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A decolonial reading of the CNN framing of the Ebola crisis.

By

Name: Jealous Paradzai

Student Reg No: R145335Q

Supervisor: Dr Last Moyo

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DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my entire family especially my wife Sheila for being a pillar of support. To my sons Tafadzwanashe and Anotidaishe Jarden, I say may this work inspire you to greater heights academically.

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Declaration

I Jealous Paradzai do hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work, has not been submitted for any degree or submitted for the degree or examination at any other University and that the sources I have used have been fully acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree in Media and Society Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Midlands State University.

Supervisor Signature

Date.....

Student Signature

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

This is a critical discourse analysis of how ideological domination and power were reproduced in the CNN representations of Africa and Africans in the coverage of the Ebola crisis. The research also sought to establish if the CNN could have provided a conduit for racism in its framing of the disease. The research used a qualitative research methodology. The research was theoretically informed by the theories of representation and decolonial theory. It generally emerged in this thesis that Africa and Africans were represented negatively as place of disease and as a place of danger. The African comes in largely in the form of a problem and they are represented as a white man's burden in the sense that there is nowhere in the CNN coverage are Africans shown as having the agency to stop the outbreak of the disease. There is no internal initiative by African systems to help stop the spread of Ebola, all help is marshaled from United States of America and United Kingdom. CNN could also have provided a conduit for racism in its coverage in the sense that the death of Americans is held apart from that of Africans. Europeans who are infected with Ebola are generally valorized and held in high esteem but the Africans are blamed for the spread of Ebola. Heroism is built around doctors and nurses from the United States of America and the west in general. This resonates with existing literature on the representations of diseases such as AIDS which was largely attributed to African cultural habits, norms and values. Racism is also inferred in the coverage of Ebola by CNN through its persistent blame on African culture and behavior. The white saviour complex is perpetuated in the coverage of the Ebola crisis as Africans are represented as helpless and have to rely on the goodwill of kind hearted whites to save them from Ebola which is basically attributed by the CNN as Africa's Ebola.

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

The ideology of Capitalism has always managed to sustain itself by continuously evolving with time in order to suit the prevailing circumstances. In order to do this, it has always found ways of mutating and reinventing itself over the past 500 years in order to disguise itself (Grosfoguel 2007). This, it has managed to achieve through its ability to reproduce dominance and power. At the beginning this dominance came in the form of brute force of slavery, through the force of colonialism to modern and sweet sounding discourses of independence, democracy and development. The discourse of white supremacy which is the fundamental pillar upon which the doctrine of capitalism is anchored on, one which is premised on the differences of people according to race and which presupposes the superiority of one race over other today lie subtle in all ideological apparatus such as the media, religion and education.

Ideological domination and the projection of power in the media is aestheticized¹, legitimized and naturalized as common sense in the news as it does in other forms of media products such as music, film, soap operas, wrestling, in sports and even in cartoons. News is a media genre which is packaged and sold as informative and authoritative. In fact it is the window through which most people in the modern world experience the world around them and in distant locations. However, news like other media products is subject to the internal and external forces which ultimately shape or determine what is eventually presented to the audience as authoritative and factual information. News is therefore a product or reflection of the sum total of forces that produce it than it reflects the real events and processes in social reality it claims to portray (Golding and Elliot 1979, Reardon 2013). In news production, there is structural privileging of elite and institutional sources means that certain voices are heard more than others, while other voices are ignored and others are silenced (van Dijk 2007).

¹ In this context the exercise of power is smooth and sweet tasting. Control is exercised in the form of everyday entertainment which is most sought after by its audience and at times at a high cost.

News is therefore not value-free and neither is it a product of disinterested parties, it is part of a more complex neo liberal capitalist machinery which seeks to reproduce and perpetuate the hegemony of white supremacy. It does this in ways that appear naturalized as everyday common sense and usually with consent of its the subalterns². Whereas dominations and the projection of power can be brute and banal like slavery and colonialism. Ideological domination in and through the media is often made sweet, smooth and subtle. It is to this end, that the research seeks to examine the representations of Africa and Africans in the CNN news coverage of the Ebola crisis with the aim of finding how ideological domination and power were reproduced and perpetuated in the context of a health crisis and also to find out if the CNN coverage of this outbreak provided a conduit for the perpetuation of the discourse of racism. This study is decolonial³ in the sense that it seeks to problematize race and colonial differences as fundamental issues used to stereotype Africa and Africans in western media representations especially during coverage of health crises.

2.0 Background to the Study

When W.E.B Dubois predicted that the problem of the 21st century and beyond was going to be that of colourline, he in fact intellectually prophesied the major challenges of this age. Although it is generally condemned and denied, racism is in fact a major problem confronting the world today. Through out the media and outside of it, messages are awash condemning and denouncing racism. Banners reading “Say No to Racism” and other such affirmations are fast becoming clichés. Before every world gathering such as sports events and conventions, racism is condemned. But however, throughout history, human kind has been characterized by the exploitation of man by man and the domination of some groups of people by others. Race has been used over centuries to

² This is a term that is used to refer to those members of society who are living outside the hegemonic power structures or in the margins of society. The term is broadly used to refer to people living outside the political, economic, social, cultural and technological hegemony. This term was popularized by a post colonial scholar, Gayatri Spivaki in her work titled “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In which she argued that these people (the subalterns) cannot speak even if they are given a platform to do so, because of the very nature they find themselves in.

³ A decolonial would be that reading which seeks to unmask and expose domination and power that presents itself as common sensical and everyday reality.

privilege on group over others. The doctrine of ‘Eurocentricism’⁴ has bifurcated the world into the west and the rest (Shohat and Stam 2002). This means that it has created a global society that is characterized by differences in people along the two traditionally problematic areas. That is race and the control of economic resources. The more privileged group, euphemistically referred to as the global north is the hegemonic group. The global south on the other hand is a metaphor to refer to groups and countries previously marginalized on the lines of race and today, along economic lines. This exploitation and domination has been mutating and transforming throughout history from the denial of outright humanity to some people to outright slavery around the 16th century, to colonialism in the in the 19th century. The discourse of white supremacy⁵ has been used throughout history to justify the exploitation of black people and non western subjects in general in the global south in order to prop up capitalism.

Global campaigns and resistance to racism has seen ‘superficial’ reaction from capitalism in the form of acceptance and recognition of the doctrine of equality of mankind regardless of colour and race and indeed all forms of differences amongst people of the world as enshrined in the United Nations charter on human rights and many other international commitments which pledge the equality of men irrespective of differences.

Racism however did not die with the birth of the discourses of human rights, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, and globalization but rather it mutated into a hidden and invisible forms which are very difficult to recognize. In fact new form of racism is much more virulent and subtle. It is legitimized and celebrated in the media as common sense, as normal. It is invisible to the ordinary eye and ear. Capitalism and its vices have this propensity to evolve and change, creating and hiding itself in new language.

The late 20th century brought up new discourses of democracy and development as African countries gained independence albeit through military struggle. These new forms of thinking brought new hope for the global south that at long last, the global north

⁴ This is considered to be the basis of capitalism. It is centred on Europe as the centre of capital. It means that everything is defined from the Centre or from Europe as a standard of how things ought to be.

⁵ A system that is premised on the supposed superiority of the white race and hence its privileging in all spheres of life.

indeed now recognizes the people of the south as equals. Media representations however speak to the contrary. Africa continues to be at the receiving end of negative and stereotyped representations from the more powerful global north. Africa and the entire global south continue to be a ground for case studies and problems while theories and solutions are said to emanate from the global north. Debates around unfair flow of information and media products lost momentum around the 1980s as the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO⁶) debate did not get the necessary support since it was considered a direct offensive against the very principles of capitalism. The post NWICO era, the collapse of the communist bogeyman and the fall of the Berlin wall are some of the geopolitical factors which brought to an end, the global debate around cultural imperialism.

