

**COVERAGE OF ELECTION CAMPAIGNS BY THE STATE-OWNED PRESS: A
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE *DAILY GRAPHIC*'S COVERAGE OF GHANA'S
2008 ELECTIONS**



BY BRAIMAH SULEMANA

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE**

December, 2009

DECLARATION

I declare that, except for sources that have been acknowledged, I have personally, under the supervision of Dr. Audrey Gadzekpo, undertaken and produced the study herein submitted.



DR. AUDREY GADZEKPO

DECEMBER, 2009



SULI MANA BRAIMAH

DECEMBER, 2009

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Braimah Asamani and Alimatu Braimah whose toil and dedication has brought me this far. And also to my lovely wife, Hasiyatu Abubakari, for her love, care and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a depth of thanks and gratitude to Dr. Audrey Gadzekpo, who supervised this work. Her invaluable direction, guidance and encouragement kept me focused on this work till its successful completion. She provided some of the useful materials that guided me in this work, provided me with leads to helpful materials and above all, provided me with the needed practical hands-on research experience by involving me in one of her studies. I will forever remain grateful.

My sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. Michael Baffoe, whose unique efforts gave me an opportunity to have a six-month study experience at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. While in Winnipeg, Dr. Baffoe was not only my Professor but also, a father. Thank you so much Dr. B.

Finally, I wish to thank Mrs. Rosemary Kimani, for her assistance and guidance throughout this work. I am also grateful to Mr. Gilbert Tietaah and Ms. Gifty Brown for their support and encouragement.



ABSTRACT

This was a triangulated study that examined coverage of political parties by the state-owned *Daily Graphic* during the 2008 electioneering campaigns. The purpose was to ascertain whether or not, the newspaper gave fair and balanced coverage to all political parties as it is constitutionally mandated to do.

The study was carried out through a quantitative content analysis of all issues of the *Daily Graphic* from June to December 2008, and qualitative in-depth interviews with editors of the newspaper. The content analysis was carried out in two parts. The first part focused on general coverage received by all parties, while the second focused on coverage received by the four leading political parties on specific events that were common to them. While the content analysis helped in providing descriptive analysis to coverage received by parties, the in-depth interviews offered explanations to the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper and also provided contextual explanations to the findings from the content analysis.

The study found that in terms of amount of coverage, the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) received more coverage than the opposition parties. However, analysis of coverage of events that were common to the four leading political parties revealed that disparities in coverage received by parties, in terms of amount, prominence and tone, were a reflection of the newsworthiness of campaign activities and the number of such activities carried out by the respective political parties, rather than a case of bias and favouritism on the part of the *Daily Graphic*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CMPA	Center for Media and Public Affairs
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
COPE	Congress of the People
CPP	Convention People's Party
DFP	Democratic Freedom Party
DPP	Democratic People's Party
EC	Electoral Commission
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
GCGL	Graphic Communications Group Limited
GJA	Ghana Journalists Association
GTV	Ghana Television
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MMA	Media Monitoring Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
MRC	Media Research Center
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NLL	Newspaper Licensing Law
NMC	National Media Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party

PNC People's National Convention
University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

RPD Reform Patriotic Democrats

SABC South African Broadcasting Corporation

SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences

ZANU PF Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZBC Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation

Declaration.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of abbreviations.....	v
Table of contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xii
List of Figures.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	
Background to the study.....	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Mass media and democratic development.....	1
1.2 The press and politics in Ghana.....	4
1.3 Dominance of state-owned media and opposition complaints.....	6
1.4 The 2008 elections.....	11
1.5 Problem statement.....	13
1.6 Research objectives.....	15
1.7 Research questions.....	15
1.8 Significance of the study.....	16

1.9 Organisation of the study.....	16
CHAPTER TWO	
Theoretical Framework.....	18
2.0 Introduction.....	18
2.1 Gatekeeping theory.....	19
2.1.1 Influences of ownership and finance on gatekeeping processes.....	21
2.1.2 Other influences on gatekeeping.....	23
2.1.3 The set of news filters in the gatekeeping process.....	25
2.2 Framing theory.....	26
CHAPTER THREE	
Review of Related Literature.....	31
3.0 Introduction.....	31
3.1 Debate over what constitutes bias in political coverage.....	31
3.2 Types of coverage bias.....	36
3.3 State-owned media's coverage of election.....	38
3.4 Coverage of elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic.....	41
3.4.1 Coverage of the 1992 elections.....	41
3.4.2 Coverage of the 1996 elections.....	42
3.4.3 Coverage of the 2000 elections.....	44
3.4.4 Coverage of the 2004 elections.....	46
3.5 Limitations of previous studies and gap to be filled.....	48

CHAPTER FOUR [University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh](http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh)

Methodology.....	52
4.0 Introduction.....	52
4.1 Scope of the study.....	52
4.1.1 Study Period.....	54
4.2 Research Design.....	55
4.3 Data Collection Techniques.....	58
4.3.1 Sampling Procedure.....	61
4.3.2 Unit of Analysis.....	62
4.3.3 Coding Procedure.....	63
4.3.4 Inter-coder reliability.....	67
4.3.5 Test of inter-coder reliability.....	67
4.4 In-depth interviews.....	69
4.4.1 Population of study and sampling.....	71
4.5 Data analysis techniques.....	72
CHAPTER FIVE	
Findings.....	74
5.0 Introduction.....	74
5.1 Content analysis on general coverage.....	75
5.1.1 Amount of coverage.....	75
5.1.2 Treatment of stories.....	78

5.1.3 Content of stories.....	80
5.1.4 Focus of stories.....	80
5.1.5 Source of stories.....	82
5.1.6 Prominence of coverage.....	87
5.1.7 Tone of coverage.....	94
5.2 Content analysis on coverage of common events.....	98
5.2.1 Amount of coverage.....	100
5.2.2 Prominence of coverage.....	102
5.2.3 Tone of coverage.....	104
5.3 In-depth interviews.....	105
5.3.1 Editorial policy on selection of political stories.....	106
5.3.2 Coverage of political parties during electioneering campaigns.....	108
5.3.3 Coverage of incumbent parties.....	110
5.3.4 Coverage of the 2008 elections.....	113
5.3.5 Ensuring improvement in coverage of electoral campaigns.....	115
 CHAPTER SIX	
Discussion.....	116
6.0 Introduction.....	116
6.1 Amount of coverage.....	116
6.2 Prominence of coverage.....	120
6.3 Tone of coverage.....	121

6.4 Implication for theory of gatekeeping.....	123
6.5 Implication for theory of framing.....	127
CHAPTER SEVEN	
Conclusion.....	130
7.0 Introduction.....	130
7.1 Summary of findings.....	130
7.2 Implications for policy and journalism practice in Ghana.....	132
7.3 Recommendations for further studies.....	134
APPENDIX A – Coding guideline.....	136
APPENDIX B – Coding sheet.....	139
APPENDIX C – Interview guide.....	140
APPENDIX D – Guidelines for testing Kappa inter-coder reliability using SPSS	142
Bibliography.....	143

Table	Page
1. Coverage of political parties.....	76
2. Monthly publication of campaign stories.....	77
3. Monthly publication of stories and party covered.....	78
4. Type of story and political party covered.....	79
5. Political party covered and subject of story.....	81
6. Sources of story.....	83
7. Political party covered and newsmaker/source of story.....	86
8. Story placement.....	87
9. Political parties by story placement.....	88
10. Story headline size by political party covered.....	92
11. Political party and story enhancement by visuals.....	93
12. Party covered by tone of story.....	94
13. Placement of stories for political parties by tone of coverage.....	97
14. Political parties by coverage received on common events.....	101
15. Political party and story placement.....	103
16. Political parties and headline size of stories.....	103
17. Political parties and visual enhancement of stories.....	104
18. Political party and tone of coverage on common events.....	105

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. A sequential explanatory model.....	56
2. Headline size of coverage received by political parties.....	91

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the study

1.0 Introduction

The mass media have been acknowledged as important players in politics and particularly in democratic elections in which the electorate largely depend on the media for information on the various political parties, their vision, policies, ideologies and what they seek to do for the masses (Strömback & Luengo, 2008; Venturelli, 1998). The Canadian-based International Development Research Centre (2008) for example, argues that the free flow of information is the lifeblood of democracy and, consequently, the role of the media in democratic development becomes imperative.

As a result of the critical role of the mass media in the cultivation of a democratic ethos in a society, it is important to investigate how the media are performing their democratic functions. The recent wave of democratisation among African countries further accentuates the need to examine the role of the media in democratic development and consolidation. The Media Foundation for West Africa (2000: 36) echoes the need to study the media's contribution to democratic development by arguing that:

Because of the crucial role of the media for the political fortunes of prospective political leaders, it is important that, whether and how the media are discharging this role should be an important subject of research interest.

1.1 Mass media and democratic development

Walgrave (2008) acknowledges the important role of the media in democratic development by pointing to the influential agenda-setting function of the mass media. He asserts that due



University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

to the widely acknowledged agenda-setting function of the mass media in the enterprise of democracy, the media's coverage of political parties and the way they frame issues regarding parties and their activities should be considered important in political analysis. Elenbaas and Vreese (2008) as well as Temin and Smith (2002) also share the same view that the success, or otherwise, of democratic elections largely depends on how the media cover the electoral campaigns that precede the elections.

The mass media can be described as the connecting tissues that allow citizens and their elected representatives to engage in the important democratic practice of communicating effectively, in their reciprocal efforts to inform and influence (Mughan & Gunther, 2001). Mughan and Gunther's assertion finds expression in the fact that, while the electorate depends on the mass media as its source of information regarding candidates or parties and their respective policy proposals, candidates and parties similarly depend on the mass media to communicate with and reach out to the electorate (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008; Smith, 2002). Tetey (2003: 85) have therefore argued that, "the mass media is seen as vehicles for the promotion of civic culture that then undergirds the development and consolidation of democracy."

The importance of the media in democratic development was also given what could be described as "judicial recognition" in an Appeal Court judgement in the United Kingdom (1988), by Sir John Donaldson (later Lord Donaldson). Delivering his judgement on a case that challenged media repetition of information taken directly from *Spycatcher* (memoires of retired intelligence agent, Peter Wright), Sir Donaldson said:

to the widely acknowledged agenda-setting function of the mass media in the enterprise of democracy, the media's coverage of political parties and the way they frame issues regarding parties and their activities should be considered important in political analysis. Elenbaas and Vreese (2008) as well as Temin and Smith (2002) also share the same view that the success, or otherwise, of democratic elections largely depends on how the media cover the electoral campaigns that precede the elections.

The mass media can be described as the connecting tissues that allow citizens and their elected representatives to engage in the important democratic practice of communicating effectively, in their reciprocal efforts to inform and influence (Mughan & Gunther, 2001). Mughan and Gunther's assertion finds expression in the fact that, while the electorate depends on the mass media as its source of information regarding candidates or parties and their respective policy proposals, candidates and parties similarly depend on the mass media to communicate with and reach out to the electorate (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Strömbäck & Luengo, 2008; Smith, 2002). Tetey (2003: 85) have therefore argued that, "the mass media is seen as vehicles for the promotion of civic culture that then undergirds the development and consolidation of democracy."

The importance of the media in democratic development was also given what could be described as "judicial recognition" in an Appeal Court judgement in the United Kingdom (1988), by Sir John Donaldson (later Lord Donaldson). Delivering his judgement on a case that challenged media repetition of information taken directly from *Spycatcher* (memoires of retired intelligence agent, Peter Wright), Sir Donaldson said:

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
as Ghana's democracy continues to grow and improve, it is expected that the growth and improvement will reflect in the way the state-owned media discharge their constitutional mandate. It is therefore important to continuously examine how the state-owned media cover political parties during electoral campaigns.

It is also important to point out that as the media contribute to democratic enhancement and consolidation, improved democratic conditions also create the right environment for the liberalisation of media laws and guaranteeing of media freedoms. The relationship between democratic development and media freedom is thus symbiotic in nature (Pasek, 2006). In the Ghanaian context, the symbiotic relationship between democratic development and media liberalisation is manifest in the continuous improvement in the country's democratic elections in 1992, 1996 and 2000 and the consistent improvement in media freedom and performance in the country (Timin & Smith 2002).

1.2 The press and politics in Ghana

The history and development of the press in Ghana is inextricably linked to the country's political history. Newspapers were introduced into Ghana (then Gold Coast) by the colonial masters partly to be used as a political tool for linking the colony to Britain and for the perpetuation of their political dominance, rather than as a mass communication tool (Anokwa, 1997, cited by Amoakohene, 2007). Newspapers were major tools for mobilising people during the pre-independence liberation struggles and for post independence political activities. The newspapers that were set up in the colonial days also served mainly as channels of ideological proselytisation by the colonialists (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000).

From independence in 1947 till now, the Ghanaian press has continued to play an important role in the politics of the country and has operated in different media regulatory environments under various forms of government. Some of the post-independence governments were friendly to the press while others were not (Blay-Amihere, 2001). Blay-Amihere notes that successive governments after Nkrumah, particularly the military regimes, enacted laws that were not favourable for the private press while the state-owned press continued to be controlled by successive governments. He singles out the government of Dr. Hilla Limann as the only exception to the indiscriminate way governments appointed and dismissed editors of the state-owned press as a means of controlling those newspapers.

Repressive media laws continued to move in and out of Ghana's statute books through repeals and enactments (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000). One of such repressive press laws that saw a series of repeals and re-introduction is the *Newspaper Licensing Law (NLL)* which required persons wanting to establish private newspapers to obtain a license (renewable annually) from the ruling government through the Ministry of Information (Ogbondah, 2004). The NNL was finally repealed in 1991, as a prelude to the Fourth Republican Constitutional rule which began in 1993 (Ogbondah, 2004). Boafo-Arthur (2007) argues that the repeal of the NLL broke the monopoly of the state-owned media and led to the establishment of a number of privately-owned newspapers and magazines.

In 2001, another landmark in press freedom was reached when the then newly-formed government of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), repealed the Criminal Libel Law. The law, which was enacted in the colonial days, had remained in Ghana's statute books since

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
independence in 1957 and had been used to imprison a number of journalists. According to the BBC World Service Trust (2006: 3), "the Criminal Libel Law ... had been like the sword of Damocles hanging over journalists."

Thus between 1993 and 2005, the number of newspapers increased from just a few titles published mainly by the state-owned Graphic Communications Group and the New Times Corporation, to 106 newspapers. The 106 newspapers that had registered with the NMC as at 2005, were made up of 11 dailies, 67 weeklies, 23 bi-weeklies and five tri-weeklies (NMC records, 2005, cited by BBC World Service Trust, 2006).

1.3 Dominance of state-owned media and opposition complaints

Debates among political parties in Ghana regarding media coverage of electioneering activities, have often centred on coverage by the state-owned media. The focus on the state-owned media could be attributed to a number of factors. First and most importantly, the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana mandates the state-owned media to provide equal, fair and balanced coverage for all political parties (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992).

The second reason why the state-owned media is important lies in its potential to reach the widest audience, readers or viewers compared with the private media. The state-owned media have the widest coverage in the country and are therefore the most effective media for the dissemination of information (BBC World Service Trust, 2006). Given the dominance of the state-owned media in terms of reach and circulation, they constitute instrumental tools

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
with which political parties can propagate their messages to the electorate during electioneering campaigns (Temin, 2002).

It has long been established that the state-owned *Daily Graphic* is the most read and widely circulated newspaper in Ghana (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Gadzekpo, 1996; Ayee, 1997; BBC World Service Trust, 2006; Temin & Smith, 2002). The dominance of the *Daily Graphic* in the print media industry makes its electoral coverage an issue of concern for all political parties. From the first democratic elections under the Fourth Republic, held in 1992, through the subsequent ones held in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, there have always been complaints mainly from opposition political parties about unequal and unfair coverage of their activities by the state-owned media including the *Daily Graphic*.

After the 1992 elections, a report by the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) that monitored the elections, indicated that the opposition, led by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) complained mainly about the advantages of the incumbent president and party in terms of resources and domination in state-owned media coverage. The opposition parties argued that as a result of abuse of state resources by the ruling party, there was no level playing field for all the political parties contesting the elections, (COG report, 1996).

Subsequently, officials of the opposition NPP at the time, filed a suit at the Supreme Court against the state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) over what was said to be an unfair coverage by the state broadcaster in favour of the then ruling National Democratic

University of Ghana <http://ugc.edu.gh>
Congress (NDC). In *NPP vs The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)*, the plaintiffs issued a writ asking for a declaration by the Supreme Court that:

- By virtue of Articles 163 and 55(11) of the 1992 Constitution, the GBC as one of the state-owned media had a duty to afford officials of the NPP fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of their views; and
- The refusal of GBC to afford them equal time on TV to present their views on the 1993 budget as accorded the NDC on 23 and 24 January, 1993, was a violation and contravention of the Constitution. (Boafo-Arthur, 2007: 22).

On July 22, 1993, the Supreme Court granted the reliefs sought by the NPP and ordered GBC to grant officials of the NPP fair and equal access to its facilities within two weeks of the date of the order, to enable the party articulate its opinions just as it was accorded the ruling NDC. The ruling by the Supreme Court has become a landmark judicial decision as far as the mandate of the state-owned media in Ghana is concerned (Boafo-Arthur, 2007).

Despite the misgivings by the opposition about the state-owned media's coverage of political parties in the 1992 electioneering campaign, the trend of coverage by the state-owned media did not change much in the 1996 elections (Ayee, 1997; National Media Commission, 2000a; National Media Commission, 2000b; Timin & Smith, 2002). The trend of coverage was also virtually the same in the 2000 elections (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001). The 2000 election was however won by the NPP.

Soon after the assumption of office of the NPP, the leadership positions at the various state-owned media houses changed. At the *Daily Graphic*, changes were made at both the editorial and management levels. The editor was assigned the position of general manager, a position that took him away from being the ultimate determiner of the paper's content. In

University of Ghana <http://ugss.africa.ug>
accordance with article 169 of the 1993 Constitution, a new editor was appointed by the governing body (Board of Directors) of Graphic Communications Group Limited.

The change in editorial position at the *Daily Graphic* was considered an important step towards ensuring the independence of the paper since the previous editor, who had once served as Press Secretary to the head of state during the military regime of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), was perceived to be openly pro-NDC and was thus favouring the NDC in the paper's coverage. Besides the perceived support of the then editor for the NDC, officials of the NDC had shown interest in controlling the paper. For example, during the administration of the first NDC government (1993 - 2000), the first lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings, was reported by *The Ghanaian Chronicle* as having declared at a rally organised by her 31st December Women's Movement that the state-owned media are supposed to support the government because they are paid from government resources (*The Ghanaian Chronicle*, May 26, 2000).

The expectation was that with new editors on board and a new government (the NPP) that had complained about unfavourable coverage while in opposition, there would be fair and balanced coverage by the *Daily Graphic* for all political parties in subsequent electioneering campaigns as required by articles 163 and 55(11) of the 1992 Constitution. However, The NDC and other opposition parties raised their criticisms against the state-owned media in the run-up to the 2004 election claiming that the state-owned media continued to deny them equal access and coverage (US Department of State, 2004 Country Report on Ghana).

In the run-up to the 2008 elections, similar complaints of biased coverage by the state-owned media were made by opposition parties. Officials of opposition parties complained to the Commonwealth Observer Group that was in the country to monitor the 2008 elections that their messages and activities were often not covered by the state-owned media. Officials of the opposition parties backed up their accusations by saying that anytime their events were covered, those news reports were relegated to the periphery (COG, 2008)

On July 16, 2008, Mr. Henry Asante, publicity chairman of the People's National Convention (PNC) complained about unfair coverage by the *Daily Graphic* on Metropolitan Television's (Metro TV) *Good Morning Ghana* programme. Asante argued that his party launched its manifesto for the 2008 elections in Tamale on Saturday, July 12, 2008, while the ruling NPP held a rally at Kasoa the following day, Sunday July 13.

He said on Monday, July 14, the *Daily Graphic* used a story on the NPP rally as its lead story on the front page and published nothing on the PNC's manifesto launch. This, Asante said, was unfair because in his view, the PNC's event which was about unveiling the party's policies for ruling the nation, was important and newsworthy than the NPP's rally. He complained that that had always been the trend of coverage by the state-owned newspaper and said his party had written to the newspaper to complain about the situation (Metro TV, *Good Morning Ghana*, July 16, 2008, monitored by researcher).

1.4 The 2008 Election

The 2008 general election was the fifth since Ghana re-democratised under the Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992. The election was held on December 7, and was contested by eight presidential candidates, seven of them representing political parties. The eighth was an independent candidate. The parties that contested were the New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), People's National Convention (PNC), Convention People's Party (CPP), Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), Reform Patriotic Democrats (RPD) and the Democratic People's Party (DPP). Mr. Kwesi Amofo Yeboah contested as an independent candidate.

The 2008 election was largely seen as a contest between the ruling NPP that had 128 members in parliament and the largest opposition NDC that had 94 members in parliament, and it was one of the most fiercely contested election in the political history of Ghana. The victorious opposition NDC defeated the ruling NPP by only 40,586 votes. In percentage terms, the difference between the two parties was 0.46 percent.

On December 10, the Chairman of the Electoral Commission (EC), Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, announced the results of the December 7 presidential polls as follows: NPP – 4,159,439 (49.23%); NDC – 4,056,634 (47.92%); CPP – 113,494 (1.34%); PNC – 72,494 (0.87%); DFP – 27,889 (0.33%); Independent Candidate – 19,342 (0.23%); DPP – 8,653 (0.10%) and RPD – 6,889 (0.08%).



The EC Chairman declared that since none of the two leading contenders, namely Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP, and Prof. John Evans Atta Mills of the NDC, was able to obtain more than 50 percent of votes, none could be declared winner of the polls. Dr. Afari-Gyan's statement was in accordance with article 63 (3) of Ghana's Constitution, which states the following:

A person shall not be elected as president of Ghana unless at the presidential election the number of votes cast in his favour is more than fifty percent of the total number of valid votes cast in the election.

In Accordance with Article 63 (4&5) of the Constitution, which talks about the conduct of a second round of election in a presidential poll, the EC Chairman announced that a presidential run-off between the NPP and NDC was to be held on December 28, 2008. On December 28, the second round of presidential ballot took place in 229 out of the 230 constituencies with the Tain Constituency not taking part as a result of a delay in the delivery of election materials. Results from the 229 constituencies could not produce a clear winner and so the polls in the Tain Constituency became crucial as the one to determine the ultimate winner of the polls. The run-off in the Tain Constituency was held on January 2, 2009, but the ruling NPP refused to participate citing insecurity.

Results from the Tain Constituency were added to that of the December 28 run-off and on January 3, 2009, Dr. Afari-Gyan declared Professor Mills of the NDC winner of the 2008 presidential election. He obtained 4,521,032 votes representing 50.23 percent of valid votes with the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo obtaining 4,480,446 representing 49.77 percent of votes.

