportunities to demonstrate these skills in political and governmental spheres. Ellen Sirleaf was convinced that postwar reconstruction in Liberia could be facilitated by women's proactive participation.

It is not only the fact of this participation, but the growing recognition of the value and promise of feminine values in reconciliation, reinvention, and reconstruction.

Women had always been involved in grassroots efforts, but the growing recognition of the part they played opened new doors and possibilities. These reconstructions of attitudes and prejudices may have fundamentally changed the stature and of women in Nigeria. And these changed attitudes are best explored by examining the differential treatment of and opportunities provided for traditional vs nontraditional women.

Grassroots Political Recognition and Participation

Women's effective participation in grassroots politics means that governments and institutions must strive to create opportunities for women to have an equitable voice in political processes. And they must be allowed to make meaningful contributions in decision-making at local and community levels. This process must include public recognition of women's unique efforts and contributions at both national and community levels. Most critically, this process can only be implemented when women's access to educational, economic, and leadership roles for decision-making (Star News, 2005) is broadened.

Historically, the importance of women's grassroots political participation in national government has been ignored. And traditional women's participation and recognition has been very low. In fact, Liberia's women have been "invisible" for a long time. Women have been effectively denied the right to vote, acquire properties, occupy leadership roles, participate in politics, and participate in decision-making at both grassroots and national levels. Change began to occur when more people began to recognize and appreciate women's efforts in postwar reconstruction. These invisible

women were taking shape and form.

Recognition of Women

When speaking about recognition, this study subscribes to the concept suggested by Joseph Folger (1998). Recognition is a process of acknowledging one's adversary as a human being with one's own legitimate situation and concerns (Folger, 1998). In this study, recognition is used in a political sense to mean acknowledgement of people's legitimacy, rights, and freedoms as defined according to society and private institutions. In order to have a clear understanding of what women's recognition and participation means in the Liberian context, it is critical to review the history of Liberia. History speaks if we listen.

The History of Women's Participation and Recognition

In general, women in Liberia first participated in national elections in 1957 that elected President William V.S. Tubman, over 100 years after Liberia's independence. Prior to 1957, women in Liberia were not allowed to vote and occupy political leadership roles. Both traditional and nontraditional women were assigned roles of housewives and social entertainers. In addition, women were filtered through the lenses and stereotypes that stand in the way of allowing their full participation in community development and grassroots political processes. Historically, women became organized and recognized for the first time in 1910 because of their artistic talents and quilting skills. Liberian women were traditionally known for their hospitality and their skills with cultural arts and crafts. In 1957 and 1958, Liberian women hosted national fairs where, for the first time, women exhibited their skills in various sewing needle arts exhibitions where many prizes were

awarded (Runn-Marcos, Kollehlon and Ngovo, 2005). This recognition certainly did not represent every woman in Liberia. The participants were mostly women with western education of freed slave descent. There is evidence that traditional women were skillful enough to participate in national and grassroots programs, but were excluded and unrecognized because they could not read and write. They were ignored by the elite political class in Liberia. Traditional women, who could demonstrate traditional arts like singing, dancing, performance, storytelling, costume, and fashion, were too often unrecognized and unappreciated. Over time this began to change.

Liberian's women, especially traditional women, were eventually allowed to participate in politics. Their efforts and participation in grassroots politics was recognized when Samuel Doe took over in 1980. Women were allowed to organize and demand rights and equality in politics. Women demanded more opportunities: employment, education, and economic resources. This led to more involvement of women in government and some enlightenment for more and more women in Liberia. In 1980, both traditional and nontraditional women began to speak out and demand freedom. Educated women, including the current President Dr. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, collaborated with traditional women to demand participation and recognition. Their demands were heard and change began.

Since 1980, collaboration among women continues to increase and the gap between nontraditional and tradition women's level of participation in politics also has narrowed. The 1980 coup broke ground for strong coalitions between women. These coalitions, collaboration, and collective efforts came to fruition in the 1989 revolution in Liberia.

During the Liberian civil war, and especially during the Accra Peace Accord, traditional Liberian women became visible and their role was recognized by nontraditional women and the international community. With this new recognition and organization they found the strength to force warring parties and political leaders to sign the Ghana peace deal.

Pray the Devil Back to Hell (2008) is an extraordinary recent documentary about women of Liberia who came together in the midst of the civil war to take on the violent warlords. These brave souls won a peace deal for their devastated country in 2003. As the rebels and warlords peace talks faced collapse in Ghana, traditional and nontraditional—Christian and Muslim—collaborated and formed a small line between the opposing forces and successfully forced an end to the Liberian civil war. Today, these Liberian women are living proof that moral courage and non-violent resistance can succeed, even when the best efforts of diplomacy and international mediation and negotiation have failed.

Women's recognition in Liberia is a key factor in accomplishing successful postwar reconstruction. Women must receive credit for their knowledge and skills in national and local politics. Skills and knowledge obtained through a variety of life experiences can be applied to leadership and government. The challenges for women achieving recognition in Liberia in past decades were traditional and religious practices and political laws that justified excluding women from participation. Governments and institutions can break these barriers and allow women to participate in politics. There are differences and disparities between traditional and nontraditional women in levels of participation. It is useful to consider what these terms mean and what factors may

account for these differences.

Traditional and Nontraditional Women

“Traditional” women are subject to various cultural expectations and have not been provided with or formally exposed to western education. Traditional women are obedient to traditional practices and norms defined by their communities. In Liberia, traditional women are mostly found in rural communities and villages. Non-traditional women have formal western educations and are mostly of freed slave descent. Nontraditional women generally live in urban areas of Liberia and often occupy professional positions in social and health-related fields.

There are some women in Liberia who embrace both traditional practices as preserved in the Liberian constitution: polygamy and female mutilation, yet insist on the right for women to own property and vote. More generally, however, there are political, educational and economic disparities and differences between traditional and nontraditional women. Despite these differences, women collectively continued to be filtered through stereotypes and myths and refused participation in political action and postwar reconstruction. My personal story provides critical examples of the implications of these discriminatory practices.

My Personal Story

While growing up in Liberia, I saw women continue to strive for social and political recognition and equality. These desires may have inspired their courage in helping to force an end to war and the restoration of democratic principles. I was raised by two grandmothers from separate backgrounds (traditional-indigenous and nontraditional Americo-Liberian). This exposed me on a daily basis to differences that

exist between traditional and nontraditional women and I saw the barriers to their participation in political events.

My childhood was spent alternately with one of these two grandmothers whose sacrifice and love helped shape my perceptions of gender equality issues. It is typical in Liberia for grandmothers to raise grandchildren. Traditionally, when a young woman gives birth, the grandmother has the right to that child first before the actual mother. My two grandmothers gave me two separate Liberian perspectives on gender equality. My Americo-Liberian grandmother exposed me to the western perspective that stereotypes were deleterious to the health and well-being of women in Liberian culture. My indigenous grandmother exposed me to the African-Liberian traditional lens where gender is perceived and considered according to less progressive Liberian cultural contexts. These alternatives provided me with useful examples which provided a special and important understanding. They helped me to suppress my biases and suspend value judgments when formulating the most useful research questions about women in Liberia.

It became clear that there are contradictory paradoxes in the different roles assigned to women in Liberian society. My traditional grandmother was in a polygamous marriage, while my Americo-Liberian grandmother was in a monogamous marriage. My indigenous grandmother married at the tender age of 14 while my Americo-Liberian grandmother had the opportunity of choosing her own husband at the age of 27. My indigenous grandmother did not have the opportunity to attend school, but Americo-Liberian grandmother received a western education. My indigenous grandmother was in her first polygamous marriage for 20 years with 29 fellow wives. In her second marriage, she had only two fellow wives.

I spent most of my early life with my Americo-Liberian grandmother and spent the vacation with my indigenous grandmother. My Americo-Liberian grandmother was a kindergarten teacher and a dedicated Christian; I was privileged to receive education and Christianity at an early age. But when staying with my indigenous grandmother, I was exposed to traditional Liberian cultural practices which determined quite specific roles for child vs the role of a man. I saw both grandmothers playing dual roles. Despite my confusion, I understood the disparities that existed between women and their husbands. My grandmothers were carrying the load while fathers to reap the benefits. This shifted my perceptions of and passion for women's equality, especially as these relate to traditional women. My past creates a deeper compassion for women in general and an obligation to address issues that these women face daily. I will not condone nor ignore the social and political injustices and exclusion. My grandmothers, mother, and other women worked very hard in their homes, families, and communities to sustain families and raise children, yet their work was never recognized or valued. I observed that women in Liberia, especially traditional women in rural towns and villages like the one where my indigenous grandmother lived, continued to face stereotypes, marginalization, and discrimination due to traditional, religious, and social practices. Women were not assigned any political and economic roles or allowed to assume leadership in their communities. In my academic and professional journey, I want to make a difference in the lives of Liberian women. I believe women in Liberia deserve social and political equalities. Based on this backdrop, this study explores the Participation and Recognition of Women in Grassroots Politics in Liberia.

Study Outline

To adequately explore the research question above, this study is divided into six chapters. Chapter two consists of literature review. Experts have prognosticated upon women's participation in postwar reconstruction and considered how women have facilitated conflict transformation processes. Conflict transformation theories can provide insights regarding the how the brutal irony of war can be mitigated by a change towards the creation of inclusiveness for women. Both western and African perspectives are considered and a few cases from contiguous countries are examined concerning the role of women during and after war.

Chapter three includes discussions about research approach, strategy, and methodology. A general overview of methodology and the strategies is augmented by detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the specific methods used: the interview and document review.

Chapter four provides results based on the interviews and document review. I also provide a narrative of the results and examine main themes based on my experience in Liberia in the context of a review of literature.

Chapter five includes suggestions for intervention and a discussion of their relative limitations (weaknesses and strengths).

Finally, in chapter six, offer a conclusion with recommendations for continued research on women's lives and work in Liberia. These recommendations are followed by citations and appendices.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature selected includes three major sections based on the research question about women's participation and recognition in grassroots politics and the differences between traditional and nontraditional women. First, conflict transformation concepts have affected decisions regarding women's grassroots participation. Second, women's roles have changed before, during, and after postwar reconstruction. And finally, there are clear and specific differences between how traditional and nontraditional women may or may not participate in political processes that may determine the quality of their lives.

There were, from both African and western perspectives, very limited resources that addressed my research question, especially from Liberian cultural and traditional contexts. The literature selected for this study is written mostly by westerners and does not specifically address traditional women's issues in the Liberian cultural context. But some excellent articles from the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) have delineated women's roles in wars and postwar reconstruction processes in areas where there have been conflicts and war. These articles also examine aspects of conflict resolution theory that examine women roles in postwar reconstruction.

Conflict Transformation and Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia

In viewing the history of Liberia from the perspective of conflict transformation and peace building theories, it becomes clear that a comprehensive paradigm shift needs to be explored moving from war to democracy and conflict to peace. There must be a shift from strife to reconciliation and power imbalances to power sharing. Women must

finally be recognized, included, allowed to participate, and considered as equals.

John Paul Lederach (1996), a theorist and scholar of conflict transformation concepts, offers comprehensive ideas about how the theory is applicable to any society and specifically applies to gender roles. Lederach's concept resonates with Liberian realities.

Lederach (1996) refrains from using the terms “conflict resolution” or “conflict management.” He suggests that the essential elements of war and conflict are aggression, destruction, and destabilization; while the key elements of conflict transformation are restoration of peace, reconciliation, stabilization, democratization, and establishment of social justice. This exemplifies the paradigm shift that must encompass the people of Liberia, especially the women. The nation must move from a view dominated by elements of war and conflict to a more useful process of conflict transformation as described by Lederach.

In *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, Lederach (1996) states that a conflict transformation framework offers a better understanding and awareness of the nature of conflict than a framework which deals with resolving the conflict itself. Conflict resolution or conflict management theory suggests that conflict is all bad and that conflict experts need to change it. These theories assume that conflict is a short-term phenomenon that can be resolved at once and permanently through conflict interventions. Such theorists suggest that people are “controllable” and aim at reducing or managing the volatility of conflict more than looking at or dealing with the problem itself (Lederach, 1996). This means that the aspects and aftermaths of conflict need to be addressed, such as transforming hate to love, violence to peace, and rebellion to

democracy. Lederach sees the use of the framework of conflict transformation as being more appropriate for his work because conflict transformation suggests that conflict experts do not merely eliminate or control conflict but also recognize the nature and volatility of conflict and try to work with it. Conflict transformation entails transforming the way conflict itself is manifested. In other words, conflict transformation involves a search for understanding, awareness, growth, and commitment to change on a personal level, which may occur through the recognition of fear, anger, grief, and bitterness (pp. 16-23).

Conflict transformation suggests that while conflict can have destructive consequences, these consequences can be transformed into positive actions so that self-image, personal and communal relationships, and social structures can improve or change.

