

Electoral Meaning among Ex-Combatants – the Gateway to Democracy in Liberia?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the meaning attached to elections among ex-combatants in Liberia, in particular in relation to the historic elections of 2005. These elections were generally considered successful, and should therefore be instrumental in the consolidation of democracy; this paper investigates the extent of such consolidation that can be seen in their wake. In particular, the meaning attached to elections are described in terms of voting behavior and motivation, as well as the extent of application of the equality principle, and finally in relation to the perceived legitimacy of the elections, based on focus group discussions carried out in the spring of 2008 in Liberia. The conclusions presented in this paper are still preliminary, as not all groups have been scrutinized, but point to problems *vis-à-vis* the legitimacy of the elections which may have long term implications for the consolidation of democracy in Liberia. However, other areas, in particular attitudes towards vote buying, show a more positive trend.

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Introduction

The elections in Liberia in 2005 were extraordinary, not only did the Liberian electorate elect the first female president in Africa ever, but the elections were also historic from a national perspective. In several different areas the elections excelled expectations; they were *free* and *fair* and were more similar to African peacetime polls than post-conflict elections. The elections were also highly competitive yet violence-free.¹ Given this remarkable assessment, this paper has attempted to evaluate the perceptions of these elections among the ex-combatant community in Liberia, and their possible impact on the long-term democratization process. When assessing the political culture among the ex-combatants, it is important to take note of Sawyer's assertion: "Liberia has never had a democratic electoral culture; these were only the first free and fair competitive elections in modern times".²

Thus, this paper presents the findings of research carried out in Liberia, as it relates to the acceptance of democratic ideals among ex-combatants. The delineation of the area of study, assumes two things; firstly the existence of democracy presupposes the existence of democrats and secondly the existence of democracy presupposes the existence of elections. Consolidation of democracy seems to require not only the holding of elections but also the creation of democrats, and this paper investigates those two things. Consolidation of democracy is thus defined, as what Schedler has called the *deepening of democracy*, i.e. moving from the state of electoral democracy to liberal or advanced democracies.³ Unlike Schedler, I do not see this categorization as equally problematic; if we recognize that it is a question of making democracy *the only game in town*, it is not that removed from the creation of democrats (diffusion of democratic values) and the issue of popular support for the political system (popular legitimation),⁴ attitudinal issues are clearly at stake.⁵

¹ Harris 2006, pp 377, 378, 393; NDI 2007, p 29.

² Sawyer 2008, p 196.

³ Schedler 1998, p 93, 100.

⁴ Cf Schedler 1998, p 91.

⁵ See also Linz and Stepan 1996, pp 15f.

True enough, elections have come to take on a special meaning in the democracy literature and especially in terms of democratization, and to a certain extent the importance of elections has been inflated, as discussed by, among others, Elklit and Svensson.⁶ The role of elections in democratization has been discussed frequently and suffice it here to say that I agree that democracy “cannot be reduced to the regular holding of elections”;⁷ but this does not mean that elections are irrelevant either.⁸ Primacy is often given to elections by the international community in their dealings with democratization, and this paper makes the argument that elections matter, not just in and of themselves, but as stepping board for the development of a democratic culture.

Thus, this paper aspires to go beyond a mere observer’s view of elections, I here look into the perception of elections among the citizenry itself. This approach allows us to recognize the importance of elections in democratization, but it also forces us to go beyond and in particular look into political culture as a way to take stock of the democratization process. It is not the entire citizenry that is the priority this paper, but the volatile and potentially problematic group of ex-combatants. This group is particularly important as they, if they have the inclination, can more forcefully distort the democratization process. In a sense they can also be seen as a litmus test for democracy, if this group lives up to the ideal of democratic citizenship, it is very likely that the entire citizenry will too. In terms of the wider research agenda for the author the elections also provide the gateway into a broader discussion of ex-combatants’ political worldview and acceptance of a democratic citizenship. Thus, the focus in terms of the elections in Liberia 2005 is not the events on the ground *per se*, but what meaning is attached to elections and how ex-combatants relate to this opportunity to participate in politics.

As discussions by Schaffer have made clear, the meanings attached to voting can vary quite extensively, and some can hardly be connected with the ideals of democracy; indeed our research community knows very little about the meaning

⁶ Elklit and Svensson 1997, p 34. See also Mainwaring 1992, p 297.

⁷ Schmitter and Karl 1991, p 85.

⁸ Bratton 1998, p 52.

attached to elections in general, and in Africa in particular.⁹ This paper will begin to rectify this, by examining and describing ex-combatants' understanding of and meaning attached to elections. Improving our understanding of this has important implications for international support of transitional elections in particular. The focus on elections provides both an empirical gateway and a conceptual one; the empirical event of the elections offer a lens through which opinions concerning democratic citizenship can be focused on and theoretically elections matter in democratization and the issue of democratic citizenship can be broken down with respect to elections.

The elections in Liberia in October and November of 2005 have generally been hailed as very successful and democratic, indeed some have called them "the freest and fairest elections that Liberia has ever seen".¹⁰ Presidential and legislative elections were held at the same time, and since no candidate received 50 % plus one vote, a runoff presidential election was held a little later. In the end, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (a Harvard graduate, minister during the Tolbert regime in the late 70s and a former World Bank employee) won with 59.4 % of the votes against George Weah's (a high school dropout and international football star) 40.6 %.¹¹ Despite logistical problems, Liberians registered and voted in very large numbers (an estimated 90 % of the population registered, and participation in the first round of elections stood at 74.9 % and in the runoff presidential election at 61 %).¹² The conduct of campaigns and actual polling were orderly and professional, and very few incidents of violence occurred. The election was also exceptional since no incumbent nor former warlord was on the ticket, which left the field wide open. This also meant that most seats were a very close call; no party or presidential candidate achieved a landslide victory so common in Africa in general. Of significance to this paper is also George Weah's challenge of the election results, his claims of electoral fraud were, however, never proven to have systematically biased the results. In general, the elections must be

⁹ Schaffer 1998, pp 23, 88-89, 106, 128-129, 131; Young 1993, p 307.

¹⁰ Harris 2006, p 378.

¹¹ Electoral Division 2006, p 51.

¹² Electoral Division 2006, p 26.

considered as very successful and ideal in many respects, the question that remains to be answered in this paper is how such elections were perceived by actual voters. Were the elections of 2005 a gateway to democracy for Liberians; can we see evidence of a consolidation of democracy among ex-combatants through their electoral experience?