Besides the fierce competition that characterised the election, there were some peculiar characteristics that were similar to events witnessed in the 2000 polls. Just like in the 2000 election when the then President, Jerry John Rawlings, had come to the end of his two four-year terms, in the 2008 elections, incumbent President, John Agyekum Kufuor, had also come to the end of his two terms in office. In both elections, therefore, the incumbent parties were represented by different candidates. The 2008 election also witnessed some significant milestones in the history of democratic elections in Ghana. It marked the second time that an election had gone into a second round. The first took place in the 2000 elections. It also marked the second time a ruling party lost an election to an opposition party, occasioning a change of government from one political party to the other. The first occurred in the 2000 elections when the then ruling NDC lost power to the opposition NPP.

1.5 Problem statement

As observed by Druckman and Parkin (2005), editorial biases in the coverage of elections influence voter decisions. This means that if news of election campaigns are slanted in a way that benefits one party or candidate than other competing parties or candidates, public opinion could be affected positively in favour of the favoured party or candidate (Hayes, 2008).

Being aware of the crucial role and influence of the media in the electoral process, the framers of Ghana's constitution legislated that the state-owned media, should provide a fair and balanced coverage to all political parties. This legislation is mainly a way of ensuring a level playing field for all parties in the political process. Yet, since the inception of the first

multi-party election under the Fourth Republic in 1992, opposition political parties have always complained that the state-owned media, including the *Daily Graphic*, favour incumbent governments in their coverage (CDD, 2004).

Results of studies by institutions such as the NMC and Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), and others by Ayee (1997), Gyimah-Boadi (1997, 2001) Timin and Smith (2002), have all confirmed the concerns of opposition parties regarding state-media's coverage bias in favour of incumbents. However, previous studies on coverage of political parties by the state-owned media, have often based their conclusions on quantitative analyses of the number of stories carried in favour of a particular party; analyses of the tone of such coverage and prominence given to the stories. In this regard, a party is said to have received favourable coverage than others if that party received the highest amount of coverage (quantitatively) and also the highest positive coverage in terms of tone and prominence of the coverage.

What previous studies have failed to look at is the issue of coverage in relation to news-generating events organised by various political parties during electioneering campaigns. The question that remains to be answered is: Would the results of previous studies have been the same if analyses were based on relating amount and tone of coverage for political parties to the number of newsworthy events carried out by parties during the electioneering campaigns? This study explores the question by looking at how the *Daily Graphic* generally covered parties in the 2008 electioneering campaign and comparing that with the paper's

coverage on events that pertained to all parties and those that involved all or some parties on the same platform at the same time, such as the presidential debates.

1.6 Research objectives

The study aimed at determining whether or not there were biases in *Daily Graphic's* coverage of political parties in the 2008 elections campaign in favour of the ruling party as has been the case in previous elections. The study was also aimed at finding out if the newspaper complied with the constitutional requirements of fairness and balance in its coverage of the 2008 electioneering campaigns.

1.7 Research Questions

In line with the above objectives, the study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

- In quantitative terms, which political party had the highest coverage in the *Daily Graphic* as far as the 2008 election campaigns were concerned?
- Qualitatively, which political party received the most favourable coverage in the *Daily Graphic* in terms of tone and prominence of coverage?
- In quantitative and qualitative terms, did the *Daily Graphic* cover the NPP, NDC, CPP and PNC proportionally on events that featured all of them on the same platform at the same time?
- In quantitative and qualitative terms, did the *Daily Graphic* cover the four leading political parties proportionally on events that were common to all of them?

1.8 Significance of the study

The crucial role played by the media in the enhancement of democracy and especially young democracies like Ghana's, makes it important to study the way the media discharge their duties in the democratic process. However, while literature on the role of the mass media in democratic practices in the Western world abounds, existing literature on the role of the media in democratic elections in developing countries remains quite small (Temin & Smith, 2002). This study therefore contributes to existing literature on content studies in Ghana by examining the coverage of the 2008 election by the state-owned *Daily Graphic* which is Ghana's largest and most widely-circulated newspaper, with the aim of finding out if it complied with the constitutional requirement of fair and equal coverage for all political parties that contested the elections.

The findings of this study will also be a reference source for political parties to know how they were covered by the *Daily Graphic* and also to inform the newspaper as to how it covered the various political parties during the 2008 electioneering campaign. This study will also help managers of the *Daily Graphic* to ascertain whether or not it complied with the paper's mandate and constitutional requirements.

1.9 Organisation of the study

The entire study is organised into seven chapters. Chapter one deals with background to the study and also outlines the role of the mass media in democratic development. The chapter also looks at the press and politics in Ghana, dominance of the state-owned media in Ghana,

media coverage of previous Fourth Republican elections as well as the objectives and significance of the study.

The second chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks used for the study and elaborates on the theories of gatekeeping and framing. Conceptual arguments and findings of previous studies related to state-owned media's coverage of elections around the world, in Africa and in Ghana, are reviewed under the third chapter. The fourth chapter explains the methodology used for the study, and the data collection and analysis processes. Chapter five contains the findings of the study which are then discussed in chapter six. The last chapter concludes the study by summarising the findings, making some policy recommendations and general recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO Theoretical Framework

2.0 Introduction

In a study on the nature of partisan media bias in the coverage of U.S. presidential election campaigns, D'Alessio and Allen (2000) contend that there appear not to be specific theories that explain media bias. They however argue that literature on media bias in political coverage points to three bodies of thought which they classified as gatekeeping bias, coverage bias and statement bias.

Scholars have argued that through a gatekeeping process, editors are able to transform information about billions of events into a manageable number of media messages. As a result of the gatekeeping process, therefore, some potential news items are winnowed out by editors and do not get published or broadcast (Folarin, 2002; Herman & Chomsky, 2000; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, 1996; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). D'Alessio and Allen (2000) note that in the news selection process, gatekeeping biases occur because it is events that editors find newsworthy that ultimately end up in the media.

While coverage bias may emanate from gatekeeping processes, biases can also occur as a result of news framing (Entman, 2004). Peng (2008) points out that different news items in the media are always given different treatment in terms of prominence. According to Peng (2008: 363):

The physical space devoted to an element of a particular story in a print news medium, frames the story in such a way that elements taking more space will be more influential in readers' interpretation of the story.

This study is therefore grounded on the perspectives of both gatekeeping theory and the theory of framing.

2.1 Gatekeeping theory

The gatekeeping theory, formulated by Lewin (1947), posits that there are forces which may either constrain or facilitate the use of news items by editors of the news media. To explain it further, Lewin related news editors to mothers or wives who decide which particular meals end up on the family dining table.

Different scholars have shared different but closely related perspectives on the exact postulations of the gatekeeping theory. Erdelez, McKechnie and Fisher (2005), assert that the theory is about the internal decision making processes within a media organisation concerning news selection. Connolly-Ahern, Williams, Kaid and Reid (2003: 3) on the other hand, adopt Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) definition of gatekeeping as, "the process by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media." For Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2007), the theory deals with how editors open the gates to only selected stories. In simple terms, gatekeeping theory, therefore, explains why and how certain events and pieces of information pass through the "news gates" of editors while others do not.

Connolly-Ahern *et al* (2003) refer to White (1950, 1964) as the first to have applied gatekeeping theory in the context of media research. This was when White (1950) introduced the world to "Mr. Gates," the pseudonymous newspaper wire editor and explored the news selection processes of the wire editor.

The original gatekeeping study by White (1950) found that Mr. Gates' news decisions were highly subjective. It also found that Mr. Gates rejected about one-third of news items based on his personal feelings about the importance of the content and the other two-thirds rejected because there was insufficient space for the story or a similar story had run not long ago (Reese & Ballinger, 2001; Connolly-Ahern *et al*, 2003).

Since its introduction in 1950, several communication researchers have employed gatekeeping studies to describe the ways in which news decisions are made by editors and reporters (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). In their study of the nature of partisan media bias in presidential elections in the United States, D'Alessio and Allen (2000) concluded that the gatekeeping theory provides a useful guide for studies on media content. For purposes of their study, they referred to imbalances in coverage that were attributable to the news selection processes by editors and reporters as gatekeeping bias.

Decisions regarding which stories to use and which not to use are, however, usually not just based on the whims of editors. The gatekeeping process is influenced by several factors including media financing, ideology and values of media owners, characteristics of individual journalists and the political process within which the media operate (Folarin, 2002; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Gatekeeping researchers have found that biases in media coverage of election campaigns could be attributed to how a medium is financed and also, the values of its owners (Payne, 2008; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

With regard to ownership as an influence on gatekeeping, Shoemaker & Reese (1991, 1996) argue that the personal attitudes, ideologies and values of media owners are usually reflected in the content of the media they own. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) specifically point out that the ultimate power in media organisations comes from their owners and add that the owners wield that much power because they hire and fire editors and reporters according to their political beliefs. Payne (2008), however, holds a contrary view as far as the ultimate influence on media content is concerned. He asserts that the ultimate sources of influence on media content are the social and political centres of power and the spokespersons of those centres rather than the media owners. Folarin (2002) supports the argument on ownership as a source of influence on media content but does not take a position on whether owners are the ultimate source of influence as argued by Shoemaker and Reese.

On media financing as an influence on gatekeeping, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) hold the view that the content of publicly-owned media organisations are those that are most likely to be influenced by commercial considerations. Supporting the argument of Shoemaker and Reese, Shoemaker and Vos (2009), note that financial influences will usually compel publicly-traded media to produce quality content that meets professional standards so that they can have the needed patronage from consumers for profit maximisation. The



University of Ghana <http://uospace.ug.edu.gh>
conclusions of Kenney and Simpson's (1993) study on bias in the coverage of the 1988 U.S. presidential election also support the postulations of Shoemaker and Reese (1991).

Discussing media financing as an influence on content under the broad subject of economics of media, Croteau and Hoynes (2003) placed emphasis on influences on media content by advertisers. They argue that the need to generate advertising revenue may sometimes constrain a media organisation from publishing or broadcasting certain news items that could disturb what Payne (2008: 4) referred to as the "corporate wellbeing" of advertisers.

According to Payne (2008), several scholars have supported such views by pointing out that the content of media, whether public or private, can be influenced by financial considerations since editors and media managers will often try to protect the interest of their financiers by way of not putting out anything that will be inimical to advertisers.

The *Daily Graphic* is neither owned by an individual nor the government but by the state and citizens of Ghana, for that matter. The independence of state-owned media in Ghana is guaranteed by the Constitution. Article 167(c) of the 1992 Constitution, mandates the National Media Commission (NMC) to insulate the state-owned media from governmental control. In addition, Article 162 (4) of the Constitution stipulates the following:

Editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions of the mass media shall not be subject to control or interference by Government, nor shall they be penalised or harassed for their editorial opinions and views, or the content of their publications (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992: 101).

Given the legislative guarantees, state-ownership of the *Daily Graphic* cannot be said to be synonymous with government-ownership. If ownership should be a significant source of influence on content as has been suggested, then it could be argued that *Daily Graphic's* content is supposed to reflect the interests and concerns of the citizenry who own it and not those of a political party or the ruling government.

Though the publisher of the *Daily Graphic* – Graphic Communications Group Ltd (GCGL) – is a state-owned company, it is not under government subvention. Management of the company would therefore be concerned about making profits to sustain its operations. Croteau and Hoynes' (2003) and Payne's (2008) emphasis on advertising revenue as a source of influence on news content could apply to the *Daily Graphic*. From the perspectives of Shoemaker and Reese (1991) as well as Shoemaker and Vos (2009), it can be argued that in order to maximise profit as a publicly-owned media, the newspaper is expected to publish quality content that serves public interest, meets journalistic standards and resonates with consumers. However, the *Daily Graphic* has a complex history of governmental influence since its acquisition by the state in 1962. The history of governmental influence on the paper has resulted in frequent complaints by opposition parties to the effect that the paper panders to the whims of government in its coverage, resulting in biased coverage in favour of incumbent parties.

2.1.2 Other influences on gatekeeping

In their theory of news content, Shoemaker and Reese (1991, 1996) identified non-media institutions, specific media organizational characteristics, work routine within media

organisations and the characteristics of the individual journalist as other factors that influence the gatekeeping process. Fico, Freedman and Love (2006) analysed these factors in their study on partisan and structural balance in newspaper coverage of the 2004 U.S. senate races and found support for Shoemaker and Reese's postulations.

Shoemaker and Reese (1991, 1996) explained that at the societal level, the political process will, itself, command media attention and shape how coverage will be done. Payne (2008) makes a similar argument by asserting that social and political institutions, as well as their spokespersons, exercise the primary level of gatekeeping influence on editors. These gatekeeping influences that emanate from the political process and social institutions are what Shoemaker and Reese (1991, 1996) describe as influences from non-media institutions.

Specific characteristics of a media organisation such as resource availability, ideology, calibre of people employed, and the kinds of rewards and punishments used by the organisation can also influence the news selection process (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Folarin (2002) identified other gatekeeping influences as management policy, perceived needs and preferences of audiences, editor's perception of reality, legal and professional considerations. These elements suggest that factors that influence news selection process transcend the whims of editors.

Payne (2008) ranks the influences on news content. Political and economic power brokers constitute the primary source of influence; senior editors and publishers constitute the secondary source of influence while reporters and low level editors make up the tertiary

level of influence. Payne (2008), however, argues that the levels of influence are hierarchical in that the influences exerted by the secondary group on the tertiary sources are a reflection of the demands of the primary source.

2.1.3 The set of news filters in the gatekeeping process

Herman and Chomsky (1988, 2004) introduced what they called “news filters” into gatekeeping analysis. They argued in their propaganda model that in countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control of media tend to make the media serve the wishes of the dominant elite. They assert that wealth and power constitute major determinants of news content because they are able to sieve out news that would have been fit to print, marginalise dissent and allow ruling governments and dominant private groups to get their messages across to the public.

Herman and Chomsky (1988, 2004) identified the following as filters that determine what news items are able to go through the gates of editors and those that are winnowed out:

- The size, concentrated ownership, owner’s wealth and profit orientation of a media organisation.
- The extent to which a media organisation relies on information provided by government, business and experts.
- The extent to which advertising serves as a primary source of income for the organisation.
- Flak as a means of disciplining the media (negative responses such as law suits, petitions, letters among others, generated by media statements).

Based on the assumptions of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988, 2004), a logical inference could be made that the following would be among the major sources of influence on the content of the *Daily Graphic*:

- The size and type of ownership of the *Daily Graphic*.
- The extent to which the *Daily Graphic* relies on information provided by government and business entities.
- The extent to which advertising serves as a primary source of income for the *Daily Graphic*.
- The level of negative responses generated by statements in the *Daily Graphic*, and the type of political system and leadership in Ghana.

2.2 Framing theory

Ervin Goffman's pioneering work on frame analysis in 1974 is regarded as the foundation of framing theory. Goffman is, therefore, widely regarded as the founder of the theory (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). Since its emergence, framing has been one of the widely used theoretical perspectives in mass media and communication analysis, and specifically in the analysis of media coverage of political issues (Bryant & Miron 2004; Shih, Wijaya & Brossard, 2008).

Despite its popularity, there hasn't been a universal definition of the theory (Botan & Hazleton 2006). Different scholars continue to describe the theory in different ways. Entman (2004) is of the view that framing is mainly about selecting and highlighting some aspects of events and issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation among the audience. Salwen and Stacks (2008) on the other hand, look at

framing as the central idea around which news content assumes a context by way of emphasis, exclusion and elaboration offered by editors. Payne (2008) makes a logical connection between framing and gatekeeping by describing framing as ideological contextualization of a gatekeeper's content choices.

Stromback and Luengo (2008) synthesise the perspectives of different scholars on framing and conclude that despite the different interpretation and description of framing, there is a high degree of consensus among scholars that the theory is basically about choice of words, emphasis, sourcing, placement, use of images and other journalistic ways of treating news stories.

As a result of the media's capability to frame stories in different ways, Peng (2008), emphasises the need not to limit studies on media coverage to only gatekeeping analysis which focuses basically on news selection processes and why some stories are used by editors while others are not. Peng argues that a study on media coverage of events and analysis of bias has to also be underpinned by the theoretical orientations of framing. Vreese (2005) had made a similar argument as Peng's by emphasising that assumptions of framing is important in content studies because stories that are able to go through the gatekeeping process are not treated the same way. Peng extends Vreese's argument by noting that through placement, emphasis, use of images and treatment of sources, the news media can project and promote some stories more than others.

The need for consideration of framing in content studies is further supported by the fact that framing remains one influential way through which the media shape public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Saris & Sniderman, 2004). Saris and Sniderman (2004) assert that through framing, the media is capable of blowing large numbers of people from one side of an issue to the very opposite of the issue. Consequently, they conclude that the media are able to influence people's voter decisions through the framing of issues. Entman (2004) similarly argues that the media influence people's political decisions mainly because of their ability to frame the news in ways that tend to favour one side of the political divide over others.

Stromback and Luengo (2008) also emphasise the power of news framing in politics by describing the phenomenon of framing as being consequential. They contend that by activating some ideas, feelings and values rather than others, the media can encourage particular trains of thought about political phenomena and lead voters to make more or less predictable choices.

The arguments on framing, discussed so far, leads to a logical deduction that analysis of newspaper coverage of events such as election campaigns should not be based only on a theory that explains factors influencing news selection processes (gatekeeping) but also on the perspectives of a theory that explores how editors treat the stories they select (framing).

Tankard (2001) finds the following as focal points for identifying and measuring frames in the news media: headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes

University of Ghana <http://uospace.ug.edu.gh>
selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and, concluding statements and paragraphs.

From the accounts of different scholars, as articulated so far, it may appear as if editors and reporters always intentionally frame news stories in a particular way as is often articulated by adherents of social movement literature (Chong and Druckman 2007). Chong and Druckman assert that from the perspectives of social movement literature, framing is seen as a deliberate tactic used by politicians and the media to co-ordinate individuals around particular interpretations of their problems. But Stromback and Luengo (2008) disagree and posit that though framing occurs through the actions of editors and reporters, they do not always do so intentionally. Stromback and Luengo, go on to assert that whether framing occurs deliberately or inadvertently, it is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided by journalists. They argue that:

What is noteworthy is that framing is inescapable, as it is a process at work each time anyone is crafting a message and has to make choices with regard to words, emphasis, images and so on. Thus, journalists cannot choose not to frame their stories (Stromback and Luengo, 2008: 552).

It can be inferred from the various perspectives on framing discussed that, even if the *Daily Graphic* were to have a gatekeeping process that ensures equal coverage for all political parties in terms of number of stories published, that alone could not do away with the issue of bias. In other words, even if there is quantitative equity in coverage of parties by the *Daily Graphic*, that will not be a guarantee for qualitative balance. This is because, due to framing, some stories will always have the capacity to stimulate support for or opposition to political parties in an electoral contest (Entman, 2004). Informed by the theoretical

orientations of gatekeeping and framing, this study examined the *Daily Graphic*'s coverage of the 2008 elections not only quantitatively but qualitatively as well.

CHAPTER THREE
Review of Related Studies

3.0 Introduction

In recent years, the subject of media bias in coverage of electoral campaigns has attracted reinvigorated scholarly attention and interest (Hayes, 2008). The renewed interest in studies on electoral coverage bias is mainly because of the agenda-setting function of the mass media and also, because of the influential role of the media in democratic development (Elenbaas & Vreese, 2008; Walgrave, 2008). This chapter reviews works on what constitutes bias in political coverage, types of coverage bias, state-owned media's coverage of elections in Africa and coverage of elections during the Fourth Republic in Ghana.

3.1 Debate over what constitutes bias in political coverage

Studies on media coverage of elections often focus on analysing coverage bias (Brandenburg, 2005, 2006; D'Alessio & Allen, 2000; Fico & Cote, 1999, 2002; Fico, Zeldes, Carpenter & Diddi, 2008; Schiffer, 2006; Wong, 2004). The concern over issues of coverage bias in electioneering campaigns is based on the premise that favouritism in media coverage can influence the opinions of millions of voters who are exposed to mass media messages and, ultimately, influence electoral outcomes (Fico et al. 2008; Hayes, 2008; Elenbaas & Vreese, 2008; Walgrave, 2008).

Despite the vast body of literature that analyses bias in media coverage of elections, there is still no consensus as to what constitutes biased coverage (Fico *et al.* 2008) and also how to establish the presence or absence of bias in media coverage of elections (Groeling, 2008;



Niven, 2003). A number of recent studies (Grosche & Milly, 2005; Gentzkow & Shapiro 2006) as well as some previous ones (Domke et al, 1997; Evarts & Stampel, 1974; Hofstetter, 1997; Lowry & Shidler, 1998; cited in Fico et al, 2008) have all sought to empirically establish media content bias in political coverage and have done so with varying results.

In his empirical test for partisan bias in election coverage by *ABC, CBC, NBC and Fox News*, Groeling (2008) emphasised that establishing the presence or absence of partisan bias in news content has proven to be a difficult task. He argues that,

Self-described media watchdog groups such as Media Matters, the Media Research Center (MRC), the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA), and Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) claim to objectively analyze media content, yet they routinely disagree on the incidence, severity, and direction of bias in the media (Groeling, 2008: 663)

Groeling (2008) then makes the important argument that the variations in results of the various studies on coverage bias and the continued difficulty in establishing the presence or otherwise of bias in media coverage of political events, is possibly the result of a lack of a unanimously accepted definition of what should be regarded as biased media coverage. He further argues that bias in the context of media coverage is a very confounded phenomenon in that perceiving an ideological slant in media content is one thing and attributing such a slant to politically biased editorial judgment is another. As an example, Groeling (2008) states that, if one observes that 90 percent of stories appearing on a news medium were bad news for a president, that could reflect biased story selection by editors of that channel but at

the same time, it may also be the case that the president is doing a good job only 10 percent of the time.

Despite the absence of a common definition of what constitutes coverage bias, various scholars have carried out content studies and have tried, in varying but usually similar ways, to establish bias in media coverage of electoral campaigns. Fico et al (2008) found that bias in electoral coverage occurs when reporter source selection results in the production of stories that highlight the perspectives of one candidate or party over others. In this case, bias is attributed to a gatekeeping process on the part of reporters. Fico and his colleagues then argue that though journalists are required not to allow partisanship to influence their reports, bias may still occur because, as human beings, journalists will often be influenced by certain socialisation biases and other factors like selective exposure, selective perception and selective recall, all of which can give rise to imbalanced reporting.

Cenite, Yee, Juan, Qin and Lin (2008) on the other hand, looked at bias reporting from the angle of balance. According to them, balanced coverage occurs when all candidates and parties are given similar amounts of coverage that is also balanced in tone and prominence. They argue that bias is the opposite of balance and occurs when there is a pattern of favouritism in which a party or candidate receives more amount and favourable coverage than other competing parties or candidates over a long period of time.