The emergence of the global west as the only geopolitical superpower entrenched the hegemony of capitalism. Western media, as an instrument of capitalism continue to provide, in the words of Achidie⁷ (2009) a single story of the global south and black people even in the global age which claims allegiance to human rights, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism as fundamental pillars of a globalization. This narrative is however no longer as banal or blatant as it used to be in the past. The images of superiority and inferiority are aestheticized and hidden from the eye of the ordinary media consumer through various strategies which are employed in order to reproduce domination and power and hence perpetuate the status quo. It is against this background that this research seeks to examine CNN representations of Africa and Africans in the context of a global health threat such as the Ebola outbreak to find out how the media institution reproduced ideological domination and power through its framing of Africa and Africans and also to find out if the CNN provided a conduit for perpetuation of racism in its representations of Africa and Africans.

⁶ A popular platform in which the countries of the global south sought to fight the uneven flow of media and information from North to South, culminating in what became understood as cultural imperialism. The NWICO debate lost its momentum when the United States of America pulled out of UNESCO as it felt that the objectives undermined its interest which lay in free trade

⁷ An influential young Nigerian female philosopher/writer who has written extensively on the subject of the representation of blacks

3.0 Significance of the Study

A critical discourse analysis of how ideological domination and power is perpetuated in and through the news is fundamental in the sense that it unmasks and exposes power and domination which is projected as common sense and natural.

Media representations may be understood as the various ways in which the media portray issues, ideas, experiences, groups of people or communities from certain ideological perspectives. Media representations are neither value free nor are they products of disinterested parties. This research study is premised on the fact that media representations are therefore not merely a reflection of society at a given point in time but rather that they are re-presentations of reality based on reflections which are selective and highly ideological. Media representations have the capacity to shape and influence people's understanding and perception of the world.

The re-emergence of Ebola virus disease in some parts of West Africa brought fresh challenges to global health efforts, which are already reeling from other epidemics such as HIV/AIDS.

The rather unusual nature of the Ebola Virus Disease in terms of its causes, and manner of transmission to human beings and among human beings make the disease very strange. The disease currently has no known cure and it also has a very high case mortality which is sometimes as high as 90% in extreme cases compounds the strange nature of this disease. Ebola virus disease has therefore generated widespread media reports across the globe. The way the local and international media frame the disease, has serious consequences on how the world receives and understand the disease. Media representations of the Ebola virus disease as a threat to world health and wellbeing impacts on how policy actors and non policy actors such as communities, governments, development agencies, multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, BRICS, Global health community such as hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, research institutions all respond to the disease and subsequently affect policy directions on mitigating the impacts of the disease and in the search for a cure.

The Cable News Network was selected for this study because of its size and its ability to reach to a global audience. Its global influence was therefore a major determinant for its selection. Although CNN is located in the global North, the media institution has got a global reach; it has viewership of over 2 billion and has offices in over 212 countries (Moyo 2011; Bagdikian 2004, van Ginneken 1998).

A study of media representations of Africa and Africans in the context of a health crisis such as the Ebola virus disease therefore brings in a fresh impetus to the study of domination and exploitation of weaker groups by more dominant hegemonic powers through the use of ideological instruments such as news which are presented as authoritative and factual when in fact they are packaged to entrench the status quo through representation of certain world views as natural and common sensical when in fact there is a deliberate move to ideologically position one group ahead of others and therefore perpetuate domination.

A study of this nature is therefore meant to have a social transformative agenda as it seeks to unmask the subtle workings of hegemony in unlikely situations of pity such as during an outbreak of a disease like Ebola to expose how certain actors seek to extract political and economic mileage under the guise of rendering humanitarian assistance. It seeks therefore to expose power in all its manifestations. To this extent, this study could be said to be significant in as far as it seeks to empower the subalterns.

This study is also significant in the sense that it continues to problematize the problem of race and racism in and through the media. Racism is one of the fundamental problems of the contemporary age, as long foreseen by scholars such as W. E. B Dubois.

4.0 Statement of the Problem

This thesis seeks to examine the CNN news representation of Africans and Africa in the context of the Ebola crisis through a critical discourse analysis of CNN coverage of the outbreak in some parts of West Africa. This study is therefore not a study of the disease per se but rather of how Africa and Africans are portrayed in the context of this disease. In other words, the disease has provided an entry point into how dominant media frame the other. There is a significant body of literature pointing to how capitalist media is at

the service of power. Media inherently work to prop the capitalist system. Film, news, sops, drama, wrestling and other forms of media content basically work to conceal the exploitation of the subaltern groups in society.

The Ebola virus disease affecting some parts of West Africa such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea has seen thousands of people dying. The disease has also exposed the ability of health care systems of these countries capability to deal with the outbreak. The World Health Organization responded to this health threat by declaring the Ebola virus disease outbreak an international health disaster, therefore placing responsibility of managing the health disaster a mandate of the World Health Organization.

The Ebola Virus Disease outbreak has consequently attracted world wide media attention making headlines on newspapers, radios, televisions and on the internet generating serious debate amongst populations. The CNN news is a vast media empire with a global reach reaching up to 200 million households' worldwide or over two billion viewers' world wide.

A critical discourse analysis of the CNN news coverage of the Ebola virus disease outbreak seeks to explore how discourse is framed in the CNN news coverage and how ideological domination and power are reproduced in the coverage of the disease and also in terms of the extent to which the discourse of racism is perpetuated in its representation. The variant of critical discourse analysis employed in this research is influenced by scholars such as Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. It focuses on the power of language as a tool for domination and how language this domination must be understood within the historical and social context of the phenomenon under study. The study is therefore influenced by linguistics and semiotics.

6.0 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions;

- 6.1 How did CNN news reproduce ideological domination and power in its framing of the Ebola crisis?
- 6.2 To what extent did racism inform the representation of Africans and Africa within the context of the Ebola crisis?

6.3 Which discourses were suppressed and excluded in the CNN coverage of the CNN coverage of the Ebola outbreak?

7.0 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to CNN news representations of the Ebola crisis in West Africa in the 2014 period. This period was chosen because it represents the height of the Ebola health crisis where media coverage was at its most extensive. This is also the period when the disease outbreak was declared an international health disaster by the World Health Organization. The study is also limited to an examination of news footage uploaded on YouTube⁸. This platform provides the most accessible and flexible repository for data as CNN news uploads most news clips this site for easy access. This method of accessing data proved very convenient. The study also used visual images as the source of data and excluded newspaper reports and radio reports mainly due to logistical purposes. Visual images were considered most suitable for this research as mostly research in visual representations of news on and about Africa are generally limited as opposed to print media and radio. Visual representations were also considered against the general belief that contemporary society is now largely visual in nature. Visual text has become the most dominant form of communication in a society that can best be described as a society of the spectacle.

8.0 Limitations of the Study

The CNN news was selected for this study because of feasibility reasons. It was considered that global media is too broad a context to be realistically studied within the purview of this study. Although CNN is located in the west it does not represent western media, it however has a global reach as to warrant significance. Results from this study would therefore be limited to the CNN news organization so that makes this study not generalizable to all western media organizations. The study remains a critical discourse analysis of how domination and power are reproduced in CNN representations of Africa and Africans in the context of Ebola only and therefore the results will not be generalizable to all CNN representations of Africa and Africans. The study will therefore

⁸ An internet based innovation that revolutionized the media and communication industries by providing a platform whereby audiences can access video based information at their own convenience. Most media giants have found the YouTube to be a very innovative site to increase their visibility and online presence.

give a picture of how CNN frames specific issues only. The research therefore lives a gap for future researchers to explore global media representations of Africa and Africans in the context of health crises in Africa on a length and breath and level of sustenance that will yield more generalizable results.

10.0 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to highlight the background of the study and to shed light on the significance of the study, the aim of the study, to highlight the research questions, the scope of the study and the limitations of the study. It emerged that this study does not seek to study Ebola as a disease per se but rather, the outbreak provide an entry point into the study of representations of Africans and Africa in the context of a heath crisis in terms of how domination is reproduced and maintained in media discourses.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to engage with existing literature in an endeavor to locate this study in existing scholarship. Literature review will also acknowledge academic authorities who inform this study. Literature will be discussed under the following themes; the framing of Africa by western media, framing of HIV/AIDS in the global media, western journalism in Africa and the portrayal of black people in the media. Literature review also seeks to point out what scholars in the field of media representation are silent about and thus establish some gaps in existing literature.