As was stated by Elklit, only when voters experience a meaningful participation in politics will they start to develop a *normative commitment to democracy*,¹³ and this is precisely what is investigated in this paper; the process of democratization as it relates to the ordinary voter, which is often overlooked.¹⁴ Here, the situation of and opinions of a more volatile group that could cause serious havoc if they had the inclination to do so,¹⁵ namely ex-combatants, will be investigated. This group has a long experience of (political) marginalization in society, which partly explains their participation in the war in the first place. If this group has made reasonable progress in terms of their commitment to democracy there is reason to cheer for the entire citizenry.

The data collected for this paper is part of a larger project, thus the choice of which ex-combatants to include was based on the logic inherent in that project.¹⁶ The 99 informants included, cover a range of backgrounds, and as such can provide us with a general view of the state of mind of ex-combatants in Liberia.¹⁷ In addition, the groups also cover a range of programs, importantly, programs with a relatively large caseload, hence representative of a large section of ex-combatants' experience. Caution is required however, as the sampling process reminds us more of a snowball sample than anything else, and specific groups were targeted rather than a catch-all strategy. Since the informants represent a wide range in terms of ethnicity, age, gender and military faction a lot can be said on the basis of this material. In

¹³ Elklit 1999, p 32.

¹⁴ Bratton 1998, p 62; Mainwaring 1992, pp 302f.

¹⁵ Sawyer 2008, p 188.

¹⁶ In this project the reintegration program experience plays a much bigger role, and issues of causality are involved, hence program selection is of inherent importance in the research project as a whole.

¹⁷ Included in the sample are also nine non-combatants that participated in programs geared towards ex-combatants.

particular, the goal of this paper is to present the similarities, the general traits they have in common, and only when called for, present opposing or different opinions when they were voiced by the participants. When such differences are noteworthy, the article will specify which characteristics are or may be pertinent in each case.

Methodology

The data collected for this paper used eighteen focus groups from four areas in Liberia, three counties: Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Montserrado, and within Montserrado both the rural and urban, i.e. the capital Monrovia, parts.¹⁸ In total, the groups included 99 participants, of which 28 were female and 71 were male. Out of the total number of participants, only 90 were ex-combatants. In this paper only eight of the focus groups are studied, with a total of 41 participants. Among these fifteen were female and 26 were male. The largest faction among these was MODEL (41.5 %), followed by GOL (31.7 %) and then LURD (14.6 %), the largest ethnic group was Krahn (50.0 %), followed by Kissi (18.3 %) and then Kpelle (15.9 %).¹⁹ The data collection was carried out between April 15th 2008 and June 15th 2008.²⁰

Why focus groups?

This is a question likely to be encountered fairly often when presenting this material. The answer given here is only preliminary, but should offer a rough guide as to why this form of data collection is useful and preferable.

The reasons are several; some are pragmatic and others are related to ontological issues. To start with some of the more pragmatic reasons, using focus groups gives rise to two forms of knowledge, one is related to the content of the conversation and the second one is related to the interaction between participants.²¹ As noted in the theoretical section, both of these forms of knowledge are sought after, however the issue of interaction will become more important in relation to upcoming aspects of analysis rather than in this paper. The alternative would be to conduct both individual interviews and observational work, which seems inefficient in

¹⁸ Two of the groups are not of direct interest, as they were only include as points of comparison. One group, number five, is made up of non-combatants that participated in the same program as many of the ex-combatants. The second group, number six, consisted of participants from the veterans' organization; a group which is very politically active.

¹⁹ Included in this sample are also Mandingo (6.1 %), Gola (4.9 %), Loma (2.4 %), Bassa (1.2 %) and Grebo (1.2 %). These numbers are based on the ethnicity of the parents, thus, in the case of the Grebo percentage, it means that one person had one parent of Grebo ethnicity.

²⁰ The field work was financed through grants from NAI, SAREC and *Rektors resebidrag från Wallenbergs Stiftelse*.

²¹ Eriksson 2006, p 44. See also Morgan 1997.

comparison. In addition, it is the belief of this author that it may be easier for most participants to express their opinions in these groups, than it would be in individual interviews. Holmberg and Petersson claim that in countries where politics is conflictual and the democratic institutions are less established than in the west, people may be more weary to expose their political views to strangers.²² Using focus groups should at least partially help alleviate this problem, although it cannot eradicate it. The presence of a white female westerner should also become less intimidating in the group setting than in the individual interview; in focus groups there certainly is both safety and power in numbers.

The ontological reasons can be divided into two. One relates to the depth of human opinion, and the other the nature of human opinion. Survey work and even individual interviews presupposes that all individuals have an opinion regarding all questions. Particularly with regards to surveys, people may often feel forced into offering an opinion – the answers given under these circumstances clearly infringes upon the reliability of the study. We simply do not know if the opinions were offered because it was theirs, or because they felt like they ought to have a response.²³ Clearly, the answers we care about are those the interviewee feel convinced about. The focus group setting allows you to take this into consideration; no one is forced to answer anything and the social pressure to give *any* answer is reduced as others are likely to speak instead.

The other aspect relates to whether opinions are independent of context, the nature of human opinion. Is the self independent of her context? If she is, than one “merely have to ask the right questions and the other’s ‘reality’ will be revealed,”²⁴ but to think that we are able in individual interviews to isolate the individual from the group is illusory, for one, we cannot completely eradicate the interviewer. The production of knowledge, seems to me, cannot be atomized in this fashion, even if we try. Pool asserts that:

²² Holmberg and Petersson 1980, p 68.

²³ Holmberg and Petersson 1980, pp 73f.

²⁴ Gubrium and Holstein 2002, p 12.

the social milieu in which communication takes place modifies not only what a person dares to say but even what he thinks he chooses to say. And these variations in expression cannot be viewed as mere deviations from some underlying 'true' opinion, for there is no neutral, non-social, uninfluenced situation to provide the baseline.²⁵

Taking the idea seriously, that "opinions are created in the act of communication in which they are expressed,"²⁶ should not only entail that we are sensitive to the impression the interviewer herself may make, but that creating the social milieu that reflects our target group the best should also be attempted in order to capture something that, although not conceived of as the *true* opinion – because there are doubts as to whether such a thing exists - can be considered as a more fruitful form of individuals' opinions. The use of focus groups is in part an answer to this call; they frame the individual in a group context, and in a group context relevant to the research subject at hand. To disregard this element of human opinion completely when collecting data seems defective. Focus groups, on the other hand, allow for a nuanced and problematizing form of research, which allows the participants to reflect and reconsider their statements, in the relevant group context.²⁷

One problem often raised by researchers not familiar with focus groups, is: What is your unit of analysis? This is a valid question, but perhaps not as problematic as one might think, and especially not if you accept the idea that opinions are never independent of context. The issue of unit of analysis is also relevant when we discuss the issue of political culture. Can political culture be measured in one individual, or do we need to rely on aggregate data? As has been expressed by Patrick, political culture is a question of something shared among individuals, thus the unit of analysis can be thought of within this tradition as "individuals in their plurality".²⁸ The focus group offers a way to capture this: the individual in the group context. Thus, the unit of analysis is not one nor the other, but rather a combination of the two, or a vacillation between the two. Clearly, this can create problems if the researcher is out to establish variation solely at the individual level, or solely at the group level, but in this research and in many other cases that is not the goal.