The view of Cenite et al (2008) on what constitutes coverage bias is consistent with the position of Kenney and Simpson (1993) in that in both cases, balance in coverage is a

significant baseline. But Niven (2003) and Groeling (2008) reject any attempts to define bias in election coverage on the basis of a simple comparison of amount and tone of coverage for various political parties as suggested by Fico et al (2008) and Ccnite *et al.* (2008).

There is also variation in opinion among media researchers on whether the phenomenon of coverage bias is a creation of the media or a product of media consumer's perceptions and beliefs. While some studies (Brandenburg, 2005, 2006; D'Alessio & Allen, 2000) found bias to be mainly a creation of the media, others (Greene, 1980; Gunther, 1988, 1992; cited in Fico & Cote, 2002) found that individual attitudes towards media content could result in mistrust of certain media content and culminate in attributions of coverage bias.

Greene (1980) found that perceptions of news bias among consumers of media messages are a product of consumers' encounter with media content that runs contrary to their previously held beliefs, perceptions or opinions. For Greene (1980), therefore, perceptions of coverage bias are just the result of the extent to which media consumers agree or disagree with the content they consume.

Groeling (2008) supports Greene's (1980) position by observing that claims of media election coverage bias are often raised by politicians for achieving their political objectives. He contends that politicians sometimes prefer that a news source be perceived as biased against them by the public. Groeling (2008), therefore, argues that politicians sometimes deliberately raise charges of bias against a media outlet with the conviction that when members of the public perceive that news outlet to be biased against them, harmful

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
messages from that outlet will be discounted by the public while favourable messages are seen as particularly credible. He concludes that claims of bias by politicians are usually their own creation and should only be accepted with great suspicion.

D'Alessio and Allen (2000) however hold a contrary view to that of Groeling (2008) and Greene (1980) by arguing that media bias is real and is actually created by the media and not a product of public interpretation of or perception about content. Brandenburg (2006) found support for the view of D'Alessio and Allen. In his study of media coverage of UK's 2005 elections, Brandenburg did a critical analysis of the issue of coverage bias and found that coverage bias is actually created by the media. Consequently, he rejected arguments that suggest that bias in election coverage is a product of media consumers' perceptions. Brandenburg's findings led him to note that media organisations actually carry out their partisanship through bias and concludes that, "in a sense, bias is the manifestation of press partisanship" (Brandenburg, 2006: 161).

Despite the difficulty in establishing what constitutes media bias in election coverage, Fico and Cote (2002) argue that bias can and ought to be established because societal norms mandate that election coverage should meet legal and journalistic ethical standards that requires balanced coverage for all parties. This study looks at bias from the perspectives of Cenite et al (2008) and examines bias as the opposite of balance and also, as a phenomenon which occurs when there is a pattern of favouritism resulting in one party or candidate receiving more amount and favourable coverage than other competitors.

3.2 Types of coverage bias

D'Alessio and Allen's (2000) categorisation of coverage bias in their meta-analysis of media bias in presidential elections, provide a good foundation for the classification of bias in political coverage. They discuss three types of bias, namely gatekeeping bias, coverage bias and statement bias.

D'Alessio and Allen (2000) explain gatekeeping bias by alluding to Lewin's (1947) definition of gatekeeping as the process through which editors allow certain stories to pass through their gates while others are not. Gatekeeping biases occur as a result of the decisions of editors to select and deselect some stories. They explain that coverage bias arises when there is a disproportional, instead of equal amount of coverage for various political parties in an electoral contest. This type of bias measures the quantitative inequalities of stories for various contesting parties in an election. The third type of bias – statement bias – is explained in terms of the relativities between favourable and unfavourable coverage for contesting parties.

Building on the work of D'Alessio and Allen (2000), Brandenburg (2005) introduced what he referred to as agenda bias. Brandenburg (2005) found that a party could be a beneficiary of both coverage and statement bias but could be a victim of agenda bias. He explains that as much as possible, political parties and candidates would want to receive not just wide and positive coverage but also, coverage that enhances their association with certain issues and policy ideas they espouse. Brandenburg (2005) again found that agenda bias occurs when

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
coverage for a party, irrespective of the amount and tone, does not help the party to be identified with the policy ideas it projects to voters.

In a study on how issue ownership among political groups in the US influences election news coverage among US media, Hayes (2008) found support for Brandenburg's (2005) argument on agenda bias. Hayes found that media coverage tends to be more beneficial for a candidate or party when the coverage is focused on the issues the party 'owns' rather than on issues that are perceived to be owned by opponents. In essence, it may be beneficial for a party to have less coverage that is focused on projecting its policy ideas and helping it to be associated with those ideas rather than having larger amount and positive coverage that do not focus on the party's policies.

Some studies have attempted to explore agenda bias by content analysing specific issues that are covered by the media during election campaigns (D'Alesio & Allen, 2000; Hayes, 2008). But as rightly argued by Groeling (2008), establishing agenda bias will require not just a content analysis but also, establishing the policy ideas of the various political parties and candidates and then comparing how the media covered the parties in relation to their policy ideas. This study did not examine agenda bias because the policy positions of the various parties were not part of the dimensions explored. The study focused on establishing gatekeeping bias, coverage bias and statement bias as explained by D'Alessio and Allen (2000).

3.3 State-owned Media's coverage of elections

While the bulk of content studies on media coverage of elections are based on Western democracies and in particular America, there are some African-based examples of content studies that examined state-owned media coverage of elections. In their study on media ownership patterns in the world, Djankov, Nenova, McLeish and Shleifer (2003) found that state-ownership of media and particularly the press, is predominant in developing countries, including Ghana. They also found that in most developing countries, state-owned media tend to have the widest reach and circulation and as a result, tend to be very influential in the supply of political information during elections.

Studies on media coverage of elections in some developing countries and in Africa, have often found the state-owned media to be biased in favour of incumbents (Cenite, 2008; Djankov et al, 2003). Cenite (2008) studied state-owned media coverage of Singapore's 2006 elections and found them to be biased in favour of the country's ruling party. He pointed out that the finding was consistent with the trend of coverage among state-owned media in most developing countries and attributed the situation to what he said was the practice of development journalism in developing countries. Cenite (2008) argued that within the context of development journalism in developing countries, state-owned media and governments act as partners in development with the press having a mandate to educate the public about government policies.

In a study of media coverage of the Zimbabwean 2000 elections, Waldahl (2005) found both the Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and all newspapers operating under the

state-owned Zimpapers Ltd., to have focused on activities of President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU PF party with little coverage for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). He noted that in the run up to the election, the state media became loyal outlets for Mugabe and his party by often presenting news from the point of ZANU PF. Based on his findings, Waldahl (2005: 28) concluded that, "in the eyes of the state-media, Mugabe and ZANU PF appeared to be the only group that deserved media attention."

Mano (2008) found similar results as Waldahl, regarding coverage of all political events by the state-owned media in Zimbabwe. Mano asserted that state-media in Zimbabwe have been traditionally biased in favour of government in all Zimbabwean affairs and not just politics. He argued that the state media in Zimbabwe is literally in bed with the ruling party and government, with little concern for activities of opposition parties.

Hubbard (2008) also found state media in South Africa to be biased in their coverage. He reported that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has always been overly biased in its elections coverage in favour of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and its officials in terms of tone and what he called balance of language.

Ahead of South Africa's 2009 elections, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), one of the political parties that contested in the election, complained that SABC was biased in its coverage in favour of the ANC and its splinter group, Congress of the People (COPE), to the disadvantage of other political parties (*Mail and Guardian*, February 23, 2009). Results of a study by South African-based Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) that looked at how the

media covered South Africa's 2009 election, confirmed the complaints by AZAPO and other minority political parties about biased coverage by the state-owned media in favour of the ruling ANC and Cope (Media Monitoring Africa, 2009).

The Media Monitoring Africa study found that SABC and other state media dedicated much of their coverage to ANC, followed by COPE. The study also reported a Board member of SABC as having confirmed SABC's biased coverage. The SABC board member was reported as justifying the Corporation's favourable coverage for the ANC. The Board member is said to have further observed that it was natural for ruling parties to receive more coverage than opposition parties in the state media because a ruling party gets additional coverage from state functions performed by the president and ministers of state (Media Monitoring Africa, 2009).

The pattern of coverage by the Kenyan media in that country's 2007 election was not different from the situation in other African countries. Media monitoring exercises by the European Union Election Observer Mission to Kenya (EUEOMK) found that the state media, particularly Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation, failed to comply with legislative requirements of providing fair and equal coverage to all parties. The Observer Mission, however, found that state press and other private media organisations were relatively fair in their coverage of the elections (European Union Election Observer Mission to Kenya, 2008).

The case in Tunisia is also not much different. The media monitoring exercise by the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights found that in Tunisia's 2004 general

elections, the country's media, both state-owned and private, favoured the ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally Party and its candidate, incumbent president, Ben Ali. The study however pointed out that the imbalance was overwhelming in the state-owned media with state-owned newspapers devoting between 74 to 84 per cent of coverage to the ruling party and its candidate (Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights, 2005).

3.4 Coverage of elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic

Since the re-introduction of multi-party democratic elections in Ghana in 1992, there have been a number of studies on the media's role in the democratic process, particularly how they cover election campaigns. Studies on media electoral coverage in Ghana since the 1992 election have produced findings that are not very different from what pertains in other African countries as far as coverage by state-owned media is concerned.

3.4.1 Coverage of the 1992 elections

The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), that monitored the 1992 elections, reported that the state-owned media were clearly biased in their coverage of the electioneering campaigns in favour of the then ruling NDC (Commonwealth Observer Group, 1996). Gyimah-Boadi (1994) made similar findings as the Commonwealth Observer Group and emphasised that the state-owned media demonstrated considerable bias in their coverage in favour of the ruling party and its presidential candidate. The report of the Commonwealth Observer Group indicated that, contrary to coverage by the state-owned media, coverage by the private media was predominantly favourable towards the leading opposition NPP.

It is important to point out that prior to 1992 the private media environment was not as vibrant as it is today. As observed by Temin and Smith (2002), opportunity for the establishment of private press came with the repeal of the Newspaper Licensing Law which took place less than a year before the 1992 election. Temin and Smith confirm the report of the Commonwealth Observer Group by pointing out that the few private newspapers that were established soon after the repeal of the Newspaper Licensing Law, were generally critical of the NDC in their coverage.

3.4.2 Coverage of the 1996 elections

In the 1996 elections, the pattern of media coverage did not differ from what happened in the 1992 elections. As Ayee (1997) found, campaign coverage by both radio and television were blatantly biased in favour of the ruling NDC and its presidential candidate, Jerry Rawlings. It is significant to indicate again that apart from Joy FM that was established in July 1995 as a private radio station (with state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation being a part owner) electronic media in Ghana as at the 1996 electioneering campaign, was exclusively state-owned. The state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was the operator of *Ghana Television (GTV)*, the only television station in the country at the time. GBC also operated the national and regional radio stations across the country. Given the monopoly of state-media at the time, Ayee could not make any comparison between coverage by state-owned electronic media and private ones.

Ayee (1997) also found that the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times* gave favourable publicity to the ruling party and its presidential candidate to the disadvantage of

opposition parties, despite a 1993 Supreme Court ruling that entreated all state-owned media organisations to give fair and equal opportunities to all political parties.

Gyimah-Boadi (1997) found similar results as Ayee as regards coverage of the 1996 elections by the state-owned media. He noted that in the months leading to the election, the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times* provided limited coverage for the opposition parties. On the other hand, coverage by the private media, according to Gyimah-Boadi (1997), was somewhat diametrically opposed to that of the state-owned media. He thus argued that it was the private media – mainly a fledgling private press – that was largely responsible for making the 1996 elections appear competitive. The focus on the opposition by the private media also saved opposition candidates from total despair in the run-up to the election (Gyimah-Boadi, 1997).

Despite the findings by Ayee (1997) and Gyimah-Boadi (1997) regarding biased coverage of the 1996 elections by state media, Temin and Smith (2002) argued that overall, the performance of the media in the 1996 elections was better than how they covered the 1992 elections. Temin and Smith argue that there appeared to be a consistent trend of improvement in media coverage from one election to the other and note that there was a significant improvement in the coverage of the 2000 elections over coverage of both the 1992 and 1996 elections, as far as fairness and balance of coverage of political parties were concerned.

The 2000 elections saw the defeat of the ruling NDC by the opposition NPP and also marked the first time in the history of Ghana when one democratically elected president had come to the end of his second term in office and handed over power to another elected president from a different political party.

A monitoring exercise of the media's coverage of the 2000 elections conducted by the Centre for Democratic Development (2001), found an improvement in the media's coverage over previous elections. Despite the acknowledged improvement in coverage, studies by both Temin and Smith, and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) found coverage by the state-owned media to be biased towards the then ruling NDC and its presidential candidate. The CDD however observed that the difference in coverage between the ruling NDC and the leading opposition NPP in all forms of media, diminished as the election drew closer.

Gyimah-Boadi (2001) explained that a significant change in the media environment in the 2000 electoral campaign was that the NDC's monopoly over the state media appeared to have weakened. He argued that though the state-owned media continued to give wide and predominantly positive coverage to the ruling party, they also expanded their coverage of opposition parties. New initiatives like the provision of daily free air time on state electronic media as well as the formulation of guidelines for ensuring equal and balanced coverage in state-owned print media also helped to reduce the state-media's over-concentration on the ruling party (Gyima-Boadi, 2001).

Additionally, Gyimah-Boadi (2001) observed that the advantage enjoyed by the ruling party from the state-owned media was countered by sufficient and positive coverage given to the opposition parties by a rapidly growing private media. He asserts that:

Since 1996, private FM radio stations had proliferated throughout the country, with more than 30 operating by 2000. Two private TV stations were established within the same period, and some private newspapers ... had become more influential. Together, these privately owned media provided a powerful alternative outlet for the opposition political parties, helping to create a rough balance in media coverage (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001: 107).

Reporting on media coverage of the 2000 elections, Gadzekpo (2001) also lauded the state-owned media's performance in the 2000 election and notes that they demonstrated that they were an integral part of the democratic process. Gadzekpo (2001: 271) adds that, "the state-owned media, accustomed to pandering to the ruling party's interests, made strenuous efforts to ensure fair and objective coverage of all political parties and their candidates."

A media monitoring exercise carried out by the National Media Commission (NMC) on the 2000 elections, however, found that state-media coverage was still biased in favour of the ruling party. In its media monitoring exercise for the period of October 1 to October 15, 2000, the NMC found that both state-owned and some private newspapers, favoured the incumbent NDC. For example, the study found that coverage for the incumbent party constituted more than a third (35.9 percent) of the total coverage for the period.

In another study that looked at coverage of political parties between October 30 and November 15, 2000, the NMC found that state media coverage for the incumbent NDC had

increased from 35.9 percent of coverage for all parties, to 39.1 percent of coverage. The NMC study did not however point out whether the increased coverage was reflected in tone of coverage as well (NMC, 2001).

On coverage by state-owned radio, the NMC found that there was a progressive increase in the coverage of the incumbent NDC from 37.2 percent to 41.9 percent of coverage for all parties, for the first and second studies respectively. On television coverage, it found that coverage for the NDC short up from 37.9 percent to 57.1 percent in the two studies by the NMC respectively. Another finding of the NMC's media monitoring exercise was that the NDC and the NPP, which are the two largest parties, dominated media coverage to the disadvantage of smaller parties mainly the PNC and the Convention People's Party (NMC, 2000a).

3.4.4 Coverage of the 2004 elections

The NMC again carried out two separate studies on media coverage of political parties in the 2004 elections. The first of the studies was on coverage from September 13 to October 3, 2004, while the second was on coverage from October 4 to November 21, 2004.

From the first study (September 13 to October 3), the NMC found that coverage by both state-owned and private radio favoured the non-incumbent NDC in both quantitative and qualitative terms. On newspaper coverage, the NMC found that the opposition NDC received more coverage from private newspapers than it received in the state-owned



newspapers. The incumbent NPP on the other hand, received more coverage in the state-owned newspapers than the other political parties.

The NMC's first study also concluded that the opposition NDC and PNC dominated coverage in terms of overall number of television news broadcast on the state-owned *GTV* (NMC, 2004a). This finding was however a subject of controversy as the opposition parties rejected it and insisted that the state-owned media, both print and electronic, were biased in their coverage against opposition parties. While the opposition parties did not provide evidenced-based reasons for their rejection of the NMC's findings, the results of the study was quite deficient because of the short study period – less than a month. Results of the second study by the NMC (October 4 to November 21, 2004) was different from that of the first study. In the second study, it was found that what appeared to be an absence of incumbency bias in the first study, had given way to incumbency bias, with coverage in state-owned media favouring the incumbent NPP as the election drew nearer (NMC, 2004b).

Following the findings of the two studies which concluded that smaller parties did not receive much coverage, the Media Commission recommended that the media, particularly the state-owned ones, should endeavour to provide equal coverage for activities of other political parties to ensure that there is a level playing field in the political process.

In another media monitoring exercise on coverage of the 2004 election, the CDD monitored coverage of the state-owned GBC radio, *GTV*, *Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times* from September 18 to Election Day, December 7, 2004. The study, aimed at identifying traces of

incumbency abuse of state resources, found that the ruling NPP enjoyed overwhelming advantage in state media coverage of the elections. Findings of the CDD study confirmed those of the NMC (CDD, 2004).

3.5 Limitations of previous studies and gap to be filled

Past studies on media coverage of Ghanaian elections have often been carried out through media monitoring exercises covering relatively short periods as have been the case of studies by both the CDD and the NMC. Findings of such studies could have been more comprehensive and perhaps different, if they were based on a content analysis of coverage over a relatively longer period of time within the electioneering campaigns.

As pointed out by Schiffer (2006), conclusions of most bias studies including the majority of the over 50 studies examined in D'Alessio and Allen's seminal meta-analysis (2000) are based on counting the number of stories for or against a candidate or party and also indicating the net of favourability (in terms of tone) for and against parties. Using balance as a baseline, they then declare a bias in favour of the candidate toward whom the count is slanted.

Reviewed studies on media coverage of Ghana's Fourth Republican elections have all drawn conclusions on bias coverage based on balance as a baseline. Previous works such as Ayee (1997), CDD (2000, 2004), NMC (2000a, 2000b, 2004a, 2004b) and Temin and Smith (2002) drew conclusions of bias and favourability based on number of stories published about each political party and the tone of those stories. For example, if a study found that in

quantitative terms, there were 100 news stories published in the *Daily Graphic* on the NPP as opposed to 60 on the NDC and 25 on the CPP, the conclusion will be that the paper's coverage was biased in favour of the NPP, followed by the NDC and then the CPP. Tone of coverage has also been usually proportional to the quantitative coverage of parties (Gyima-Boadi, 2001).

Arguing in support of the use of balance as a baseline for drawing conclusions of bias in electoral coverage in America, D'Alessio and Allen (2000), contend that presidential elections are high-profile events featuring the primary-tested superstars of America's two evenly matched political parties and, therefore, balance is a reasonable baseline for determining bias. But in a sharp rebuttal, Niven (2003) argues that it is unrealistic to assume that campaign activities and newsworthiness of parties and candidates can be the same in a particular election. Niven further argues that apart from differences in campaign and media efforts by contesting parties, there is the question of qualifications. He asks: "Why should candidates of varying ability, experience, and ideas receive the same coverage?" (Niven, 2003: 315).

Schiffer (2006) also rejects the use of balance for determining election coverage bias by the media. He noted that the argument of D'Alessio and Allen (2000) can only stand the test of time if it is to be considered only as a general normative claim because in highly mediated events like presidential elections, several factors could contribute to one candidate receiving more and favourable or unfavourable coverage than another. Schiffer (2006) adds that when balance is used as a baseline for determining bias in coverage, imbalances occurring as a

result of other nonpartisan and non-ideological factors of the newsmaking process may be spuriously considered as partisan slant.

There may appear to be an intractable epistemological dilemma as to how bias in political coverage can be established if balance cannot be an appropriate baseline. Kenney and Simpson (1993) attempt to find a solution to the dilemma by arguing that drawing conclusions by simply comparing column inches devoted to each political party is not enough because it is events that create news and the political parties do not organise similar and the same number of events during the campaign period. They contend that since the parties have different capacities and engage in different campaign activities, unequal coverage by the media may not necessarily be attributable to bias on the part of the media.

Kenney and Simpson (1993) suggest that a more realistic way of establishing bias is by comparing media reports with non-media reports or data. In other words, events that involved all political parties and those that were common to all parties in a particular election, and for which there should be equal coverage for all parties, should be analysed. Kenney and Simpson (1993) argue that any differences in the coverage of parties on such events could then be realistically attributed to media bias. Thus, in their study that sought to find out whether the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times* were biased in their coverage of the 1988 presidential election in the U.S., Kenney and Simpson (1993) based their conclusions on coverage of events like presidential debates and others that were common to both Republicans and the Democrats. They also analysed events that featured the two parties on the same platform.

Past studies on media coverage of Ghana's fourth republican elections have often not analysed coverage received by parties on similar or common events in order to take care of the fact that parties are not of equal strengths and do not carry out equal newsworthy and news-generating campaign events. From the arguments of Kenney and Simpson (1993) and Schiffer (2006), conclusions of such past studies on Ghana's elections may not have fully represented the true picture of coverage bias. In the light of the above shortfall in previous studies, this study will, in addition to analysing general coverage for all the political parties that contested the 2008 election, also analyse coverage received by the parties on events that were common to all of them and those that featured them on the same platform at the same time.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This study examined how the *Daily Graphic*, as a state-owned newspaper, covered electoral campaigns of the various political parties that contested the 2008 elections. This chapter explains the method used for the study and discusses the research design, methods of data collection, the study period, sampling procedure, units of analysis, coding scheme and procedure for data analysis. To be able to respond to the research questions within the theoretical perspectives of gatekeeping and framing, the study was conducted through a quantitative content analysis and qualitative in-depth interviews with gatekeepers of the newspaper.

4.1 Scope of the study

The study involved a content analysis of the state-owned *Daily Graphic* to generate quantitative database regarding the paper's coverage of the various political parties during the 2008 electoral campaigns. The Daily Mirror Group, a British newspaper giant, set up the *Daily Graphic* in Ghana in 1950, mainly for political as well as economic reasons. After its establishment, the paper also took an active interest in the political and social activities of the country (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000). The British-owned *Daily Graphic* also became the most effective public communication medium in Ghana in the post-independence era mainly due to factors such as financial security, use of better equipment, good management and a well-trained indigenous editorial staff (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000; Eribo & Jong-Ebot, 1997).