2.2 The framing of Africa by western media

War, disease and famine symbolize Africa in news reports by the US and European media. News coverage of Africa usually begins with a preliminary report on a looming crisis usually accompanied by graphic or violent images. These are sensationalized for a few days, followed by some degree of resolution or a new crisis. As a result, audiences only get episodic information about Africa (Moeller 1999). This view is also shared by Moyo (2011) in a study of the CNN coverage of Zimbabwe in an election context, when he concluded that its news coverage of the election was episodic and lacked context. Coverage of international conflicts is particularly influenced by news sources that help shape journalists' understanding of the subject (Seib 2002). Chouliaraki (2008) also points out that the media uses mode of presentation of news such as the use of maps and static pictures as a way of eliciting minimum or no sympathy at all on the people covered thereby creating distant sufferers out of victims in Africa and other peripheries.

In contrast the framing of events in Western Europe or in the United States of America is done using modes of news presentation which elicit maximum sympathy from the audience. The bombing of the World Trade Centre and the London Underground railway station are typical examples of news framing which elicits maximum sympathy from the audience by appealing to the highest emotions of the audience, through the use of news devices such as having a reporter on the news scene and reporting using highly emotive

language which is very low on facts and very high on appealing to the emotions of the audience. This study seeks to find out how news on Ebola is packaged and framed.

Strentz (1989) points out that the direction and the “facts” of news is shaped by how, what, and who defines the story, giving sources, greater power in framing information. Study considers the role of news sources in the framing of a story, by paying attention to the correlation between the dominant media frames in a news story and the sources cited in the story. Drawing on normative media theories and prior studies of Africa’s representation, the role of sources in the frame-building process was analyzed, together with the impact of news making processes on journalists’ reporting about Darfur⁹. The textual analysis largely supports results of prior studies on news framing of Africa. However, interviews with journalists revealed that the individual biases and motives of journalists and their sources significantly influenced the coverage of African issues.

However for scholars such as Ibrahim (2013), media representations tend to fit into the historical narrative that is held by media’s audience or readers rather than the individual motives of journalists. From Ibrahim’s perspective, it becomes imperative therefore to find out who the intended audience of any media representations is, if one is to understand the framing of certain media representations. Ibrahim (2013) further asserts that media representations of western media are therefore a veiled form of perpetuation of the discourse of race and racism that characterized previous encounters between western and African societies. It is this assertion which this research seeks to subject to an analysis to see if there has not been any shift of perception of the other by the west or to see if there is no change in the status quo. Put in other words, this research intends to find out how ideological domination is perpetuated in the representation of Africa and Africans in the context of Ebola. That is whether it follows the traditional frames of references or if there is a change because of time and other developments on the world scene such as globalization, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

Atkinson (1999:214) points out that media “analyses of the causes of conflict and crisis in Africa rarely make more than a passing reference to the political roles of western

⁹ The capital city of Sudan. Sudan has a long history of civil war and only recently the civil war gave birth to the newest country in Africa, which is South Sudan.

countries or to the importance of Africa's economic resources in the world economy". In other words, reporting events on Africa is devoid of context. Viewers or readers are just furnished with bare facts of the event (Kleinman and Kleinman 1996; Campbell 2003).

Consequently, the press portrayal to Americans is that Africa is a 'dark continent'¹⁰ where violent and irrational people live, or that the continent is a lost cause because of its constant struggle with violence, famine and disease. (Kothari; 2010:209).

Framing of HIV/AIDS in the global media

The tragedy of AIDS unfolding across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) cannot be grasped without taking into account the myriad ways whereby the 'disease is linked to poverty and inequality' (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). In globalized world (Barnett and Whiteside, 2002:27). Drawing on Galtung's (1990) typology of structural and cultural violence, the article investigated the relationship between HIV/AIDS and neoliberalism¹¹, which appeared as the dominant paradigm in development thought and practice at a time when the disease emerged (1990).

Studies examined representations of AIDS in Africa in policy and popular discourse, for material struggles over access to treatment, funding and wider global political and economic arrangements, are intimately bound up with struggles over the frames through which policy actors and the general public portray, perceive and interpret AIDS, poverty in Africa and its people (Nauta and Stahinova 2012).

A study by Nauta and Stahinova (ibid) revealed two dominant frames in the representation of AIDS which are the behavioral frame and the philanthrocapitalist¹²frame. In order to understand how the conditions necessary to sustain lives in a health crisis such as the HIV/AIDS, it is considered necessary to

¹⁰ A classical stereotype of Africa as a heart of darkness and as a place associated with backwardness and underdevelopment

¹¹ Refers to a new form of capitalism which is more virulent, more subtle, it is associated with ever diminishing role of nation states in the regulation of the markets. It is often touted as capitalism with "gloves off". Typical neoliberalism philosophy states that government has no business in business

¹² This is a term which refers to new philosophy in philanthropy which subscribes to the infusion of business principles to charity causes. It is considered by some as a form of privatization of charity as it is traditionally known.

interrogate the images, messages and narratives in order to analyze and understand the frames through which policy actors and the general make sense of the crisis.

An understanding of how AIDS in Africa is framed in public discourse significantly help to shape not only the range of policy responses deemed feasible, appropriate and rational but to also ask questions of why certain policy directions are viewed as favorable ahead of others. Policy directions are hardly value free, even if the policy actors claim to be working in the best interest of the public health and safety. The dominance of certain frames over others usually and in many cases reflect and in turn, reinforce existing inequalities of economic, political, and cultural capital, such that certain interpretations of the pandemic are given prominence not because they necessarily offer the most comprehensive framework for understanding AIDS, but because of power and legitimacy of the institutions from which they emerge (O'Manique, 2004).

Accordingly, Bardhan's empirical frame analysis of five global news agencies shows that 'western conceptions of the pandemic' and 'dominant AIDS-related institutional forces of the west' dominate media coverage of the pandemic (2001:304). Struggles over how the pandemic in Southern Saharan Africa is framed have always been at the heart of the politics of HIV/AIDS (Sontag 1990; Treichler 1999). A focus on two central frames and how their circulation in policy literature, the media and in popular culture at large has played a significant role in legitimizing the wider neoliberal paradigm within which the global response to AIDS has been understood (page 702)

This frame is based on the stereotype of African sexualization and the individualization of risk of contracting the disease. Ever since its emergence, HIV/AIDS has been exclusively viewed primarily through biological lens and only secondarily through a rather narrow public health lens that attributes the disease to the excesses of individual behavior (O'Manique 2004). This study therefore seeks to examine the frame with which the CNN views the disease like Ebola given its completely different mode of transmission between people.

The production and circulation of knowledge about the disease in the public sphere has thus been largely shaped by the biomedical and public health fraternity. Throughout the

1990s, the period which is widely acknowledged as the lost decade in the fight against AIDS in Africa because of the failure to make breakthrough in arresting the spread of the disease, biomedical sources, researchers and policy actors were the ‘dominant spokespersons for the pandemic’, making up almost 75% of all the news sources (Bardham 2001;300), and bulk of media attention was characterized by annual international AIDS conferences and workshops which were dominated by those same actors (Brodie et al 2003;4), thereby constructing ‘a hegemonic reality’ (O’Manique 2004,6) which has largely influenced the global institutional response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Whereas the biomedical perspective of this hegemonic reality is based on the belief of the ability of scientific knowledge to control the virus, the behavioral dimension on the other hand has its origin in public health and behavioral science philosophy and conceives HIV/AIDS in terms of sexual habits, practices and behaviors (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). It would therefore be of academic interest to see how a disease whose mode of transmission is not sexual will be explained and if the disease will be treated as a global challenge that provide a threat to the whole of humanity. This is against the background that when HIV/AIDS first surfaced in the North, it was widely associated with so-called ‘risk groups’ homosexual men, intravenous drug users and commercial sex workers. Early public health efforts were therefore concerned with minimizing the spread of the virus in these groups and to prevent its spread into the wider population through vigorous awareness raising and behavior change advocacy programs.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa was fundamentally different as it was seen largely as being heterosexual in nature; the disease thus aroused western interest in African sexuality. The framing of Africa as a continent obsessed with sex. As a result, ‘African culture, poverty, ignorance and promiscuity’ were advanced as key explanatory themes by the UK media for the emerging HIV/AIDS crisis in the late 1980s (Kitzinger and Miller 1992). The disease was therefore portrayed as ‘something to do with Africanness and blackness itself (Kitzinger and Miller 1992, Nauta and Stahinova 2012:40).