In the case of Liberia, conflict transformation embraces the new roles and actions women in Liberia demonstrated during the war to enforce peace in Liberia and their determination to participate in grassroots politics. Women's efforts and contributions were too often unrecognized. But since the military coup in Liberia in 1980, both traditional and nontraditional women have organized themselves and formed a strong coalition to advocate for their right to participate in politics and seek political recognition at national and local levels. During the civil war, women played roles typically reserved for men, while most men were at the war front or in hiding. Women were providing for the family, confronting warring factions, praying and fasting for peace, and engaging the international community to stop the situation in Liberia. These contributions and efforts demonstrated the innate power of women to make a difference and suggests that both

traditional and nontraditional women are worth recognition and worthy of participation in grassroots politics and decision making positions.

Lederach (2002), in his book, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, suggests that effective conflict transformation and peace building must involve a systemic process of increasing equal justice and power balance in political and social systems. Lederach's conflict transformation concept seems operational in Liberia when it suggests a need to eliminate oppression and power domination to order create avenues for women to participate. Sharing power and resources between people and communities or groups can lead directly to reconciliation and remediation. The outcomes of this transformation may include truth, social justice and equality, and empowerment. These must take place in Liberian society for the liberation of women to be realized and for social growth to occur. Lederach does not stand alone in his transformational analysis of conflict and peace.

Cristina Jayme Montiel (2001), a peace building psychologist, explains and contributes to conflict transformation theory in saying,

Peace building demands co-construction of transformational structures within communities. Transformational structures need to be explicitly designed into collective-action and nonviolence movements. These transformational structures can make the difference between a nonviolent and a violent transition to peaceful states. Conflict transformation can also occur across many levels. At the individual level, conflict transformation can begin through peace education with the aim of raising awareness. Awareness allows people to understand their current roles in violent structures so that they can begin to disentangle themselves from those roles, creating new roles and purposes. Awareness of processes is also an important element of constructing transformational structures.

Montiel and Lederach concur that rather than attempting to erase conflict, we must transform the energies which create that conflict into more useful and productive

directions and purposes.

Montiel (2001) further develops the psychological framework of conflict transformation by pointing out that empowerment is another phenomenon of peace building frameworks. Montiel suggests that empowerment can happen at the individual level. This is similar to Lederach's view. For her, Empowerment involves sustaining connections to those with common purpose and building channels for all parties to become involved. These opportunities for participation, whether taken or not, transform relationships. These transformations help create a sustainable framework for peace (Montiel, 2001).

Applying the framework of conflict transformation instead of conflict resolution in Liberia becomes a challenge for scholars. The framework aims to be inclusive and to honor all voices and perceptions in reconstructing peaceful cultures and societies. Liberia has a collectivist culture that requires more awareness of the culture before applying the principles of conflict transformation to fit the situation.

Peace psychologists like Wessells, Schwebel, and Anderson (2001) address this challenge by suggesting a peace building solution. These authors state that peace is not just a feeling of inner well-being or security. Peace includes these but is also bound within a culture of its own. The culture of peace includes social justice, human rights, nonviolence, inclusiveness, civil society, peace education, and sustainability. Achieving any of these pillars of peace requires action; action targeted at change. Consequently for them, peace building involves moving from exclusion to inclusion, a system that embraces the participation of all and not just the elite. This is identical to Lederach's claim that applying conflict transformation to restore peace in society broken by war is

more practical than any “resolution” in such a state of chaos and destruction.

Conflict transformation and peace building concepts are applicable to Liberia’s 14 years of war and violence. Liberia must move from war to democracy, inequality to equality, and from exclusion to inclusion. The emancipation of women would seem to represent a parallel to these same processes of reconstruction and transformation. That women have played such tremendous roles and made significance contributions to the political stabilizations of Liberia, would seem to provide support for these conceptual frameworks.

To increase women’s participation in grassroots politics and for women’s efforts to be recognized, peace building and conflict transformation concepts must be considered and implemented. It will be most useful to transform institutions and policies in Liberia by creating opportunities for women. We must explore methods and practices which can facilitate and encourage transformations, participation, and recognition.

Women’s Participation and Recognition

“If you educate a woman, you have educated a nation.”
—Flomo (A Liberian Comedian)

The above quote became popular in Liberian culture especially after the war. It means women are the ones with compassion. They are the mothers of peace with skills of caring and leadership in the home and family. These skills and knowledge can transform the nation at all levels if women are provided with opportunities to participate. A variety of literature examines feminist perspectives of women’s representation in politics and decision-making. These studies will be reviewed through the lenses of western and African (Liberia) cultures so that we can consider the differences and similarities.

Feminists Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana conducted a (2001) study which suggested that increased violence and war around the world have provided a need for postwar reconstruction and peace building projects and education. McKay and Mazurana suggest that some governments and non-governmental institutions have been making tremendous efforts by investing huge sums of dollars in peace building and community development programs. But some of these programs have come under criticism, especially from certain feminist scholars in the west concerned about gender inequality and power imbalances. Peace building and reconstruction processes in some countries have overlooked women's lack of involvement and unequal participation. Feminist scholars, especially in the west, continue to see women's voices and rights as being overlooked in traditional cultures. They advocate for more women's participation and recognition in politics to create more transformative structures.

Grassroots political participation involves an organized movement at community and local levels, headed by volunteers in the community to support political and social causes and changes. These movements encourage political participation and extending all rights and freedoms to women: education, economic resources, owning land, wealth, and obtaining public and private jobs.

Grassroots political recognition is acknowledgement of women's legitimacy and contributions to society. Despite well-intentioned efforts, women participate less than men in politics and their efforts are not sufficiently recognized.

Nathalie Lasslop (2007) draws from the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 to support this claim. She points out that the conference called for governmental and non-governmental institutions to increase women's involvement in

development, human rights, and peace building. Lasslop says the convention called for eliminating forms of discrimination against women; and their Plan of Action demands that governmental and non-governmental organizations commit to women's participation. In addition to these calls to action, Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana (2001) presented significant arguments that the study of peace psychology has not been objective with regard to women. These authors suggest that peace psychology has not in the past been, and is not now, conscious of gender biases and that these biases have supported male domination. McKay and Mazurana developed what they called "gendered thinking" as a way to challenge bias and discrimination against women. They believe the theory or concept of gendered thinking will illuminate the substantial differences between women's and men's perspectives on the issue of peace building. They argue that the discipline of peace psychology includes patriarchal bias that needs to be seen—and challenged—through the eyes of feminism. They suggest that those who call themselves feminists must look at the world by gathering and interpreting information through the eyes of women, differentiating from patriarchal views, and seeking to explain the importance of considering women's oppression. The injustices they have suffered and the unequal power that exists in most societies are quite clear. McKay and Mazurana argue that those who direct feminist studies should ask critical questions about what building peace means to women across cultural lines. Variation in cultural perspectives becomes a very interesting aspect in the investigation of gender equality and of what constitutes human rights relating to women's participation, especially at the international level and the UN. It appears that no universal understanding of women's perceptions and expectations may be valid. But, other feminist scholars have made important theoretical contributions to

understanding gender differences and similarities in peace building, politics, and societal reconstruction processes. They argue that gender discrimination is based in a focus on gender differences and too often ignores gender similarities. Meredith Kimball (2002), a renowned feminist scholar supports Mazurana and offers historical background to the theoretical study of gender equality, differences, and similarities.

In support of Kimball, Mary Crawford (2002) points out that language has a huge impact on the study of gender differences and peace building. Language serves as an agent of change as it shapes social reality. Language is a source of power and has an influence over social perceptions. Crawford suggests that social construction has categorized and labeled “woman,” which contributes a stereotypical definition of their roles.

Liberian tradition has labeled women as secondary to men and relegated them to roles as housewives. For this reason, boys are most likely to obtain education and wealth than girls, and men are more likely to obtain public and private office. Because of these prejudices, men have more economic power, political leadership, and resources.

In recent years, feminist research has focused on conversation, discourse, and the characteristics of language itself: linguistics, construction, the use of words, particular ways people speak, and grammatical construction. Crawford (2002) focuses on gender-related differences and similarities as having potential to dispel myths and stereotypes of women. Emphasis on gender differences creates negativity that leads to real dangers, like making value judgments that men and women are socially unequal based solely on physical differences. Thompson (2002) suggests that unless we understand specific roles, capacities, and vulnerabilities women serve in war and conflict, we may continue to

practice strategies that do not address gender differences. When this is the case, women become more and more disadvantaged and marginalized.

There is a connection between the views of Thompson, Crawford, and Nathalie Lasslop. Lasslop (2007), the Project Researcher for the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, points out that women's participation in society is not only a question of women's representation in democratic process and leadership. She explores how women can contribute to new dimensions in politics. Lasslop draws on a document from the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. A resolution called the *Platform of Action* calls for institutions and governments around the world to take positive steps to increase women's participation. She points out two challenges to bridging the gender gap. The first has to do with the massive increase of women representatives needed to better reflect the demographic percentages in society. The second involves gender inclusion awareness by men that allows women into the decision-making process. Lasslop claims that in any war zone, women experience and suffer disproportionately the effects of war and violence. While they collectively advocate for peace and stability, they find themselves unjustifiably marginalized and essentialized in the reconstruction and peace building process. This is a risk Thompson (2002) sees in the concept of essentialism or the assignment of characteristics as being essential to women, when those characteristics may be arbitrary or erroneous. Lasslop supports Thompson when she raises a two-part question: is women's participation in the political process only a question of democratic representation or can women contribute to the new paradigm of political and social processes in societies? Lasslop suggests that women's participation in society is not only a question of women's representation in democratic processes and

leadership, but of how women are especially suited to contribute essential ingredients to political process at grassroots and national levels.

Harriette Williams (2006) agrees with Lasslop in claiming women experience and suffer the effects of war and violence, advocate for peace and stability, yet find themselves unjustifiably marginalized and essentialized in peace building processes. Williams argues, “If women contribute about 70% of the total agricultural labor in African by farming and producing small crops, why do women receive less than 10% of the credit given to small farmers in Africa (2006)?” But she praises some East African countries like Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa, and Burundi for scoring high on the world global chart for women’s representation in parliament. She claims that countries in West Africa, especially Sierra Leone and Liberia, where women’s representation is below 20% in government, should strive to improve good governance practices in their postwar reconstruction. She also raises another interesting question: “What makes postwar reconstruction successful in Africa; is there or should there be an African approach to determine success?” William argues that an effective and successful postwar reconstruction and conflict transformation must be characterized by strong state participation and local ownership which is inclusive of women.

Sanam Anderlini (2000) agrees with Williams (2006) that women continue to be excluded from many peace tables and societal reconstruction processes. Anderlini suggests that this is the result of a belief that participants at peace and reconstruction tables must be those having power to implement agreements. Women, it is argued by some societies, rarely have such power. Gender inequity is embedded in cultural and traditional practices predetermine women’s exclusion. Anderlini is not the only writer

who identifies the reasons for exclusion of women. Kemi Ogunsanya (2006) reviews challenges women face in Africa, and claims women seeking leadership roles confront cultural bias and stereotypes.

Ogunsanya (2006) alludes to the many obstacles and challenges women face, ranging from oppressive cultural traditions, illiteracy, and domestic violence to religious structures that stand in the way of women's inclusion in politics in their societies.

Ogunsanya claims that women account for 52% of the world's population and account for the largest number of voters in any democratic election. Despite this proportion, women are vastly under-represented.

Barbara Love (2003) attributes women's exclusion from community development to the rules of power, domination, and subordination that lead to an oppressive framework. Liberian traditional practices often subject women to subordination. She sees the oppressive framework as a socialized process that is developed by individuals. These members play a significant role in developing the inequities and subordination that leads to oppression. Love suggests that it must be the responsibility of all individuals in society to create a consciousness of oppression and develop ways to strive for equity. This consciousness must be translated into individual action. Joanna Kadi (2003) suggests the importance of taking action to effect social change. She states that being silent can damage spiritual, emotional, and physical abilities. If women consistently subscribe to the power of domination and subordination, then oppression becomes sustainable. In order to unsubscribe from this phenomenon, women must locate and discover their identities and inspirations in order to create raise consciousness towards liberation and freedom and increased motivation to participate in grassroots politics, peace, and reconstruction

processes.

Gilbert M. Khadiagala and Terrence Lyon (2006) point out that post-conflict reconstruction furnishes many opportunities for redefining gender roles, redrawing the rules, and propelling women into leadership positions across society. Post-conflict reconstruction must encourage inclusive policies that address gender disparities in the right to education, power, and resources. Khadiagala and Lyon go on to claim that the process and transition from war to peace must allow for greater involvement of women in the rebuilding and reconstruction of society. In order to create and construct this inclusive framework, governments and institutions must develop and create policies and political and democratic processes that encourage women's participation (Khadiagala and Lyon, 2006).