As a way of curtailing the monopolistic dominance of the then British-owned *Daily Graphic*, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, established *The Ghanaian Times*, in 1958, as a parallel newspaper to the *Daily Graphic*. Despite this, the Mirror Group was still compelled by pressures from the post-colonial government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to sell the *Daily Graphic* to the state on July 2, 1962. It was subsequently incorporated as a statutory corporation in 1965 and has since remained a state-owned organisation (Asante & Gadzekpo, 2000; Eribo & Jong-Ebot 1997).

Graphic Corporation was converted into a limited liability state-owned company in 1999 and had the name of the holding company changed to Graphic Communications Group Limited to reflect the change from a corporation to a limited liability company. Currently, the *Daily Graphic* is published by Graphic Communications Group Limited and managed by an eight-member board and a managing director appointed by the National Media Commission in consultation with the president. The paper's masthead is *Daily Graphic* printed in white on a red background.

A series of restructuring and transformations over the past two decades has resulted in the growth of the paper from eight pages as of 1988 to its current 48 pages. Sometimes, advertising pushes the number of pages to 72. It is the most read and widely circulated newspaper in Ghana (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Gadzekpo, 1996; BBC World Service Trust, 2006; Timin & Smith, 2002). The dominance of the *Daily Graphic*, coupled with its long-standing history in the print media industry in Ghana, has created a situation where, for some people,



University of Ghana <http://www.uog.edu.gh>
the word *Graphic* denotes newspaper. The paper is published six times a week (Monday to Saturday) and has a current circulation figure of 90,000. It has specialised sections for politics, business, foreign news, women's affairs, features, regional news, metropolitan news, education and sports. Stories of the paper are also carried online at its website: www.graphicghana.com.

One major reason for the choice of a print medium instead an electronic one for the study, was that given the time limitation for the study, it was relatively easier to access research data from a printed medium than an electronic one. The *Daily Graphic* was selected for the study instead of other newspapers for two main reasons. Firstly, it is Ghana's largest and the most widely circulated newspaper. Secondly is a state-owned newspaper and as such, has a constitutional mandate to provide fair and balanced coverage for all political parties during electoral campaigns.

4.1.1 Study period

The study examined the *Daily Graphic's* coverage of the election campaigns from Monday, June 2 to Saturday, December 6, 2008. Monday, June 2 was the first production day of the paper in the month of June since June 1 was a Sunday. Saturday, December 6, was the last production day of the paper before the December 7 elections. The year 2008 was chosen because it was an election year and the month of June was considered an appropriate month for this study because the *Daily Graphic* started implementation of its guidelines on electoral coverage in June, 2008. Also, by June of the election year, all the political parties had elected their flagbearers and had become active in the political process. The chosen

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

period thus fairly represented a time when all political parties, big or small, were engaged in political activities that would or should attract coverage in the *Daily Graphic*. Another factor that influenced the choice of the study period was the fact that in seeking to use content analysis to determine whether or not there was bias in the newspaper's coverage, the time period to be examined should be sufficiently long so that the phenomenon to be studied would have had enough time to occur (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

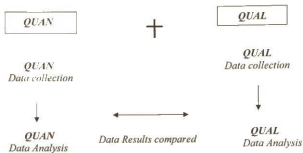
4.2 Research design

There are currently three methodological approaches to research in the social and behavioural sciences. These are the qualitative research approach, quantitative research approach and the mix method approach (Creswell, 2003). This study employed the mix method approach and adopts the sequential explanatory design which is one of the six research designs within the framework of mix methods research (Creswell, 2003).

One of the main strengths of the sequential explanatory design is that it is considered to be easily applicable and straightforward (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, Hanson, 2003) because it mainly involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. This design allows for easier reporting because it makes it possible to present findings in two distinct phases with a final discussion that brings the results together. These strengths explain the adoption of the sequential explanatory design for this study.

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh> (2003), illustrates the sequential explanatory design of mix method research.

Fig.1: Sequential explanatory model



Though an exclusive qualitative or quantitative approach could have been considered for this study, the study's objectives, research problem and questions, made the mix method the most appropriate. To answer the research questions, it was imperative to analyse the manifest content of the newspaper and, also explore the gatekeeping practices and beliefs of the gatekeepers of the newspaper. Also, weaknesses associated with exclusive qualitative designs such as researcher bias and difficulties in making quantitative predictions, made the adoption of such an exclusive methodological approach inappropriate for this study. Similarly, a sole quantitative design would have suffered from a limitation in the qualitative in-depth exploration of the gatekeeping practices and personal views of gatekeepers of the newspapers.

The mix method approach was thus chosen for this study instead of an exclusive qualitative or quantitative design because of the relevant strengths and benefits of combining the two methods in a single study. For example, Rossman and Wilson (1991) noted that using both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study helps to ensure that the qualitative and quantitative datasets and findings confirm or corroborate each other through triangulation. They observe that the mixed method makes it possible to obtain data that allows for elaborate analysis and add that the method also helps the researcher to initiate new lines of thinking by paying attention to surprises or paradoxes and fresh insights.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007), provide an elaboration on the advantages of the mix method by asserting that the method makes it possible to:

- Converge and corroborate results from both qualitative and quantitative data while studying the same phenomenon
- Elaborate, enhance, illustrate and clarify quantitative results with qualitative results
- Discover paradoxes and contradictions that may help in reframing research questions
- Expand the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different research variables.

Wimmer and Dominick (2003) also espouse the value of the mix method by pointing out that qualitative data tend to be more in-depth and thus can help offer useful explanations to the raw data generated through a quantitative approach. A study that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods will thus have the strength of having both breadth and depth which in turn, enhances the validity and reliability of the study (Wimmer &

Dominick, 2003). And as Vitale and Amenakis (2008: 90) observe, "...mixed methods not only add to the research toolbox, but they also explores both qualitative and quantitative methods and therefore provide an opportunity for a synthesis of both traditions."

Thus, while the stated advantages may not be necessarily exclusive to the mix method design, the method has the potential of exploiting the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches while offsetting any inherent weaknesses that may be associated with exclusive qualitative or quantitative analysis and hence its adoption for this study.

4.3 Data Collection Technique

In line with the mixed method approach, the study involved the collection of both quantitative numeric data and qualitative textual data. Specifically, the study used both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, and in-depth personal interviews, which are in the qualitative tradition of inquiry (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

In the field of mass media research, content analysis has been perhaps the fastest growing research technique in the last couple of decades (Babbie, 2009; Neuendorf, 2002). Despite its popularity as a research technique, there is no single accepted definition of content analysis as a research method. Krippendorff (2004) defines it as a research technique that is used for making replicable and valid references from data to their context. Neuendorf (2002) on the other hand, defines it as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. Kerlinger (2000), however, provides a much broader definition of the technique. He defines content analysis as a method of studying and analysing

communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for purposes of measuring study variables.

The content analysis approach was chosen for this study because it is one of the most appropriate research techniques in the social sciences (Krippendorff, 2004) and one of the most practical methods for examining mass media content (Rife, Lacy & Fico, 1998). To achieve the objectives and answer the research questions of this study, it was important to examine the text of the *Daily Graphic* since it was one of the most realistic ways of establishing bias in the coverage of political parties. In addition, as pointed out by Babbie (2009), content analysis is one of the most appropriate methods for studying processes or events occurring over a long period of time. The study examined *Daily Graphic*'s coverage of political parties for over six months (June 2 to December 6, 2008). Thus, Babbie's assertion also influenced the choice of content analysis for this study.

Furthermore, the study period generated a large volume of data, a situation that (Krippendorff, 2004) suggests, makes content analysis one of the preferred methods capable of coping with such large volumes of research data. The study also entailed descriptions of communication content and such descriptions could better reflect content characteristics if they were based on data generated through content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

The study looked at coverage of political parties by the newspaper from two perspectives. Firstly, general amount and tone of coverage received by each party during the study period was examined. As argued by Kenney and Simpson (1993) and Niven (2003), just comparing

coverage received by political parties in an election without a standardised baseline, may not lead to logical conclusions of biased coverage because political parties and candidates are not equal and do not engage in the same or equal number of campaign activities. Since parties and candidates are unequal in their news generating capabilities, it logically follows that some parties and candidates will receive more coverage than others. Drawing conclusions of bias on the basis of some parties and candidates receiving more amount of coverage than others can thus be faulted.

Guided by the arguments of Kenney and Simpson (1993) and Niven (2003), there was a second set of analysis that looked at the relative coverage received by the four political parties with representation in parliament on activities that were common to them and those that featured all of them either at the same time or at different times within the study period. The four parties are the NPP, NDC, PNC and CPP. This second analysis was restricted to these parties because some events that could have involved all contesting parties on the same platform were limited to these four parties. One of such events was the presidential and vice presidential debates organised by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA).

Events such as presidential debates, as argued by Kenney and Simpson (1993), provide a standard baseline for an expectation of equal coverage because all the parties and candidates are then put on the same scale. Since the Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), Reform Patriotic Democrats (RPD) and the Democratic People's Party (DPP) were not involved in the presidential and vice presidential debates, they were not included in the second part of

the content analysis that used coverage received by parties on events such as the presidential debates, as a baseline for determining coverage bias.

Besides the general analysis of coverage received by the parties during the study period, there was, therefore, an additional analysis of how the NPP, NDC, PNC and CPP were covered by the *Daily Graphic* on the following events which were common to all the four parties:

- Launching of party manifestoes.
- Official launching of party campaigns.
- Filing of nominations with the Electoral Commission (EC).
- Balloting for positions on ballot paper at the EC.
- Presidential debates
- Vice presidential debates

4.3.1 Sampling procedure

There were a total of 162 production days of the *Daily Graphic* within the study period. The total universe for the study was thus 162 issues of the newspaper. The entire universe was used for the study rather than a representative sample. This was adopted from Fico and Cote (2002), and Kenney and Simpson's (1993) election studies in which they content-analysed all issues of selected newspapers published within a chosen study period. In their study of coverage bias in the 1988 U.S. presidential election by the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*, Kenney and Simpson (1993), used all issues of the two papers published from September 1 to November 10, 1988. The two dates represented Labour Day (the day



University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

for the official start of campaigning) and a day after the elections respectively). Similarly, in their study on partisan and structural balance of election stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan, Fico and Cote (2002) content-analysed all editions of Michigan's nine largest newspapers from Labour Day to Election Day. Though in the Ghanaian context, there is no Labour Day, all the political parties start campaigning by the middle of the election year. Consequently, this study content-analysed all the 162 issues of the *Daily Graphic* published within the study period of June to December 6, 2008.

The use of all issues of the paper within the study period helped to prevent any forms of sampling error that could have been encountered if any particular sampling procedure were to be used in selecting issues for the study. Conducting a census of the content, instead of using a sample, also helped in generating results that were more conclusive and reflective of the entire universe and thus helped to sufficiently meet one of the principal goals of scientific research – describing the nature of a population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Using the entire universe for the study also enhanced the reliability of findings.

4.3.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is described as the smallest element of a content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). The unit of analysis for this study was all stories on political parties and their activities related to the 2008 elections. All items published on the editorial pages of the *Daily Graphic* were read and those related to or focused on campaigns by the contesting political parties in the 2008 elections were recorded on a coding sheet against the appropriate content category.

4.3.3 Coding procedure

Content analysis is essentially a coding operation with a purpose of synthesising distinctive pieces of information into a more comprehensive dataset (Babbie, 2009). Coding is explained by Wimmer and Dominick (2003) as the placement of unit of analysis into content categories. The works of D'Alessio and Allen (2000) and Hayes (2008) guided the formulation of the coding scheme for this study. For both analysis on general coverage received by political parties and coverage received on similar events or events that featured the top four parties at the same time, the unit of analysis was assigned to the following content categories: story type, political party covered, newsmaker, context of story, subject of the story, placement of story, headline size, enhancement of story and tone of story. The content categories were operationally defined as follows:

- **Story type:** this was about the typology of the unit of analysis. This was categorised as: straight news, feature, editorial, letter, opinion, follow-up, rejoinder, retraction, interview, investigative report, photo story, news analysis, profile and an “other” category that will cater for stories that do not fall within the listed categories. Advertisers’ announcements and publications that were advertisements were not considered for analysis.
- **Political party covered:** this category was about the political party or parties that were the focus of a story. The political party of a newsmaker or newsmakers in a story was taken as the party or parties receiving the coverage. The following political

parties that contested the 2008 elections were considered: New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), People's National Convention (PNC), Convention People's Party (CPP), Reform Patriotic Democrats (RPD), Democratic People's Party (DPP) and Democratic Freedom Party (DFP). Only the NPP, NDC, PNC and CPP were, however, considered in the analysis of coverage of common events. The study did not include coverage for the independent presidential candidate in the election as the focus was on coverage for political parties and not individual candidates.

- **Newsmaker:** this was about the person or persons who were the source of a story. Analysis of this was aimed at finding out the persons who made the news for the various political parties. The newsmaker category was coded under the following: president, presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate, parliamentary candidate, politically appointed government official, party officer, party supporter/activist, intra-party group, feature writer, editor, wife of presidential candidate, wife of vice presidential candidate and, "other political actors". The category of "president" was for stories that had the then sitting President, John Kufuor as a source. The "politically appointed government official" category represented stories that had ministers and/or district, municipal, metropolitan chief executives as the newsmakers. The "party officer" category represented stories with national, regional or constituency executive officers of a party as a newsmaker. The "party officer" category also included national campaign leaders of a party, Members of Parliament (MPs) and persons identified as founding members of a party. The

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
category of “party supporter/activist” represented newsmakers identified as supporters of a party. “Intra-party group” represented stories that had a group of party supporters as a source.

- **Context of story:** this denoted the situation or event on which a story was predicated. The categories under this were: state function, political rally, campaign event, interview with a journalist, press conference, press release, other speech events, workshop/seminar/conference, inauguration/commissioning of a project, donation/launching, intra-party meeting/election, resolutions, organised civil society event, election of vice presidential candidate, defection, launch of party manifesto, filing of nomination, presidential debate and an “other” category for those that did not fit into any of the above contexts . For this study, a state function was operationally defined as a public event such as an event marking republic day, state of the nation address, among others.
- **Subject of story:** this referred to the issue that a story is focused on or discusses. This was categorised into: national development, campaign strategy, attacks on opponents, and other election-related issue. Stories that were placed under the “national development” category were those that focused on policy proposals and discussions of national problems and how they can be dealt with. Stories on the vision, programmes and pledges of a party or candidate were placed under “campaign strategy” while those in which a party, a candidate, a party official or supporter attacked or condemned an opposition party or candidate were placed under

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
“attacks on opponents.” All other stories relating to the 2008 elections that did not fall under any of the above categories were placed in the “other election-related issues” category.

- **Placement of story:** this referred to the page on which a story was placed. The page on which a story is placed has an influence on the prominence of the story and the importance readers may attach to it. Stories on the front pages obviously gain more attention from readers than those on inside pages. Story placement was categorised into the following: front page (lead), front page (second lead) other front page, back page, centre spread, political page, and other pages.
- **Headline size:** As the name suggests, this referred to the size of a story's headline. As explained by Kenney and Simpson (1993), though stories may appear on the same page, they may have different levels of prominence due to differences in headline size. Kenney and Simpson's categorisation of headline size into streamers, spread heads, two-column heads and one-column heads was adopted. Headlines that went across a whole page, fell under the category of “streamers,” and those that were more than two columns wide but less than streamers were put under the category of “spread heads.” Two-column heads and one-column heads, as their names imply, were headlines that were two columns wide and one column wide respectively.
- **Enhancement of story:** this related to whether a story is accompanied by a photograph or not. The categories under this were: story with photo/visual, story without a visual, and story with a cartoon.

- **Tone of story:** tone referred to the kind of description given a source, story subject or context and how such a description reflected on the party or candidate involved. The coding categories for tone of coverage, adopted from the work of Reichert, Mueller and Nitz (2003) were: positive, negative, and neutral. The tone of a story was coded as "positive," if it portrayed a candidate, a party or a subject matter in a good light. A story was coded negative if it portrayed a candidate, party or a subject matter in a negative light. Other stories that did not fall into any of the two categories were coded as neutral. (See coding guideline and coding sheet in appendices 'A' and 'B').

4.3.4 Inter-coder reliability

Coding was carried out by the researcher and two independent coders. The independent coders were trained on the unit of analysis and content categories by taking them through the coding guideline and the coding sheet. The training was aimed at ensuring that coders thoroughly understand the coding process so as to obtain a more reliable data for the study. The training sessions provided an opportunity for definitions to be revised, category boundaries to be clarified and for improving upon the coding guideline until coders become familiar and comfortable with the coding procedure.

4.3.5 Test of inter-coder reliability

Though no instrument can ever be 100 percent reliable, it was considered important that an inter-coder reliability test be performed after the two independent coders had been trained on the coding process. To ensure that the reliability test is itself not biased, it was considered

necessary to base the test on coding results from a trial coding performed by the two independent coders on the same issue of the newspaper. One issue of the newspaper was randomly selected from the universe of study and given to one of the coders together with copies of the coding sheet and guidelines. Another copy of the same edition of the newspaper was presented to the second coder alongside copies of the coding sheet and guidelines. Two days later, the coders submitted their results.

The data submitted by the two coders were entered into the SPSS dataset and Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability test was carried out. As explained by Landis and Koch (1977), values for Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability measure ranges from -1.0 to 1.0 where large numbers mean better reliability, values near zero suggesting that agreement is attributable to chance, and values less than zero signifying that agreement is even less than that which could be attributed to chance. Landis and Koch (1977) note that as a rule of thumb, Kappa inter-coder reliability test values that range from 0.40 to 0.59 are considered moderate, those from 0.60 to 0.79 are considered substantial, while those above 0.80 are considered to be outstanding. The Kappa test performed on the data from the two independent coders yielded a value of 0.88. From the categorisation by Landis and Koch (1977), the level of agreement between the two coders was outstanding. This meant that the guidelines for coding were reliable enough for actual coding of content for the study (see appendix D, for steps used in testing Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability).

4.4 In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interview technique for gathering qualitative data was employed as an additional data collection method in this study. The in-depth interview method can be described as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents with the view to exploring respondents' perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). As observed by McCracken (1988), the in-depth interview approach makes it possible to explore the worldview of people (subjects of study) and the logic behind their actions. Guion (2006) expands on McCracken's view by describing the in-depth interview approach as an open-ended, discovery-oriented method that helps researchers to explore the view points and perspectives of study respondents.

In-depth interviews, also known as intensive interviews (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003), is an appropriate data gathering method for this study because it is an ideal method of inquiry for studies that investigate complex subject matters as well as those that seek detailed information (Patton, 1990). Wimmer and Dominick (2003: 127) corroborate Patton's assertion by pointing out that, "the most important advantage of the in-depth interview is the wealth of detail that it provides." The choice of the in-depth interview as a qualitative data collection method for this study was thus aimed at obtaining rich and detailed information about the news selection and treatment processes at the *Daily Graphic* from the perspectives of editors and journalists.

The use of the in-depth interview method also helped in gathering elaborate data that reflected the opinions, values, experiences and motivations of journalists and editors as well as the gathering of data that reflected gatekeeping and news framing practices at the *Daily Graphic*. McCracken (1988:9) argues that, “without a qualitative understanding of how culture mediates human action, we can only know what the numbers tell us.” Informed by McCracken’s argument, the qualitative data, generated through the in-depth interviews, served as a basis for commenting on and contextualising the quantitative findings from the content analysis.

The data collection involved the use of a semi-structured interview schedule which is the most ideal tool for individual in-depth interviews (Newcomb, 1993). The use of semi-structured interview schedules is advantageous in that they help the researcher to combine the strengths of both the structured and the unstructured types of interviews (May, 1993). The schedule had open-ended questions for gathering the relevant data for the study. While the use of the interview schedule helped pace interviews appropriately and made the interviewing more systematic and comprehensive (Lofland and Lofland, 1995), the use of open-ended questions gave respondents the freedom to provide in-depth responses and also allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and further probes into respondents’ responses. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed to enable the researcher to fully capture the responses of participants (see appendix “C” for interview schedule).

One basic difference between qualitative and quantitative research relates to sample size and sampling method. Whereas quantitative studies mostly involve the use of large representative samples selected through probabilistic sampling, qualitative studies largely use relatively smaller samples selected through non-probabilistic sampling techniques (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

The universe for the qualitative study was journalists of the *Daily Graphic*. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees for this study. Though the use of purposive sampling did not allow a fully representative sample to be chosen for the study, it was adopted on the basis that it is a sampling technique that makes it possible for respondents with qualities and characteristics that are relevant to a study to be selected while eliminating those without the relevant characteristics (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003; Babbie, 2009). Four journalists, made up of the editor, news editor, political editor and one senior political reporter of the newspaper were interviewed.

In-depth interviews can be time consuming and expensive (Boyce & Neale, 2006), but the sample of four was considered a size that could be handled effectively alongside the content analysis and within the timeframe and budget for the study. Findings of the qualitative aspect of the study were not to be generalised over the population of study. Rather, they were aimed at providing an insight into the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper and a context for the findings of the content analysis.



The choice of respondents was based on the argument by McCracken (1988) that scientific research in the field of social science is well grounded and improved by exploring and understanding the beliefs, experiences and orientations of the actors of the issues under investigation. The selected respondents can be considered as some of the main actors behind the production processes at the *Daily Graphic*. The editor determines the final content of the newspaper while news editors assign reporters to cover various events and may determine which events are covered. News editors also sit in editorial conferences for the selection of stories. The political editor is the head of the political news section while the senior political reporter, covers some of the main political events for the paper. Understanding the experiences, orientations and beliefs of this group of people was thus critical for this study.

4.5 Data analysis technique

The findings from the content analysis and the qualitative in-depth interviews are presented separately and triangulated at the stage of discussion in line with the sequential explanatory design of mix method research. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used for analysing coded categories from the content analysis. Through the use of the SPSS software, data from the content analysis was converted into frequency tables and cross-tabulations as a way of summarising them into formats that could be easily comprehended. The development of frequency tables from the content analysis also helped to discover and compare patterns and relations that emerged.

In line with the sequential explanatory design of mix method research, data gathered from the qualitative in-depth interviews were analysed after analysing the quantitative content

analysis. Analysis of the qualitative data mainly involved giving meaning and explanations to quotations and interview notes. Patterns and relationships that emerged were noted and later juxtaposed with findings and relationships that emerged from the content analysis.

For analysis on coverage of events common to the four top parties and those that featured all of them at the same time, balance of coverage was determined by calculating what Kenney and Simpson (1993) referred to as news story generation rates. The news generating rate for a party was determined by dividing the total number of stories for that party by the total number of news-worthy events engaged in by the party (in this case, the events that were common to all the four parties and those that featured all of them at the same time during the campaigns). For example, if the NPP and NDC engaged in the same programmes, stories published on those events for each party were divided by the number of events to get the story generating rate for each party. In the case of the events that were common to all the four parties and those that featured them at the same time, it would be expected that the same number of stories would be published on the parties and as such, the news story generating rate for all parties should be the same. If it turns out that some parties got more news story generating rate than others, then a case of coverage bias could be made.

Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the finding of the study. In line with the sequential explanatory approach as discussed in the previous chapter, findings of the content analysis are first presented followed by findings of the in-depth interviews. As already pointed out, the study was aimed at examining coverage of political parties by the state-owned *Daily Graphic*. The aim was to find out whether or not the paper gave fair coverage for political parties that contested the 2008 elections as the constitution of Ghana requires it to do.

To be able to respond to the research questions, the content analysis was carried out in two parts. The first part focused on gathering information that would help in providing descriptive explanations for general coverage received by the various political parties. The second part focused on coverage of events that were common to all political parties as well as those that involved all the parties on the same platform. The second part was aimed at gathering information that would help ascertain whether or not disparities in general coverage received by parties could be attributed to differences in the strengths of parties and number of campaign events they organised.

Another aspect of the study involved qualitative in-depth interviews with editors of the *Daily Graphic*. This was aimed at seeking explanations to the reasons behind the amount and type of coverage received by political parties. The in-depth interviews mainly explored

editorial and gatekeeping practices that influence the selection, placement and treatment of stories in the newsroom of the *Daily Graphic*.

5.1 Content analysis on general coverage

This section focuses on analysing the newspaper's general coverage of the various political parties that contested the 2008 elections. The section will examine the amount of coverage received by political parties, how the stories were treated, the contextual background and focus of the stories, the sources of the stories as well as the prominence and tone of the coverage received by the various political parties.

5.1.1 Amount of coverage

The study looked at coverage of political parties from June to December 2008. For this period, there were a total of 162 issues of the *Daily Graphic* which were all content analysed. A total of 1,185 stories focusing on political parties that contested the 2008 elections were identified and coded. For stories that involved two or more parties, coding on the various variables were done for the parties captured in such stories. The seven parties were the NPP, NDC, PNC, CPP, DFP, RPD and DPP. Coverage for the independent presidential candidate was not coded for analysis as the study was focused on investigating coverage of political parties.

Analysis of general coverage received by political parties showed that the NPP had the highest amount of coverage. The NPP recorded 435 out of the 1,185 stories, representing

36.7 percent of total coverage. The main opposition NDC, followed with 28.2 percent of coverage (334 stories)

The CPP had 17.3 percent of coverage (205 stories) which is a little less than half of the coverage received by the ruling party. The PNC received 9.5 percent of coverage (112 stories), the DFP had 61 stories representing 5.1 percent of coverage, while the DPP and the RPD received just 21 and 17 stories representing a meagre 1.8 and 1.4 percent of coverage respectively (See Table 1).

Table 1: Coverage of political parties

Party	Frequency	Percentage
NPP	435	36.7
NDC	334	28.2
PNC	112	9.5
CPP	205	17.3
DFP	61	5.1
RPD	17	1.4
DPP	21	1.8
Total	1185	100.0

In terms of monthly distribution of coverage, October had the largest amount of stories (143) representing 20.5 percent of the total stories coded for the study. October was followed by November with 17.1 percent (203 stories). September followed closely with 17.0 percent (201 stories). August and July had 163 and 150 stories representing 13.8 and 12.7 percent respectively. Even though only six issues of the newspaper's December publications (December 1 to 6) were included in the study, 115 stories representing 9.7 percent of total coverage was coded for December. This was more than stories coded from the entire 25

University of Ghana <http://unspace.ug.edu.gh>

issues of June which stood at 110 representing 9.3 percent of total coverage. December 6 was the last publication of the paper before the election day of December 7 hence the use of only six issues of the paper for the month of December. The data, as presented in Table 2 below, show a generally steady increase in the number of stories for parties from June through October, with a drop in November. It is, however, not clear what may have contributed to the drop in November, especially when the expectation was that more stories will be published as the election drew closer.

Table 2: Monthly publication of campaign stories

Months	Frequency	Percent
June	110	9.3
July	150	12.7
August	163	13.8
September	201	17.0
October	243	20.5
November	203	17.1
December	115	9.7
Total	1185	100.0

Note: Only six issues were coded for December since the election was held on December 7

The progressive increase in the number of stories from June through October, reflected in the amount of coverage received by the various political parties in those months (see Table 3). The bulk of the coverage for the NPP, NDC, CPP, DFP, DPP and the RPD occurred in the months of September, October and November. Though the PNC also had its highest coverage in October and November, it had more coverage in July and August (14 stories each) than in September (9 stories).

Table 3: Monthly presentation of stories and party covered

Month	Political party covered in the story							Total
	NPP	NDC	PNC	CPP	DFP	RPD	DPP	
June	47	31	21	19	4	0	0	110
July	61	42	14	22	7	0	1	150
August	62	51	14	28	5	2	1	163
September	74	65	9	44	9	0	0	201
October	86	60	26	41	13	7	10	243
November	69	52	27	34	14	3	4	203
December	36	30	13	17	9	5	5	115
Total	435	334	112	205	61	17	21	1185

Note: Only six issues were coded for December since the election was held on December ~

5.1.2 Treatment of story

Journalists treat stories in different ways in terms of presentation. Stories can be treated as simple straight news, which entails the presentation of reports of events or happening without analysis or interpretation. Stories can also sometimes be treated as investigative reports which will include details on background and context with analysis and interpretation. Political stories can also be presented as news analysis in which a journalist examines the strengths and weaknesses of a party or candidate, and also, profiling in which readers are presented with detailed facts about a party or a candidate. These and other types of stories such as features, letters, follow-ups, retractions and rejoinders, interviews, opinions and editorials were considered for analysis in this study.

As the data in Table 4 show, 1,048 out of the 1,185 stories coded for this study were straight news stories. This means that more than three-thirds (88.4%) of the total number of stories

was straight news leaving the rest of the news treatment genres – feature, editorial, letter, interview, investigative report, photo story, profiles and one other story that did not fall under any of the categories – with just 11.6 percent of coverage. The dominance of straight news reports as opposed to other forms of story treatment means that journalists overly relied on reporting on happenings and events organised by the parties such as rallies, intra-party elections and other forms of campaigning, rather than generating their own stories through investigations and journalistic enterprise.

Table 4: Type of story and party covered

Political Party	Type of story									Total
	Straight news	Feature	Editorial	Letter	Interview	Investigative report	Photo story	Other	Profile of party or candidate	
NPP	388	21	1	8	1	3	10	1	2	435
NDC	294	22	0	8	0	0	8	0	3	334
PNC	97	11	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	112
CPP	183	12	0	0	1	0	6	0	1	205
DFP	55	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	61
RPD	14	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	17
DPP	17	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	21
Total	1048	75	1	16	2	3	29	1	10	1185

5.1.3 Context of stories

Analysis of the context of stories revealed that only two stories representing 0.2 percent of coverage were based on national events. This means that the ruling party stayed away from using national events as campaign platforms for the NPP. In other words, NPP events were differentiated from government events. Nonetheless, certain government functions were used to articulate or project the achievements of the government which tend to benefit the NPP as a party. Political rallies, other campaign events, internal party elections and interviews were the main contexts of stories. Press conferences and releases as well as organised civil society events also served as the contexts for a considerable number of stories. The presidential debates accounted for 38 stories, representing 3.2 percent of total coverage while filing of nominations generated 26 stories, making up 2.2 percent of total coverage.

5.1.4 Focus of stories

The study considered it important to look at the subject or focus of stories to find out whether stories were focused on national development, campaign strategies, attacks on opponents, internal party squabbles or other election-related issues. As indicated in Table 5, a total of 810 stories (68.4% of coverage), focused on campaign strategies of the various political parties. There were 118 stories (9.96% of coverage) focusing on national development issues, 55 stories (4.6%) on attacks on opponents, 71 stories (5.9%) on internal party conflicts and 131 stories (11%) on other election-related issues.

Table 5: Political party covered and subject of story

Party	Subject of the story					Total
	National development	Campaign strategy	Attack on opponent	Intra-party conflict	Other election-related story	
NPP	32	309	23	32	39	435
NDC	31	210	27	12	54	334
PNC	22	79	1	4	6	112
CPP	21	145	2	21	16	205
DFP	6	43	1	1	10	61
RPD	2	12	0	1	2	17
DPP	4	12	1	0	4	21
Total	118	810	55	71	131	1185

The data from Table 5 indicate that though the NPP had the highest number of stories (32) focusing on national development (policy proposals, discussions on national problems and how to deal with them), when the figure is expressed as a percentage of the party's total coverage, it shows that the NPP had only 7.4 percent of its coverage focusing on national development. Overall, the PNC did better with 19.6 percent (22 out of 112 stories) of its coverage focusing on national development. The DPP had 19 percent of its coverage on national development (4 out of 21 stories), the RPD (11.8% or 2 out of 17 stories), CPP (10.2% or 21 out of 205 stories), DFP (9.8% or 6 out of 61 stories) and NDC (9.3% or 31 out of 334 stories). To a large extent, parties did not resort to attacking each other. Nonetheless, the NDC had eight percent of its coverage (27 out of 334 stories) focused on attacking its opponents particularly the NPP and DFP. The NPP had almost the same proportion of its stories (7.4%) focusing on attacking mainly the NDC. The order of coverage received by

parties on campaign strategy was the same as the order of total coverage received by the parties, with the NPP, NDC, CPP, PNC, DFP, DPP and the RPD receiving the highest and lowest coverage respectively.

5.1.5 Source of stories

The study considered it important to investigate the sources of the stories or the people who were generating the news for the various political parties. First, this was to establish whether the then president, government officials and other political appointees used their positions to generate more coverage in favour of the ruling party. That is significant because of the view that the state-owned media usually pander to the whims of government officials and the President, and may thus be more inclined to cover events involving such officials more than those involving opposition figures.

As indicated in Table 6, presidential candidates were the source of 377 out of the 1,185 stories coded for the study. The figure represented 31.8 percent of total coverage. Party officials, made up of founders, national, regional and constituency executives as well as national campaign officers of a party, were the source of 266 stories, representing 22.3 percent of total stories coded. Parliamentary candidates served as the third largest source of stories accounting for 188 stories or 15.9 percent of total stories coded. Party supporters and activists followed with 7.1 percent (84 stories). There were 73 stories (6.2) that had the authors (journalists/feature writers) as the source, while vice presidential candidates accounted for 68 stories or 5.7 percent of total coverage. Intra-party groups and wives of presidential candidates were sources of 28 stories each accounting for 2.4 percent of total

coverage and were closely followed by stories that had an official of the Electoral Commission or other public official as source (27 stories or 2.3 percent).

Table 6: Sources of story

Source of story	Frequency	Percent
President	11	0.93
Presidential candidate	177	31.8
Vice presidential candidate	68	5.7
Parliamentary candidate	188	15.9
Government official/political appointee	23	1.9
Party official	266	22.3
Party supporter/activist	84	7.1
Intra-party group	28	2.4
Writer	73	6.2
Editor	1	.1
Other	8	.7
Wife of flagbearer	28	2.4
Wife of vice presidential candidate	3	.3
EC official/Other public official	27	2.3
Total	1185	100.0

The data from Table 6 show that the then sitting president, Mr. John Kufuor of the NPP served as source for 11 stories (0.93% of total coverage), with government or political appointees serving as sources for 23 stories (1.9%). Three stories had their source as wife of a vice presidential candidate. There was a single editorial, while eight stories had sources other than all the sources indicated above.

A cross-tabulation that relates political parties to newsmakers shows that President Kufuor, who was the sitting president (but not a candidate in the election), was the source was the



source of just 11 stories. It is therefore apparent that President Kufuor did not use his position as the sitting president and the leverage he had to be covered in the state-owned newspaper, to unduly generate coverage for the ruling NPP and its presidential candidate. There were, however, some stories that featured President Kufuor commissioning a project, making donations or performing other functions which projected the image of the government and the NPP. In cases where such stories neither focused on the NPP as a party nor the electoral campaigns, they were not coded as constituting coverage for the NPP.

Just like the amount of coverage for the political parties, the NPP presidential candidate had 107 stories or 28.4 percent of total coverage generated by all the presidential candidates. The CPP's presidential candidate followed with 24.7 percent of coverage (93 stories). The presidential candidate of the NDC placed third with 22.7 percent of coverage (86 stories). The PNC candidate placed fourth generating 14.3 percent of coverage (54 stories) followed by the candidates of the DFP, DPP and the RPD who obtained 4.3 (16 stories), 3.2 (12 stories) and 2.3 percent (nine stories) of coverage respectively. The figures show that while the NDC had 28.2 percent of total coverage (334 stories) as against the CPP's 17.3 percent (205 stories), individually, the CPP presidential candidate generated more coverage than the NDC candidate.

The NDC's vice presidential candidate had the highest coverage among the vice presidential candidates with 32 out of the 68 stories devoted to him. The NPP's vice presidential candidate followed with 26 stories, while the vice presidential candidates of the CPP and the PNC generated four stories each. The vice presidential candidates of the DFP and the RPD

generated a story each. No story was generated by the DPP vice-presidential candidate. The difference between the coverage received by the NDC and the NPP vice-presidential candidates could be said to be insignificant considering the fact that the NDC's candidate was nominated in April 2008, giving him seven clear months to campaign ahead of the polls while the NPP's candidate had barely three months to campaign having been nominated in August 2008.

As the incumbent party, the NPP had some government officials and other political appointees generating coverage for the party. There were only 23 out of the total 1,185 stories that had government officials or political appointees as the source. The figure represents 1.9 percent of total coverage for all parties and 5.3 percent of total coverage received by the NPP (see Table 7).

As indicated in Table 7, parliamentary candidates of the NPP generated the highest number of stories (66) out of the total 188 stories generated by parliamentary candidates of all parties. The NPP was followed by parliamentary candidates of the NDC with 50 stories and the CPP with 30 stories. It is important to note that the NPP and NDC had candidates in all the 230 constituencies as opposed to the CPP that had candidates in 206 constituencies. Though the DFP contested in 108 constituencies, its parliamentary candidates generated 19 stories compared with the PNC that fielded candidates in 129 constituencies, but had only 17 stories generated by its parliamentary candidates.

One other news source of interest was the wives of presidential candidates. As the data in Table 7 show, the wife of the NPP flagbearer received the highest coverage among all the wives of flagbearers. She was the source of 13 out of the total 28 stories generated by wives of all the presidential candidates put together. Next was the wife of the CPP flagbearer who was the source of 10 stories, the wife of the NDC candidate had only three stories, while those of the PNC and the RPD had one story each. The wives of the DFP and DPP had zero coverage.

Table 7: Political party covered and newsmaker/source of story

Party	Newsmaker/source of story												Total
	President	Presidential candidate	Vice presidential candidate	Parliamentary candidate	Government official/politician appointee	Party official	Party supporter/activist	Party group	Writer	Other	Flagbearer	Wife of vice presidential candidate	EC official/Other public official
NPP	11	107	26	66	23	90	42	20	25	5	13	2	5
NDC	0	86	32	50	0	85	25	4	27	15	3	1	5
PNC	0	54	4	17	0	23	3	0	6	0	1	0	4
CPP	0	93	4	30	0	37	13	4	10	0	10	0	4
DFP	0	16	1	19	0	18	1	0	3	0	0	0	3
RPD	0	9	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
DPP	0	12	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Total	23	377	68	188	23	254	84	28	73	20	28	3	27
													1185

5.1.6 Prominence of coverage

Prominence of coverage is analysed in terms of placement of stories, headline size and the usage or non-usage of visuals for stories. With regard to placement, it is generally argued that where a story is placed reflects the importance gatekeepers attach to the story and also indicates the extent to which a story can attract the attention of readers. It is widely acknowledged that the front page is the most prominent page, followed by the back page and then the center spread. It is, therefore, believed that gatekeepers will often put the stories they consider important on the front page, while the less-important ones will be placed in the inside pages.

Table 8: A frequency distribution of story placement

Placement	Frequency	Percent
Front page (lead)	66	5.6
Front page (second lead)	48	4.1
Other front page	1	1.1
Back page	7	.6
Centre spread	56	3.9
Political page	882	74.4
Other pages	123	10.4
Total	1185	100.0

As indicated in Table 8, the majority of stories (882 or 74.4%) were placed on the political pages of the newspaper. Pages other than the front, back, centre spread and the political pages (other pages) followed with 123 stories representing, 10.4 percent of total coverage. There were 66 front page lead stories constituting 5.6 percent of total coverage; 48 stories

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
 (4.1%) featured as second lead stories on the front page, while 13 other stories (1.1%) were placed as third lead stories on the front page. The centre spread had 46 stories, representing 3.9 percent of coverage with the back page having the least number of stories (7 stories or 0.6% of coverage).

It was also important to relate the placement of stories to the political parties in order to ascertain if some of the parties had the advantage of having more of their stories placed on the prominent pages of the paper than other parties had. This was done with a cross-tabulation that points out how many stories of a political party were placed on the prominent pages of the newspaper (see Table 9).

Table 9: Political parties by story placement

Party	Placement of story							Total
	Front page (lead)	Front page (second lead)	Other front page	Back page	Centre spread	Politics page	Other pages	
NPP	20	20	3	2	17	325	48	435
NDC	10	9	2	2	10	265	36	334
PNC	9	6	0	0	7	78	12	112
CPP	15	9	5	1	9	147	19	205
DFP	5	1	0	0	2	49	4	61
RPD	3	1	3	1	1	6	2	17
DPP	4	2	0	1	0	12	2	21
Total	66	48	13	7	46	882	123	1185



As the data in Table 9 show, the NPP had the highest number of front page stories (43) made up of 20 lead stories; 20 second lead stories and three other front page stories. The NPP was followed by the CPP with a total of 29 front page stories out of which 15 were front page lead stories, nine second leads and five other front page stories. The NDC was next with just under half of the total for the NPP (21 front page stories) made up of 10 front page leads, nine second leads and two other front page stories. The PNC had 15 front page stories nine of them as lead stories and six as second lead stories. The RPD followed with a total of seven front page stories made up of three front pages leads, one second lead and three other front page stories. The DFP and the DPP had a total of six front page stories each. Five of the DFP's stories were leads with one second lead, as against four lead stories for the DPP and two second leads.

Analysis of front page coverage received by parties as a proportion of total coverage they received, showed that the RPD had 41.2 percent of its total coverage (7 out of 17 stories) being front page stories. This positions the RPD as the party that had the greatest chance of having its stories on the front page. The DPP had 28.5 percent of its total coverage (6 out of 21 stories) being front page stories. The CPP was next as the party with the highest chance of having its stories on the front page (14.1 percent or 29 out of 205 stories). The NPP had the largest number of front page stories (43), but the figure only represented 9.9 percent of the party's total coverage. The PNC also fared relatively well in terms of front page placement by having 13.4 percent of its coverage on the front page (15 stories out of 112). The DFP had nine percent of its coverage on the front page (6 stories out of 61). Though the NDC received the second highest amount of coverage (334 stories), only 6.3 percent (21

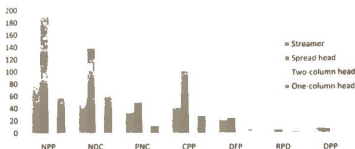
stories) of its coverage was on the front page. The trend is explained by the fact that in consonance with its guidelines for covering political parties in the electoral campaigns, the newspaper provided front page coverage for major activities of all the political parties. Thus the major activities that were carried out by the smaller parties attracted front page coverage just as those of the bigger parties. But in addition to the major activities, the bigger parties carried out more activities that attracted additional coverage on the front and other pages of the newspaper. Generally, therefore, the parties that received less coverage had greater proportions of front page coverage.

The order of coverage on the politics pages of the paper was reflective of the order of total coverage received by the parties. As indicated in Table 9, the NPP had the highest number of stories (325) followed by the NDC (265), CPP (147), PNC (78), DFP (49), DPP (12) and RPD (6). Both the NDC and NPP had two stories each on the back page, the CPP, RPD and DPP had a story each, while the DFP and the PNC had no story on the back page. The pattern of coverage on the centre spread was also closely related to the trend of total coverage received by parties. The NPP had 17 stories followed by the NDC (10), CPP (9), PNC (7) and DFP (2). The RPD which had the least amount of coverage had just one story on the centre spread, while the DPP had none.

Another significant measure of story prominence is headline size. Stories can appear on the same page, but those with a bigger headline size will have more prominence because of their potential to attract the attention of readers. For purposes of analysing story prominence by headline size, headlines were categorised into streamers, spread heads, two-column heads

and one-column heads. Streamers were headlines that cut across the entire columns of the newspaper and thus the most prominent. Spread heads were headlines that were more than two columns long but less than streamers, while two-column and one-column heads as their names suggest, were headlines that were two columns and one column long respectively.

Fig. 2: Headline size of coverage received by political parties



Analysis of Figure 6 shows that the size of story headlines received by political parties was proportional to the coverage received by the parties. Just like overall coverage of parties, the NPP had the highest number of stories in each category of headlines with the exception of one-column heads. The NDC had more stories with one-column head than the NPP. Generally, therefore, the NDC, CPP, PNC, DFP, DPP and RPD followed the NPP in that order in terms of story prominence by headline. The order of the parties is, however, reversed when the number of streamer headlines received by the individual parties is expressed as a proportion of total coverage received by each party.

Table 10: Story headline by political party covered

Party	Size of story headline				Total
	Streamer	Spread head	Two-column head	One-column head	
NPP	90	189	97	58	435
NDC	59	138	76	60	334
PNC	34	50	16	12	112
CPP	42	101	34	28	205
DFP	22	25	7	7	61
RPD	8	6	0	3	17
DPP	9	8	3	1	21
Total	264	517	233	169	1185

In terms of proportion of stories with streamer headlines (the most prominent headline type), analysis of the data in Table 10, showed that the RPD topped with 47.1 percent (8 out of its 17 stories) followed by the DPP with 42.9 (9 out of its 21 stories). The DFP was next with 36.1 percent (22 out of its 61 stories), followed by the PNC with 30.4 percent (34 out of its 112 stories). Though NPP had the highest amount of total coverage, it had a relatively lower proportion of its stories appearing under streamer headlines (20.7% or 90 out of its 435 stories), with the CPP closely following with 20.5 percent (42 out of its 205 stories). The NDC, that was second to the NPP in terms of total amount of coverage, had the least proportion of its stories under streamer headlines (17.7% or 59 out of its 334 stories).

Visuals such as photographs, cartoons and graphs also tend to enhance the prominence of stories in a newspaper. Stories may be placed on the same page but those enhanced with photographs or other forms of visuals are more likely to draw a reader's attention than those without visuals.