When images of the ‘slim disease’ first appeared, they ‘fit neatly into the pre-existing western image of a wasting continent of Africa (Patton 1990:83), where death was merely

a ‘fact of life’ for media audiences and therefore hardly newsworthy (Kitzinger and Miller 1992:36). The depictions of the ‘third worldness’¹³ of Africa’s health care system reinforced the deeply entrenched Northern image of a helpless and hapless Africa in need of outside intervention (Treichler 1999:105, Nauta and Stahinova 2012:703). This means that at the present moment diseases of the nature of HIV/AIDS are essentially attributed to the condition of being African, hence confirming the biopolitical and geopolitical explanation of strange diseases to a specific people and a specific continent.

Since no effective medication was known during the first decade of the mass outbreak of HIV/AIDS (1985-1995), these interventions focused on prevention (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). Yet, argues, Stillwaggon (2006:142) that ‘the framing of AIDS in Africa was based on the belief that the disease was inimical to Africa because of exceptional sexuality of its people. To date this belief has restricted the scope of research to sexual behavior. This belief has also largely influenced epidemiological policy direction on Africa to placing emphasis on prevention programmes as the primary method of coping with the disease. Policy strategies in and on Africa are built around the need for Africans to change risky sexual behavior and cultural norms which is generally believed to fuel the spread of the disease (Stillwaggon *ibid*).

The framing of HIV/AIDS as a sex based disease in Africa which is fuelled by cultural norms which encourage risky sexual behavior has created a stereotype around which policy on treatment has been shaped in terms of who gets access to which regime of medication. For most of the second decade (1996-2005), as has been noted already, treatment available for the affluent was deemed unsuitable or uneconomical for the poor. The ‘only practical course’ for African countries was still ‘to concentrate on prevention’ through changing their risky sexual habits (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). One cannot that issues of race and power have been built around the issue of treatment of HIV/AIDS by merely suggesting that treatment for a certain class of people may not be suitable for another class.

¹³ According to a leading decolonial scholar Boaventura desousa Santos, this is a euphemism to refer to the category of countries which is considered by the global North to be the poorest countries in a ranking that privileges the countries of the North as the “First World”. The iron is that most of the countries as the third world countries are the richest in terms of natural mineral wealth.

The racial component is brought in when we understand these issues of access around Galtung theory of structural violence and structural racism. It is a generally acknowledged fact that the world's resources are heavily skewed in favour of a small minority and to suggest that this small minority gets access to preferential treatment for a disease which has "scientifically" attributed to the biological and geographical nature of the majority of people can be interpreted as racist. Therefore by framing AIDS as a disease of the poor and many of the world's poor people being black can be read as providing a conduit for racism. It would therefore be of interest to find out how a disease of the nature of Ebola is accounted for in the media, given its strange nature of manifestation and its deadliness.

Even, after the dramatic fall in ARV¹⁴ prices from 2000 onwards, most global health actors continue to argue against massive rolling –out of treatment in Africa by drawing on the same arguments which are based on racial and neo-colonial stereotypes. They insist that anti-retroviral therapy is too sophisticated not only for Africa's primitive health care systems but for impoverished, illiterate Africans themselves (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). Even the head of the United State of America International Development once asserted that Africans were too backward and illiterate that they could not understand the logic of taking prescription drugs to take their drugs at a certain time of the day (in Jones 2004), therefore treating incapable and dull Africans was deemed wasteful. It made financial logic therefore to commit funds to 'cost effective' prevention and self-help programmes.

It was believed that the best way therefore of saving the lives of the Africans was to ensure that they did not contract the disease in the first place. The message was thus simple, the poor simply had to learn to endure their suffering and the rich would have to show them how it was supposed to be done (Barnett and Whiteside 2002, 325). The framing of AIDS as a disease of the poor effectively provided for a racist intervention where Africans are considered as too poor, too uneducated and dull to warrant a

¹⁴ Anti-retro viral is an HIV/AIDS therapy which boosts a compromised immune system by revitalizing the body's ability to fight opportunistic diseases. At the time of its invention, this drug was very expensive and only available for the rich elite who could afford it but however with persistent lobbying and fighting crusaders from the global south, the drug is now available in general forms and is now available to millions of people, thereby saving millions of lives.

complicated regime of treatment and therefore the only way for them was to drive policy towards prevention and towards culture change.

In the New York Times, a consultant to US health agencies fighting AIDS' declared explicitly that there was nowhere in the world than in sub-Saharan Africa where AIDS is clearly a disease that is attributed to primitive and backward life-threatening cultural attitudes'. African cultural norms were described as devastatingly dangerous and therefore changing a culture that casually accepts dangerous sexual behavior was the only way to save lives (LaPorte 2004). According to the UNAIDS, effective HIV prevention efforts often require changes to deep-seated traditions and social norms regarding sexuality (UNAIDS 2006:127). Africans are framed as helpless in the face of HIV/AIDS and therefore it is the white man's burden to save his poor and backward brother even if it meant through forceful methods, just as it was the white man's burden to save his sinful brother as the justification for the colonization of Africa (Mhiripiri¹⁵ 2008).

In the late 1980s, AIDS activists in the US began to challenge the hegemonic dominance of the biomedical establishment to expose the concealed sexist, homophobic and racist premises of scientific research and prevention schemes (Nauta and Stahinova 2012:704) this exposure resulted in some drastic changes to the power structures, practices and discourse of the national health apparatus and redefined people living with a disease from being viewed as objects of pity to the arbiters of how that disease should be managed (Smith and Simpton 2006:155-156). The hegemonic framing of the pandemic has however proven resilient.

While sexual behavior is recognized as an important element in managing the pandemic, it by itself cannot explain the HIV prevalence as high as 25% of the adult population in some African countries and less than 1% in the developed world (Poku, 2005:4). The fixation with Africa's 'unusually' high-risk sexual cultural system (Leclerc-Madlala 2010) finds little empirical grounding. As early as 1995, the World Health Organization had declared that AIDS would become largely a disease of the poor (1995:21). It is this

¹⁵ Professor Nhamo Antony Mhiripiri is a Senior lecturer in media studies at one of the top universities in Zimbabwe. However because of the epistemic privileging of knowledge from the global north scholars like him hardly receive academic mention in global discourse

framing of AIDS in Africa which has not found a voice among policy hegemonic actors and even when global health agencies readily acknowledge that food insecurity, gender inequality and poverty are the key socio-economic determinants of risk and vulnerability.

Calls however, for a ‘structural approach¹⁶’ to combating HIV/AIDS have not found resonance with hegemonic global health policy directors. This therefore points to a gap for measures challenging hegemonic forces on global health by questioning and rejecting dominant frames on epidemics and emerging diseases which reinforce stereotypes and domination of the poor. The emergence and re-emergence of diseases such as the Ebola virus disease and the global media interest around its publicity points to a gap in media research to establish and question dominant ideologies in media representations especially in view of the power of representations in shaping policy direction around the management of global health issues. As has already been alluded to earlier on, policy decisions and policy directions are sites of struggles socially, economically and politically and therefore dominant hegemonic powers must always be challenged especially where they legitimize the unjust suffering of the poor.

The second frame described by Treichler (1999:317) as a ‘liberal humanist view of AIDS, represents HIV/AIDS as a terrible human tragedy which demands care and compassion. He points out the pandemic represents a human calamity which demands that the more privileged members of society rise up above prejudice, discrimination and fear and help the suffering, the victims of the disease.

The past few years have seen numerous corporate-celebrity status campaigns Product RED, Fashion against AIDS, LIVE8 adopting this philanthropic narrative around the plight of African AIDS ‘victims’ as their principle cause. They embrace the ideology, strategies and practices of transnational capitalism as a means of affecting positive change in the world. It signals a wider shift away from the ‘pornography of poverty’ of past representational strategies (Cameron and Haanstra 2008). Images of wasting bodies and emaciated children are out. Instead, celebrating affluence in the North, concern for

¹⁶ A holistic approach which acknowledges that the solution lie in a number of flaws which may have a historical background such as acknowledging the impact of poverty on disease prevention and management. For example acknowledging that by addressing the problems of poverty a system could in effect be indirectly addressing the causes of diseases such as AIDS and Ebola.