There are few cases that illustrate women's roles during and after war. These may or may not be identical to the situation of Liberia, but still can be directly relevant. While women served as combatants in war, women also played more active roles in ending wars and caring for their families during these wars. In addition, during war and times of violent upheaval, women take on additional roles normally assigned to men in society, especially in collectivist cultures during war and violence. These roles were filled by women in Liberia during the 14 years of civil war.

The Differences in Participation of Women in Wars and Postwar

Molly Carter (2007) explores the role of women during the American civil war. According to Carter, the women's role in the American civil war signaled the start of women's fight for equal rights.

Case Study #1: American Civil War

American's women were very strong and capable. Women took on the duties of men who were fighting. Women fought for the right to become medical professionals during the war to ease the pain the war inflicted on all. American women on both sides of the civil war left their homes to become nurses and fought for the abolition of slavery and equality for all in America. Women became spies for both sides. But Carter notes that despite women's contribution and participation during the tumultuous years of the civil war, women could not vote, own property, and had few civil liberties. Most had not previously worked outside the home. These determined women hid their identity, took up arms, cared for the sick and dying, risked their lives to gather information, and still cooked, cleaned, and cared for children (Carter, 2002).

Rural women were more closely tied to home and land, but urban women in the lower classes frequently did go to work. But these women and their lives were rarely documented, in contrast with the lives of wealthier women in both rural and urban settings. Historian's accounts must always be considered according to existing bias and the lenses of class, race, and gender. Maren Sage supported Carter's view (2002) and drew from the writings of Mary Bodkin Miler Chestnut. Sage argued that the tenacity and love with which these women served their country was astounding, yet too often overlooked. Chestnut, author of "A Diary from Dixie," (published in 1905), said these women laid the ground work for the women of today. Chestnut acknowledged there were many other women who deserve credit for their efforts in equal rights for women during this period of time of the civil war (Sage, 2002).

During the war, Liberian women exercised a higher level of commitment to the

peace process. They organized protests and demonstrations to force warlords to adhere to the peace deal. Non-traditional Liberian women were educators, lawyers, politicians, and were mostly from the upper class prior to the war. They used their resources to engage the international community to secure peace. But this representation was limited. Traditional women voluntarily organized themselves to engage in prayers and fasting for peace, peace marches, demonstrations and grassroots protest in their local communities. Both traditional and nontraditional women in Liberia collaborated for peace in Liberia. Wars in other nations and times paralleled this process wherein women became proactive for peace.

Case Study #2: Guatemala War

During the war in Guatemala, women took up similar roles. During the period of conflict, women primarily fulfilled roles as combatants, mostly as messengers for guerilla groups. They were also representatives for the army where they were hired as ‘beauty queens’ for army events and as dancers for army personnel (Advocates of Human Rights, 2008). These women’s efforts for peace helped bring the conflict to an end. Pilar Yoldi, Yolanda Aguilar, and Claudia Estrada (1988), members of Guatemala's Project for the Recuperation of the Historic Memory (REMHI) recalled that during the war the suffering of women was beyond words. Thousands of women were killed, tortured, or humiliated at the hands of the Guatemalan Army and by agents of the state security apparatus. Additionally, Guatemala’s women were the first people to organize to look for their relatives, publicize acts of violence, and put pressure on authorities at both national and international levels. These women were the force behind organizations such as the Mutual Support Group, the National Coordinating Committee of Guatemalan Widows,

and Relatives of the Guatemalan Disappeared (Yoldi et al, 1988). Most importantly, these women formed organized groups, opening spaces in society for the search for the disappeared. Guatemalan women put traditional roles aside, becoming the backbone of their families and communities and breadwinners on whom their family's survival depended. Women were responsible for supporting and caring for the children, old people, and the sick. Traditionally, these roles were assumed by men in Guatemala. The case of Guatemalan women is similar to what happened in Liberia. Liberian women's contributions should be respected and valued. They were examples of dignity and defenders of life.

Case Study #3: Cameroon's Balikumbat and Bafanji Conflict

Another example is from the war in the African country of Cameroon. The experience and role of Cameroon women in the Balikumbat and Bafanji villages' conflict, illustrates the point. Rosemary Ngufor (1994) described the historical context of the conflict in Cameroon. The conflict centered on decades of periodic land disputes between two villages, which led to an intervention in 1968 by the national government of Cameroon. The dispute resulted in civil war, with massive killings by each side. During the war women were actively engaged in the armed conflict. Some women took up arms, often spears with poisoned heads, and killed as many opposing forces as possible. While both men and women played combatant roles, women had additional support roles caring for the male combatants and victims and serving as mail runners and spies. Women used local herbs to heal wounded men. Unfortunately, these roles were unrecognized (Ngufor, 1994).

During peace negotiations women played only minor roles like cooking and

dancing to entertain the negotiators. The chiefs and elders (all men) were brought to the negotiation tables. There were no mechanisms for women to take part. Women were ignored while decisions were taken on issues that affected their lives. The peace negotiations were considered to be “male matters” (Ngufor, 1994). Women from within Bafanji and Balikumbat still buried the dead and provided shelter for orphans and the homeless in mud houses they constructed. Through farming groups, thrift and loan groups, and prayer groups, they stressed the importance of peace. They also used some of these groups to improve their economy. War widows sold farm produce to pay fees for their children. The most active women strengthened the women’s groups that existed before the war and new women’s groups continue to emerge (Ngufor, 1994). In Cameroon as in Liberia, women’s efforts were unrecognized.

These cases illustrate common themes that unite women's experiences around the world, especially in countries that experience war and violence. These themes include lack of access to social networks, powerlessness, lack of voice, and a tendency to be negatively stereotyped. Women's participation in war, either voluntary or involuntary, adds an additional level of complexity to their already complicated lives. Ironically, these women have often discovered more freedom during the brutality of war than during more peaceful periods.

Ellen Sirleaf (2008), in a radio address to Liberians, claims that women shoulder the majority of the burden of raising children, managing households and caring for aging relatives. During intractable conflicts, women become more visible within the family and community as men are absent for long periods of time. Women may become breadwinners and primary decision makers in the home and in the community and may

fill other roles within the conflict including supporting pro-or anti-war movements.

Women carry out covert measures, engage in actual peace processes, providing humanitarian relief, and lobby politicians and other key stakeholders to de-escalate the conflict and restore democracy and peace. Yet women continue to be excluded from participation in national government and politics or are given limited roles in postwar reconstruction. Sirleaf contended that women are more peace-oriented, more risk-aware, and better at communication. Women's increased participation in politics and in decision making should have a salutary effect and be given more weight (Star Radio, 2008).

Elise Boulding (2001) takes this view further. She argues that women's traditionally marginalized role has given them the space to be creative and inventive, especially in the field of peacemaking. She also argues that their contributions have often been overlooked. Boulding writes that while the constraining effects of the relegation of women to the household and the private spaces of society may have been overstated, what tends to be ignored is that “women's work” of feeding, rearing, and healing humans is critical work. Building and rebuilding communities under conditions of constant change, including war, environmental catastrophe, plague, and continual push-pull migrations---has produced resources and skills within women's cultures that have been essential not only to human survival but for human development (Boulding, 2001). These women have walked the talk, yet remain strangely invisible in histories written by men.

The historic exclusion of women in Liberia from structures of power and politics stimulated efforts by women themselves and inspired international bodies to pay serious attention and address power imbalance and inequity in Liberian politics. Advocates in the

various UN systems supported efforts by women in Liberia to argue that women participation in governance structures is critical for development in Liberia; however, not only the issue of women's underrepresentation that needs to be addressed, but also the lack of recognition of women, especially traditional and ordinary women in Liberia. Additionally, from human rights perspective, women equal participation is argued on the premise that women constitute half of the world's population. In the case of Liberia, traditional women who are in the majority are always excluded from politics, and their efforts at the grassroots level go unrecognized.

Different Liberian women have different visions and concepts of politics, and subsequently bring a special caring focus to politics and issues that have effectively fostered postwar reconstruction. Yet my experience allows me to recognize that there are differences between the participation of traditional versus nontraditional Liberian women. Bridging the gap between traditional and nontraditional women in Liberia could create greater opportunities for producing creative change. But the literature reviewed in this study suggests that more work needs to be done. This concern was reflected in my choice of methods.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes (a) the purpose of this study, (b) the research design, (c) the setting and participants, (d) the instruments, (e) the procedures, and (f) the data analysis process.

The Purpose of this Study

The primary purpose is to investigate the participation and recognition of women in grassroots politics in Liberia. We will examine differences between traditional and nontraditional Liberian women's participation.

Method Overview

The case study method was used to conduct this study. According to John Creswell's (2003) description, case study method involves multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering processes. Creswell (2003) suggests that data gathered in case studies is normally largely qualitative, but it may also be quantitative. Tools to collect data may include surveys, interviews, document review, observation, and even the collection of physical artifacts.

Robert Yin (1993) suggests a useful working definition of the case study method. Yin defines case study method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary issue and subject related to a real-life situation. Case study method uncovers and unveils the most difficult context and content in order to create an understanding and awareness of the main issue (Yin, 1993). Yin goes beyond Creswell's view of defining case study method and offers researchers broader suggestions and techniques for effectively organizing and conducting case study research. He provides detailed descriptions of what case study method entails, and argues that case study methods should begin with one or

two important questions, e.g. how or why, and one or more units of data analysis: narrative or descriptive. Based on these ideas, I chose to review the 2005 Liberian election data and to conduct interview with ten women, both traditional and nontraditional.

I also drew from John Paul Lederach's (1996) elicitive model and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) indigenous paradigm model for conducting research with everyday or traditional people.

The Indigenous Paradigm Model

Smith's (1999) Indigenous Paradigm Model approach involves a deconstruction of western ways of conducting research simply by sharing indigenous stories about research. She challenges traditional westerners' ways of gathering, knowing, and researching. She calls for "decolonization" of research methodologies and advocates a "new agenda" of indigenous research (Smith, 1999) Decolonization, the central theme of Smith's approach, is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices (Smith, 1999). Her approach situates research in a much larger historical, political and cultural context and examines critical nature within these dynamics. Her intent is to develop indigenous peoples as researchers and so that she can better address the issues indigenous people face. Smith's approach is similar to John Lederach's development of training called an elicitive model.

The Elicitive Model

John Paul Lederach (1996) points out four key factors in his elicitive model for conducting conflict resolution training: (a) People are a key resource and not recipients

(b) Indigenous knowledge is a channel to discovering appropriate action (3) Building from available local resources fosters self-sufficiency and sustainability, and (d) Empowerment emerges from processes that promote participation in naming and discovering appropriate responses to identified needs and problems. Lederach's approach proposes a methodological framework emphasizing the importance of cultural factors in conflict resolution processes. His main idea is to question how researchers can foster a pedagogical study that empowers people to participate in creating appropriate models for handling conflict. He implies this self-referential method may have some flaws. He suggests the elicitive model approach that uses information from already-existing local sources on managing conflict. His approach aims at discovery and creation of models that emerge from resources within the setting, most importantly; culture is regarded as the center for developing training models that are responsive to local people. According to Lederach, the trainer sees himself primarily as a facilitator rather than as an expert in a particular model of conflict resolution. Consequently, the trainer role is to provide participatory process in which participants gain a better understanding of conflict. Finally, the design and goals of the training process are formulated by the participants, rather than dictated by the trainer. Participants are encouraged to participate in the creation of the training model and to articulate their own understandings about how to approach conflict. The aim is to foster an indigenous, self-sustaining peace process. Lederach's elicitive model validates why case study method is relevant and appropriate for this Liberian study.

Lederach's and Smith's models for conducting studies and training with traditional people influenced the way I conducted my interviews with traditional elders

and informants. While Smith's and Lederach's works are not identical, the approaches are similar. While my study was not intended to challenge western scholarship, research, and training; I employed Smith and Lederach's methods and used indigenous or traditional people at the center of knowing and gathering information. These approaches situated my research in a more culturally, politically, and historically accurate context.

I met with traditional male elders in Liberia who spoke to me about traditional ways of seeking and gathering information. Because I was interviewing traditional women, I needed guidance from these elders to avoid breaking cultural norms and violating traditional practices. The elders I spoke to were traditional chiefs in rural villages. I also spoke with traditional female elders who were knowledgeable concerning how to appropriately interact with traditional women, especially when asking personal question about women's backgrounds and experiences.

Research Design

The framework for the research is case study derived from the research question that explores women's participation in politics and the relative recognition afforded women's grassroots political efforts. The research was conducted in two phases. First I reviewed the 2005 election's data and then conducted interviews with ten women in Liberia, five traditional and five nontraditional.

Document Review

The election result data I reviewed was part of the official document of the National Election Commission. The NEC is the constituted body appointed by the government of Liberia to conduct elections at local and national levels. The headquarters of NEC is located in Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia.