²⁵ Pool 1957, p 192.

²⁶ Pool 1957, p 194.

²⁷ Eriksson 2006, pp 43.

²⁸ Patrick 1984, pp 285f.

Focus groups allow room for social pressure to conformity,²⁹ and this is partly its purpose but it can also be troublesome if it gets out of hand. This is why it is important to pay attention to the group interaction displayed in each group, in order to determine the level of group conformity. I would argue that different personas are visible through this type of data collection; the groups do not homogenize to such an extent as to render invisible differences in opinion or language use. Clearly, some of the groups did exhibit very uniform opinions; but some did not – hence I believe this variation has more to do with the participants themselves than the instrument used for data collection. In these cases I am led to conclude that it relates more to their culture of discussion and debate; i.e. these participants value uniformity and consensus to a much higher degree than other participants, hence the tolerance of different ideas was lower in these instances. However, in this particular paper the main unit of analysis will remain the group because the issue area covered here is quite limited, hence there is not enough data to evaluate and assess each individual adequately.

Selection and selection bias

The selection of focus group participants was done strategically, as delimiting the entire population is problematic (even if a list existed, it is hard to locate the individuals). The groups were recruited in different ways, in some cases I arrived at a local community and asked to be introduced to some of the ex-combatants in the area (usually through the elders or those in charge of the program). In other cases, I would locate some of the villagers involved in the particular trade I was looking at, and asked for the names of some of the trainers I knew to have been involved in a particular reintegration program. Through their help, I would contact some of the participants and ask them to meet me the next day. In one case I also visited a training facility to speak directly to some of those currently enrolled. And finally, in some of the cases I worked with a veterans' organization located mainly in Monrovia, and through their network contacted potential participants and invited

²⁹ Eriksson 2006, pp 284-5.

them to come to a discussion, the groups recruited this way remind us of a snowball sample.

The specific programs that were targeted by this study, relate to the overall aim of this research project, but this not of any immediate concern for this paper. The goal here is simply to describe, rather than to explain. Although the programs were chosen in a strategic manner, this does not hamper the potential for generalization. Especially as the programs studied also represent a large part of the programs under the UNDP trust fund, three of the four training programs (the other groups where either involved in formal education or no program at all) were covered by the UNDP trust fund, and are among the four largest program; Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) covered 12.2 % of the total caseload, Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) covered 8.5 % and the United Methodist Committee on Relief covered 7.2 %. The fourth training program, German Agro Action (GAA) was not covered by the UNDP trust fund, but was part of the parallel programs.³⁰ In addition, twelve of the eighteen groups were carried out in Montserrado County, the county of preferred settlement (48 %).³¹

If we look more closely at the individual characteristics of the ex-combatants involved, the potential for generalization is not stifled there either, although the composition differs from the population composition. In part, this has been intentional, so as to allow for important comparisons, e.g. the female component was larger than in the population (30 % vs. 22 %).³² Also, this sample includes more well-educated, i.e. university graduates, than does the population. In terms of the faction affiliation of the participants, most of them either fought for MODEL (33 %) or GOL/NPFL (49 %), whereas LURD was significantly lower (15 %), out of a total of 90 ex-combatants interviewed, which underestimates LURD members significantly compared to the population.³³ About 19 % of the ex-combatants did not participate

³⁰ JIU 2008.

³¹ UNDP 2004, p 38. These numbers are based on information given at cantonment site; there are no figures available for actual settlement. The figures for the other counties varied between 14 % and 0.05 %, with Lofa at 6 % and Grand Gedeh at 4 %.

³² Bugnion et al. 2006, p 30.

³³ Aboagye and Bah 2004, p 8.

in demobilization and disarmament (a lot higher than in the population), and 37 % did not participate in reintegration programs, also a lot higher than in the population. As for the ethnic affiliation, none of the participants belonged to the Americo-Liberians, but only the *native* groups of Liberia. About 23 % of the ex-combatants had a mixed ethnic background. Out of the sixteen groups in Liberia, members from fourteen of them have participated in the groups. The five largest groups are, in descending order: Krahn (21 %), Kpelle (14 %), Loma (13 %) and Kissi (9 %) and Bassa (9 %). The age of the participants ranged from 13 to 44, but the mean age is rounded of to 28,³⁴ compared to the population mean of 25 years.³⁵ With a small and strategic sample it is hard to match the distribution of demographic characteristics of the population, but the important issue is rather if these individuals are different from individuals with the same characteristics in the population. There are no apparent reasons to suspect that this is the case, except for some self-selection issues, see below. For more details on group composition, see Appendix 1.

Self-selection is to some extent a problem, as the participants can choose not to take part; in this case it is likely that those who do participate will be more inclined towards a positive democratic citizenship. Some of the recruitment channels used are also likely to lead to an overestimation of the extent of their democratic citizenship, or at least to a positive view of the programs they attended. Mainly, this should be suspected when the participants were contacted through the network of the program they participated in, which was the case for GAA and UMCOR. In some cases, recruitment was carried about just before the discussion started, which meant that it was only those readily available for the discussion that could participate, i.e. ex-combatants already working in the fields would not have been included. All participants were given monetary compensation for their time and to cover transportation costs, to the amount of five USD (varying slightly depending on transportation needs). This economical provision should have decreased the number

³⁴ The median was 27 and the modal category was 28.

³⁵ UNDP 2005, p 54.

of those who particularly enjoy talking and debating in the sample, and encouraged others not so interested in participating.