Africa is repackaged in the glitz, glam and fashion-magazine gloss' of commodity fetishism (Richey and Ponte 2008:720). These campaigns however, although they avoid the stereotypical imagery of Africa, they do very little to challenge the symbolic politics governing donor-recipient, North-South power relations. Deprived of agency and voice, Africans are framed as distant others to be rescued by affluent, ethical, cosmopolitan shoppers, while celebrities have become their self-appointed spokespeople (Nauta and Stahinova 2012:705). While this may be the case with the new trends in the representation of AIDS sufferers, this research seeks to find out what images are generally used to depict the suffering other.

Digital death takes the silencing of the 'other' a step further by the total absence of its intended beneficiaries on its website. Instead, stylized, sexily, sexily clad celebrities in coffins have become the avatars of dying Africans (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). The growing pervasiveness of these schemes in popular culture marks an important shift in the production and circulation of knowledge about the pandemic, which is increasingly being shaped by the corporate-celebrity-NGO-philanthrocapitalist frame. The question which this research will provide answers to, is there really a shift in the representation of the suffering others, in terms of the images that are used to depict the other? In other words, is Africa now being represented differently in the CNN, in the context of a disease such as Ebola?

The philanthrocapitalist frame produces and circulates an understanding of the pandemic which erases any contradiction between the hegemony of global capitalism and the fight against AIDS and masks the structural relationship between mass consumption and global relations of production and trade that sustain poverty, inequality and differential distribution of HIV/AIDS. It shifts attention from the way victims are implicated, by doing what we always do", in the structural violence of the global order. A framing that reduces the public response to the AIDS crisis to a matter of compassion and charitable consumption creates the cultural conditions for structural violence to take place and at the same time renders it invisible (Nauta and Stahinova 2012). The philanthrocapitalist view to media representation of the other presupposes an epistemic shift in the projection of the other, and hence this research will seek to confirm in deed if the images that are used

to depict the other, and in the context of this research, the suffering Africans differently from the traditional, stereotyped images of Africa and Africans as dying and decaying.

Portrayal of black people in the media

There is a significant body of literature depicting the media portrayal of black people from being absent in the media altogether, being represented as incapable of representing themselves, to being represented in the most negative and derogatory images, to being represented in somewhat funny roles, to being represented as an auxiliary help to white people. Perhaps what is critical to allude to, is that the portrayal of black people has always reflected the historical, political, economic, social and cultural epoch of a given time, from slavery, to colonialism through to post independence era.

Wendy Willems et al (2001) in a research on the media portrayal of the poor, point out that although news articles were in neutral tone and portrayed the difficulties faced by blacks, they however did not do anything to contextualize the suffering or to shed more light on the problems suffered by black victims. Cinema and news used to create an image of Africa as a place of suffering, for example famine and war in some of Africa such as South Sudan is decontextualised and there is no background information given as to why there is war in that country. The media strategy to decontextualise the negative portrayal of black people is what Mourid Boughart¹⁷, a Palestinian poet says that if you want to dispossess a people, tell their story, in stead of them telling their own story and always start with secondly (Achidie 2007). Put in other words, do not give a context or background. Talk about the poverty of black people but never talk about the cause of that poverty.

Williams et al (2009) posits that outside sports, the African Americans appear fewer and fewer times in the media with the few remaining appearing as gangsters and street people. It appears therefore that black people are represented in negative stereotyped roles in the media in the minority of cases that they are given prominence. Bullock et al (2001) also views the African Americans as invisible in the media. They are treated as

¹⁷ A leading Palestinian poet

absent in the main stream media except where they are represented in a negative way. Gans (1995) however believes that there is an over representation of blacks in the media.

The media is awash with images of blacks as poor and undeserving of sympathy and public support. The idea of structured absence is captured well by Mhiripiri (2008) when he says that when Europeans come to Africa to visit tourist attractions, they are more interested in the visual elements which play into the dominant stereotypes of Africans by the people back home, therefore they collected those photographs and images of Africans which fitted into what people back home in Europe and America believed to be the real, authentic Africa. They therefore excluded everything and anything which did not represent the other as backward and primitive and therefore pristine and untainted by modernity. Black people are sometimes depicted in western media as being discovered by this adventurous white man who travels around the world as depicted in the heart of darkness or in the tales of John Locke¹⁸, who is credited as being one of the pioneers of writing stories about black people, where black people were negatively described as people without heads or a people with their heads on their breasts (Achidie 2009).

Language is also deployed differently to describe black and white victims for example; the black victims of flooding¹⁹ in USA were described as ‘looters’ whereas their white counterparts were described as having ‘found’ some food although visual images showed that they all had secured the cartons of soft drinks from the same source and in the same manner. This thesis therefore to this extent, seeks to establish if the CNN news coverage of Ebola provide a conduit for racist representations of Africa and African victims of Ebola and how language is used to perpetuate reproduction of domination and power.

Media representations of blacks have traditionally been stereotyped on racial lines. Africans, Asians, Arabs, Latin Americans and indigenous and people have always been represented negatively in the media, especially in Hollywood cinema and in the news. In some cases, these groups have often been represented as absent, in other words, they have

¹⁸ An English philosopher and physician who is regarded as one of the enlightenment thinkers and was regarded as the “father of classical liberalism”

¹⁹ Hurricane Katrina victims of flooding in New Orleans, United States of America. It turned out that the majority of the victims were black and they were negatively represented as criminals, refugees and looters Sommers et al (2006). Race and Media coverage of Hurricane Katrina: analysis, Implications, and Future Research Questions

been structurally removed from the media as a way of ‘representing’ them. In early cinema, blacks were usually absent from film. In news they were also absent or in cases where they made it in the news, they were consistently represented as problems either as criminals or as social ‘pests’²⁰. This view is also shared by Van Dijk (1993) that a strategy of media to hide domination and mask power is through the persistent projection of marginalized people as a problem. This view also finds resonance in Achidie (2009) that if one shows a people as only one thing over and over, that is what they become. Media therefore builds stereotypes.

The blacks, Asians and other marginalized social groups have also often been represented by whites in roles which were deemed inappropriate for blacks to represent themselves. Aggressive roles were often played by whites, representing the blacks; the opposite however, was not possible. Blacks could not represent whites. The definition of black was not restricted literally to colour but to blood. In the Euro-American racist discourse, just one drop of black blood was sufficient to disqualify an actress or an actor from representing whites (Shohat and Stam). Put in other words, dominant cinema finds it convenient to turn “dark coloured” people into substitutable others while white people are seen ideologically as being “beyond ethnicity” and can therefore “stand in” for others.

Although African American, native American, have been allowed to ‘represent’ their communities in cinema, Shohat and Stam (2002) however, point out that an epidemically correct face does not guarantee community of self representation because the definition of race by blood and not by the colour of one’s skin.

Today blatantly open racism is stigmatized and punished. Racism has become more subtle, deeper forms of discursively and institutionally structured racism is still unrecognized (ibid, 201). Blacks are no longer cast as servants, maids or waiters. They now appear on television as lawyers, doctors and pilots. This however, does not point to the disappearance of racism but to its mutation into much deeper and hidden forms. Riggs

²⁰ The construction of the black man as a problem (and therefore to be eradicated by extermination like pests

in Shohat and Stam (2002) is of the view that for example, the role of Uncle Tom²¹, was not to represent the blacks but rather to reassure whites comforting images of black docility. Positive portrayals of black actors in TV sitcoms²² such as *The Jeffersons*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, according to Herman Gray²³ paint a simulacrum of “racial harmony, affluence and individual social mobility” when in actual fact they just subvert attention on more the persistence of racism and inequality. This thesis there seeks to find out how news as a discourse represents Africa and Africans and also if the racial discourse as perpetuated in the dominant cinema is also prevalent in news about Africa.

Shohat and Stam (2002) also point out that in order to subvert growing attention on glaring racism; the media undertook some form of cynical integrationism in dominant cinema which simply replaced new heroes and heroines from the ranks of the oppressed without changing the oppressive system itself. These few assimilated ‘natives’ cannot be described as representing the natives. Therefore in a study of media representations, researchers ought to pay attention to pseudo representation which is not representative of the broader homogeneous group, in the case of this, a group which is not representative of the Africans infected and affected research by Ebola.