In 2009, I traveled to Monrovia to review the 2005 election results at the NEC. After I sought and received permission from the Election Commission, I was referred to the Commission's library where the documents were kept. I reviewed the hard copy of the election results. I scheduled six hours daily for two weeks, from 10am-4pm, Monday through Friday (except for holidays) to conduct the review. In the first three days, I reviewed all the results and data of the elections held in local and national areas and levels. Starting from day four, I narrowed the review to the results of the national elections that included the presidency, House of Representatives, and senate. While reviewing these documents, I made notes of the information that support the research question and hypotheses. I also made notes on doubts or question I had concerning the review. At the last hour of each day, I spoke with any commissioner who might be available to clarify my concerns and address my doubts. I completed the review in ten days. I returned to the US and analyzed the data. Based on my notes and information I gathered, I provided a comprehensive narrative about the data. After reviewing the election results, I conducted interviews with ten women, traditional and nontraditional.

Interview

The interviews were conducted in Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia and in five other rural communities outside Monrovia. These rural communities are set up according to tribal and clan identities. I was acquainted with the demography of these communities because I grew up in Liberia, and selected these communities and went directly into them to recruit informants for the interviews. I selected the ten women, five from urban communities and five from rural communities.

Informants

Traditional women in rural areas, without formal education and economic resources, are obedient to traditional norms and practices. Nontraditional women I interviewed in urban areas, most often had some western education, economic resources, and professional careers: lawyer, nurse, teacher, and public positions. These women ages ranged from 40 to 60 years, some were Christian and others Muslim, the two main religions practiced in Liberia.

Before the recruitment and selection process, I met and spoke to a few community chiefs with many years of experience in the culture. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) suggests doing this in adhering to an indigenous model of research. This approach takes into consideration the importance of tradition, history, and norms for the informants. Most importantly, this approach suggests a framework that allows the researcher to report back to the traditional people. This is the intent of this study.

The chiefs I spoke with were highly knowledgeable and understood what case study involves. In each community, a chief's assigned roles were to conduct investigations, resolve conflicts, and conduct community meetings. In Liberia, elders have the power to gather together the community members to share views and conduct meetings. The meeting would be held in the traditional atmosphere and information is gathered from stories, songs, dance, proverbs, etc. The name of God and the spirits would be invoked during the meeting. A sacrifice will be offered as a way of binding the community to the peace covenant. As a gesture of oneness, the whole group would eat together. Elders, respected community leaders, provided guidance I found helpful before I recruiting informants for interviews.

I selected women who met specific criteria including marital status, leadership in their community, minimum education (especially for nontraditional women), and experience with grassroots political participation.

When in these communities, I randomly asked anyone I saw, based on the advice I received from the elders, if there was any female or woman leader in the community. This was culturally appropriate. Members of those communities did not have any problem directing me to the homes of women they knew were leaders. For women who were married, I consulted and got permission from their husbands before I contacted them. This was part of the cultural norms and was the usual way of identifying informants, by knocking on doors.

I went to each informant's home to have them sign a consent form and schedule an interview. They voluntarily signed the forms and helped set the schedule for interviews. But I decided to leave the interview time open and not let time be a constraint. For those traditional women who could not read and write, but spoke and understood some English, I read the consent form aloud to them and help them write their names on the form.

Setting

In the rural communities, I conducted the interview in the palava hut setting as suggested by the chiefs because this is the place where community meetings and investigations are held. Every rural community in Liberia has a palava. The palava hut is an open tent located in the center of each community to bring people together when there is a conflict or concern. The palava hut is a place where people gather to restore harmony and resolve conflicts involving important and difficult issues. The hut is reserved and

respected by community members. It is within this setting that a safe environment was created in an effort to gather information. It is against the norm of the community for someone who is not part of a group meeting held in the palava hut to interfere, interrupt, or listen in.

These huts are where I interviewed informants in traditional rural communities. I conducted the interviews with nontraditional women in a private room at their place of work. The chiefs told me that in order to “save face,” especially of a woman or an older person is involved, I should refrain from asking direct questions. Since I also knew the Liberia culture, I was able to effectively design my interview questions. Face-saving is important in Liberian society because Liberian’s culture is a high-context and collectivist society where women and elders receive special treatment and respect. This concept is opposite the norms in a society that practices individualism.

Questionnaire

David W. Augsburger (1992) cited Stella Ting-Toomey in writing, “Face saving in high-context cultures is a psychological-affective construct that is tied closely with other concepts such as “honor,” “shame,” and “obligation” (Ting-Toomey, 1992). Therefore, during the interview, I played a role of a chief and moderated the interview. I invited the informants to tell their stories or narrate their response to the questions.

In developing the questions for the interview, I relied on experiences and knowledge I had gained when growing up in Liberia. I understood collectivist culture. Instead of starting my question with what, how, and when, I asked the informants to please share stories about their roles or efforts in politics. Since I grew up in Liberia, I did not have any difficulty understanding these informants when they responded to a

question. Using Smith's (1999) Indigenous model, I underscored the importance and significance of their stories. Smith's model suggests that the indigenous paradigm approaches cultural protocols, values, and beliefs as integral aspects of the research. This was compatible with and similar to what Lederach talked about in his elicitive model.

I designed 10 questions, but the informants used storytelling to respond. The questions are divided into two categories. The first 5 questions gathered demographic information from the informants while the other 5 questions gathered information about women's roles, grassroots political participation, and recognition before, during, and after the war. The second set gathered information about differences between traditional and nontraditional women's relative levels of participation. Each interview session lasted approximately two hours.

Procedure

The woman had signed consent forms and during the interview, I asked questions based on the chiefs' suggestions. I listened quietly, took notes, and recorded their stories. I then transcribed and translated the recordings and notes. After the interviews in Liberia, I returned to the US four days later due to lack in Liberia of electricity and electronic equipment to analyze the data from the interview process. Most of the interview data was paraphrased or edited for adequate clarity. Since I understand the Liberia English or language spoken by some of these women, I paraphrased and translated the stories into some form of Western Standard English. I decided not to use direct quotations verbatim because of the native idiom would be vulnerable to misinterpretations. I chose this path because it helped me to identify highlights and major themes emerging from these stories over the course of the interviews.

Research Validity

The aim is design to maximize the degree to which the findings obtained accurately describe and are generalizable to the greater population. Robert Yin (1993) suggests and describes two levels of validity: internal and external. This study takes both into consideration in designing this research.

Internal

According to Yin (1993), internal validity demonstrates that certain conditions lead to other conditions and requires the use of multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources to uncover convergent lines of inquiry; the researcher strives to establish a chain of evidence forward and backward. Considering what Yin (1993) establishes as internal validity, the inability of this study to randomly select participants for the interview process could be a major threat to the validity of the results gleaned from this study.

But I intentionally set the criteria to recruit and select participants because I believe these women provided interesting stories that addressed the research question. Additional threats to the internal validity of this study may include the participants' experiences of the civil war. The irony of war could influence their engagement with these interviews. These women also might have encountered threats from their husbands or other community members that may have influenced their ability to fully engage in the process. I did, however, employ traditional-based procedures in interviewing these women. I conducted the interview in the palava hut according to the elders' suggestions.

External

Robert Yin (1993) suggests that external validity reflects whether or not findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case or cases; the more variations in places,

people, and procedures a case study can withstand and still yield the same findings.

Based on this view, I believe generalizing this case study of Liberian's women participation in grassroots politics is unrealistic. This study is may not be generalizable because it aims at gathering and understanding women specifically with Liberian stories and experience. This study may not apply to women's situations in Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, or any other country. But some aspects of war and violence are indeed common among these principalities. This study is also about conflict *transformation*, which means people's stories and experiences are the hearts of transformation with the aim of restoring stability in broken societies. But if there is any external validity in this study, it has to do with possible bias in the process of generalizing conclusions. One possible threat to the external validity that I considered and can account for is the exclusion of men as political participants in this study of postwar reconstruction activity in Liberia. I decided not to consider information given by men in this study because I felt that men's participation and voices might undermine or change the informants' stories. This idea is supported by some elders who suggested that having men involved in the process would inhibit women's ability to be fully engaged and share important issues. With this understanding and to maximize the external validity, I decided to include women who are respected as elders in these communities because of their power to help provide safeguards for the women who participated.

Data Analysis

This study was designed in accord with Yin's claim that a researcher must collect and store multiple sources of evidence comprehensively and systematically. The data must be in formats that can be referenced and sorted so that converging lines of inquiry

and patterns can be uncovered. This approach was applied after my interview process and as a method to code the interview. Building off Yin's work, I meticulously protected the data gathered. I locked up my notepad, recorder, and all material used in my briefcase. I returned to the US to analyze the data. I transcribed the interview documents and created an electronic version of each set of interview notes. I used colored paper and markers to code my data. I coded the data separately based on main themes gathered from the interview. After coding the data, I cut out themes and grouped them according to content. Based on the coded information, I wrote narratives of my findings. Each informant's document was color-coded and reviewed separately. The interview documents were printed and sessions were cut and pasted on a separate sheet of paper. Finally, I labeled these notes and pasted them according to main themes as grounded in the literature and rooted in my personal story and experience. The main themes gathered and coded from the data collected were: (a) Pre-war grassroots political participation (b) During and postwar grassroots political participation (c) Recognition of women's grassroots participation and efforts (e) Differences between traditional and nontraditional women's level of participation (f) Barriers to traditional women's grassroots and political participation, and (g) Barriers to nontraditional women's grassroots political participation. These main themes were narrated and formed part of my findings in the result chapter.

Chapter 4: RESULTS

These results are based primarily on interviews conducted with ten Liberian women and a review of the 2005 election data. The goal of the document review was to gather data and results of the 2005 election to document women's participation and nonparticipation in grassroots politics. After reviewing the election results data, I discovered there were some disparities between male and female levels of participation. In order to understand why these differences exist, I conducted interviews with traditional and nontraditional women. It seemed that interviewing both categories of women might explain further these disparities. I also felt that listening to and documenting these women's stories would support my research hypotheses. From these women's stories and experiences shared, I was able to gather some main themes which are supported by literature and my personal experience. These themes serve to illuminate and perhaps explain some of my research questions.

Phase 1: Document Review of the 2005 Election Results

The National Election Commission is the constituted body responsible for conducting elections in Liberia at national and local levels. For the purpose of this research, I selected the election results data of the national election. The NEC's office is located in Monrovia, the capitol of Liberia, where I reviewed the data. The NEC comprises of 5 commissioners, 2 female and 3 male, who run the activities of the NEC. The figures presented below are based on that election data.

Voter Registration

The National Election Commission's data showed that the total number of registered voters were 79.5 % of the population of 3.5 million people. The official age for

registration to vote and participate in politics in Liberia according to the NEC, and supported by the Liberia's constitution, was 18 years and above. According to the results reviewed, the data indicated that women accounted for 50% of the total number of registered voters while men accounted for 50% (NEC, 2005) as shown in figure one on the next page.

Registered Voter Percentages

Figure 1: Voters Registration

Even though there was equal representation of women in the registration process; this was not carried over to women being elected to political offices. I decided not to include the election results data for local elections because local elections were ongoing in many of these local communities at the time when this review was conducted. I did not

report any percentages concerning women's levels of participation and registration in elections because the election results did not record any data to indicate the demography and percentages between traditional vs nontraditional women's registration and participation. But I discovered that despite of the equivalent percentages of women having been registered to vote, the election data revealed that the election results overwhelmingly favored male candidates. The one exception was the election of a female candidate to the presidency. She was the only female candidate among 20 who were deemed eligible for the presidency.

Presidency

The data indicated there were 21 political parties registered that nominated 21 candidates for the Presidency and 21 for the Vice Presidency. The data further showed that 20 of the 21 candidates for president were men. The only female candidate won the election in a runoff election in November, 2005.

The House of Representatives

The literature indicates Liberia has fifteen counties represented by representatives and senators. In the House of Representatives, the election data revealed that only 13% of those elected were women (see figure 2 on next page).

House of Representative Data

Figure 2: House of Representative

Senatorial Election

In the Senatorial election, only 16% of those elected were women (NEC, 2005).

The data showed a huge gender gap between men and women candidates elected as indicated in figure 3.

Senatorial Data

Figure 3: Senatorial Representation

Based on the above information and to further address the research question that investigates the relative recognition of traditional and nontraditional women's participation and non-participation in postwar reconstruction in Liberia, I conducted interviews with ten women. It seemed reasonable that these women could provide some clarity with their participations, recognition, and the obstacles they faced in grassroots politics and electoral processes before, during and after the war in Liberia. These women's stories might allow me to understand the level of women's participation in grassroots politics in Liberia, and most importantly, the differences between traditional and nontraditional women's levels of participation in grassroots politics.

Phase #2: Interview of Women in Liberia

The interview process involves collecting information to illuminate the research question and the purpose of this research.