As contained in Table 11, the majority of stories (722 or 60.9%) were published with photographs. A total of 13 stories (1.1%) were enhanced with cartoons, while 37.9 percent of total coverage (450 stories) had no visuals. The results showed that all parties had more than half of their stories enhanced with visuals. Though the RPD had the least amount of coverage, it had 11 out of its 17 stories enhanced with visuals making it the party with the highest proportion of its coverage enhanced with visuals (64.7%). The CPP followed closely with 64.4 percent of its coverage enhanced with visuals (132 out of 205 stories). The PNC was next with 63.4 percent or 71 out of 112 stories, NPP (61.8% or 269 out of 435 stories), DFP (59% or 36 out of 61 stories), NDC (57.5% or 192 out of 334 stories) and DPP (52.4% or 11 out of 21 stories).

Table 11: Political party and story enhancement by visuals

Party	Story enhancement by visuals			Total
	Story with photo	No visual	Story with cartoon	
NPP	269	163	3	435
NDC	192	138	4	334
PNC	71	39	2	112
CPP	132	71	2	205
DFP	36	23	2	61
RPD	11	6	0	17
DPP	11	10	0	21
Total	722	450	13	1185



5.1.7: Tone of coverage

The study also considered the tone of coverage received by the parties. Tone of coverage relates to the description given to the source, story subject and context and how the description reflected on the party or candidate involved in the story. While some stories could be presented in a manner that enhances the image of a party or candidate, others could be presented in a manner that ridicules, condemns or generally portray a party or candidate negatively to readers. Analysis of tone of coverage was important in that, a party could receive more coverage in terms of number of stories but may not necessarily have the most positive coverage. While positive coverage enhances the fortunes of a party or candidate, negative coverage does the opposite. Stories on all political parties were therefore analysed to establish whether they were positive, negative or neutral and coded as such.

Table 12: Party covered by tone of story

Party	Tone of the story			Total
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
NPP	198	33	203	435
NDC	122	29	183	334
PNC	54	5	53	112
CPP	98	15	92	205
DFP	28	5	28	61
RPD	10	0	7	17
DPP	11	1	9	21
Total	521	88	575	1,185

The data in Table 12 points to a generally positive and neutral coverage for all parties with just 88 stories, representing 7.4 percent of total coverage being negative in tone. There were 521 positive stories, which is equivalent to 43.96 percent of total coverage. When the amount of stories received by each party under the three categories of tone is expressed as a proportion of total coverage received by the parties, the data show that with the exception of the DFP, the parties with the least coverage fared better than those with high coverage. In other words, parties that had low amounts of coverage tended to have a relatively higher proportion of their coverage being positive than the parties that had high amounts of coverage.

The RPD, as the party with the least amount of coverage, had 58.8 percent of its coverage being positive in tone (10 out of its 17 stories). The RPD was followed by the DPP with 52.4 percent of its coverage (11 out of its 21 stories) being positive. The PNC was third in terms of the proportion of its coverage that was positive (48.2% or 54 out of 112 stories). The CPP was next with 47.8 percent (98 out of 205 stories) and the DFP (45.9% or 28 out of 61 stories). The NPP had 45.5 percent of its coverage (198 out 435 stories) being positive as against NDC's 36.6 percent (122 out of its 334 stories).

There were a total of 575 stories, representing 48.6 percent of total coverage, that were neutral in tone. This means that close to half of the newspaper's overall election coverage was neutral. Only the NDC had more than half (54.8%) of its coverage being neutral. The rest of the parties had more than a third but less than half of their coverage being neutral.

The NDC was followed by the PNC (47.3%), the NPP (46.7%), DFP (45.9%), CPP (44.9%), DPP (42.9%) and the RPD (41.2%).

There were few negative stories overall. The NDC had the highest proportion of its coverage being negative (8.7% or 29 out of 334 stories). The DFP followed with 8.2 percent of its coverage being negative (5 out of 61 stories). The NPP was next with 7.7 percent (33 out of 435 stories), CPP 7.3% (15 out of 205 stories); the DPP 4.7% (1 out of 21 stories), the PNC 4.5% (5 out of 112 stories), while the RPD had no story coded as negative.

Apart from analysis of tone of coverage received by the parties, it was considered important to find out the proportion of negative and positive stories on each party that was put on the front page. This is because due to the prominence of front page stories, a positive story on the front page benefits the party involved more than having the same story on any other page. On the other hand, a negative front page story will have a greater negative impact on the party or candidate involved than the same story can have if it is placed on any other page.

Table 13: Placement of stories for political parties by tone of coverage

		Placement of story							Total
		Front page (lead)	Front page (second lead)	Other front page	Back page	Centre spread	Political page	Other pages	
Positive	NPP	15	11	1	1	14	132	24	198
	NDC	7	6	1	2	10	87	9	122
	PNC	7	4	0	0	6	34	3	54
	CPP	9	6	1	1	7	68	6	98
	DFP	3	1	0	0	2	20	2	28
	RPD	1	1	2	0	1	3	2	10
	DPP	1	2	0	0	0	6	2	11
	Total	43	31	5	4	40	350	48	521
Negative	NPP	1	2	1			24	5	33
	NDC	0	1	1			15	12	29
	PNC	0	0	0			4	1	5
	CPP	3	0	0			9	3	15
	DFP	0	0	0			5	0	5
	DPP	0	0	0			1	0	1
	Total	4	3	2			58	21	88
Neutral	NPP	4	7	1	1	3	168	19	203
	NDC	3	2	0	0	0	163	15	183
	PNC	2	2	0	0	1	40	8	53
	CPP	3	3	4	0	2	70	10	92
	DFP	2	0	0	0	0	24	2	28
	RPD	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	7
	DPP	3	0	0	1	0	5	0	9
	Total	19	14	6	3	6	473	54	575

The data from Table 13 reveal that the two parties that received the least coverage – DPP and RPD – fared better than the other parties in terms of the proportion of their positive stories that were placed on the front pages. Both parties did not also have a negative story on the front page. The RPD for example, had 10 positive stories with four of them (40% of positive coverage) placed on the front page. The DPP had 11 positive stories out of which, three (27.3% of positive coverage) found space on the front page. The PNC also did fairly better in terms of the proportion of its positive stories that made it on the front page. It had 11 out of its 54 (or 20.4% of positive coverage) positive stories on the front page, while having no negative story on the same page.

The CPP, however, had 16.3 percent of its positive coverage or 16 out of its 98 positive stories on the front page but it also had three of its 15 negative stories appearing as front page lead stories. The DFP had four out of its 28 positive stories (14.3%) appearing on the front page with none of its five negative stories on the front page. The NPP had 13.4 percent of its positive coverage (27 out of its 198 positive stories) on the front page but also had four of its 33 negative stories appearing on the front page. The NDC on the other hand, had 11.5 percent of its positive coverage (14 out of its 122 positive stories) featuring on the front page and two of its 29 negative stories on the same page.

5.2 Content analysis on coverage of common events

Apart from analysing coverage received by parties generally, the study also analysed coverage received by the four political parties that had representation in parliament on events that were common to all of them and those that had them appearing on the same

platform for the same event. The rationale for this analysis was that differences in amount and tone of coverage for political parties could be as a result of the fact that parties are different in size and carry out unequal number of news-generating activities during electioneering campaigns (Niven, 2003). Due to these differences, parties can legitimately receive different amounts and tone of coverage even if a newspaper were to be fair and balanced in its coverage for all parties. As a result, conclusions of bias cannot be legitimately drawn solely on the basis of differences in the general amount and tone of coverage.

As argued by Kenney and Simpson (1993) as well as Niven (2003), drawing conclusions of bias coverage, therefore, requires the use of a baseline that puts parties on the same level and then measuring coverage for each party against that baseline. The following events which were either common to, or involved the four dominant parties – NPP, NDC, PNC and the CPP – at the same time on the same platform, were used as a baseline:

- Launching of party manifesto
- Launching of party campaign
- Filing of nomination with the Electoral Commission (EC)
- Balloting for positions on ballot paper at the EC offices
- Presidential debates and
- Vice Presidential debates

Coverage received by the parties on the above events were analysed to ascertain whether or not, given the same events and equal number of activities by the parties, the *Daily Graphic* provided proportional coverage for the four parties.

The DFP, NRP and DPP were not included in this analysis because, even though they carried out some of the activities listed above, organisers of some of the other important events such as the presidential and vice presidential debates, excluded them from participating on the grounds that they did not have representation in parliament. Under the circumstance, they did not generate coverage on such events to enable a valid comparison to be made on all issues under consideration.

5.2.1 Amount of coverage

As indicated in Table 14 below, the NPP received slightly higher coverage than the other three parties. It had 27 out of the total 90 stories generated by the four parties on the selected common events, representing 30 percent of total coverage for all the four parties. Unlike the figures for general coverage that placed the NDC second to the NPP in terms of amount of coverage, the CPP fared better than the NDC on coverage of events that were common to both parties. The CPP had 25 out of the 90 stories, representing 27.8 percent of total coverage as compared with the NDC's 20 stories that make up 22.2 percent of total coverage. Again, unlike in the general coverage, where the PNC placed a distant fourth with just 9.5 percent of total coverage, in the case of coverage for common events, it inched up to 20 percent of total coverage (18 out of the total 90 stories).

In the case of filing of nominations, with the exception of the PNC that had just one story, the other three parties had three stories each. On coverage of the presidential debates, the CPP topped with nine stories, while the NPP, NDC and the PNC had eight stories each. The four parties had an equal number of two stories each on the vice presidential candidates' debate. The NPP and CPP had two and five stories respectively, on their campaign launch with the NDC and PNC having no story on that event.

Table 14: Political party by coverage received on common events

Political Parties	Events							Total	%
	Filing of Nominations with Electoral Commission	Presidential Debate	Presidential candidates' debate	Vice Presidential candidates' launch of campaign	Launch of manifesto	Launch of party manifestos with flagbearers	IE A Evening encounter		
NPP	3	8	2	2	6	5	1	27	27.0
NDC	3	8	2	0	2	4	1	20	20.0
PNC	1	8	2	0	2	4	1	18	20.0
CPP	3	9	2	5	3	2	1	25	27.8
Total	10	33	8	7	13	15	4	90	100

The NDC and PNC held official campaign launches before July and so fell out of the study period. On the launch of party manifesto, the NPP had six stories, with the CPP having half of that figure (3 stories). On the same event, the PNC and NDC had a third of the NPP's coverage (2 stories each). The four parties, however, received a single story each on balloting for positions on the electoral ballot paper.

Amount of coverage alone cannot be enough basis for drawing conclusions of coverage bias. Biases can also occur in terms of differences in the prominence given to different stories. The study, therefore, analysed the prominence given to coverage for the four parties on the selected common events, using three variables: story placement, headline size and story enhancement with visuals.

As indicated in Table 15, with the exception of the NPP that had six out of its 27 stories being front page lead stories, the other three parties had five front page lead stories each. In terms of overall front page coverage (lead and other front page stories), however, the CPP came slightly on top with 13 stories compared with NPP's 12 stories. The NDC and the PNC had 10 and nine stories respectively. Analysis of the front page coverage received by the parties as a proportion of their total coverage still puts the CPP on top as its front page coverage was equivalent to 52 percent of its total coverage (13 out of 25 stories). The NPP had 44.4 percent (12 out of 27 stories) of its coverage on the selected common events being on the front page and thus placed last in terms of the proportion of its coverage that was featured on the front page. Both the NDC and the PNC had exactly half (50 percent) of their total coverage on the common events being front page stories.

Table 15: Political party and story placement

Party	Placement of story					Total
	Front page (lead)	Front page (second lead)	Centre spread	Political page	Other pages	
NPP	6	6	2	10	3	27
NDC	5	5	1	7	2	20
PNC	5	4	0	7	2	18
CPP	5	8	1	7	4	25
Total	21	23	4	31	11	90

In terms of headline size, the NPP fared slightly better than the others with 51.9 percent of coverage on common events (14 out of its 27 stories) appearing under the most prominent headline size (streamer). The NDC and PNC again had half of their stories (50%) appearing under streamer headlines with the PNC placing bottom with 48 percent of its coverage or 12 out of 25 stories having streamers as headline. The next category of prominent headline was the spread head and the NPP again had a slight edge with nine of its stories having spread heads as headline while the other three parties had eight stories each under this category of headline (See Table 16).

Table 16: Political party and headline size of stories

Party	Size of story headline				Total
	Streamer	Spread head	Two-column head	One-column head	
NPP	14	9	3	1	27
NDC	10	8	1	1	20
PNC	9	8	1	0	18
CPP	12	8	3	2	25
Total	45	33	8	4	90



As reflected in Table 17 below, all the four parties had more than three-quarters of their stories on common events enhanced with photographs. The NPP had 81.5 percent of its coverage on the selected common events (22 out of 27 stories) enhanced with photographs. The NPP is followed closely by the NDC with 80 percent of coverage (16 out of 20 stories) enhanced with photographs. The PNC followed with 77.8 percent (14 out of 18 stories) and the CPP with 76 percent (19 out of 25 stories).

Table 17: Political party and visual enhancement of stories on common events

Party	Story enhancement by visuals		Total
	Story with photo	No visual	
NPP	22	5	27
NDC	16	4	20
PNC	14	4	18
CPP	19	6	25
Total	71	19	90

5.2.3 Tone of coverage

Another significant indicator of bias in the coverage of political parties relates to the tone of stories. A party may have the highest amount of coverage with stories placed on prominent pages and enhanced with photographs but the party may not benefit from such coverage if it turns out that majority of the stories reflects negatively on the party or its candidate. The study, therefore, considered it crucial to investigate the tone of the coverage received by the political parties on the common events.

Table 18: Political party and tone of coverage on common events

Party	Tone of the story			Total
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	
NPP	17	1	9	27
NDC	14	0	6	20
PNC	12	0	6	18
CPP	17	0	8	25
Total	60	1	29	90

As indicated in Table 18, coverage of the political parties on common events was generally positive. Only one story, which was on the NPP, was coded as negative. In terms of proportions, the NDC had 70 percent of its coverage (14 out of 20 stories) being positive. The next was the CPP with 68 percent of its coverage being positive (17 out of 25 stories), followed by the PNC with 66.7 percent (12 out of 18 stories) and the NPP placing bottom with 62.9 percent (17 out of 27 stories).

5.3 In-depth Interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with four journalists of the *Daily Graphic*. Since the in-depth interviews were aimed at providing an insight into the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper and a context for the findings of the content analysis, it was considered useful to explore and understand the beliefs, experiences and orientations of the key actors in the gatekeeping processes of the *Daily Graphic*. The following people were,

therefore, purposively sampled for the in-depth interviews since their designations and work schedules position them as major gatekeepers of the newspaper:

- The substantive first deputy editor of the newspaper who was acting as the paper's editor during the period of the interviews – the editor of the newspaper is the principal decision maker when it comes to news selection.
- News editor – the news editor assigns reporters to cover events and can thus influence which events are covered and which may not
- Political editor – the political editor is head of the political news section and is in charge of the political news pages of the newspaper
- Senior political reporter – the senior political reporter is one of the main producers of political news reports published by the newspaper

Analysis of the qualitative data generated through the in-depth interviews focused on editorial policies that inform the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper, factors that influence news selection, coverage of political parties during electioneering campaigns, coverage of the 2008 elections and ways by which the paper can best meet its constitutional obligation of providing fair and balanced coverage for political parties.

5.3.1 Editorial policy on selection of political stories

Editorial policies regarding the selection of news items constitute one of the factors that can influence the gatekeeping practices of a newspaper. Editorial policies could serve as a guideline on what stories can go through the news gates of editors and those that are winnowed out. Guided by this, the study sought to find out whether or not the newspaper

has any formally laid down editorial policies that guide the performance of gatekeeping functions among editors.

All the respondents indicated that the *Daily Graphic* does not have a written editorial policy regarding news selection, but there exists what could be described as a conventional means of consensus building among editors in story selection. This is done through an editorial conference held among editors on a daily basis. The following response explains what guides the news selection process at the *Daily Graphic*:

What we do is that we go for editorial conference every afternoon to do the selection of stories. The selection is based on the value of a news item and its import on national development. We also look at whether the story has all the elements: where, when, who and all the other elements one can think of (Breda Atta-Quayson, Deputy/Acting Editor, *Daily Graphic*, November 30, 2009).

Despite the absence of a formal editorial policy, editors say that there is a deliberate effort on their part to ensure fair coverage for all parties. Editors said news selection was also influenced by provisions of the 1992 Constitution that mandates state-owned media to be fair and balanced to all parties in their coverage. The Code of Ethics of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) was also identified by all editors as playing a critical role when it comes to news selection. The following excerpt from a respondent identifies some of the influences on the gatekeeping processes of the newspaper:

The selection of political stories and stories generally, is guided by the provisions of the national Constitution that relates to the mandate of state-owned media, the Code of Ethics of our profession, our conscience and also ensuring that we will be fair to all parties so that we don't over

Analysis of the data also points to the fact that as far as the selection of political stories specifically for the front page is concerned, emphasis is placed on a story's potential to influence national policies, rather than being to the benefit or detriment of a particular political group. The following response to a question of what goes into the selection of a political story for the front page of the newspaper explains it further:

For a political story to be considered for the front page, it should be one that goes beyond partisan consideration. It should not be one that is such that if it is the NDC making a statement then the story is just about the NDC and if it is the NPP making a statement then it becomes an NPP story, no! The story should be one that goes beyond the party involved to have a national dimension and impact (Kobby Asmah, Political Editor, November 30, 2009).

5.3.2 Coverage of parties during electioneering campaigns

Besides seeking to know whether or not the *Daily Graphic* had a general editorial policy on coverage and news selection, the study also sought to find out whether the newspaper had a specific policy or policies regarding coverage of political parties during electioneering campaigns. This was aimed at finding out if the newspaper had a formal policy for ensuring fair and balanced coverage for all parties as mandated by the 1992 Constitution.

It was found that though the newspaper did not have any specific written policy to guide the coverage of previous elections, it had one for the coverage of the 2008 elections. All four respondents indicated that there was a policy guideline on how to ensure fair coverage for all parties during the 2008 electioneering campaigns and that the policy guidelines were

adhered to. The following response elaborates on the paper's 2008 policy guideline on coverage of political parties:

We had the *Graphic* policy guideline on the coverage of political parties during the 2008 elections. The policy guided all practitioners here, on what we can do, what we cannot do, how we should cover the political parties, how we should share our resources such that we give all the parties equitable coverage, and as the constitution says, attempt to provide them with equal space (Kobby Asmah, Political Editor, November 30, 2009).

Apart from the specific provision in the 42-page policy guideline that required editors to provide fair and balanced coverage to parties, the document also addressed, to some extent, the issue of selection and placement of front page stories. It stipulated, for example, that anytime a party held a congress, the story from the congress should be used as a front page story regardless of the size of the party. Asked whether all such congress stories were to be front page lead stories or just a front page story, the following explanation was offered:

If at the time we go to editorial conference only one party had held a congress and we have a story from that congress, then we use it as the front page lead story. But if it happens that two parties are having congresses on the same day, then we look at the news value of the stories on the two parties and usually, in such situations, the bigger parties tend to dominate the front page because of the issue of news value and the interest of the wider society (Breda Atta-Quayson, Deputy/Acting Editor, November 30, 2009).

Despite the paper's policy guideline and the constitutional provisions on fair coverage, the study found that the main gatekeepers of the newspaper interpret fair and balanced coverage to mean proportional, but not equal coverage for all parties. This is because, as all the

respondents argued, parties are not of the same size and do not also engage in an equal number of political and news-generating activities. Editors of the newspaper make a distinction between equal coverage and equitable coverage. They understand equal coverage to mean giving political parties the same amount of coverage, which they consider unachievable. On the other hand, they consider equitable coverage to mean coverage that is proportional to the relative number and quality of news-generating events organised by the parties. The following response further illustrates editors' view on the distinction between equal and equitable coverage. The response also reflects arguments put forward by Kenney and Simpson (1993) and Niven (2003) that so long as political parties remain different in terms of size, values, campaign strategies and number of campaign events they carry out, the media cannot be expected to give all parties the same amount of coverage.

I think the issue here is equity because if you talk about equal coverage ... you will agree with me that some of the political parties are working more than others. Others are just there by name. They exist by name and once in a while, they come out to make a press conference to create a semblance of their existence. But in actual fact, they don't even have offices and you cannot locate them. So to say there should be equal coverage for all political parties, obviously cannot really hold. But then if we are talking about equity where, if a party is able to do something it should be given the needed coverage and prominence, then that one can be said to be realistic. I mean, if a political party does not do anything and we go to them to interview them, how often can we continue to go to such a sleeping party to interview, just to make up? So I want to emphasise on the issue of equity which will require that if party 'A' is working all the time and getting coverage, when party 'B' does something once, it should be given coverage for that event (Kobby Asmah, Political Editor, November 30, 2009).

5.3.3 Coverage of incumbent parties

There is a widely held perception that the state-owned media often favour incumbent political parties in their coverage. This perception is strengthened by findings of previous

studies by institutions such as the NMC and the CDD that have all always found coverage by the state-owned media to be favourable towards incumbents since the first elections under the Fourth Republic in 1992. This study therefore sought to find out from the gatekeepers of the newspaper, whether or not there is a policy for ensuring that activities of incumbent governments are divorced from activities of incumbent parties.

Analysis of the responses show that though the *Daily Graphic* does not have any formal policy regarding coverage of incumbent governments and parties, editors are conscious of the need to draw a line between governments and governing parties. Three out of the four respondents held the view that people who hold the perception that the *Daily Graphic* was biased in favour of incumbents are people who fail to distinguish between the paper's coverage of a government and its activities and coverage of a ruling party and its activities. One respondent explained that once a party comes to power, it forms a government that is a different entity from the party. Three out of the four respondents held a unanimous view that coverage for a sitting president and that of a leader of an opposition party will be the same if the two are involved in a similar campaign event for their respective political parties. The following excerpt from a respondent captures the general view on why people have the perception that the *Daily Graphic* is biased towards incumbent parties:

Statements made by the President are usually considered important because he runs the country. The paper will, therefore, usually cover events featuring the President. Apart from that, ministers and district chief executives of the government also generate their own news from the performance of their official government duties. At the same time, the party that is in government may be doing their own activities that also generate news. The most important point, however, is that people need to understand that coverage for government activities is different from

University of Ghana <http://www.space.ug.edu.gh>
coverage for activities of the ruling party. They are two different entities. But what people do is that they see a story of the President and they take it to be coverage for his party, which is wrong. People must begin to see the difference and when that happens, I think they will begin to appreciate that the *Daily Graphic* has always been fair and balanced to all political parties in its coverage (Breda Atta-Quayson, Deputy/Acting Editor, November 30, 2009).