Today the problem of race is individualized. It seeks to reprimand only that white child who is unfortunate to utter the ‘nigger’ while disguising the real institutionalized and structured forms of racism. It is with this background that this research sought to explore how the CNN represented Africa in the context of a health crisis such as Ebola. This health crisis has come against the rhetoric of development, globalization, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism.

²¹ The construct of a black figure who possesses the characteristics which are considered ideal for a black man. These characteristics are inter alia passive, docile and servile. The kind of black man who inspires confidence to an insecure white community

²² Sitcoms such as *The Jeffersons* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* are widely regarded as a media strategy by the west to mask racism by creating a façade of an America where upward social mobility through social classes was very much possible depending on how hardworking one is. Black people were beginning to be represented in top positions such as judges and lawyers.

²³ He is a leading Professor Sociology professor whose area of interest is media studies and issues of race and racism. He has also appeared in documentaries including ‘colour adjustment’

As highlighted by Foucault, that representation ought to be understood in its proper historical context, attention is drawn to the Tom Brokaw²⁴ report (April 1993) on immigration. This report highlights the importance of historicity and contextualization in discussions of stereotyping and media racism. The police use language such as “illegal aliens” in reference to the immigrants, and how they proliferate like mice. One of the immigrants is even shown briefly warning that nothing would stop the immigrants. The report does not however put the issue into its proper historical context; it does not explain that the whole area was previously a part of Mexico and that at one stage in history, these “illegal” immigrants were once legal.

In the Brokaw report, whites are represented as the experts, the few blacks who are given a voice call for more stringent immigration control policies, nobody speaks for the blacks and there is absolutely no mention of colonialism, slavery and capitalism. A closer reflection on the Brokaw report revokes echoes of 19th century racial hierarchy theories by classical scholars such as Hegel²⁵, Gobineau and Renan (Shohat and Stam). The racialised human gradation pyramid has blacks occupying the lowest position on the racial hierarchy. The blacks are incapable of development, while the Asians are rung above the blacks, they are however, passive. The white race, at the top of the human hierarchy is characterized by intelligence, orderliness and a sense of freedom.

For Renan, too, blacks still occupy the bottom position, the Asians are in the middle and whites maintain pole position. In the Brokaw report, although the qualities posited have changed, the Asians have improved a great deal; they are now hardworking, although the basic hierarchy remains unchanged although the supremacy of the white race is however down played. They are represented as more objective and as the experts. In light of this statement, this research seeks to find out how Africa and Africans are represented in the context of a health crisis such as the Ebola crisis.

²⁴ In Ella Shohat and Robert Stam *Unthinking EuroCentricism*, Report on Immigration which touched on racism

²⁵ Hegel, Gobineau and Renan are widely acknowledged as the grandfathers of modern racism

However for scholars such as PLO Lumumba and Achille Mbembe²⁶, they attribute blame on the Africans and describe them as co-conspirators or authors of their own problems because for Lumumba, Africans always define themselves from the point of view of Europe and America for example, even African food has foreign names, they sing the praise of football teams from Europe and watch films from Hollywood but however, scholars such as Last Moyo²⁷ believe that blaming the victim does not really help solve the problems of agency and but rather a way of escaping from the fundamental issues at the bottom of negative representations of Africa. This is the reason why this thesis seeks to find out how a dominant media institution such as the CNN represented Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis.

It is against this background that this research seeks to find out how the CNN news, as the missionary of western media represent Africans experiencing a health crisis.

Western Journalism in Africa

The construction of Africa in western journalism as alluded to earlier in this research has mainly been centred bad events such as war, famine, disease, governance although good events such as the hosting of world events such as the world cup 2008 in South Africa, world beauty pageant²⁸ in Abuja, Nigeria have also occurred on the continent. Although western media coverage of Africa has largely been negative, it has however played a significant role in some cases by exposing corruption, genocide and other acts of atrocities in some African countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan among other countries. According to Last Moyo (2011), while the CNN played an important role in exposing the human rights abuses in that took place in the run off election of 2008 in Zimbabwe. The CNN was able to “use citizen journalism and investigative reporting and

²⁶ These scholars subscribe to the philosophy of co-construction conspiracy. These scholars believe that we cannot blame the white man alone for the problems of colonialism but blacks also had a part in their own exploitation. Their views are however akin to blaming the victim for their misfortune

²⁷ Dr Last Moyo is a leading media studies scholar from Zimbabwe, who has done articles on the CNN framing of specific issues. He did a study on the CNN framing of Zimbabwe in an election context, which covered the hotly disputed Zimbabwean election of 2008. He also did a comparative study of the CNN and Xinhua news coverage of the Tibetan crisis

²⁸ The Miss World beauty contest which was set to be held in Africa for the first time in its history only to be switched at the very last possible turn to London because of safety concerns.

news reports from NGOs, the CNN was able to expose the rising tides of violence on the supporters of opposition party and their officials.

In this instance, the news organization played a clearly undisputable role in averting a political massacre. Its news reportage of the whole election period was however characterized by the selective application of human rights to place more emphasis on private property rights of white commercial farmers and the civil and political rights of opposition party supporters. Zhao and Hacket (2005) cited in Moyo (2011) are of the view that global media's human rights interests in the developing world are not effective because they are not motivated by the desire to promote sustainable democracy and development but they simply seek to promote liberal interests from the west.

In other words, this assertion seems to insinuate that western journalism in Africa is self seeking. This view is also shared by Herman and Chomsky's (1994) propaganda model of 'worthy' and 'unworthy victims' as a tool to understand the motivations of western media in Africa and the third world. According to Moyo (2011), western media always selectively applies the discourse of human rights in order to suit their home countries' foreign policies and geopolitical alliances. They thus portray victims who are abused in enemy states as their worthy victims while those who are exposed to the same or even worse treatment by their governments are labeled unworthy victims. Therefore, in the Zimbabwean election context, the white farmers and the MDC²⁹ supporters were the CNN's worthy victims because they both had a common interest of seeking to oust the Mugabe regime which is unpopular with most western governments (Chomsky 1994, Moyo 2011).

Human rights have however been abused by the same government at a much greater scale in the early 1980s when over 20000 supporters of the opposition supporters were massacred but the victims never received any international media attention because the government had excellent relationships with western governments at that time (Zimrights 1999, CCJP and LRF 1999, Moyo 2011). So using the CNN coverage of the election period in Zimbabwe as a prism of western journalism in Africa, it has emerged that there

²⁹ The Movement for Democratic Change, Zimbabwe's main opposition political party

are positives and negatives to CNN news reportage of Zimbabwe in the context of an election and thus it is the interest of the thesis to investigate the representation of Africa and Africans by a western media organization such as the CNN in the context of an illness such as Ebola.

In 2008, when South Africa hosted the football world cup, western media was skeptical of Africa's ability to host an event of such magnitude. It was even speculated that Australia was on stand by to host the event in the even that at the last minute, should South Africa fail to host the event then Australia would save the tournament. This view suggests that Africa is a potential failure. South Africa however, hosted a very successful tournament (Hoppe 2011). The same situation was encountered when Nigeria, scheduled to host the world beauty pageant, the event was quickly moved to London at the last minute following riots in some parts of Nigeria in reaction to a Sharia³⁰ court imposed death by stoning penalty on a woman accused of adultery.

The media frenzy around the staging of the beauty pageant in Lagos in the first was highlighted as historical on its own that an event of that nature was being held in the jungle of Africa. A BBC reporter, Danny Isaacs is on record as having said that the beauty queens arrived in Africa to "a crowd of chaos and pandemonium of music of drums" (Michira 2002:3) suggesting that Africa and Africans were primitive For Shohat and Stam (2002), the sounds of drums are presented as threatening. The African sounds are presented as some form of aural signifiers of encircling savagery or danger, as if presenting Africa as a place where one ought to be very careful. In representations of African culture, musical expressions are presented as a signal of danger. The beauty pageant was taken to a place of safety because Nigeria was considered too risky to host the event because of impending violence from the riots in reaction to a culture which is so harsh as to prescribe death by stoning as justice for an offence which is hardly considered an offence in Europe.