Prior to interviewing each woman, they were given the option of choosing a pseudonym so their identities could be kept anonymous and be concealed. Five of the ten women who were traditional women and one nontraditional woman asked for their real names and identities to be concealed while the four other women who were nontraditional did not have any problem with my use of their real names and identities. But all ten women volunteered to share their experiences and stories for the sake of this study. These women were offered the freedom to speak as they wished so that they could be empowered by telling their stories. This idea is supported by Linda Smith (1999) who suggests the importance of using traditional people's stories while conducting research. Throughout the interview, I was able to listen critically, identifying some themes which are presented in a narrative in the result section.

Demography of Women

The demography chart reports are based primarily on questions one and two. Question one was stated as, "please give your name if you would like, date of birth, marital status, and community of origin." Question two was asked, "Please share your education, social, religious, and leadership experience in your community." All ten of the women responded to both questions. The findings indicate that five women had traditional orientation and the other five had nontraditional orientation. The responses show that five women who were all nontraditional had some economic resources, formal education, and professional careers (nurse, lawyer, and manager positions) and the other

five who were traditional women had little or no western education but were educated in traditional schools and followed some traditional norms and practices like rising children, taking care of the family while the men were gone, farming, and selling small crops to sustain the family. All ten of the women interviewed, in response to these questions, shared that they were married with children, gave their age range which was between 40-60 years old, and stated that they were Christian or Muslim. Based on these responses, I offer the demographics in table one, see next page.

Demography Information

Pseudo nym	Age	Area	Marital Status	Occupation	Education	Class	Religion
Susan	55	Rural Town	Married	Farmer & Marketer	None/Traditional school	Traditional	Christian
Leymah	47	Urban City	Married	Lawyer	College Degree	Nontraditional	Muslim
Oretha	60	Urban City	Married	Police Officer	College Degree	Nontraditional	Christian
Martha	57	Rural Town	Married	House wife Farmer	None/Traditional High School	Traditional	Christian
Hanna	55	Rural Town	Married	Marketer & Community Leader	None/Traditional High School	Traditional	Muslim
Eliza	49	Urban City	Married	School Teacher	College Degree	Nontraditional	Christian
Mary	59	Rural Town	Married	Marketer & Community Leader	None/Traditional High School	Traditional	Christian
Amelia	58	Urban City	Married	Lawyer	College Degree	Nontraditional	Christian
Karma	44	Urban City	Married	Nurse	College Degree	Nontraditional	Muslim
Jessie	47	Rural Town	Married	Farmer & House Wife	None/Traditional School	Traditional	Christian

Table #1: Demographical

The above information indicates the categories of women interviewed and includes community of origin, education, religion, career, and cultural background. After gathering this information, I proceeded with the question that asked about their experiences in grassroots politics in Liberia.

Grassroots political participation in the Liberian context involves an organized movement at the local level. These are headed by volunteers in the community to support

political and social causes. For example, the Liberian Women Lawyers Association organized a grassroots movement at local levels in rural Liberia that led to significant voter registration for a political party which in turn helped the national party elect a woman to the presidency.

Pre-war Grassroots Political Participations

When asked to share experiences and participation in grassroots politics before the war, most women reported some experience in participating in grassroots politics before the war. All five of the nontraditional women stated that they had participated in grassroots politics before the war while three out of the five traditional women reported that they had little participation experience in grassroots politics. Some of the grassroots activities they reported included membership in women's movement groups, organizing other women to register to vote, mobilizing friends and relatives to get out the vote, advocacy for women's recognition and inclusion, election education and interpretation, attending rallies, and making minimum financial contributions. All five of the traditional women reported that they faced more challenges when they participated in these activities in previous elections. These challenges included abuse and dehumanization, suppression and aggression (from some men), discrimination in the electoral process, and traditional biases that sometimes prevented them from registering to vote. Additional challenges they reported included lack of education and money. They felt intimidated by the Election Commission's requirements, traditional norms, and were subjected to stereotypes that created significant barriers for participating in electoral process before the war.

Here are their stories:

My first participation in grassroots organization was in 1980 during the military coup. I was part of the group that went to the executive mansion to present a statement to the military government from the women of Liberia. In the statement that I signed, we requested consideration for the women of Liberia. Traditional women were tired of sitting home and waiting for the men to come home late with money for us to buy food, cook, and set their tables. We requested equal job opportunities so we could earn income like any man. - *Susan*

Since 1979, I have been a leader of the marketing association in my community. Before that, I sold crops in the market near the military barracks for many years. When the military government took office, I knew some of the armed boys who were leaders of the coup because some of them came to me to arrange credit for money and food stuffs. In 1981, I was appointed commissioner for my community. When I was a commissioner, I organized a women's group in my community and encouraged many women to either establish small businesses or get a job. Some of the women, especially the younger ones, reported that whenever they went out to seek jobs and help to go to school, the men would ask them for sexual favors before they could get help. You know our society has been and is dominated by men all the time. This made it very difficult for most of our women to get anything without sexual favors. Some of the women agreed to offer sexual favor in order to receive scholarships to go to college or get a job and others refused. As their leader, I encouraged those who did not want to do it to start small businesses and helped them get small loans from other women. In the 1985 election of Samuel K. Doe and the 1997 election of Charles Taylor, I was still in power and was one of the leaders of Traditional Women's Coalition. I was elected in 1983 to help traditional women understand the 1985 electoral process and their rights. Many of our young girls reported major harassment and rape, including myself, when we decided that we were voting for the woman candidate who was contesting the presidency in Liberia. I was jailed for three weeks along with other women. However, we did not give up and became more aggressive until the war came. -*Oretha*

Eliza, a Christian college graduate and school teacher recalled her experience:

Before the war, I struggled to get my husband to accept my independence. When he completed college, he appeared to be dissatisfied that I completing college. When I got the teaching job, he started to threaten and harass me every day at home. Each day my husband would accuse me of breaking our traditional norms. He wanted me to spend more time working at home than in school. My marriage was in danger when I became the chairperson of the Women Teachers Association in my network that

comprises four rural communities. But I did not give up. I organized a women teachers' network to translate portions of the Liberian constitution concerning elections into local dialects and trained some of our traditional mothers and sisters who could not read or write English. Our program was able to help these women understand their rights to vote and participate in grassroots politics. Our organization helped trained over 1300 traditional women in how to vote and how to respond to traditional practices that stand in the way of their participate in politics and elections. –*Eliza*

When asked for their views about grassroots participation during and after the war, all five of the nontraditional women interviewed stated that they had participated in politics during and after the war and four out of five traditional women claimed that they had participated. The women reported that they experienced more obstacles to their participation during the war than after the war.

Postwar Grassroots Political Participations

The interviews indicated that grassroots political participation during the war was very limited because of the barriers against and limitations of reaching traditional people in rural areas. Most of the women, especially traditional women, reported that they more concerned about getting food and protecting their family because their husbands' lives were in danger during the war. According to these informants' stories, there more collaborations and solidarity between traditional and nontraditional women during the war. But the women reported that they faced more political challenges: prosecution for breaking the law established by the warring factions, harassment, rape, lack of economic resources, bad roads and poverty.

Leymah, a Muslim lawyer, shared her story:

My first real attempt to be involved in politics was during the war. I helped organized the Women's Coalition of Liberia for Peace. Before and during the war, I was a leader for the Muslim women in Liberia. My involvement in grassroots politics came about when I received an

invitation from the Christian Women's Association to collaborate in order to bring an end to 14 years of civil war. When we came together during the war, there were no traditional, nontraditional, Muslim, Christian, educated, uneducated, rich, or poor. We all came together under one umbrella. We were women whose husbands' were killed, in hiding, or at the battlefield. We were women who were out there looking for food for our families. We were women who were raped and harassed by rebels and we were all concerned about our children's future. With my influence in the Muslim community, I recruited thousands of Muslim women to join the women's movement for peace.

I saw the power of courage and unity among all women in Liberia at the battle fronts of warring factions. We were determined and ready to die for peace. I saw traditional women praying and singing while the nontraditional women were making phone calls and establishing contacts at the international level to help bring peace to our nation. We were all working together. We demanded a complete end of the war by gathering every morning between warring factions and demanding that they end the fighting and return our children to us. I was part of the women's group that presented statements to all the warring factions demanding an end to the war. I participated with and represented Liberian women in the third peace conference in December 1994 in Ghana: The Accra Clarification of the Akosombo Peace Agreement.
—*Karma*,

When asked a question about women's grassroots participation after the war, the women reported that there was more involvement in politics and in the 2005 electoral process than there had been before the war. But nine of the ten women reported, that despite their efforts in bringing about peace and democracy in Liberia, they were unrecognized and less represented in the decision-making process at the peace conference in Ghana. Some of the women, traditional and nontraditional, recalled:

I was one of those women who signed the letter presented to the Economic Community of West African States-ECOWAS, the African Union-AU, and the United Nation-UN requesting official invitations to attend the peace conference in Ghana. When the invitation was sent to us, women were given five seats while there were one hundred seats allotted to men. We wrote back to the peace committee requesting more representation and were allotted twenty more seats. When I arrived in

Ghana as part of the women delegation to the peace conference, there were thousands of women from the refugee camps in Ghana who received us. We marched from the airport to the conference site. There were more outside the conference hall than in the hall. These women were cheering, crying, and singing for peace and a democratic election in Liberia. Most of the women outside couldn't read and write but they were committed to their demands. –*Amelia*

Mary, a marketer representing the market women of Liberia shared her participation:

Once in Accra, we women sought to gain attention from the international community by demonstrating and marching to the conference hall every day, and using Ghanaian's media including newspaper and television. I spoke my Liberian dialect when I was interviewed by the media and it was interpreted in English. I believe this tactic worked for us. We were granted more official observer seats at the conference.

And another woman recalls:

At the conference, we presented statements demanding a complete end to the factions signing the peace deal unconditionally and drop all demands. Representing *Liberia Women Initiative-LWI*, I requested a private meeting with senior diplomats and UN officials, factions, and other International stakeholders. The goal was to build bridges to key stakeholders as a means of influencing the peace process and including more women in the Transitional Government that was established during the conference. We also wanted to appeal to the country for peace, stability, and a democratic election. –*Martha*

When the women were asked to state how they felt about their grassroots efforts during and after the war, all ten of the women claimed that they actively participated despite obstacles and barriers during the election process. But the informants stated that their grassroots efforts had been unrecognized.

Grassroots Political Recognition

Political recognition, in the Liberian context, means acknowledgement of the legitimacy of a particular group or governing structure. Most of the women described political recognition as extending all rights and freedoms to women in the Liberian

society.

I believe that members of Liberian society need to recognize that every citizen must enjoy equal freedoms to pursue different concepts of a good life, and be able to express their political opinions without fear of persecution. In a democracy, I believe we are free to express ourselves and pursue our interests as long as we do not infringe upon others or break the law. The government needs to recognize certain basic protections from religious, political, and legal persecution.

-Leymon

After the Accra meeting, we women quickly realized that in order to be taken seriously and have our agenda considered, we had to turn our attention to adequately documenting and substantiating our demands. I, with other interested women peace activists, organized consultations with various women's groups. These included traditional women. The meetings resulted in a position statement on the conduct of the war and its impact on women, children, and our communities. Armed with this document, we sought to gain access to future decision-making processes on the future of Liberia and more representation in government. In addition, we demanded recognition because our work and efforts during the war served as the foundation for stable democracy in Liberia. We also demanded equality and full representation at all levels and for all women. *-Amelia*

Beyond our efforts at being recognized, there were challenges: traditional practices, poverty, and male domination in the homes. We faced this domination in the past and I continue to see this happening after the war. I was aware of two main disparities and challenges that stood in our way. Our traditional mothers and sisters wanted to fully seek political leadership and jobs, but we lacked education and financial resources. I would like to see traditional women included in the government and have the ability to acquire good jobs because of their efforts at the grassroots level during the war. These traditional people gave all they had, even abandoning relationships to bring peace to Liberia. Our work must include their empowerment so that they can join us. It would really be sad to see traditional women return to their old way of life. We need for their lives to be improved by earning income, acquiring land and property, and learning how to read and write in order to seek office in public and private sectors.

-Oretha

During the interviews with these women, when they were asked how they envisioned their role in a new democratic government in Liberia, all ten of the women

reported that they wanted to be included in private and public leadership and decision-making. They also indicated they wanted more political recognition and equal opportunities for all women at all levels. These themes emerged consistently in the interviews. All ten women said the Liberian political system and everyday social customs needed to become more tolerant and progressive in recognizing the contributions and efforts of women. Their desire for political recognition was a clear message in each of their stories.