Doing the interviews

All participants were given financial compensation for their time and transportation costs, at an average of five USD (in Monrovia transportation was almost always organized for them). Each discussion began with a discussion over the research aims and issues of confidentiality over some light snacks and drinks. They were informed about how the data collected would be used and of the independence of the research, i.e. lack of links to local NGOs and programs. Before starting the recorder all were asked whether they consented to recordings being made of the talk. The average length of the discussions was an hour and 45 minutes, although some ran longer and some a little bit shorter (one hour to about three hours). The size of each group varied from four (three groups) to seven (one group), but most groups included six participants (ten groups). I found that a group of six worked the best, as it was large enough to create a feeling of a group and small enough to ensure that the length of the discussions remained reasonable. At the end of each discussion, they were asked to fill in a short survey that mainly covered demographic issues. Often I would read the survey out loud and they would check the appropriate box, or I would assist them in that as well depending on the reading and writing skills of the particular participants.

All groups were exposed to the same opening questions, but follow-up questions varied depending on the discussion itself; in some cases the groups entered into the topic on their own, other times they were prompted by me. The participants were often prompted by questions such as: *Could you give an example of what you mean? Why do you think that is? Does everyone agree? Are there any alternatives? Why do you say that?* Sometimes the discussion had to be cut off, in order to have time to cover all of the questions included. Only very rarely was there a need to stop a discussion that was of substantial interest to the researcher, but more often it was

stopped at the point where the discussion had turned towards a topic outside of the scope of the study.

The bulk of the discussion concerning elections was towards the end of each talk, and initiated through the presentation of images depicting the election in 2005. The pictures included people voting, standing in line and campaigns for both Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and George Weah. The use of pictures was motivated by two things, firstly it helps as a memory device to take participants back to the situation at hand, and as the pictures were neutral they also allowed participants to voice spontaneous thoughts and ideas in relation to the pictures. All of the groups really liked looking at the pictures, and quite a few became very excited by them. This method of starting the discussion made it easier for the participants to gear the conversation towards aspects relating to the election that was of major importance to them first, rather than me setting the agenda.

Before moving on to the theoretical section of the paper, it is important to mention that in the groups carried out in the rural setting, language was more of a problem. All interviews were carried out in English, but in the four groups in Grand Gedeh, a translator was present. Thus, I would start the conversation in English, and when required, this would be translated into Krahn, and if a participant so wished they could express themselves in Krahn and the translator would then translate it back to English for me. The majority of the conversation was always carried out in English however, and the translation was simply a backup. During the transcribing process, I also had another Krahn speaker translate the Krahn sections, in order to verify what had been translated. In the two groups in Lofa County, no such separate translator was present, but individuals in the group would help to explain words or questions in Kissi to those not as fluent in English as themselves.

The issue of Elections

Clearly, elections are not the only scene where the political worldview of ex-combatants in Liberia can be gleaned, but it's a place to start. All political spheres interact and impact each other, so trying to delineate one area will undoubtedly be difficult and it will most certainly be impacted by other issues included in the discussion as it is sure to have ramifications on other areas. However, elections do provide a convenient starting point, both empirically and conceptually. Empirically, because it is an event that is easy to relate to for the participants, and conceptually because we cannot have democracy without elections, and election experiences are likely to shape individual experiences and their understanding of democracy. Indeed, elections are literally the main event where they are able to practice their democratic citizenship.

So what does it mean to be searching for the meaning of elections? To some it includes the issue of legitimacy, the interpretation of outcomes; these struggles over electoral meaning can involve and be directed towards different audiences ranging from the international community, the national elite to the masses.³⁶ Bratton also makes the argument that where there is contestation over the legitimacy of the election results the consolidation of democracy is unlikely to move forward, and yet the fact that contestation is taking place is a sign that elections actually matter.³⁷ This is an issue we have reason to return to when analyzing the data. Others suggest that the meaning of voting in Africa remains tangled up with problematic ideas of representation, and that the vote itself is very much removed from the notion of 'one person – one vote'. Voting from Chabal and Daloz' point of view is more an expression of communal links and potential material gains, than an expression of a political preference.³⁸ Clearly, there are reasons to be interested in the meaning of elections in Africa in general and in Liberia in particular.

³⁶ Bratton 1998, p 53.

³⁷ Bratton 1998, p 63, 66.

³⁸ Chabal and Daloz 1999, p 39.

The Gateway to Democratic Citizenship

Seeing elections as a gateway towards democratic citizenship also helps to structure our treatment of the topic and still incorporate the issues already mentioned as linked to electoral meaning. In addition, the experience and meaning attached to elections has bearing on the democratization process; as stated by Elklit:

Only when voters experience meaningful contestation and participation in the political process [...] will they develop some kind of normative commitment to democracy. That is an ingredient in the consolidation process which should not be forgotten, in spite of the focus that many analyses train on the importance of elites and their behavior.³⁹

Others are more hesitant about the potential of elections in the democratization process, especially in a post-conflict situation.⁴⁰ The purpose of my research is to look into these aspects, particularly as it relates to a certain group amongst the masses, namely ex-combatants. In order to systematize the investigation of electoral meaning, I have opted to link it conceptually to the idea of democratic citizenship. A large section of the quantitative literature on democratic norms rarely discuss in detail what these are or why they are included. It is an area with a plethora of various approaches, where the concept can be broken down in several different ways: some delineate between civic competence, democratic values and democratic participation; some between political participation, social participation and civic orientations; others again make the link with democracy more explicit by relating it to the principles of a democratic system.

I have, however, adopted, at least in part, Bratton's division which seems the most appropriate and theoretically sound for this study. Bratton divides the concept of democratic citizenship into three dimensions; values (tolerance, accountability and equality), attitudes (preference for democracy, the nature of the support for democracy and patience) and behavior (voting, collective action, contact).⁴¹ This division applies to democratic citizenship per se, and not necessarily the meaning of elections, but by building on this division, one can develop a reasonable approach to understanding the meaning of elections.

³⁹ Elklit 1999, p 32. See also Akokpari and Azevedo 2007, p 75.

⁴⁰ Sawyer 2008, p 178.

⁴¹ Bratton 2006, pp 11-13.

The issue of *behavior* is easily incorporated and expanded upon. Political behavior in relation to elections becomes narrowly defined as those acts related to voting and campaigns leading up to elections. Clearly, political behavior can include other things as indicated by Bratton, but these issues are not as election-orientated and are therefore not covered in this paper. Let's expand on the concept of behavior in relation to elections in terms of the *input* and *output* relative to voting.