³⁰ A Moslem religion based justice system in Northern Nigeria which is very strict and believes in the most punitive of sentences such as death by stoning and amputation of convicted criminals. A system which has demonstrated its displeasure at capitalism and western civilization in the most violent way

The world beauty pageant was quickly taken to London suggesting that Nigeria had spun an opportunity to prove to the world that it was a safe place, which could host an event of that magnitude. A number of scenarios have been given where western journalism in Africa has been explored, for example CNN coverage of Zimbabwe in a context of an election, South Africa when it hosted the football world cup and Nigeria when it was scheduled to host the world beauty pageant. This seem to suggest from these representations that western media views Africa as a place which cannot be relied on as a partner and hence, this thesis seeks to find out how the outbreak of Ebola is represented in the CNN.

Nanjala Nyabola, a Kenyan writer criticized the media coverage of events in Africa saying that much of it is devoid of nuance and context (Gathara 2014). The coverage of Africa is described by Achide as the danger of a single story, where the entire continent is reduced to simple, superficial clichés one after another such as “The hopeless continent”, “Africa is rising” and “Magical Africa” (Gathara 2014). The story of a continent of over one billion people and fifty four countries, their existence, history, and stories is reduced to a single narrative.

Journalism in Africa is very much an event driven entity where journalists fly into a crisis or disaster ridden spot and are expected to come up with a story in a matter of hours or days. Gathara (2014) says that journalists whether they are African or western, they should aim to cover stories on Africa, as opposed to seeking to cover African stories. For Nyabola (2014), the choice between western journalism and African journalism is really a matter of choice between “a person whose truth seems conditioned by race and the other as the truth conditioned by experience. She seems to suggest that western journalism is influenced by race as the single most determining element. Carter (2014) is however of the view that western journalists sometimes co-opt African stories to reinforce existing narratives among western audience.

This view is shared by Rothmyer (2011) who claims that reporters are attracted to write certain stories based on pre existing frames of reference they hold about Africa. She cites a New York Herald correspondent Henry M Stanley who revealed that he arrived in Zanzibar expecting to find a place “populated with ignorant black people, with great lips,

whose general appearance might be compared to DuChaillu's gorillas". These representations of the other which are based on binaristic hegemony built on north/south, white/black, modern/primitive (Ibrahim 2013, Mistry 1999, Doty 1996, Hall 1995, Freeth 1985, Ferguson 1998, Perterse 1995). Rothmyer (2011) further allude to the influence of western based Non Governmental Organizations and International Aid Organizations such as the United Nations. These institutions, it is believed, tend not to focus on the gains but rather on convincing people how much remains to be done. She claims that the need to attract funding by these international Aid organizations was the biggest incentive to presenting a single story narrative about African issues Dutch correspondent Linda Polman concurs with the view that western journalism is influenced by western NGOs when she claims that "Aid organizations are businesses dressed up like Mother Teresa, but that's not how reporters see them". This perpetuation of stereotyped images which are far from the representation of reality as motivated by the need to fundraise is also shared by the following scholars Benthall (1991; Charney 1991; Moeller 1999; and Ibrahim 2013).

This does not however, mean that this is how all western media reportage of issues on Africa is influenced by racism and as a conduit for international aid organizations to appeal to their benefactors for more funds through the use of a western discourse about Africa which is constructed around stereotyped imagery which borders on what scholars such as Myer et al 1996, Campbell 2003, Dunn 2003, Lammers 2005 and Ibrahim 2013 refer to as "famine iconography" in their study of media representations of famine in countries such as Ethiopia in 1984 and Somalia in 1991, formulaic narrative and humanitarian agency. This research therefore, seeks to find out how CNN covered the Ebola crisis in West Africa and with what suppositions of the other.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to engage with related literature in an effort to locate this research within the area of representation as well as to acknowledge existing knowledge and to establish literature gap. Literature was reviewed under the following themes; the representation of African and Africans in the media, the framing of Africa in health contexts and western journalism in Africa. It emerged that although there is a significant body of knowledge on representation of Africa in western media much of the literature on news has tended to concentrate on the flow of news from west to the rest and it has had a quantitative thrust to look at volumes of news flow, very little or nothing has been recorded in terms of analyzing qualitatively the nature of representations of Africa and more so in the context of health, which is the gap this thesis seeks to contribute to.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework in the research was grounded. A theoretical framework is fundamentally a tool which provides a critical search light for guiding the study. This study is informed by decolonial theory³¹ and theory of representation. These theories therefore are the basis upon which decisions on methodology such as what data is relevant to the study, how it will be gathered and analyzed. The decolonial theory was used in this study because it provided an epistemic shift to traditional studies of media representation which have always sought to study representation of media for its own sake. Decolonial theory is based on the fundamental principle that a study of representations cannot be a useful study in and by itself. The theory is emancipatory in nature, in the sense that it seeks to go beyond mere description of a phenomenon. It seeks to empower, to emancipate or to free the non western subject.

3.1 An Overview of the broad theoretical framework

In a study of media representations, research stands guided by three major theoretical musings which are the post colonial theory, decolonial theory and post modernization theory. Decolonial theory is interested in coloniality, pluri-versalities³² and multi-versalities. It is concerned with instilling pride and dignity in the previously marginalized groups. The decolonial theory is anchored on the premise that a study of representation should help to understand the workings of ideology and power. It should expose domination and subordination of a weaker group by a powerful group through the intersection and co-construction of race, class, gender and sexuality among many different layers of inequality. Representation should therefore seek to expose how power organizes space, and in this study, media space and how domination and power are concealed, normalized and legitimized as everyday common sense. A study of

³¹ A theory which advocates for a delink with the global North. Decolonial scholars such as Walter Dignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, Nelson Madonaldo-Torres, Anibal Quijano, Boaventura de Sousa Santos to mention but a few, totally reject the ideal of a universal world that is anchored in the global north as nothing more than strategy of capitalism to impose itself on the world.

³² The possibility of a world order that is anchored on the acceptance of multiple forms of reality and therefore multiple forms of knowledge. Hence the rejection of the notion of a universe but a multiverse or a multiverse

representation would be incomplete without talking about power and consequentially, domination. Just like the power structures of the world, such as the economic and political world, representations too are defined by power hierarchies in terms of how they are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told. All these are dependent on power relations. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of the other but to make it the definitive story of the other (Achidie 2009).

In light of this, decolonial scholarship contends that representations are therefore fundamentally not a study of whether images or stories have elements of truth but rather more about framing, angling, apportioning or denial of salience, structured inclusion and exclusion and distortions in ways which conceal or mask power and organize it as normal and as common sense.

3.2 Unpacking the “decoloniality in Decolonial Theory

Decoloniality is not a new thinking. Decolonial thinking is based on a philosophy that has always been in existence since colonialism itself. It is a term that is used to refer to a radical rejection of colonialism. Early scholars such as a W.E.B Dubois are some of the earliest decolonial thinkers who advocated for the freedom and emancipation of the marginalized. In modern times however, decolonial thinking is credited to those scholars who emerged from the post colonial school of thought, mainly south American scholars, Caribbean and African scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Maldonado-Torres, Quijano, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Gatsheni-Ndlovu among many others, who while they agree with the post colonial scholars on all the salient workings of colonialism and its aftermath differ philosophically on fundamental issues. Decolonial scholars advocate for a radical solution to the centuries long domination of the subaltern societies by the west. Decolonial theory is therefore a radical epistemic response to a centuries long problem of domination anchored on colonialism.

Decoloniality is historically grounded in the Bandung Conference of 1955 where twenty nine Asian and African countries converged with a view to finding a common ground and vision for the future that was neither capitalism nor communism and this meant delinking from anything Western (Mignolo 2001). Their argument was that since colonialism gave

birth to coloniality. They therefore could not depend on the same colonial forces for their developmental needs. This theory therefore sought to expose their perpetuity of coloniality. That is, coloniality did not end with the formal attainment of independence. Coloniality is therefore not over but it was all over (Mignolo and Michelle K 2007).

Coloniality is defined by Mignolo (2011) as the ‘darker side of modernity’, that is, the idea that modern science, modern capitalism, beliefs in progress, modern architectural and infrastructural advancements, which constitute the brighter side of modernity, all brought with them liabilities which constitute the ‘darker side of modernity’ which give justifications for colonialism largely based on selective understandings of Europe’s advanced place in history and the advent of scientifically based racial hierarchies dating back to the renaissance.