The study however found that despite the commitment of editors to be fair and balanced in their coverage of elections, the issue of unequal resource capabilities of the political parties serves as influence on coverage and usually puts incumbents at an advantage. It was found for example, that during electoral campaigns, the paper is unable to provide transportation for its reporters to move from place to place with the political parties. Under those circumstances, the paper sometimes has to rely on the political parties to transport reporters to campaign venues, especially those outside the main cities. Analysis of the responses shows that usually, incumbent parties are in a better position to transport journalists to their events. It was again found that incumbent parties are able to get journalists back to the newsroom on time due to the use of motorcades and that also puts incumbents at an advantage. The excerpt below offers further insight into the issue of resource constraints and how incumbents tend to benefit:

In terms of timeliness, reporters with the ruling party are able to come back early to meet the production time probably because of the use of motorcades. The opposition parties are not able to afford all that. So sometimes, when the opposition hold an event, you get the story a day or two after. So the incumbent is always in an advantageous position (Sammy Okaitey, News Editor, December 1, 2009).

One respondent was, however, of the view that though certain factors could legitimately account for favourable coverage for incumbent parties, sometimes, editors also deliberately tend to favour incumbent parties, in order to either please government authorities or to maintain their positions.

The analysis of responses to the question on coverage for incumbents, indicated that though editors are conscious of the need to separate government events from partisan events and also the need to be fair and balanced to all parties, the following factors can lead to favourable coverage for incumbent parties during elections:

- Relatively better resource capability of incumbent parties that enables them to transport news reporters to event venues to generate the needed coverage
- Timely delivery of stories on activities of incumbents due to their (incumbents) ability to facilitate the transportation of reporters from event venues to the newsrooms through the use of motorcades and
- Tendency of editors to please government officials

5.3.4 Coverage of the 2008 elections

The study considered it worthwhile to find out from gatekeepers of the *Daily Graphic*, how fair and balanced they thought they were in their coverage of the 2008 elections and to further explore the gatekeeping practices of the paper in relation to political coverage. This was also considered a useful approach for generating a database that will facilitate a



meaningful comparison of the views of editors on how the newspaper covered the political parties and the findings from the content analysis.

All four respondents held the view that the newspaper discharged its constitutional mandate effectively by providing fair coverage to all the political parties that contested the 2008 elections. It was however pointed out by the respondents that the fairness and balance was based on the principle of equity and not equal coverage for all parties. The following response summed up what the editors meant by equity in coverage:

Like the constitution says, we are required to provide equal space for all parties and we did our best to do that. But I don't want to say equal space. I want to say we were as equitable to the parties as we could and I think the parties themselves appreciated that. Each party got the coverage it deserved based on their activities and campaign events (Kobby Asmah, Political Editor, November 30, 2009).

All respondents said the newspaper's coverage of political parties in the 2008 elections was a remarkable improvement over coverage in previous elections. The consensus among respondents was that the improvement in coverage was not accidental but rather the result of policy guidelines that was put in place to ensure fair and equitable coverage for all parties during the 2008 electioneering campaigns. Analysis of responses showed that there was a deliberate decision by gatekeepers of the paper to ensure fair coverage for all parties. For example, it was revealed that apart from the policy guideline, an internal editorial research team was constituted mainly to monitor the paper's coverage of the parties and to ensure fair and balanced coverage for all political groups. The following response to a question of how the paper fared in the last elections reflects the general view shared by respondents:

There was a significant improvement in our coverage of the last election mainly because, in previous elections, we did not have a plan for

coverage. In previous elections, we just allowed our reporters to do their own reporting of events that were taking place. What we did this time was that we sat down and came out with a policy paper on coverage. For example, every political party leader was assigned a permanent reporter throughout the campaign period. This made some difference and ensured that we covered everyone fairly (Breda Atta-Quayson, Deputy/Acting Editor, November 30, 2009).

5.3.5 Ensuring improvement in coverage of electoral campaigns

In order to make useful recommendations on political coverage, the study sought the views of the gatekeepers of the newspaper on how they could improve upon coverage of political parties and electioneering campaigns in general. The need for the state to properly resource the paper during elections was a view shared by all four respondents. One respondent was of the view that during electioneering campaigns, the newspaper tends to shy away from reporting on very critical issues involving ruling parties. In the opinion of the respondent, fairness requires that all issues of parties, whether negative or positive, should be reported on if it comes to the attention of the paper. On the quality of stories, two respondents shared the view that the paper needs to do more in the areas of in-depth political analysis, political research reporting and also, political investigative reporting so that the electorate will be adequately informed about the various political parties, their policies and programmes, and what they stand for

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

6.0 Introduction

This study explored how the state-owned *Daily Graphic* covered political parties in the 2008 electioneering campaign. The study involved a content analysis of all 162 issues of the newspaper published from June 2 to December 6, 2008, and in-depth interviews with the main gatekeepers of the newspaper. The in-depth interviews were conducted as a way of finding explanations to the findings of the content analysis. In line with the sequential explanatory research approach, this chapter integrates the findings of both the content analysis and in-depth interviews.

6.1 Amount of Coverage

The NPP and NDC dominated the paper's coverage in terms of number of stories, with the NPP receiving about 8.5 percent coverage more than the NDC. The CPP and the PNC followed in that order as far as amount of coverage is concerned. Though the amount of coverage received by the CPP positioned it at a distant third, it marked an improvement in the party's coverage as previous studies had found the PNC receiving more coverage in the state-owned media than the CPP. This time, the CPP had almost double the coverage received by the PNC (NMC, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; CDD, 2001).

The NPP's dominance in the amount of coverage (total number of stories), is however consistent with findings of previous studies such as those by the Commonwealth Observer Group (1996), Ayee (1997), Gyimah-Boadi (1994, 2001), NMC (2000, 2004) and CDD

(2000, 2004). All these studies found incumbent parties dominating coverage in the state-owned media in Ghana since the 1992 elections. The dominance of the NPP in total number of stories affirms an observation by Cenite (2008) that state-owned media in most developing countries favour incumbent parties in their coverage.

Previous studies such as those cited above, have often attributed the dominance of incumbent parties in amount of electoral coverage to bias and favouritism by state-owned media such as the *Daily Graphic*. Analysis of the findings from this study however points to the contrary. In fact, the difference in the amount of coverage received by the parties was more of a reflection of the inequalities in campaign activities of the respective parties rather than bias on the part of the *Daily Graphic*. This is because analysis of the paper's coverage of events such as filing of nominations with the EC and balloting for positions on the ballot paper that were common to the four top political parties – NPP, NDC, CPP, PNC showed the parties receiving an equal amount of coverage in terms of total number of stories. Analysis of coverage of other events that featured the four parties on the same platform at the same time, such as the presidential and vice presidential debates, also revealed that the parties received almost the same amount of coverage quantitatively. Indeed, the CPP received more coverage than the NDC and was very close to the coverage received by NPP as far as coverage of common events was concerned.

As editors of the newspaper explained, incumbent parties are usually well resourced to be able to transport journalists to their events and get them back to the newsroom on time. The resource capabilities of incumbent parties thus help them to get more coverage than poorly

resourced opposition parties who cannot afford the financial and logistical requirements to transport journalists to their events. The situation can, therefore, result in quantitative differences in coverage between incumbents and opposition parties. It is however significant to note that such imbalances in coverage do not constitute gatekeeping bias because they are not the result of deliberate decisions by editors to deselect stories on some parties. As explained by D'Alessio and Allen (2000), gatekeeping bias occurs when editors consciously select stories on one party and deselect those on others, and by so doing, give more coverage to one party over the others.

Findings from analysis of the common events and those that featured all the parties on the same platform, supported assertions by editors of the paper that they tried as much as possible to be fair and balanced in their coverage of political parties during the 2008 electioneering campaigns. Based on the results from analysis of coverage on events that were peculiar to all the parties, one may conclude that differences in the overall amount of coverage received by the parties were a reflection of the number of news-generating activities carried out by the individual parties. This is further supported by the fact that close to 90 percent of total coverage for all parties was straight news that were based on organised political events such as rallies, intra-party meetings and other forms of campaigns. The results, therefore, show that as far as amount of coverage was concerned, the paper was equitable in its coverage of political parties. In other words, the amount of coverage received by a party was a reflection of how active the party was during the campaigns in terms of organising news-generating events.

One way through which incumbents abuse the use of state-owned media to their advantage is the turning of national or government functions and events into partisan campaign platforms. Since state-owned media in Ghana for example, have a mandate to project the policies of governments, partisan campaign events disguised as government or state functions can generate more coverage for incumbent parties. For example, Media Monitoring Africa (2009) reported a board member of South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as justifying state-media's biased coverage for South Africa's incumbent ANC party. The SABC board member is said to have defended his position by claiming that it was natural for ruling parties to receive more coverage than opposition parties in the state media because a ruling party gets additional coverage from state functions performed by the president and ministers of state.

Results from both the content analysis and the in-depth interviews showed that there was barely any coverage for the incumbent NPP that was based on a national or state function. Almost all the coverage for the incumbent party were based on partisan campaign activities. This shows that either the incumbent government stayed away from using national and government events as campaign platforms or the *Daily Graphic* divorced government functions from political gatherings in its coverage. The results confirmed assertions by editors of the paper that they adhered strictly to the newspaper's policy guideline for the coverage of the 2008 elections. The policy guideline made it clear that government events should be separated from campaign events of the NPP. This could have also accounted for the limited number of stories that had the incumbent president and his political appointees as

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
source. Generally, therefore, the results do not point to any significant case of incumbency abuse of state-owned media by the NPP government.

6.2 Prominence of coverage

Despite the notion that Ghanaian newspapers tend to give prominence to political stories by placing them on the front pages, the results of this study show that the *Daily Graphic* placed less than 10 percent of its coverage on political parties in the 2008 elections on the front page. Based on explanations offered by editors of the newspaper on factors that influence the selection of a political story for the front page (including prominence of the newsmakers and the relevance of issues discussed), it became apparent that close to 95 percent of stories were those that, in the opinion of editors, did not meet the essentials of a good story or those that were considered not to have the potential to influence national policies.

In terms of distribution of front page stories among the parties, the results of this study are different from those of previous media monitoring exercises such as those by the NMC (2000a, 2000b, 2004) and CDD (2000, 2004). Contrary to findings of these past efforts at monitoring state-owned media coverage of elections, the findings of this study do not point to any favouritism for or bias in favour of the incumbent party. Though the NPP had the highest number of front page stories, it was a reflection of the party's total amount of coverage rather than favouritism on the part of the newspaper. This is because, analysis of front page coverage received by each party showed that parties that had less amount of coverage, had a higher proportion of their stories on the front page. Proportionally, therefore, the smaller parties fared better than the NPP in terms of front page coverage. This

trend was reflected in the results of both the content analysis of general coverage and the coverage on common events. In the case of coverage of common events, though the NPP was second to the CPP in terms of number of stories on the front page, it placed last in terms of the proportion of its stories that made it to the front page.

Prominence of coverage received by the respective parties in terms of headline size and visual enhancement of stories, followed the same trend as the prominence they received in terms of placement. The parties that received the least amount of coverage had the highest proportion of their stories appearing under the most prominent headlines and enhanced with either a photograph or a cartoon. The trend gave credence to assertions made by editors of the paper during the in-depth interviews that there was a deliberate effort to ensure that the smaller parties were given as much prominence as possible. The trend also supports the position of editors that any differences in amount of coverage (number of stories) are attributable to the fact of inequalities in campaign activities carried out by the parties rather than bias on the part of the newspaper.

6.3 Tone of coverage

Coverage was generally positive for all political parties with just a few negative stories. This could be a result of the over reliance of journalists of the *Daily Graphic* on organised events of the political parties resulting in the dominance of straight news reports. As noted by one respondent during the in-depth interviews, political parties would always make an effort to ensure that any intra-party development that will impact negatively on the party involved will not be reported in the media. Political parties would therefore usually invite

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
journalists to cover only the events they know would generate positive news for them. As a result, when journalists rely mainly on organised events of the political parties for their news reports, the bulk of their stories are likely to be positive.

Despite the overwhelming positive coverage for all parties, analysis of the positive coverage received by each party as well as the few instances of negative coverage showed that parties with the least amount of coverage had a greater proportion of their coverage being positive and hardly any negative coverage. The NDC placed last in terms of proportion of its coverage that was positive and was the party with the highest proportion of negative coverage. The negative stories on the NDC were mainly focused on internal squabbles in the party and the party's rivalry with its splinter group, the DFP, which rivalry occasioned unending trading of accusations between the two parties. The situation also accounted for the DFP placing second to the NDC in terms of proportion of negative coverage.

When the tone of coverage for the NPP and the NDC are compared, the findings support conclusions of previous studies by the NMC (2000a, 2000b, 2004) and CDD (2000, 2004) that incumbent governments often receive more positive coverage than the opposition. Such a comparison between the two dominant parties also confirms a respondent's view that the newspaper tends to ignore very critical and negative issues associated with a ruling party. Analysis of tone of coverage for other opposition parties however points to the fact that the NPP as the incumbent was not the party with the highest proportion of positive coverage or least proportion of negative coverage. It therefore becomes difficult to make any claims of

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>. The general results bias on the part of the newspaper as far as tone of coverage is concerned. The general results thus affirm the claims of neutrality in coverage by editors of the *Daily Graphic*.

6.4 Implication for theory of gatekeeping

As observed by Erdelez, McKechmie and Fisher (2005) the theory of gatekeeping is basically about the internal decision making processes of a media organisation regarding news selection. How a newspaper like the *Daily Graphic* covers political parties would thus be a manifestation of the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper.

Responses to the question of whether or not the newspaper has a formal gatekeeping policy revealed that though the newspaper does not have a written policy that guides the selection of news stories, there was a specific written policy guidelines for coverage of the 2008 electioneering campaigns. This meant that selection of news stories was not based on the whims of the editor of the newspaper as the original gatekeeping study by White (1950) found Mr. Gates to have been doing. The existence of the policy guidelines did not however limit consensus building among editors in the news selection process. As all the respondents indicated, story selection is through consensus building at an editorial conference attended by all editors during which the merits of stories are discussed before they are selected for publication.

Findings of both the in-depth interviews and the content analysis, confirm the views of gatekeeping researchers such as Shoemaker and Reese (1991), Shoemaker and Vos (2009), Folarin (2002), and Herman and Chomsky (2000) all of whom contend that the gatekeeping

process is influenced by a number of factors. Empirical evidence from this study confirmed factors such as management policy, perceived needs and preferences of audience, legal and professional considerations, ownership, as well as finance, as being among the factors that influence the gatekeeping process as argued by Folarin (2002) and Shoemaker and Reese (1991). The study's findings also support assertions by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) that resource availability can also influence the gatekeeping process.

Management policy was identified as an influence in the gatekeeping process, as editors indicated that they adhered strictly to a policy guideline on coverage that was put in place by management to guide the newspaper in its coverage of political parties. As stated in the previous chapter, all respondents held the view that the policy guidelines helped the paper to improve upon its coverage of the 2008 elections over previous elections. The setting up of an internal committee to monitor the newspaper's coverage and compliance with the policy guidelines, demonstrated a further commitment, on the part of managers of the *Daily Graphic*, to have the policy guidelines complied with. To a large extent, therefore, the news selection process or gatekeeping at the *Daily Graphic* was influenced by the policy of management.

Though the policy guidelines generally influenced coverage, editors pointed out that interpretation of the policy was in turn influenced by their perception of the needs and preferences of the newspaper's readers. The news editor for example, observed that during editorial conferences where stories are selected for publication, consideration is given to issues that the public will be interested in. According to him, the consideration of public

interest, in the news selection process, usually benefited the parties with large following, namely, the NPP and NDC thus resulting in more coverage for those parties. The advantage in coverage enjoyed by the larger parties is mainly influenced by commercial consideration of making more sales on the part of the gatekeepers. This confirms Folarin's (2002) contention that what editors perceive to be the needs and interest of the majority of readers tend to have an influence in the gatekeeping process.

Tied to the issue of public interest is finance as an influence on the gatekeeping process. Though editors consider public interest in the selection and placement of stories, empirical evidence from the findings of the study revealed that the motivation for considering public interest is, in itself, partly influenced by the desire to increase sales of the newspaper. One respondent noted for example, that when two parties hold similar events, prominence will be given to the story on the party that has a larger following. The following comments from an editor demonstrated that financial consideration is an influence in the gatekeeping process:

How many people will buy the newspaper because of a DPP story on the front as opposed to the number of people who will buy the paper because of an NPP or NDC story on the front page? Obviously, I will sell more copies by satisfying the needs of the large followers of the NPP or the NDC. We are in business so we cannot rule out the issue of making money. So all things being equal, I will use an NDC or NPP story on the front instead of a DPP story (Sammy Okaitey, News Editor, December 2, 2009).

Even though the assertion by the news editor suggests editors may deliberately promote stories of the NPP and the NDC, findings from the content analysis did not reveal any biases in coverage in favour of the two leading parties. This is because as indicated in the preceding chapter, the smaller parties rather had a higher proportion of their coverage on the

front page, higher proportion of their stories enhanced and higher proportion of their stories in positive tone than the bigger parties. In terms of absolute numbers, however, the bigger parties had more stories in all aspects of coverage than the smaller parties.

Though there appears to be a consensus among gatekeeping scholars that the desire to generate more advertising revenue on the part of media organisations constitutes a significant gatekeeping influence, findings of this study do not support that view. All respondents were of the opinion that the newspaper would not favour a political party in its coverage just because of the party's advertising capabilities or in order to generate more ads from the party. This, therefore, does not support Herman and Chomsky's (1988, 2000) contention that financial influence on the gatekeeping process is mainly because editors would want to protect the interest of advertisers. The results indicate that as far as the *Daily Graphic* is concerned, the main financial influence on gatekeeping is attributable to the desire to increase the newspaper's circulation. This affirms Herman and Chomsky's assertion that profit orientation of media organisations tend to be an influence on gatekeeping.

Results of the study also support Shoemaker and Vos' (2009) and Folarin's (2002) identification of legal and professional considerations as gatekeeping influences. Results of the in-depth interviews, for example, indicated that the content of the policy guidelines on the coverage of the 2008 elections was guided by provisions of the 1992 Constitution that requires the newspaper to be fair and balanced in its coverage of political parties. Findings of the in-depth interviews also revealed that decisions taken at editorial conference

regarding news selection are, to a large extent, influenced by provisions of the 1992 Constitution regarding the mandate of state-owned media. It was found that though editors give consideration to constitutional requirements of fairness and balance, at the same time, they also feel protected by provisions of the same Constitution that insulate them from any form of governmental influences.

The code of ethics of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) was also found to have some level of influence in the gatekeeping practices at the *Daily Graphic*. As the editor of the newspaper observed, “the GJA code of ethics serves as a guide for ensuring professionalism in our news selection and our work in general.” This means that some stories sometimes fail to pass through the gates of editors for failing to meet professional requirements as spelt out by the GJA code of ethics.

Results of the study therefore show that though the *Daily Graphic* does not have a general written down editorial policy, a number of factors influence the gatekeeping practices of the newspaper. These include finance, management policy, perceived needs and preferences of audiences, legal and professional considerations. The results also show that the gatekeeping processes of the paper transcend the whims of any single editor of the newspaper.

6.5 Implications for theory of framing

As observed by Entman (2004), framing relates to the process through which some aspects of news items are highlighted to promote a particular interpretation among audiences. This means that news items that go through the gates of editors to get published, may not be

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>

given the same treatment and prominence. Framing of stories is carried out through headlines, sub-heads, photos and captions, source selection, quote selection, logos, statistics and charts, among a few other story characteristics (Vreese, 2005). As argued by McCombs (2004), gatekeeping and framing are therefore interlinked in that framing constitutes the ideological contextualisation of content choices by gatekeepers.

Analysis of framing measures such as headline size, subheads, visuals, story placement and tone of story revealed that even if parties were to receive the same amount of coverage, differences in the way stories are framed, could make some parties have more favourable coverage than others. In other words, the gatekeeping process may allow quantitative equity and balance in the coverage of parties but through story framing, some parties can have more favourable coverage than others.

A typical case of how framing can make a difference in the coverage of parties was witnessed in the profiling of presidential candidates in the December 6, 2008 publication of the *Daily Graphic*. In that issue of the newspaper, the presidential candidates of the NPP and NDC had their profiles elaborately presented in two columns of 19 and 16 paragraphs respectively, while the rest of the candidates had their profiles squeezed in single columns of eight paragraphs each. Additionally, the presidential candidates of the NPP and the NDC had their profiles presented with five sub-heads each. The profile of the NPP candidate had: education, career, political career, top diplomat and family, as sub-headings. The NDC candidate also had his profile presented with the following sub-heads: education, publication, expertise, other activities, and project. The profile of the CPP candidate



contained only two sub-heads, namely: career and political involvement. The profiles of the rest of the candidates had no sub-heads (*Daily Graphic*, December 6, 2008). This implies that even though each presidential candidate had a front page profile, some were made prominent than others through framing.

As argued by Stromback and Luengo (2008) through the activation of certain values of some stories at the expense of others, framing can promote particular trains of thought about the political phenomena projected in stories. Such projections then lead audiences to arrive at more or less predictable conclusions. The *Daily Graphic's* framing of the profiles of presidential candidates as indicated above, had the potential to lead readers to perceive the NPP and the NDC presidential candidates as the most qualified among all the contesting candidates. This is because framing remains one of the most influential ways through which the media shape public opinion (Druckman, 2007).

Empirical evidence from the findings of this study showed that editors framed stories differently in terms of headline size, placement, enhancement with visuals and overall tone of coverage. Results from both the in-depth interviews and the content analysis, however, pointed to the fact that, though systematic biases may occur, there was no deliberate attempt on the part of editors to favour one party or the other through the framing of stories.

7.0 Introduction

As observed by Walgrave (2008), the mass media's role in the enterprise of democracy cannot be underestimated due to their widely acknowledged agenda-setting function. As a result of the agenda-setting capabilities of the media, the way they cover political parties and frame issues regarding parties, ought to be considered important in all aspects of political analysis. Indeed, it has been argued that the success or otherwise of democratic elections, largely depends on how the media cover the electoral campaigns that precede the elections (Elenbaas & Vreese, 2008). Informed by these arguments, this study sought to find out if, as required by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the *Daily Graphic* as a state-owned medium and Ghana's biggest newspaper, provided fair and balanced coverage to all political parties during the 2008 electioneering campaigns. This chapter sums up the findings and discussions presented in the previous two chapters. This chapter also points out some policy recommendations as well as recommendations for further research.