In terms of the *input*, issues of motivation and reasons for voting come into the fore. Whether they see elections as having the potential to change things, matters for determining the perceived importance of elections among them. In order to gauge their opinions regarding voting, pictures of the election in 2005 were used as a starting point for the discussion. How much weight is attached to this form of behavior, and do they feel motivated to use this opportunity? Whether they voted is also relevant here, and if elections are not seen as a means to impact, clearly you are unlikely to feel motivated to use your vote. Meanings attached to voting vary extensively, and some can hardly be connected with the ideals of democracy;⁴² thus trying to delineate the intentions behind their own voting matters if we are to consider it as an act of democracy or not. As Chabal and Daloz make clear, whether material gains or political agendas are at stake, shape electoral meaning among the citizenry.⁴³ The *output* relates to the degree of participation in elections, and also how they feel about participating in the future.

With regard to values, one aspect in particular is relevant in relation to elections: *equality*. Equality in elections, from the standpoint of the citizenry is mainly about the right to vote. First of all, who should have it, and secondly how should this right be applied – one vote, one person? Is it even seen as a right? Thus bordering the aspect of equality is how the demos is defined, and how access to voting is portioned out.

Finally, in terms of attitudes, the issue is very much support for the principle of democracy for Bratton, and translated to the study of election, this becomes a question of support of the process, i.e. the *legitimacy* of the elections and the

⁴² Schaffer 1998, pp 88-89, 106, 128-129, 131.

⁴³ Chabal and Daloz 1999, p 154.

election results. As stated by Chabal and Daloz electoral victory does not guarantee the legitimacy of the results,⁴⁴ not even in free and fair elections as we shall see later. The elections also impact on the legitimacy of democracy as a whole.⁴⁵ Who is seen to own the process; did the right person win; did they win with legitimate means?⁴⁶

Thus, to summarize, electoral meaning will be investigated as it relates to behavioral aspects (*motivation* and *participation*), the application of the *equality* principle regarding the vote, and the *legitimacy* of the elections.

⁴⁴ Chabal and Daloz 1999, p 151.

⁴⁵ Akokpari and Azevedo 2007, p 79.

⁴⁶ These issues can be linked to what has been termed as the *systemic dilemma* of peacebuilding and democratization, as this relates to the ownership of the process; here this clearly has implications for legitimacy as well. See Jarstad and Sisk 2008, p 11.

Electoral meaning among ex-combatants

Voting: motivation and participation

To start off this section, it was clearly the norm among all the participants to vote if you were able to. The few who were unable to vote cited sickness or problems related to the site of registration, or indeed that they were underage as the reasons for why they did not vote. Given this universal norm of voting, let's take a look at what motivated these ex-combatants to go to the ballot.

Three main reasons for voting can be delineated: personal gains, community gains and the rights argument. Vote buying has been common in Liberia for a very long time,⁴⁷ although it may not be termed as such under electoral laws but personal gains, in the form of money or rice, or smaller local projects, given early on in the process must still be seen as vote buying.⁴⁸ Vote buying in terms of goods and rice have been confirmed, although it was never blatantly done close to the polling stations.⁴⁹ Clearly, as Chabal and Daloz claim, if vote buying is part of the electoral process, i.e. if the elections become about the exchange of material resources rather than registering political preferences, then casting a vote is no longer the same type of political action as in the latter case.⁵⁰

In terms of motivation based on personal gains, the groups judged this behavior very differently. In some (3 and 11) this behavior was seen as reprehensive and one of the problems of politics in Liberia, whereas for other groups (1, 2 and 4) the complaint was more about failed promises. Politicians would make promises in exchange for votes, and the ex-combatants delivered on their part but felt let down by the politicians in question, but this experience also led them to question the honesty of all politicians. In other groups (4 and 7), participants expressed experience with vote buying but without evaluating the event positively or negatively. Given a long history of vote buying and the like, it is not surprising that

⁴⁷ Sawyer 2008, p 195.

⁴⁸ See also Bratton 1998, p 63.

⁴⁹ Barr and Moor 2005.

⁵⁰ Chabal and Daloz 1999, p 154.

this view and experience still lingers on. What is more surprising and hopeful is that a large section, although having experienced this behavior, are condemning it as inappropriate and contrary to the goals of Liberia.

Those that were motivated by community gains (3, 4, 11 and 12) often mentioned development (trade, investors, and work opportunities) and peace, and yet others were very explicit about what they were hoping for, namely for the price of rice to come down (4).⁵¹ Quite often the need to get a good leader was cited as the main reason for why they voted (3 and 11). To have a good leader was also seen as instrumental towards the goal of increasing foreign investment and development (1). A few also carried out the more explicit argument of representation, that voting was about selecting those that could represent your interests (12), or at least those that could forward your interests the most: “but I think about my future plan. [...]I only think what... who will be usually best for me. You know, yeah. That I’ll vote for. Not because you... what you give me, I will vote for you.” (Bill, 3).⁵²

Others, usually in combination with the community gains, also made the argument that it was their *right to vote* hence they felt motivated to exercise it. Not using your vote meant that you were giving up your say in the process, which could be detrimental both to the voter herself, but also the specific candidates and for the overall result (8 and 12).

For some, the elections also provide the only, or at least main, point of interaction with politicians. Democracy only seems to happen for them on Election Day (2). The weight of elections, i.e. whether elections had the potential to change things, was often iterated, although some also made the argument that elections can bring both good and bad things and that the result depended upon the character of

⁵¹ Rice has always been a political issue in Liberia. The country has never been self-sufficient in rice production, although it is the main staple food. As early as 1979 there were the so called rice riots in Monrovia as a result of government intention to increase the price of rice, and some claim that this was the event that tipped the scale and set Liberia on the path toward war. The price of rice has continually been increasing over the past decades, and in April of this year 50 kg of rice cost 34 USD, compared to half that amount just six months prior. Thomas 2008-04-22, p.

⁵² What system for anonymity – alternative names? The names used are not the real names of the participants. Those in the same group all have names starting with the same letter. When there is a male and female group from the same village, they also start with the same letter.

those elected (Bart, 3), and others explicitly mentioned that elections were not the only way to change things (7).

In terms of whether they want to vote again in the future, most answered in the affirmative. As two women in group four commented on the issue of voting again next time: “We still want development. – We vote for development” (Bethany and Barbra). Thus, the issues that motivated them in the last election are still relevant for their motivation in the next election. There were a few exceptions, notably in group two, who did not feel motivated to vote next time, but would rather stay on their farm and spend their time more constructively. One participant also added that next time he would *shut his eye*, i.e. not listen to politicians and be fooled, but only to take his own opinions into consideration when voting (Brandon, 3).