In addition to our efforts being unrecognized, challenges included restrictive traditional practices, poverty, and male domination in the homes that we faced in the past. This domination has continued since the war. Two challenges stand in our way: traditional mothers and sisters need education and financial resources to be able to seek political leadership and jobs. I would like to see our traditional women included in government. They should be assisted in acquiring good jobs because they worked really hard during the war. It would be sad to see them traditional women return to their old way of life. We need for their lives to be improved by earning income and acquiring land and property. They must learn how to read and write in order to seek offices in public and private sectors. —*Martha*

These women believe that their contributions and efforts during the civil war deserved to be recognized and acknowledged. They felt this move could help solidify peace efforts in Liberia. Many women, traditional and nontraditional had new hope, but this hope was tempered by fear and frustration.

I know some women are active and employed in critical aspects of political, social, and economically strategy positions. I know we have elected the first female African president. There are now women at the head of government ministries and agencies. Furthermore, due to pressure by women, the national legislature has passed a revised law against rape and the Devolution of Estate Act which grants women in customary marriages the rights to own property and to take custody of their children. But these successes are not enough compared to the privileges afforded men. Private and public sectors in Liberian society are still dominated by and favor men. In spite of the recent and

remarkable contributions by women in Liberia, it remains clear that that reliance on these successes by women's movements in the last several years is not enough to produce the kinds of changes that will bring economic benefits to everyday women in Liberia. We need to work hard to empower women by offering them, especially traditional women, education and economic resources to close the gap. –*Mary*

The informants were also asked about the challenges and obstacles they faced in their grassroots participation. They all concurred that these obstacles persist.

Grassroots and Political Obstacles

All ten women reported some major challenges and obstacles faced before, during after the war. But based on their stories, there were specific differences between traditional and nontraditional women. The most obvious differences were there relative levels of participation in the political process.

Non-traditional Women

All five traditional women interviewed reported that the political system is out of balance and discriminatory. They agreed that election eligibility requirements highly favored men. They claimed that the election process also tended to benefit the educated and rich. Other obstacles they reported were harassment and threats from their husbands and organized political persecution.

In 1985 before the war, I was jailed and raped along with other women because of our participation in grassroots politics. We were accused of inserting women to defile the government dominated by men who were seeking the same political office women sought. One woman candidate who was jailed with us later fled the country when we were released. Our lives were in danger. Armed men were sent to my home on two occasions.

–*Oretha*

The Liberian civil war posed real danger for all women. Many of us fled and became victim of rape, extortion, theft, abduction, and death. Others were blocked from traveling, forcing them to hide in

buses with little or no food, water, shelter, and medical care. I was forced to take this route. Rape and other violence epitomized some of the most gruesome weapons used against us by forces on all sides of the conflict. Rebel fighters routinely targeted us for rape at checkpoints. Women and girls refusing to provide sexual services were killed. We, the women in postwar Liberia, have decided to protect ourselves with the help of the international community and human rights organizations. -*Mary*

Amelia, a lawyer, shared this:

In Liberian society, men have traditional advantages over women in terms of going to school, acquiring higher education, and accumulating wealth (money and property)... These factors then make up the requirements for those who may be seeking elected positions in government or leadership roles in society. Most Liberian women have few economic resources and little education. This lack of critical resources leads to poverty and fosters dependency on men. I believe for women to overcome these barriers and obstacles, the current government must implement policies that address poverty, equal education, and access to economic resources in order to increase women's participation in leadership.

Traditional Women

In addition to educational and economic challenges reported by nontraditional women, all five of the traditional women reported and emphasized the difficulties imposed by restrictive traditional norms and inappropriate stereotypes which barriers to grassroots political participation. These barriers seem to have remained after the war.

After the election in 2005, I went out to look for work. My husband tried to threaten me by saying I was trying to find way to have another relationship. He claimed that, for this reason, I should not seek work. He refused to allow me to work. One day, when he came home from work... and before going to bed, I told him if I couldn't work the relationship was over. I refused him sex for three months. Whenever he attempted to force me, I left the house and went to visit a friend. This was the only tool I had to resist his suppression and domination. So I used it and it worked for me. I am working and now have income to do things for myself. -*Hanna*

Listening to the traditional women and their stories, it was clear that some traditional

norms and practices created obstacles for women who chose to participate in politics.

Dependence on men must be eliminated in order to increase opportunities in society. Traditional practices will not allow us to own property or seek political office. Our roles are limited to being housewives only. Women must have bigger horizons. These limits must be addressed in order for us to have more representation in community development. During the war our roles shifted from being housewives only to participating as proactive grassroots organizers who helped bring peace to Liberia. Our roles shifted from being housewives to advocating for peace and democracy. We demonstrated, marched, wrote letters, and presented petitions to world leaders, the US, the UN and African leadership calling for an end to the war. We, the traditional women who were under-educated, collaborated with our sisters who were educated to secure peace and democracy in Liberia. It is sad that some traditional men continue to be challenged by our new role in Liberia. We hope these traditional beliefs and practices can change. –*Mary*

Some of our Liberian men find women new roles, and the different power balances these reflect, difficult to accept. They feel less of a man when their wives seek employment. They feel more secure educating their sons than their daughters. They want to be in control all the time. This is about male ego, I think. The new Liberian government is creating more opportunities for women and some men don't like the idea. The notion that husbands have to be breadwinner is changing. –*Jessie*

As I listen to these stories, I became more aware of the differences between traditional and nontraditional women in their levels of participation and the challenges they faced.

Differences: Traditional and Nontraditional

When asked the question of how they felt about participating in grassroots politics, the informants' responses varied. The nontraditional women reported that they need more paid jobs, education, and to achieve economic equity. Additionally, they felt they needed to see fundamental policy change and reformulations that see women as economic and political actors rather than welfare clients and housewives. The traditional

women reported that educational and economic deprivation created a gap between traditional and nontraditional levels of participations. Poor education and economic disparities were the main challenges these traditional women faced in their day to day lives.

To address these challenges, we the women who have the education and money have committed ourselves to the cause of all women. We have organized the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia and Liberian Women (AFELL) to work diligently towards eliminating violence against women, human trafficking, slavery (including sexual slavery), persecution, harassment, and discrimination. No women were spared from the suffering inflicted by these atrocities during the civil war. As a result, AFELL adopted a rights-based approach, putting pressure on the government to implement policies that will give vulnerable women control over all areas of their daily existence. This approach will also put pressure on the state to be accountable for such obligations. We, the traditional women, understand the Liberian constitution and the political machinery of our society, therefore our participation and our ability to navigate the system has been changing mainly at the national front. AFELL adopted the empowerment approach to develop and improve women's standard of living in Liberia.

—*Amelia*

I am a member of Liberia Women Initiative- LWI where I served as Secretary General. Our organization drew from the resolution of the UN Commission on the status of women in 1946 to secure rights for women in Liberia. The resolution confirmed its intention to eliminate all discrimination against women in statutory law, legal maxims, or rules. We called upon our government and the people of Liberia to honor measures to secure political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights for women as outlined by the UN commission. We understood that the commission drafted policies on the political rights of women and on the nationality of married women. Based on these policies, we continue to mount aggressive pressure on the state to be accountable to these mandates drafted by the UN and women's organizations. We have been addressing issues at the national and international levels with the support of those traditional sisters and mothers who did have the education and resources to navigate at these levels. —*Karma*

I, along with other traditional sisters and mothers who could not read and write, participated by attending rallies, demonstrations,

protests and advocacy meetings in our communities. We relied on others who had the education and resources to represent our interests and advance our concerns. We attended meetings to understand our rights to equality and to participate in community development in our community. Before the war, the men were making all the decision for us. Today, we want to be included.
—Martha

The women interviewed offered suggestions for how to decrease the gap and settle the differences in participation in politics between traditional and nontraditional women.

Women in Liberia have been suffering, oppressed, and excluded for too long. We need to collectively move, as we did during the war, to demand more opportunities at all levels. We need educational and economic empowerment for women in order to bridge the gap between traditional and nontraditional women so that all women can succeed in Liberia. I believe if women themselves can overcome this gap then the gender gap will close considerably. *—Eliza*

We are doing well working toward improving skills among traditional women and acquiring resources that are needed for them to participate in community development. Great strides have been made since Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President. But because of poverty and high illiteracy rates, women will continue to find themselves excluded from community reconstruction programs for a longer time. In spite of these realities, women have been able to utilize local resources to help them gain literacy skills and money to begin small markets. We are now becoming brave and are not allowing men to hold us back. We are determined and will defeat the stigmatization of illiteracy. We need no longer be embarrassed because of our age to seek and acquire the skills needed for political participation. *—Oretha*

Based on the election data, these women's stories, and my personal experience growing up in Liberia, I offer this analysis and conclusion to this study.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The Election

The 2005 election results reviewed were not surprising. It would be challenging for women candidates to receive the votes needed to be elected to political offices. The Liberian society has been struggling for many decades with recognizing the proper roles for women in politics, and too few women have been elected to political office.

Despite of the increase of women registered to vote and contested offices as compared to past elections; the gap between men and women elected to office has changed very little. But based on my personal experience and the document of 2003 Ghana's peace accord, I believe the increase in female registration was the result of increased UN security (UNMIL) being present, some electoral education, more women's grassroots organizations, and the presence of members of the international community. Human rights organizations' involvements have been a major factor which has resulted in the increased registration of women.

The fact that a woman is Liberia's president and that other women hold several of the key government jobs, represents a significant achievement. Yet given the magnitude of the breakthrough that women have achieved as laid out in this case study, one would have expected the number of women, both in the senate and in the House of Representatives, to be more abundant than what it is today. In fact, the proportion of women's representation in the government has been consistently low since women were allowed to vote, although there was more of an increase in the number of women registered to vote in 2005 than in previous elections. Progress has been halting but real.

But when I reviewed the election document, I did not find any data that indicated

and documented differences between traditional and nontraditional levels of grassroots political participation. The data they collected did not differentiate between traditional and nontraditional women. But it was clear that the political process during the election was challenging for all women. Traditional women, who for the first time were participating in an election without former education and financial resources, experienced more challenges as compared with nontraditional women who had education and economic resources.

The election in Liberia was deemed democratic, free and fair, but I discovered that the electoral process was significantly different from election processes in the US. For example, a candidate seeking electoral office is not supported nor sponsored by any institution or individual in term of financial resources. Generally, voters or citizens do not give financial contributions to a candidate's campaign. By this I mean, in some cases, candidates buy votes rather than voters giving to candidates. Candidate with more money stand a greater chance of winning political office. This is one of the reasons why disparities exist and the gender gap was huge. A majority of the candidates during the election were men with higher education and economic powers. Most of the women at the grassroots level did not have the resources to compete with men. In fact, the vast majority of women's livelihoods, especially traditional women, depend on the attitudes and actions of men.

During and after the 2005 elections, there were a number of steps women took to improve their representation. Former chief justice, Frances Johnson-Morris was appointed as a commissioner on the Nation Elections Commission (NEC). The NEC had two women out of a total membership of five. One female commissioner, Mary Brownell,

was a women's movement activist and progenitor of the LWI. Brownell acted to protect women's interests on the commission. Unfortunately, in the draft electoral reform law, submitted by NEC to the transitional legislature in September 2004, the commission called for 30% women's representation for all political parties. Earlier, during the Transitional Government era, a group of women had presented to George Dweh, the speaker of the transitional legislature, a resolution calling for this 30% quota representation for women. When the measure came up for debate in the legislature, many members of the body rejected it. One prominent opponent of the bill was deputy speaker, a former university lecturer. The former speaker and professor argued that the Liberian constitution did not marginalize anyone for political office. He argued that tampering with the constitution in favor of one particular group was unconstitutional. Surprisingly, women accepted the wishes of the legislature without mounting a fight as they had done before.

I believe the failure on the part of women in Liberia on this issue draw a close link with what Joanna Kadi (2000) described in her work. Being silent on an important issue has some huge consequences—silence has the ability to damage one's psychological, spiritual, emotional, and physical ability (Kadi, 2000). If women consistently consent to the power of domination and subordination, then oppression becomes sustainable. In order to unsubscribe to this phenomenon, women must first locate and discover their identity and inspiration to create a consciousness of liberation and freedom. Furthermore, when women strive to acknowledge themselves, affirm their own identities, and hear their own voices through words, it creates the power they need to fight marginalization through social and gender inequality (Kadi, 2000).

In rural towns and villages, Liberian women's obedience to traditional hierarchical structures, stereotypes, myths, and practices that defined their roles in the village, reinforced factors that disadvantaged and alienated them from postwar political processes in Liberia. For example, boys are considered a higher priority for being educated because they are to become the leaders of society; women are presumed not to be born leaders. Historically, women have been too silent for too long due to a lack of education and inadequate economic resources. Today they want to be included in national development and decision making.

In addressing these stereotypes and traditional myths, Barbara Love provides a solution to overcome traditional practices. She states that individuals in society build and construct the machines of power and domination; hence, it is individuals who can deconstruct them and instead build bridges to equality and power balance. Her response here suggests a solution to how fighting oppression and domination can be contextualized in order to benefit women in Liberia's collectivist culture.