7.1 Summary of findings

Findings of the study presented in the fifth chapter showed that the incumbent NPP received more coverage than the other six opposition political parties that contested the 2008 elections. Previous studies that examined media coverage of political parties during electioneering campaigns often found state-owned media giving ruling parties overwhelming favourable coverage in all aspects at the expense of opposition parties. Findings from the content analysis, corroborated by results from the qualitative in-depth

interviews, represent a departure from results of previous studies that often found incumbent parties having absolute dominance in amount, prominence and tone of coverage.

In fact, unlike previous elections where incumbent parties received almost 50 percent of total coverage for all parties, in the 2008 elections, the incumbent party did not receive up to 40 percent of total amount of coverage in the *Daily Graphic*. Significantly also, results from the analysis of events that were common to the four leading parties and those that involved all the four on the same platform at the same time, showed an almost equal coverage for all of them. The incumbent NPP only had a slight edge over the main opposition NDC in terms of amount of coverage. The incumbent party did not, however, dominate coverage in terms of the proportion of its stories on the front page, proportion of its stories that was visually enhanced, proportion of its stories with positive tone and the proportion of its stories with the most prominent headline. The opposition parties rather fared better in terms of the proportion of their stories that was positive. Additionally, the opposition parties fared better than the NPP in terms of the proportion of their stories that was enhanced with visuals and the proportion of their stories that had prominent headlines.

Results from the analysis of common events and events that involved the four leading parties on the same platform at the same time, point to the fact that disparities in coverage received by parties were a reflection of the unequal nature of the respective political parties in terms of support base. The disparities were also a reflection of differences in the number of campaign activities carried out by the respective parties and the extent to which those activities met the editorial guidelines of the *Daily Graphic*. As the data show, if political

parties that contested the 2008 elections were equal in size, and had carried out the same number of newsworthy campaign events, they would have received an almost equal coverage in terms of number of stories, story prominence and tone of coverage. It could therefore be concluded that *Daily Graphic's* coverage of political parties in the 2008 electioneering campaigns, was an improvement over the newspaper's coverage of previous elections. The *Daily Graphic's* coverage of the last election also indicated a high degree of compliance with Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution that mandates state-owned media to provide fair and balanced coverage for all parties during electioneering campaigns. The results also affirm Temin and Smith's (2002) assertion that there appears to be a pattern of consistent improvement in state-owned media's coverage of political parties during elections in Ghana.

7.2 Implications for policy and journalism practice in Ghana

Findings of the study point to a need for some modifications in existing gatekeeping practices at the *Daily Graphic*. As was gathered from the in-depth interviews and indicated in the preceding two chapters, the *Daily Graphic* has no formally-written editorial policy for news selection. What the newspaper had in place is a policy that was limited to coverage of political parties during the peak period of the 2008 electoral campaigns. After the elections, the newspaper put aside the policy guidelines and reverted to the conventional practice of selecting stories based on views shared by editors at editorial conferences. It is, however, important to point out that the constitutional requirement of fair and balanced coverage for political parties should not be applicable only during electoral campaigns. This is because coverage received by parties during the political "off seasons," contributes to shaping

people's perceptions about a party even before elections. Coverage during elections may thus be only enforcing already held public perceptions about a party. There is therefore the need for a permanent editorial policy on political coverage by the state-owned media that will ensure that parties are given fair and balanced coverage at all times.

The findings of the study show that journalists rely mostly on organised political events for political news stories. This tendency culminates in the overwhelming dominance of straight news reports in political coverage as the analysis of types of stories received by political parties revealed. There is therefore a need for further training of political reporters on how to generate and write good political stories through investigations and research. There is also a need for journalism training institutions to take a second look at their syllabi and consider introducing adequate modules that will enhance students' abilities in writing quality investigative and research-based political stories.

Resource constraints were identified as one of the major factors that sometimes militate against coverage of smaller political parties. Editors explained that, sometimes, the newspaper is unable to fund the transportation, accommodation and logistical needs of reporters to cover some political events that take place outside the national and regional capitals. Consequently, the newspaper relies on the political parties that are organising the events to provide those requirements. This situation makes it possible for incumbent and other bigger opposition parties that have resources to transport, accommodate and provide the other logistical requirements of reporters, to receive more coverage than smaller and resource-constrained parties. To be able to enforce the constitutional requirement of fair and

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh>
balanced coverage, it is recommended that the state-owned media should be adequately resourced by the state for them (the media) to be able to meet the necessary resource requirements for providing fair and balanced coverage.

7.3 Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study is that it did not compare coverage received by the political parties with the number of campaign activities embarked upon by the respective parties. Such a comparison would have been useful for a further examination of the issue of bias in coverage. It would have also been useful to have broadened the scope of the qualitative interviews beyond the views of editors and reporters, to those of political party representatives and readers of the *Daily Graphic*. A comparison of the views of gatekeepers, political party representatives and readers could have strengthened the findings of the study.

7.4 Recommendations for further studies

On the basis of the findings and limitations of this study, the following are recommended for future studies that would be examining state-owned media coverage of political parties and ways of improving upon the role of the media in Ghana's democratic development:

- It would be useful to have a study that compares coverage received by political parties with the number of campaign activities embarked upon by each party. The results of such a study will be a further step in establishing whether or not disparities in coverage received by political parties are attributable to biases on the part of the state-owned media or to the inequality of competing political parties and the number of their campaign events.

- The in-depth interviews focused mainly on editors and reporters of the newspaper. In future studies, officials of the various political parties and readers of the newspaper could also be interviewed to gather their views on state-owned media coverage of electioneering campaigns. Analysis and comparison of responses from editors, reporters, political party representatives and readers will help enhance understanding of the gatekeeping practices at the *Daily Graphic* and also strengthen any findings of bias or otherwise in the newspaper's coverage of political parties during electoral campaigns.

The role and contribution of the media remain critical in Ghana's democratic development. It is, therefore, important to continuously examine the role of the media, particularly the state-owned ones, as tools for the promotion of Ghana's democratic development. Thus, it is critical to constantly monitor and analyse whether and how the media cover democratically-relevant events, such as elections.

Coding guideline

Story ID:

Stories identified by serial number

Date of Publication:

1. June
2. July
3. August
4. September
5. October
6. November
7. December

Type of story:

1. Straight news
2. Feature
3. Editorial
4. Letter
5. Opinion
6. Follow-up
7. Rejoinder
8. Retraction
9. Interview
10. Investigative report
11. Other
12. Photo story
13. News analysis
14. Profile

Political party covered in the story

1. NPP
2. NDC
3. PNC
4. CPP
5. DFP
6. RPD
7. DPP



1. President
2. Presidential candidate
3. Vice presidential candidate
4. Parliamentary candidate
5. Government official
6. Party official
7. Party supporter
8. Intra-party group
9. Writer
10. Editor
11. Other
12. Wife of presidential candidate
13. Wife of vice presidential candidate
14. Other public official

Context of story

1. State function
2. Political rally
3. Campaign event
4. Interview with journalist
5. Press conference
6. Press release
7. Other speech event
8. Workshop/seminar/conference
9. Inauguration/commissioning of project
10. Donation/launching
11. Intra-party meeting/election
12. Resolutions
13. Organised civil society event
14. Other
15. Election of running mate
16. Social event
17. Defection
18. Launch of manifesto
19. Filing of nomination
20. Presidential debate

Subject of story

1. National development
2. Campaign strategy
3. Attack on opponent
4. Intra-party conflict
5. Other election-related story

Placement of story

1. Front page (lead)
2. Front page (second lead)
3. Other front page
4. Back page
5. Centre spread
6. Political page
7. Other pages

Headline size

1. Streamer
2. Spread head
3. Two-column head
4. One-column head

Enhancement

1. Photo
2. No visual
3. Cartoon

Tone of story

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

Interview guide for in-depth interviews

1. How long have you worked as a journalist?
2. What is your current position?
3. Have you held any other position previously?
4. What is the editorial policy or policies regarding the selection of political stories for publication?
5. What in your opinion determines the selection of political front page stories of the *Daily Graphic*?
6. Do you think story selection and placement at the *Daily Graphic* is in anyway, influenced by any constitutional provisions?
7. Is there any policy or policies on how the paper is supposed to cover political parties during election campaigns?
8. Is there any policy on how the paper is supposed to cover activities of incumbent governments and parties and opposition parties?
9. Do you sometimes feel pressured to carry or place political stories on certain pages?
10. Do you think editors of the paper pander to political pressure and influences in their news selection activities?
11. What is your view on how the *Daily Graphic* covered the various political parties in the 2008 elections?
12. Was the paper's coverage of the last elections different from how it covered previous elections?

- University of Ghana <http://ugpress.ug.edu.gh>
13. Would you say the *Daily Graphic* has been fulfilling its constitutional mandate regarding election coverage?
 14. Why do you think the paper is usually accused of bias in its election coverage in favour of ruling parties?
 15. In your view, is there anything the paper needs to do in order to best meet its mandate as a state-owned newspaper?

Guidelines on using SPSS for calculating Kappa inter-coder reliability

1. Open the file KAPPA.SAV. Enter data from independent coders
2. Before performing the analysis on the summarized data, specify on SPSS that the *Count* variable is a “weighted” variable.
3. Select Data/Weight Cases...and select the “weight cases” option with *Count* as the Frequency variable
4. Select Analyze/Descriptive Statistics/Crosstabs.
5. Select coder ‘A’ as Row and coder ‘B’ as Column.
6. Click on the Statistics button, select “Kappa” and the “Continue.”
7. Click OK to display the results for the Kappa inter-coder reliability test

Amoakohene, I. M. (2007). *Ghana: Media and Democracy in 50 years of Independence*. Retrieved March 10, 2009 from: http://www.ugal.org.gh/teticy/files/teticy/ghana_media_democracy.pdf

Ansu-Kyeremeh, K., & Gadzekpo, A. (1996). *Who reads the newspapers. why and for what? A Ghanaian readership survey*. School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana.

Asante, C. E. & Gadzekpo, A (2000) *Press and Politics in Ghana*. In (M'Bayo, R.T., Onwumehili, C., & Nwafo, R. (Eds). *Press and Politics in Africa* (Chapter 11). Edwin Mellen Press.

Ayee, J. R. A., (1997). The December 1996 Elections: *Electoral Studies* 16: 416-427

Azapo blasts SABC for biased reporting (2009, February, 23) *Mail and Guardian*
Retrieved March 14, 2009 from: <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-02-23-azapo-blasts-sabc-for-biased-reporting>

BBC World Service Trust (2006). *African Media Development Initiative: Ghana context*. Retrieved March 18, 2009 from: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/AMDI/ghana/amdi_ghana11_appendix.pdf

Blay-Amihere, K. (2001). *Fighting for Freedom: The Autobiography of an African Journalist*. Accra: TAN

Boafo-Arthur, K. (2007). *Ghana: One decade of the liberal state*. In Boafo-Arthur, K. (Ed), *Ghana: One decade of the liberal state* (Chapter 1: pp 1 -20). Zed Books

Botan, C. H., & Hazleton, V. (2006). *Public Relations Theory II*. Mahwa NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Brandenburg, H. (2005). Political Bias in the Irish Media: A Quantitative Study of Campaign Coverage during the 2002 General Election. *Irish Political Studies* 20(3):297-322. Retrieved September 2, 2008, from: http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.proxy2.lib.umanitoba.ca/697804_770885140_727347082.pdf

Brown, J. D., Carl R. B., Stanley T. W., & Dulcie M.S. (1987). "Invisible Power: Newspaper, News Sources and the Limits of Diversity." *Journalism Quarterly* 64:45-54.

Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and Research in Mass Communication. *Journal of Communication* 57(4): 662-704

Cenite, M., Yee, C.S., Juan, H.T., Qin, L. L., & Lin, T.X. (2008). Coverage bias in the media. *Asian Journal of Communication* 18(3):280-295

Centre for Democratic Development (2001). *A report on media coverage of election 2000*. CDD-Ghana. Accra

Center for Media and Public Affairs (November 1, 2004). *Kerry gets best press ever*. Retrieved December 19, 2008 from:
<http://www.cmpa.com/documents/04.10.29.Kerry.Final.pdf>

Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing Theory. *Annual review of Political Science* 10(1):103-126

Commonwealth Observer Group (1996). *Final report on Ghana's 1992 elections*. Commonwealth Secretariat, London

Commonwealth Observer Group (2008). *Final report on Ghana's 2008 elections*. Commonwealth Secretariat, London

Connolly-Ahern, C., Williams, P. A., Kaid, L. L., & Reid, A. (2003). *Hyperlinking as Gatekeeping: Online newspaper coverage of the execution of an American terrorist*. University of Florida, USA. Retrieved August 13, 2008 from:
www.jlmc.iastate.edu/faculty-sites/danielad/docs/hyperlinking.pdf

Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992). Assembly Press. Accra

Cresswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2003). *Media/Society: Industries, images, and audiences* (3rd ed). Pine Forge Press.

D'Alessio, D.J., & Allen, M. (2000). Media bias in presidential elections: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 50 (4): 133-157

D'Angelo, P. (2002). News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman. *Journal of Communication* 52 (4): 870-888.

Djankov, S., Nenova, T., McLiesh, C., & Shleifer, A. (2003). Who Owns the Media? *Journal of Law and Economics* 46 (2): 341-381

Druckman, J. N. (2005). Media matter: How newspapers and television news cover campaigns and influence voters. *Political Communication*, 22, 463-481

Druckman, J.N., & Parkin, M. (2005). The impact of media bias: How editorial slants affects voters. *The Journal of politics* 67(4):1030-1049

Elenbaas, M., & Vreese, C. (2008). The effects of strategic news on political cynicism and vote choice among young voters. *Journal of Communication* 58 (3): 550-567

Entman, R.M. (2004). *Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion and US foreign policy*. University of Chicago Press.

Erdelez S., McKechnie, L., & Fisher K. (2005) *Theories of Information Behavior: A Researcher's Guide* (eds). Retrieved August 13, 2008 from:
<http://projects.ischool.washington.edu/karinch/html/pub/NGT.pdf>

Eribo F., & Jong-Ebot, W. (Eds). (1997). *Press freedom and Communication in Africa*. Africa World Press Inc.

European Union (2008) *Final report of the European Union Election Monitoring Group to Kenya*

Evening News (December 6, 2000, page 7). Africa's thirst for Democracy. A statement by former United Nation Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

Fico, F., & Cote, W. (1999). Fairness and balance in the structural characteristics of newspaper stories on the 1996 Presidential election. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 76(1): 124-138

Fico, F., & Cote, W. (2002) Partisan and Structural Balance of Election Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan. *Mass Communication and Society* 5(2): 165-182

Fico, F., Freedman, E., & Love, B. (2006). Partisan and structural balance in newspaper coverage of U.S. Senate races in 2004 with female nominees. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. 83(1): 43-57.

Fico, F., Zeldes, G., Carpenter, S., & Diddi, A. (2008). Broadcast and cable network news coverage of the 2004 presidential election: An assessment of partisan and structural balance. *Mass Communication & Society*, 11(3): 319-339.

Folarin, B. (2002). *Theories of Mass Communication*. Abeokuta: Links Publications.
Gadzekpo, A. (2001). Reflections on Ghana's Recent Elections. *Review of African Political Economy* 28(88): 267-273. Retrieved September 19, 2008 from:
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy2.lib.umanitoba.ca/stable/pdfplus/4006721.pdf>

Getzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2006). Media bias and reputation. *Journal of Political Economy* 114: 280-316.

Greenwood, W. & Welsh, T. (1998). *McNae's Essential Law for journalists* (10th ed). Butterworth & Co., London

Groeling, T. (2008) Who's the Fairest of them All? An Empirical Test for Partisan Bias on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox News. *Presidential studies Quarterly* 38(4): 631-657. Retrieved July 15, 2009, from: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/cgi-bin/fulltext/121451851/PDFSTART>

Groseclose, T., & Milyo, J. (2005). A measure of media bias. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120: 1191-237.

Guion, L. A. (2006) *Conducting an In-depth Interview*. University of Florida

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (1994). Ghana's uncertain political opening. *Journal of Democracy* 5: 79-87

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (1998). The Rebirth of African Liberalism *Journal of Democracy* 9 (2): 18-31

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2001). A peaceful turnover in Ghana. *Journal of Democracy* 12(2): 103-117

Hayes, D. (2008). Party reputations, Journalistic expectations: How issue ownership influences election news. *Political Communication* 25(4): 377-400

Herman, E.S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Herman, E.S., & Chomsky, N. (2000). The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective *Journalism Studies* 1(1): 101-12



International Development Research Centre (2008). *The Fourth Estate: The Media and Democratic Development*. Retrieved March 12, 2009 from http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-116247-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie A. J., Turner, L. A (2007) Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*. Vol. 1(2): 112-133

Kaid, L. L., & Holtz-Bacha, C. (2007). *Encyclopaedia of political communication*. Sage

Kenney, K., & Simpson, C. (1993). Was coverage of the 1988 presidential race by Washington's two major dailies biased? *Journalism Quarterly* 70: 345-355.

Klaehn, J. (2002). A Critical Review and Assessment of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. *European Journal of Communication*, Volume 17 (2): 147-182

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Landis, J. R., Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics* 33 (2):159-174.

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics II: Channels of group life; social planning and action research. *Human Relations*, 1: 143-153.

May, T., (1993). *Social Research. Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Mano, W. (2008). The Media and Politics in Zimbabwe: Turning Left while Indicating Right. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13 (4): 507-514

McCracken, G. (1988). *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Media Foundation for West Africa (2000) *Politics in the Airwaves: How Radio Covered the 2000 General Elections In Ghana*. MFWA, Accra

Media Monitoring Africa (2009). Election Coverage: Did the media assist citizens in making informed choices in South Africa's 2009 election?

Metropolitan Television (2008, July 16). *Good Morning Ghana*

Mughan, A. & Gunther, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Democracy and the Media: A comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press

National Media Commission (2000a). *A report on Media Coverage of Political Parties by State-Owned Media and Selected Private Media*. (October 1 to October 15, 2000). NMC, Accra

National Media Commission (2000b). *A report on Media Coverage of Political Parties by State-Owned Media and Selected Private Media*. (October 30 to November 12, 2000). NMC, Accra

National Media Commission (2004b) *A report on Media Coverage of Political Parties by State-Owned Media and Selected Private Media*. NMC, Accra.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newcomb, H. (1993). *The creation of Television Drama* in Jensen, K.B., Jenkowski N. W. (Eds.). *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*. London: Rutledge

Niven, D. (2003) Objective Evidence on Media Bias: Newspaper Coverage of Congressional Party switchers. *Journalism and Mass Media Quarterly* 80(2): 311 -326

Ogbondah, C. (2004) Democratisation and the Media in West Africa: An Analysis of Recent Constitutional and Legislative Reforms for Press freedom in Ghana and Nigeria. *West Africa Review*, Issue 6

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.), Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Payne, G. A. (2008). *Mass mediated news and the freemarketplace of ideas: Structural impingements on the right to communicate*. LSE Research Online. Retrieved June 21, 2009 from: [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/21582/1/Gregg-Payne\(LSEROversion\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/21582/1/Gregg-Payne(LSEROversion).pdf)

Peng, Z. (2008). Framing the anti-war protests in the global village: A comparative study of newspaper coverage in three cities. *International communication gazette* 70(5): 361-377

Reese, S. D., & Ballinger, J. (2000). The roots of a Sociology of news: Remembering Mr. Gates and social control in the newsroom. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78(4): 641-658

Reichert, T., Meuller, J. E., & Nitz, M. (2003). Disengaged and uninformed: 2000 presidential election coverage in consumer magazines popular with young adults. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80(3): 513-527.

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. (1998). *Analyzing Media Messages*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rossmann, G. B., & Wilson, B. L. (1991). Numbers and words revisited: Being "shamelessly eclectic." *Evaluation Review* 9: 627-643.

Salwen, M., & Stacks D.W. (2008). *An integrated approach to communication theory* (2nd ed.). Taylor & Francis

Saris, E. W., & Sniderman, P.M. (2004). *Studies in public opinion. Attitudes, non-attitudes, measurement error, and change*. Princeton University Press

Schiffer, J.A. (2006) Assessing Partisan Bias in Political News: The Case(s) of Local Senate Election Coverage. *Political Communication* 23(1): 23-39.

Shih, T., Wijaya, R., Brossard, D. (2008). Media Coverage of Public Health Epidemics: Linking Framing and Issue Attention Cycle Toward an Integrated Theory of Print News Coverage of Epidemics. *Mass Communication and society*, 11 (2): 41 - 160
Retrieved June 19, 2009 from
http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.proxy2.lib.umanitoba.ca/507395_770885140_792440965.pdf

Shoemaker, P. J. (1991). *Communication concepts 3. Gatekeeping*. Newbury Park, Ca: Sage

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influence on mass media content* (2nd eds.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Shoemaker, P.J. & Vos, T.P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge

Smith, D.A. (2002). Consolidating democracy? The structural underpinnings of Ghana's 2000 elections. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40(4): 621-650

Strömbäck, J., & Luengo, Ó. G. (2008) A Comparison of Election News Coverage in Spain and Sweden. *International Communication Gazette* 70(6): 547-562. Retrieved April 16, 2009, from <http://icaz.sagepub.com.proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/cgi/reprint/70/6/547>

Tankard, J.W. (2001). *The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing*. Mahwah, NJ

Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Temin, J., & Smith, D. A. (2002). The Media Matters: Evaluating the role of the media in Ghana's 2000 elections. *African Affairs* 101: 585-605

Tettey, J. W. (2003). *The Mass media, Political Expression, and Democratic Transition*. In Tettey, J. W., Pupilampu, K. P., Berman, B. J. (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Politics and Socio-Economic Development in Ghana* (Chapter 3 : pp 83 - 106). Brill Publications
The Ghanaian Chronicle (May 26, 2000, page 4). Statement of the First Lady at the 31st December Movement Rally at Nyankomasi Ahenkro, Central Region.

Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights (2005). *Report on Media Coverage of Tunisia's 2004 Elections*

U.S. Department of State (2004). *Country Report on Ghana*. United States Department of State, Washington.

Venturelli, S. (1998). *Liberalizing the European media. Politics, Regulation, and the public sphere*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Vitale, D. C., Armenakis, A. A., & Field, H.S. (2008). Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods for Organizational Diagnosis. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 2 (1) 87-105

Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design journal* Vol. 13(1) 51-62

Waldahl, R (2005). Political Journalism the Zimbabwean way: Experiences from the 2000 election campaign. *Westminster papers of Communication and Culture*. University of Westminster

Walgrave, S. (2008). Again, the Almighty Media? The media's political agenda setting power according to politicians and journalists in Belgium. *Political Communication* 25(4):445-459

White, D. M. (1950). The "gate-keeper": A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 27: 383-390

Wimmer, R. D., Dominick, J. R. (2003). *Mass media research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Wong, K. (2004). Asian-based Development Journalism and political elections: Press coverage of the 1999 general elections in Malaysia. *The International Journal for Communication studies* 66(1): 25-40