Voting, participation, is clearly the norm among ex-combatants which is to be expected in a country where voter turnout was so high. The issue of widespread vote buying is more worrisome, although there is a growing dissension towards such behavior, hence a growing awareness of what democratic behavior should be like. In addition, representative issues or community gains are making inroads on voting simply for personal gains. Overall, in this particular area there is reason for a positive appraisal, especially since most feel motivated to vote again. The vote still represents a useful means to participate in the democratic process.

Equality: the right to vote

This area probably provides the most surprising and positive results concerning the extent of democratic citizenship among ex-combatants in Liberia. Issues of ethnicity and citizenship have been polarized and problematic for a long time in Liberia. In the 1980s President Samuel Doe made matters worse through his declaration that Mandingos⁵³ were citizens; even though this could be seen as something positive, it was perceived by many as a *naturalization* of the Mandingos, i.e. that they were not

⁵³ The ethnic group of Mandingos did not settle as early as other groups can claim in Liberia, but they were already present with the American Colonization Society landed in Liberia and set up the Liberian state. They do not have a majority in any of the counties in Liberia, and are often seen as different partly because of religious issues (they are more often Muslim than Christian), but also because of their drive in business.

truly Liberian but only accorded such rights through the acts of a highly partial president. During Doe's regime Mandingos and Krahn were positively differentiated from other ethnic groups through the actions of the state, which further enhanced this polarization. During the war (1989-2003) things became even more polarized, especially in relation to Mandingos; the Taylor regime beleaguered the Mandingos in particular, and the composition of the different factions during the years of war also reflected this polarization, notably the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) catered towards the Mandingos, as did the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO-K), a possible precursor to LURD. During the elections of 2005, there were a lot of accusations of either Mandingos not being allowed to register and vote, or Mandingos fraudulently coming in from neighboring countries to vote. Although such claims have been exaggerated, Mandingos did make up a large part of Liberian refugees and as such were disproportionately disenfranchised, as it was very difficult to register as a refugee.⁵⁴ Clearly, during the elections of 2005 and the period leading up to it, the issue of Mandingo citizenship was a contentious one, and hence also their status as voters.⁵⁵

Most, although not all, of the participants were very adamant about an inclusive *demos*, and particularly in relation to Mandingos. Naturally, one might suspect that this was a product of the interview context, and a wish to conform to what they thought I was looking for. But even if this is the case, the data still speaks to an interesting finding, namely they perceive an inclusive *demos* as the *norm*, as the 'correct' answer. The groups that were clearly in favor of extending the right to vote to Mandingos included two, three, four, eight, eleven and twelve. Although certainly not all participants extended the right to vote to Mandingos, this issue usually created some contention, were defenders of an inclusive *demos* were the most vocal and expressive. The fact that this spurred a lot of discussion, and verve among the defenders of an inclusive definition, also points to the usefulness of focus groups; it allows us to gauge the strength of opinions. Thus, although not universal, there is reason to cheer given the extent of this polarization in Liberia in the past.

⁵⁴ Harris 2006, p 380; ICG 2005, p 3.

⁵⁵ Akokpari and Azevedo 2007, p 86; ICG 2005, p 19; Sawyer 2008, p 194.

The right to vote was linked to the issue of citizenship, i.e. no citizenship - no right to vote (4 and 8). It did not matter whether such individuals were totally disinterested and ignorant about politics, if they could claim citizenship the focus groups were steadfast in their extension of the right to vote to such groups. In a country with such high illiteracy, such claims may be essential to the extension of the right to vote to oneself and close family. Interesting to note is that there was some disagreement regarding the voting rights of prisoners, particularly in group eight.

The right to vote was often seen as a legal concept, i.e. something regulated through law and in particular the constitution. When asked to defend the reason for why only people eighteen years old or older should be allowed to vote, only such legal claims were invoked and they would only on occasion offer a substantive argument for why such delineations of the right to vote were made. Thus, being Liberian and adult (eighteen or more) were the two basic requirements for access to the vote (11 and 12).

When discussed, the groups were also very forthright about the equality of the vote, the idea of one vote-one person was very much engrained in the participants. Playing the devil's advocate I tried to suggest that more educated people for instance should be given more votes, based on their knowledge and experience, an argument they did not buy into, but argued against (2, 3 and 4).

In this area there is also reason for cheer, as the inclusiveness of the vote was greater than could have been expected, particularly in relation to the Mandingos. The right to vote is plainly linked to citizenship and being Liberian, the only other qualifying characteristic is age. The notion of one vote, one person also seems quite engrained among the participants, again this calls for positive appraisal.

Legitimacy: election results

The results of the elections can be related to the issue of legitimacy in several ways. In part the elections can be said to be legitimate in the eyes of ex-combatants and in other areas legitimacy is lacking, below this will be discussed as it applies to the

rules of the game, long-term legitimacy, contested election results and fulfillment of election promises.

Concerning the rules of the game, several of the participants agree with the notion of majority rule, i.e. whoever wins a majority of the votes also assumes more power/the power (depending on the office) (1, 3 and 12). Some even described this as a local tradition, as something inherently Liberian to abide by results in this manner (Bishop, 12). Several of them also recognized that if you do not win in this particular election, there is always the next election that you can turn to; this must be seen as evidence of long term trust in the process (3). As one participant expressed it: “if they not win, the second time they can win” (Bethany, 4), thus they recognize that elections are a recurring event, and that losing is not a permanent state, hence easier to live with, in each particular instance. There were other positive appraisals of the elections as well, which point to the legitimacy of the elections, for instance some participants expressed as sense of pride in the election results (that a female won the presidential election) (Kirby, 11), others described the elections as free and fair, a first for Liberia, which also led them to make a positive appraisal of the overall state of democracy in Liberia (Chad and Curtis, 12).

However, a fair amount of the participants felt disappointed by the elections. This was mainly related to unfulfilled expectations, either in the form of campaign promises not carried out, or a more general disappointment linked to the behavior of politicians after the elections. The participants often mentioned a feeling of abandonment after the elections; politicians stopped listening or interacting with the electorate, again resurfacing the feeling that democracy only happens during elections (1, 3, 4, and 11). In group three this was expressed by Brandon: “Yeah, the elections, you know, I feel good. But, what I want... for the government to do I can’t see them do it. So now I am feeling bad again.” Others felt cheated by the behavior of politicians as it relates to representation, i.e. the self-interests of the politicians take over as soon as the election is over. One participant expressed it thus: “the representatives are not able to represent, those we send, they are not able to represent us” (Kasper, 11) and another participant expressed it as “they are only there

for themselves, they are not there for... the poor people, grass-root people, they are not there for them" (Kevin, 11).