When I listened to these women stories, it became clear that women collectively wanted their voices to be heard but that Liberian society continues to silence their voices because of their essentialized traditional roles in the communities.

While the election data did not address the differences between traditional and nontraditional levels of participation, the women's stories provided evidence of such realities.

The Interview

Women are busy carrying out responsibilities like raising children and grandchildren, taking care of the family, and being housewives. This does not give them

a great deal of time to acquire the financial and educational resources needed to win electoral positions. During the interviews it was clear that education and finances were challenges these women. The need to empower women at all level was a major concern. Empowerment involves sustaining connections to those with common purpose while building channels for all parties to become involved. The opportunities to participate, whether those opportunities are used or not, transform relationships which are part of empowerment. Education and economic equality increase women's opportunities in society. Empowering women to seek good paying jobs will change them from dependent to being providers.

These women's stories made it clear that historic exclusion from structures of power has stimulated efforts by the international community to address this gender imbalance in Liberia. And various women's group resolutions contend that women's participation in governance structures is critical for development. Women's movements in Liberia are joining with international advocates to strive for equality and equity for women in Liberia.

From a human rights perspective, women's equal participation is advocated on the premise that they constitute half of the world's population. The mechanisms for increasing women's political participation have included gender quotas, gender mainstreaming, affirmative action, and a party list system. Although not all of these approaches have been tried in Liberia, a few (including gender mainstreaming and quotas) have been tried without great success. I believe that leaders in Liberian's society need to keep in mind that gender inequality can produce some negative elements when it becomes unbearably imbalanced and unequal. The resistance to women's liberation can

only hurt Liberia.

Liberians and the international community buy heavily into the belief that the election in Liberia of a female head of state is a significant step toward gender equality and power-sharing in the country. On the contrary, based on the interviews and election data, I believe this is merely a beginning and that a huge amount of work will yet be required to increase women's participation and to give all women the recognition they desire and deserve. There is a critical need to bridge the gap between traditional and nontraditional women's levels of participation and recognition.

The question remains, what happens to those traditional women who have been silent for many decades due to traditional norms and practices? Traditional women in Liberia continue to struggle to close the gap of leadership and power, but they continue to lack education, resources, and money, and are still marginalized and faced with obstacles to participation. There is increasing frustration among many of these women.

In order to address this concern, Liberian leaders must change institutional expectations and processes so that more grassroots and community opportunities can be developed. Traditional women's involvement and participation in projects, decision making, and literacy education programs can increase their opportunities for obtaining jobs and becoming involved in community development. Liberian groups must continue to collaborate with the international community to help women in Liberia become better educated. Raising consciousness of and desire for education and economic empowerment will allow these women to seek and find ways of sharing power and increasing equality. The gender gap can be eliminated when government structures, private institutions, churches, and mosques proactively develop systems and raise

awareness. If Liberians desire democracy and stability, we must subscribe to a more inclusive framework.

The extant exclusion of women from educational endeavors and economic security cannot be denied. The various social injustices are documented and quite real. All Liberians must re-examine the roles of women in their communities. The literature points out that no society is free from suppression of women or social injustice. Every society must implement measures to rediscover and reinvent women's roles in economic, political, and social programs. Women's inclusion in social, cultural, and traditional practices must be attained so that all segments of the population become more healthy and productive. When power is shared and equity becomes reality, social progress and functional democratic government become that much easier to nurture, sustained and stabilize.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis is based on a research question that investigates the recognition and participation of women in grassroots politics in Liberia. The study also examines differences as may be documented between traditional and non-traditional women's participation.

It seems that a proactive intervention framework constructed from strong peace building and conflict transformation processes can facilitate transformational processes. But real questions remain: what is the best intervention for a society that is still menaced by war and includes members who honor traditional practices that essentialize women. And how can traditional women, subjected to violent resistance, hope to implement transformation?

Conflict itself has created enormous potential to transform structures towards more inclusiveness. Despite the complexity of sustaining peace, peace building offers numerous opportunities in dealing with paramount issues in the work of postwar reconstruction, women inclusion, grassroots political participation and recognition, and bridging gaps. Peace building creates opportunities for equality in decision-making and provides marginalized groups and individuals equal access to resources like in the case of traditional and nontraditional women in Liberia. The recombinant efforts of education and peace building can open doors, build bridges, and create new realities.

Peace building seeks to cure oppressive and marginalizing structures which have been the main obstacles women face in Liberia. Peace building is an interventional tool that values the views, needs, and rights of everyone and builds relationship between disparate people and groups. Peace building offers a transformative framework that

empowers people and societies devastated by war and conflict (Montiel, 2001).

Transformational structures need to be explicitly designed into collective action to create opportunities for empowerment. What we call peace building involves relationship building, reconciliation, cooperation, and networking (Montiel, 2001). This revitalization of Liberian culture will provide women the recognition they desire. Liberia, as a nation and a people, must create the capacity not only to contribute to change, but to lead change in an effective way to enhance an inclusive framework for all women. The literature reviewed shows that women in Liberia have played significant roles in restoring peace and democracy in Liberia; therefore, their efforts are sorely needed. Officials in government and in private industry must come to recognize and respond to the strength and courage of what was once, but is no longer, the invisible half of the nation. The only question which remains is how can we get this done?

Recommendation and Suggestions

1. While acknowledging the role women have played in Liberia in recent years, I argue that reliance on mere political participation is not enough to produce the kinds of changes that will bring economic benefits for ordinary women. This is especially true for women in rural towns and villages. One must also consider the differential investments and participation between traditional and nontraditional women. The women's movement cannot, of itself, ensure any automatic and equal representation for all women. Any effort to secure development for women requires a strong and proactive state with leaders who are capable of implementing strong policies.
2. For the totality of women in Liberia to benefit fully from the process of

development will require disaggregating traditional and nontraditional women and developing specific and effective programs for each of them.

3. Legal reforms and public policies aimed at increasing women's equal rights must be formed and enforced by social context and local customs through which local people negotiate various relationships. Violence against women cannot be condoned.
4. In a battered, ravished, and war-torn country such as Liberia with little or no private sector investment or state infrastructure, the government must bear an unusually large burden for producing and sustaining initiatives to stimulate long term changes within the economy. This investment will provide more economic resources for women to help them succeed. As levels of education and economic security rise, the nation will rise and become stronger.
5. The government must modernize the economy by transforming subsistence agriculture, industrializing the economy, educating women, and providing vital services such as health, housing, food, water and work.

These recommendations and suggestions are Liberia's best options for increasing opportunities for women in Liberia. These recommendations and suggestions informed the transformational frame structure presented below.

Recommendations

Transformation Structures

Figure 4: Transformational Frame

Limitations

As I conducted this study, I wrestled with the dearth of literature written by Liberians or other Africans from the Liberian and African perspectives to facilitate my research. It was especially difficult to find literature that takes into consideration the values and traditional perspectives of Liberian culture. When I visited two Libraries in Liberia belonging to the University of Liberia and the United Methodist University, I found books that were written only by the same westerners. I could not access any

electronic sources due to lack of electricity and internet services. In order to address this limitation, I relied heavily on hard copies of the election results and interviews with indigenous women.

One challenge I could not overcome is being an African male with extreme amount of power as a male. I am educated and have access to more economic resources than traditional people, especially traditional women. However, I adopted Lederach's elicitive model to deal with this limitation. This model helped me come to see myself as a student who is interested in learning about issues that change the lives of regular women. While I could not erase my gender or power from the minds of my informants, I was humble and respectful of the cultural mores and traditional practices of these women.

Furthermore, as is the case with many researchers and experts, I came to this study with personal biases or judgments. I found myself in this situation so many times and stand guilty of being influenced by my own feelings and perceptions. I have a personal bias stemming from being a male from Liberian society and growing up in Liberia, which stands in the way of being able to see things from the outside. I belong to the dominant male group and have enjoyed much more power than women in Liberian tribal groups. Due to this reality, I could not be culturally "neutral." I was born and raised in the Liberian culture, understand the practices and traditions of Liberian culture, and also believe and have practiced some traditional practices. But this bias did not stand in the way of examining the core of this study; instead it provided substantial ground and foundation from which to inform the study.

While there was no conflict of interest in the selection of specific narratives, I do not want to ignore the very profound effect these women and their stories have had on my

development as a researcher in the field of peace building and postwar reconstruction. Listening to, writing about, and editing the stories of these women, I have learned more than I set out to. Learning conflict resolution theories and working on the African Diaspora Dialogue Project has made it easier for me to see and understand how peace building enhances women's grassroots participation and their inclusion in decision-making.

The Need for Further Study

At the end of this study, it became clear to me that more work needs to be done to create temporary institutions and support transformational structures. In time, permanent institutions can be built to support peaceful structures to continually promote awareness in Liberian society of the need to redefine women's roles. These institutions would sustain such change once it is accomplished. The huge gap that exists between traditional and nontraditional women in Liberia that needs to be further examined. This gap needs further investigation and examination in all its dimensions. These areas create the next challenge for peace building and conflict resolution practitioners and scholars to engage in future research. Yet beyond questions of gender, class, and tradition, researchers and scholars must begin to examine how a fundamental redirection of developmental resources and a rethinking of priorities might provide schools to educate and jobs to employ in a process of rebuilding, reconciliation, and revitalization. If governmental institutions or individual men are resistant to change and stand in the way of progress, perhaps the brave and persistent women who found the courage to demand peace can provide examples for how to get the job done.

References

- AFELL progress report, September 30. 2004 at [http://www.wildafao.org/eng/IMG/doc/Liberia ENG-2.doc](http://www.wildafao.org/eng/IMG/doc/Liberia%20ENG-2.doc)
- African Women and Peace Support Group (2004). *Liberian Women Peace Makers, Fighting for the right to be seen, heard, and counted*: African World Press, New Jersey.
- AllAfrica.com-Liberia (HYPERLINK "<http://allafrica.com/liberia/>" <http://allafrica.com/liberia/>) News Headlines
- Anderlini, S. (2003, March). *The Untapped Resources: Women in Peace Negotiations*. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from <http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2003-3/pg18-22.pdf>
- Andersen, L. (2007). *Democratic Governance in Post-Conflict Liberia*. Denmark: DIIS Working Paper no 2007/20. www.diis.dk
- Boulding, E. (2001). *Building a Culture of Peace: Some Priorities*. NWSA Journal, vol 13, no. 2 Indiana University Press at. http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/nwsa_journal/v013/13.2boulding.html
- Carbajal, H. (2002). *Born on a Bridge*. In E. Anzaldœa & A. Keating (Eds) *This bridge we call home* (pp. 50-52). New York: Routledge.
- Carter**, M.(2002). *The Role of Women during the American Civil War*. Helium Official blog. MA. Andover, at <http://www.helium.com/items/497159-the-role-of-women-during-the-american-civil-war> and interpretation. New York: Academic Press.
- Cook, N. (2005). *Liberia's Postwar Recovery: Key Issues and Development*. CRS Report

- for Congress, CRS Web, and code 33185. Congressional Research Service. The Library of Congress.
- Crawford, M. (2001). *Gender and Language*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. <http://>
- Gbowee, L. (2007). *Women Peace Activism in West Africa, the WIPNET Experience*, at [http://www .peoplebuilding.org/thestories /print.php? id =80&typ=theme](http://www.peoplebuilding.org/thestories/print.php?id=80&typ=theme)
- Gilbert, M. & Lyon, T. (2006, April). *The Challenges of Leadership in Post-Conflict Transitions: Lessons from Africa*. *Conflict Trends*. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2006-4/CT4_2006_pg9-15.pdf
- Goldhor, H. (1972). *An introduction to scientific research in librarianship*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.
- Kadi, J. (2003). *Speaking about Silence* (pp. 539-544). Boston MA: South End Press.
- Kimball, M. (2001). *Gender Similarities and Differences as Feminist Contradictions*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lasslop, N. (2007). *Understanding the Impact of Women Members of Parliament on Peace, Security and Decision-Making*. *Conflict Trends*. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2007-1/CT1_2007_pg32-39.pdf
- Lederach, P.J. (1996). *Preparing for Peace Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Lederach, P. J. (2002). *Building Peace Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, D.C. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Liberia Post, chronology, at <http://liberian.tripod.com/Post22.html>
- Liberia's Path from Anarchy to Elections; *Current History*, May 1998, vol 97, no.619, pp.229-233, at <http://www.brook.edu/views/article/lyons/199805.htm>

- Love, B. (2000). *Developing a Liberatory Consciousness. Readings for diversity and social justice: an anthology on racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism*, (pp. 470-474). M. Adams et al (Eds). New York: Routledge.
- Mazurana, D. and McKay, S. (1999). *Women and Peace building*. Montreal: International Centre Human Rights and Democratic Development
- McKay, S. and Mazurana, D. (2001). *Gendering Peace building*. In D. Christie, R.V. Wagner, and D.D. Winter (Eds), *Peace, conflict, and violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Miller, F. (1986). Use, appraisal, and research: A case study of social history. *The American Archivist*: 49(4), 371-392.
- Montiel, C.J. (2001). *Toward a Psychology of Structural Peace building*. In D. Christie, R.V. Wagner, and D.D. Winter (Eds), *Peace, conflict, and violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Naraghi, S. (2003, March). *The Untapped Resource: Women in Peace Negotiations*. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from <http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2003-3/pg18-22.pdf>
- National Elections Commission: *Guidelines relating to the registration of political parties and independent candidates*, January 1995, at <http://www.necliberia.org/content/legaldocs/guidelineandreg/regofpoliticalparties.pdf>

- Ngufor, R. (2007). Women, Conflict and Peace: A Case Study of a Tribal War in Cameroon. Bamenda, Cameroon at [http:// www.ifuw.org/ seminars /2007/ ngufor.pdf2](http://www.ifuw.org/seminars/2007/ngufor.pdf2)
- News Headlines. AllAfrica.com-Liberia. Retrieved October 20, 2008 from <http://allafrica.com/liberia/>
- Ogunsanya, K. (2006, February). Women and Elections in African Politics. Conflict Trends. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from [http:// www .accord. org.za/ ct/ 2006-2/CT2_2006_pg14-18.pdf](http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2006-2/CT2_2006_pg14-18.pdf)
- Radelet, S. and Johnson-Sirleaf, E. (2005). The Good News out of Africa: democracy, Stability and the Renewal of Growth and Development. The Initiative Neue Soziala Marktwirts Craft. <http://www.insm.com>
- Radelet, S. (2008). Reviving Economic Growth in Liberia. In the Center for Global Development, Social Science Electric Publishing. USA: Washington DC. <http://papers.ssrn.com/so13/papers.cfm>.
- Retrieved November 15, 2007, from [http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2006-2/CT2_2006_pg14-18. pdf](http://www.accord.org.za/ct/2006-2/CT2_2006_pg14-18.pdf)
- Run-Marcos, K.T., Kolleholon, B. Ngovo (2005) Liberians: An Introduction to their History and Culture (http://www.cal.org/co/liberians/liberian_1.pdf). Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC
- Sage, M. (2002). The Role of Women during the American Civil War. Helium Official blog. MA. Andover, at <http://www.helium.com/items/497159-the-role-of-women-during-the-american-civil-war>
- Schindler, D. (1996). Urban youth and the frail elderly: Reciprocal giving and receiving.

New York: Garland.

Smith, T. L. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodology Research and Indigenous People*.

London, New York. Zed Books Ltd.

Star Radio (2009). President Ellen Sirleaf Radio Address. Liberia, Monrovia

Thompson, M. (2006). *Women, Gender and Conflict: making the connection*.

Development in Practice, 16, 3-4

UNIFEM (2003). *The Impact of the Conflict on Liberia Women*, at [http:// www. women warpeace.org/liberia/liberia.htm](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/liberia/liberia.htm).

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, at

<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html#Full>

U.S. Department of Education. (1988). *Rethinking the library in the information age*:

Wagner, and D.D. Winter (Eds), *Peace, Conflict, and violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Weiss, C.H., & Bucuvala, M. J. (1980). *Social science research and decision-making*.

New York: Columbia University Press.

Wessells, M., Schwebel, M., Anderson A. (2001) "Psychologists Making a Difference in

the Public Arena: Building Cultures of Peace" in Christie, D., Wagner, R. and

Winter, D.D. (Eds.) *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for*

Williams, H. E. (2006, January). *Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa*

Conflict Trends. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from [http:// www.acCORD](http://www.acCORD.org.za/ct/2006-1/ct1_2006_pg30-34.pdf)

[.org.za/ct /2006 - 1/ct1_2006_pg30-34.pdf](http://www.acCORD.org.za/ct/2006-1/ct1_2006_pg30-34.pdf)

World Council of Churches feature, *Women in Liberia: Forgiving but not forgotten*,

August 14, 2000, Available at <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/>

press/00/10feat-e.html

World Development Report (2000/2001): Attacking Poverty, World Bank, available at

[http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXPOVERTY/0..cont](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXPOVERTY/0..contentMDK:20194762~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992.00.html)

[entMDK:20194762~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992.00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXPOVERTY/0..contentMDK:20194762~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992.00.html)

Yin, R. K. (1984). Case study research: Design and methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Yoldi, P., Aguilar, Y., & Estrada, C., (1988) Guatemala's Women During the Long War:

"Treated Worse than Animals:" GüeGüe: Web Hosting and Development

Retrieved from <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2260>

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

Opening Statement: The Investigator (Introduction and explanation of the interview process)

- 1 Please give your name if you would like, date of birth, marital status, and community of origin
- 2 Please share your education, social, religious and leadership experience in your community.
- 3 Please share your experience about your community activities before the war
- 4 Please share your experience about your community activities during and after the war
- 5 Please explain your role before, during, and after war concerning voting and election process in Liberia.
- 6 Please share whether there were any obstacles or not during any election you participated in and please explain any specific role you played
- 7 Please describe the efforts and contributions women made during and after the war.
- 8 Please share the different roles difference women played, meaning women in the rural areas and women in Monrovia. Did you see and differences?
- 9 Please share and give suggestions and recommendations you think could help improve women's life in Liberia. Please include actions women need to take to improve their lives. How do you envision a good community or government now?
- 10 Finally, do you have any questions to ask me or do you have any final thing to say?

Appendix B: Abbreviations

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution Disputes
ACS	American Colonization Society
ALF	Armed Forces of Liberia
AU	African Union
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CR	Conflict Resolution
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOMIL	Economic Community Mission in Liberia
AFELL	Association Female Lawyers of Liberia
LWI	Liberia Women Initiative
UN	United Nations
NEC	National Election Commission
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NTLA	National Legislative Assembly
PSU	Portland State University
RL	Republic of Liberia
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
US	United States
WA	West Africa
WB	World Bank

Appendix C: Election Summary Table

Search	Finding
Country	Liberia
Election Institution	National Election Commission of Liberia (NEC)
Election Year	2005
Register Voter	1352,730
Women	50%
Men	50%
Presidential and V. President Candidates	21 each
Senatorial Candidates	205
House of Representative Candidates	513
Elected Male	86%
Elected Female	14%
Political Parties	22
Gender Gap	72% Favored of Male

Table #2

Appendix D: Subject Consent Form

Roland Tuwea Clarke
Conflict Resolution Graduate Program
Portland State University
PO Box 751
Portland, OR 97207-0751
Phone: **(503) 453-0074/503-941-5800**
Fax: (503) 725-9174

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in this research as part of a study to complete a thesis requirement in the International and Intercultural Conflict Resolution Graduate Program at Portland State University.

Objective: The study hopes to learn the contexts of women's experiences of postwar reconstruction and peace building in Liberia. The study examines Liberian women's stories through interviews and a review of the 2005 election summary with the desired result being to design a framework for women participation in postwar reconstruction and peace work in Liberia.

Procedure: If you decide to participate, you will be asked some questions related to you, your community, your communal experiences, and your experience of the 2005 election in Liberia. You will participate in an individual face to face interview with me the investigator. You will be given a schedule of the time and place for the interview process. In addition, two female elders have been invited from your community to observe the interview. You will not be asked any question by them. Their present is to give you emotional support if you desire. However, you can request that the interview be conducted without observation which is an option that is acceptable to me.

Confidentiality: confidentiality is a critical part of the study. It encourages frank, open discussion and a full exploration of issues. Any information that is obtained from you or linked to you will be kept confidential. You will be asked to be audio taped by me for the purpose of this research only. Information and data collected will be used anonymously in this study. All communication made in or in connection with the interview process is confidential and will not be released for any purpose not described above.

Benefits: You will not receive any salary or direct benefit for taking part in this study, but the investigator, Roland Clarke, will pay for your lunch, not exceeding \$15.00. Your participation is voluntary and I highly appreciate your contribution and your commitment to the entire process is requested.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this project or your rights as a resource person, please contact:

Human Subjects Research Review Committee
Office of Research and Sponsored Projects,
600 Unitus Bldg., Portland State University
(503) 725-4288 / 1-877-480-4400
Dr. Robert Gould, Director
Conflict Resolution Graduate Program
Portland State University
PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751
Phone: (503) 725-9175/Fax: (503) 725-9174

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this project and process.

Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The facilitator will provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Subject's Spouse Consent Form

Roland Tuwea Clarke
 Conflict Resolution Graduate Program
 Portland State University
 PO Box 751
 Portland, OR 97207-0751
 Phone: (503) 453-0074/503-941-5800
 Fax: (503) 725-9174

CONSENT FORM FOR SUBJECT SPOUSE/HUSBAND

Your wife _____ is invited to participate in this research as part of the study to complete a thesis requirement in the International and Intercultural Conflict Resolution Graduate Program at Portland State University.

Objective: The study hopes to learn the contexts of women's experiences of postwar reconstruction and peace building in Liberia. The study examines Liberia women stories through interview and review of the 2005 election summary and result to design a framework for women participation in postwar reconstruction and peace work in Liberia. In addition, it investigates the proportion of women's participation and non-participation in postwar reconstruction in Liberia.

Procedure: If you agree for your wife to participate, she will be asked some questions related to her history, her cultural and communal experiences, and her experience of the postwar election and reconstruction processes during the interview and the information will be used in this study. In additional, I have also invited two female elders from the community to observe the process and to help manage any discomfort or emotional that may be experienced by your wife. The observers will not be allowed to ask question during the interview, and the investigator will not use any information from the observers. I will schedule the time and place for the individual interview.

Confidentiality: confidentiality is a critical part of the study. It encourages frank, open discussion and a full exploration of issues. Any information that is obtained from her or linked to her will be kept confidential. Your wife name will be omitted from the interview document and notes. Information and data collected will be used only in this study. All communication made in, or in connection with, the interview process is confidential and will not be released for any purpose not described above. I asked that she let me know if she experiences any emotional stress or physical risk at any time in the

process. I have contacted some religious leaders, social counselors, and medical professionals and the two trained female elders who can help immediately if she feels it is necessary. She may also choose to withdraw at anytime and I will honor her request.

Benefits: She will not receive any salary or direct benefit for taking part in this study, but the investigator, Roland Clarke, will pay for her taxi or bus fare to the focus group dialogue session, not exceeding \$15.00 LD. Her participation is voluntary but is highly appreciated. If she chooses to participate, her commitment to the entire process is important; however, she is free to choose to withdraw from the process at any time without any condition.

If you have concerns or problems about her participation in this project or your rights as her husband, please contact:

Human Subjects Research Review Committee
Office of Research and Sponsored Projects,
600 Unitus Bldg., Portland State University
(503) 725-4288 / 1-877-480-4400
Dr. Robert Gould, Director
International and Intercultural Conflict Resolution
Conflict Resolution Graduate Program
Portland State University
PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751
Phone: (503) 725-9175/Fax: (503) 725-9174

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree for your wife named above to take part in this project and process. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The facilitator will provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

Your Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Appendix F: Human Subject Approval Document

Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Post Office Box 751
Portland, Oregon 97207-0751
503-725-4288 tel
503-725-3416 fax
hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu

May 8, 2009

To: Roland Clarke

From: Nancy Koroloff, HSRRC Chair *Nancy Koroloff /ccs*

Re: Approval of your application titled, "Postwar Reconstruction in Liberia: Creating an Inclusive Framework for Women Participation" (HSRRC Proposal # 09883).

Dear Roland,

In accordance with your request, the Human Subjects Research Review Committee has reviewed your proposal referenced above for compliance with DHHS policies and regulations covering the protection of human subjects. The committee is satisfied that your provisions for protecting the rights and welfare of all subjects participating in the research are adequate, and your project is approved. Please note the following requirements:

Changes to Protocol: Any changes in the proposed study, whether to procedures, survey instruments, consent forms or cover letters, must be outlined and submitted to the Chair of the HSRRC immediately. The proposed changes cannot be implemented before they have been reviewed and approved by the Committee.

Continuing Review: *This approval will expire on May 8, 2010.* It is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that a Continuing Review Report (available in ORSP) of the status of the project is submitted to the HSRRC two months before the expiration date, and that approval of the study is kept current.

Adverse Reactions: If any adverse reactions occur as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Chair of the HSRRC immediately. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending an investigation by the Committee.

Completion of Study: Please notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee (campus mail code ORSP) as soon as your research has been completed. Study records, including protocols and signed consent forms for each participant, must be kept by the investigator in a secure location for three years following completion of the study.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the HSRRC in the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP), (503) 725-4288, 6th Floor, Unitus Building, 4th & Lincoln.

Cc: Harry Anastasiou