In several of the groups the issue of the presidential elections and George Weah's loss did put in question the legitimacy of the elections as a whole. This issue requires a little more attention due to the extent and gravity of this opinion. In Liberia you need 50 % plus one vote in order to carry that particular election, thus when George Weah and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf did not reach the required number (Weah came in first with 28.3 % and Johnson Sirleaf second with 19.8 %),⁵⁶ a second round of presidential elections was required. In the end Johnson Sirleaf won the run-off with 59.4 % of the votes to Weah's 40.6 %. Weah contested the results, and only conceded a month after the results were declared, and after rigorous court appeals. During the campaign for the run-off election, officials of the Weah campaign made comments about the lack of credibility of the results in case Weah lost, and when Weah actually lost, the campaign's challenge of the results⁵⁷ reinforced this perception.

A lot of the participants did not understand why a run-off election was organized; their line of argument was that George Weah got the most votes, so he won the first round, hence there was no need for a second run. Thus, in part, the idea of run-off elections seemed to several as staged by those who wanted a different result. Some were very clear about who they suspected of cheating, namely the West or the international community, others were more vague, but had doubts about whether the will of the people was accurately reflected in the election results (Kasper, 11).

Several statements made by the Weah campaign, such as Weah winning the first round with 62 % of the votes, or claims that he could only be defeated through massive cheating engineered by the USA,⁵⁸ has certainly contributed to the current perceptions among his supporters and ex-combatants. These statements and the campaign's refusal to accept the election results have played a part in the creation of this mistrust, but what is important to note is that almost three years later this

⁵⁶ Electoral Division 2006, p 48.

⁵⁷ Most losers in African elections tend to challenge the election outcomes, see Bratton 1998, p 55.

⁵⁸ Harris 2006, p 390; NDI 2007, p 24.

suspicion still lives on. The groups covered so far, have not been typical regarding this issue; this experience was much more common among the urban ex-combatants. The longevity of such issues seriously decreases the legitimacy of the elections and could potentially have very detrimental effects on the overall democratization process. Indeed, quite a few felt less motivated to participate next time as a result of these issues.

In comparison to the general sentiment among several of the ex-combatants that George Weah was cheated out of the election, in reality several things actually worked in favor of Weah rather than Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. For instance the native-Americo-Liberian⁵⁹ divide certainly worked in favor of Weah, whereas Johnson Sirleaf struggled with the perception that she was an Americo-Liberian having had a mixed upbringing. Although Weah was only the second wealthiest presidential candidate after Farhat, he clearly had more private money than Johnson Sirleaf, of which he may or may not have made use in the campaign. In terms of fraud at the ballot boxes, there are quite a few claims of fraud on the side of Weah's campaign and polling officers clearly supporting Weah rather than Johnson Sirleaf. In addition, Weah owns a lot of the media in Liberia, which made it easier for him to get media coverage, and he was endorsed by more leading politicians during the run-off elections than Johnson Sirleaf.⁶⁰

However, it has been harder to validate or repudiate the idea that the international community had decided on Sirleaf Johnson. Clearly, there were no blatant moves in favor of Johnson Sirleaf, but it has been hard to ascertain the sources and size of the campaign contributions to Weah's and Sirleaf's campaigns; thus it is impossible to determine whether Johnson Sirleaf had an advantage in terms of resources and an implicit support from the West. The information available on campaign finances suggests that candidates did exceed the ceiling of 2 million USD, and that state resources were used in the campaign, although not exclusively for one candidate. Weah's party, Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) and Johnson

⁵⁹ Belonging to this settler group is usually termed as being a *Congo*, a word with negative connotations.

⁶⁰ Harris 2006, p 384, 388; IRI 2006, p 13; NDI 2007, pp 20-22; Sawyer 2008, p 185, 187.

Sirleaf's Unity Party (UP) and the Coalition for Transformation of Liberia (COTOL) were among the best funded parties. Interesting to note is, however, that the use of campaign funding seemed to have differed between the two main contenders, as stated by Harris: "too much of Weah's campaign fund was 'eaten' at the top, whereas more of his rival's money made it down to the voters".⁶¹

⁶¹ Harris 2006, p 390, 378; IRI 2006, p 10; NDI 2007, pp 14-15.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to take stock of the emerging democratic culture among ex-combatants in Liberia, through an analysis of the personal experiences and meanings attached to the elections of 2005. The data used for this paper was collected in three areas of Liberia between the 15th of April and the 15th of June of this year, through the use of focus groups. In this paper, eight out of a total of eighteen groups were scrutinized. The analysis was mainly focused on the group level, as the particular issue of election was too narrow to allow for a detailed analysis on the individual level. In the larger research project dealing with democratic citizenship in its broader sense, such individual analysis will be possible however. Ex-combatants have often been described as a problematic group to do research on, particularly regarding honesty.⁶² Although such issues are never completely eradicated, the fact that the participants openly voiced their experience and feelings concerning vote buying, is evidence of a willingness to be open about issues that are usually seen as sensitive or precarious.

Using Bratton's division of democratic citizenship into three areas, namely behavior, attitudes and values, this paper has extended Bratton's schemata in order to deal with the meaning of elections appropriately. In particular, this has meant an investigation into voting behavior in terms of participation and motivation, the application of the equality of the vote, and the legitimacy of the elections as it is perceived by ex-combatants.

The conclusions offered in this paper can only be preliminary as not all groups are included in the analysis, however the general trend is believed to be similar. Overall, there is reason both for cheer and concern. To start on a more positive note, participation seems to be the norm, and there is a growing critique against vote buying. Given Liberia's long history of vote buying, the presence of such critique is noteworthy. In terms of applying the principle of equality, the ex-combatants are also living up to such ideals, although there are notable exceptions particularly relating to the extension of the demos in relation to the Mandingo community. Yet,

⁶² See Utas 2003 for more details.

a large part did extend the right to vote to Mandingos, as long as they could claim Liberian citizenship, and again given Liberia's history of polarization between the Mandingo community and the other ethnic groups, this is cause for cheer. Finally, in relation to the legitimacy of the elections, the most notable problem is the lack of trust in the outcome.

If we are to arrange these groups according to the most democratic, we need to consider the difference between ideals and empirical experience. If a participant's experience with the political system has been problematic, their evaluation of said political system is one thing, and the political ideals they may or may not hold are not necessarily the same. Most often any negative appraisal was linked to actual experiences, rather than to engrained ideals; although this is promising, if such negative experiences continue to abound they are likely to have bearing on the ideals as well.

The group that was the most disillusioned with the experience of voting was group two; this group was mainly disappointed with politicians failing to live up to promises made during the election, this disappointment was so extensive that they even had doubts about voting in the next election. The group most explicit about their critique concerning vote buying was group eleven. In general this group was probably the most expressive about their political worldview out of all the groups. In general, four out of the groups would have to be characterized as overall positive, namely group three, four, eleven and twelve. In particular, group twelve and three clearly expressed strong opinions in favor of a democratic citizenship, and perhaps more strikingly, group three and eleven did so despite negative experiences.

What characteristics can be said to be of importance relative to electoral meaning? The two youngest groups, seven and eight, were clearly the least expressive in general, and in relation to elections most of them were too young to have participated at all: in the male group the average age was seventeen and a half, and in the female group, nineteen and a half. Life experience in general, rather than level of education seemed to be a larger determinant of political awareness. Distrust concerning the election results was more present among the urban groups in

Monrovia; possibly this could be connected to a closeness to politics in general (many of the ex-combatants had participated in rallies for Weah), details in the political process are more generally known here and there are more channels of information available, more room for rumors to grow. In the countryside however, there is rarely any competition in the media space. The feeling of abandonment and failed election promises, particularly in relation to vote buying, was more abundant in Grand Gedeh (group 1, 2, 3 and 4). This is a region which during the 80s became much more closely involved with politics, as President Doe originated from Zwedru, the county capital, and it is possible that this point of comparison is of importance for their current day experience of politics. Yet groups two, three and four are noticeably dissimilar regarding their assessment and conclusions regarding voting. Especially group two stands out, the reasons for which are rather obscure at present, but could be related to more intense negative experiences with politicians.

The three areas of investigation also impact on each other, particularly behavior and equality feed into the issue of legitimacy. If the participants perceived others' motivation for voting as illegitimate, the results of the election could also be called into question. The same goes for the issue of equality, if the participants experience that this principle was largely ignored during the elections, the results of the elections could also be called into question. Finally, the perception of legitimacy also feeds into future behavior; if the elections are not perceived a legitimate means to an end, it becomes hard to motivate future participation in the elections.

What conclusions can be made in relation to the issue of democratic consolidation? In this area there are three points to be made. The perception of the legitimacy of the elections, partly a result of Weah's behavior, is a serious problem for the consolidation of democracy. As Bratton suggests, contestation over election results stands in the way of consolidation, however, one could also argue that contestation as such denotes the increased importance of the elections, hence a move in the right direction. In the national perspective this point seems valid, but for the specific individual such distrust of the election results are much more problematic; the legitimacy of the system as such becomes questioned, and

democracy may not be the only game in town. For some, it appears democracy only happens on Election Day, in light of consolidation this is not a positive result either; ideally the empirical experience of democracy should extend beyond elections in a consolidated democracy. However, there are rays of light; some of the ex-combatants are clearly aspiring higher ideals, particularly *vis-à-vis* motivation for voting. Based on this data it would seem that notion of vote buying as something reprehensive and the notion of representation, and of 'one person - one vote', are starting to penetrate the electoral political culture of ex-combatants. This progress is noteworthy, particularly in the face of the otherwise weak political institutions in Liberia.

The investigation of the extent of democratic citizenship among ex-combatants does not stop with the experience of election, but this first glance does offer some interesting conclusions. Given, what Sawyer describes as a lack of "a political *tabula rasa*" in Liberia, i.e. the heritage of oligarchy and warlords still lives on,⁶³ the prospects for democracy in Liberia are not as grim as they could be. However, an election generally considered such a success has also failed to produce unconditionally positive results with respect to the general electorate, as may have been hoped for. This highlights the importance of taking into consideration the experience of the masses when exploring the importance of an election in the democratization process. Indeed, what does it matter what international observers say about an election, if such evaluations do not ring true among the populace?

The conclusions in this paper also point to important implications for organizing and handling elections in transitional contexts in general. Simplicity matters. If the electorate cannot relate to and understand the principles and organization of the election, even in the face of rigorous voter education (as in the case of Liberia), this poses serious problems for the acceptance of the outcome and ultimately the consolidation of democracy. This is a serious challenge for organizers of elections. Another aspect is the issue of broken election promises, an event not unfamiliar to developed democracies, but an aspect of much more fundamental importance in the

⁶³ Sawyer 2008, p 199.

transitional context. Failure to live up to election promises in the Western context may be detrimental to the specific parties involved, and may in the long run damage the overall trust in the democratic system (as witnessed by decreasing voter turnout for instance), but for transitional countries they pose a much graver threat. In the face of weak institutions, persons matter, and when they fail there is no offsetting force that can attenuate such experiences, thus the potential impact is much greater. This calls for more attention to the behavior of politicians and campaigns during transitional elections, and perhaps higher standards.

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Appendix I: Group Composition

No	Program	Area	Gender	Faction	Ethnicity	Size	Comment
1	GAA	Rural	Male	MODEL	Krahn	7	
2	GAA	Rural	Female	MODEL	Krahn	5	
3	GAA	Rural	Male	MODEL	Krahn	4	
4	GAA	Rural	Female	MODEL	Krahn	6	
5	MVTC	Urban	Male	-	mixed	5	Not combatants
6	Various	Urban	Male and female	mixed	mixed	6	Staff at veterans' organization
7	UMCOR	Rural	Male	Mixed	Kissi	4	two were not ex-combatants
8	UMCOR	Rural	Female	GOL	Kissi	4	
9	MVTC	Urban	Male	GOL	Bassa/Kpelle	6	
10	MVTC	Urban	Male	LURD*	Bassa*	6	
11	None	Rural	Male	GOL/LURD	Kpelle	5	
12	YMCA	Urban	Male	LURD/GOL	Mixed	6	
13	YMCA	Urban	Female	GOL	mixed	6	
14	None	Urban	Male	GOL	Loma	6	
15	YMCA	Urban	Male	MODEL	Kpelle*	6	
16	MVTC	Urban	Male	MODEL*	Mixed	6	
17	University	Urban	Male	GOL	Mixed	5	
18	High School	Urban	Female	GOL	Gio*	6	

* indicates that the group consisted mainly of such individuals, but not exclusively

Groups in bold are included in paper