The humanity of mankind has not always been recognized. It had to take the intervention of the Pope as late as the 16th century to declare black people as fully fledged human beings. Black people have not always been recognized as fully human, even though they appeared and acted like human beings. The centuries long argument was whether black people had a soul or not, which in fact was to question their humanity. The humanity of the black people therefore had to be endorsed by the white, Caucasian, western, heterosexual male who considered themselves to be more human than others coming only second to God, after the angels (Grosfoguel; Mignolo, Boaventura Santos).

According to Mignolo (2011) the process of colonization gave rise to a historical complexity that can only be properly addressed if there is a delink from the Euro-centered assumptions. Modernity/coloniality/decoloniality are a complex relational structure of power that Anibal Quijano has summarized as “domination/exploitation/conflict” (Quijano 2000). The process of colonization of Africa, South America, India and north America was therefore premised on the superiority of the white, western male and therefore the inferiority of the black man and people of indigenous origin such as Indians and American Indians. Decolonial scholars therefore argue that the invention of the black man and the invention of the white man was all part of the matrix of coloniality upon

which the modern forms of domination, exploitation are anchored on. For Decolonial scholars, race is a social construct. That is used as a tool of domination.

“Domination” and “exploitation” are not only physical relations but epistemic as well: dominance and exploitation require justification and legitimation (Torres). When both are taken for granted by the majority of the population they become hegemonic. In this instance, hegemony is understood as the way the oppressed live their lives and participate in their own oppression. Colonial matrix of power is organized as coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power.

The coloniality of being explains how Africans and other non western subjects have lost ownership of the body, of being, their culture, their subjectivities, their sense of value. That is how they always view themselves relative to the white world. The coloniality of being focuses on how blacks do not accept themselves outside the framework of whites.

The goal of the decoloniality project therefore, is to “delink” from the coloniality of power by as many means as possible, and so far, this has mainly implied decolonial thinking and doing. The goal is to identify “options confronting and delinking from the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo 2011: xxvii). In this regard, the decolonial perspective can thus be understood as an opposition to or rejection of the effects of coloniality on contemporary thought and practice (Mignolo, Boaventura Santos, Vambe and Khan, Quijano 2000, Suarez-Krabbe 2009).

The concept of coloniality is different from colonialism. Coloniality transcends colonialism. Coloniality is maintained alive in the structures, knowledge, practices and institutions. It is visible and invisible in universities, in books, in the media and through the media and in cultural practices. Coloniality therefore remains alive and an integral part of contemporary civilization (Quijano, Suarez-Krabbe 2009). The form of coloniality which views knowledge as only emanating from the global north is coloniality of knowledge. It also focuses on how African ways of knowing, indigenous knowledge systems are viewed as suspicious, traditional, as opposed to western knowledge which is considered universal.

The colonial matrix of power or simply coloniality has complex layers of forms of exploitation and inequality, one such layer, as has been pointed out, is the idea of race and racism. In the words of Quijano (2000; Mignolo 2007, Santos, Torres), the idea of race, brought forth the myths of the discourse of differences between the imperial centre and the colonial periphery and placed the people in the periphery in a 'natural' situation of inferiority to the others (Quijano 2000). The idea of race, according to Quijano was unknown to the world before the colonization of America (Quijano 2000). Race therefore, has colonial origins and character. Quijano further contends that if racism was founded in a colonial 'matrix of power' that was historical colonialism, this means then that the element of coloniality has survived historical colonialism and remains a component of the "model of power that is globally hegemonic today" Quijano 2000:533).

However, according to Vambe and Khan (2013) pre-colonial, Latin America or Africa should not be validated by and marked by the presence of European time in Africa. These continents also have a 'pre-colonial' colonial history that can also be defined as coloniality of power which is not encompassed in Quijano's conception of coloniality of power from the location of the western forms of consciousness in Latin America is important to explain the power of what is fundamental in any context that invokes the notion of the coloniality of power.

The very idea however, that race must be understood in the context of coloniality of power betrays a mind whose conception of time is historically anchored to the colonization of Africa and the Americas. This does not help in imagining other pervasive forms of the expressions and manifestations of the coloniality of power in Latin American and African indigenous, 'pre-colonial' societies (Vambe 2013). This view by Vambe widens the understanding of the idea of race and domination and it concurs with the traditional view of decoloniality that coloniality did not start with the onset of colonialism but rather it is a construct which dates back to the 16th century and before.

This conception of coloniality of power is itself warped and hence needs to be decolonized. This view is corroborated by Achebe () when he points out the oppressive

cultural system in things fall apart, cultural and political layers of injustice such as the murder of twin babies and the ritual murders to appease spirit mediums as a form of acknowledging that injustice, domination and exploitation cannot be solely attributed to the process of colonization but as something that predated and outlived formal colonialism. This writer tends to agree with the view that coloniality as a form of oppression and injustice is all pervasive in time and geography.

Griffith in Vambe and Khan (2013) observe that “when the geography of knowledge production appears to be shifting, taking numerous turns through whose values ordinary people appear to ‘speak’ the language of the oppressed, “there is a real concern as to whether what the world listens to, is really a subaltern voice, or whether the subaltern is being spoken by the subject position they occupy within the larger discursive economy (1994:75) of euro capitalism. This means that an analysis of media representation ought to interrogate the element of race beyond that as defined by the skin. A more critical analysis of media representation also ought to unmask the locus of enunciation of the subject which speaks in the media. This view is also shared by Van Dijk (1993) that a general strategy for denying the existence of racism in a system is that of inclusion of a few people from the minority group and has them deny its existence and thus reinforce the status quo.

Meanwhile, Hall (1994) warns that the concept of decoloniality or decolonial turns must not be understood as simplified binaries of oppressor/oppressed, good/bad, modernity/tradition, primitive/modern continuum, but rather that the agency of those who seek freedom can be expressed simultaneously as resistance, incorporation, obeisance and also as cultural implantations calculated to reverse or slow down the expansion of horizons of diverse expression of freedom. What this basically means for Hall is that if the hallmark of decolonization narratives were often represented as visible political movements, a qualitative leap must then be expected in the ‘episteme decolonial turn’ in ways that should help to locate oppression hidden in some other subtle planes. The project to decolonize then must thus unearth these entangled layers of inequality and exploitation.

Hall seems to be merely alluding to the complex nature of coloniality and how the colonial matrix of power hides its complexity by pretending to project a worldview that is based on simplistic binaries and masks exploitation in the process. A decolonial reading must therefore be alert to the such strategies and go beyond mere skin deep analysis and expose coloniality and domination that masks itself as naturalistic, common sense and normal.

The object of decoloniality is aptly summed by Terdiman and Pecheux in Parry (2007:274-275) that a 'discourse against' is that in which the subject of enunciation takes up a position of separation 'with respect to what 'universal subject' gives him to think. Put in other words, the decolonial turn, seeks to interrogate, to challenge, and reject the dominance of Eurocentricism in the media and in all spheres of life. Decoloniality according to Terdiman and Pecheux (ibid) could be viewed as advocating for a border prognosis or border thinking whereby the black subject must aim to speak from the periphery or to move the centre, in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Decoloniality advocates for an epistemic disobedience which rejects the whole notion of epistemic exclusiveness of euromodernity. It seeks to recognize and reject the notion that when in the words of Descartes the west says "cogito ergo sum", 'I think therefore I am', that did not include the black subject. The black subject was never meant to be a thinker. This view is further substantiated by Valentine Mudimbe who claims that if Europe represents the 'mind' then "Africa" represents the 'heart'. Decoloniality however rejects the claim that whites possess the epistemic exclusiveness to thinking and that the African mind is spurred to act based on emotions.

3.3 Exploring the concept "Decolonial reading"

A decolonial reading has its roots in aesthesis, which is a term which refers to senses and sensibilities. These emanate from the fact that coloniality is all pervasive and therefore difficult to discern. Sensibility or aesthesis therefore come from the experience of

coloniality, of being considered less or deficient human beings by those who control discourse and have the authority to define and grant humanity to others. It is the experience which comes from the colonial wound, inflicted by western aesthetics and hence it becomes decolonial aesthesis. A decolonial reading therefore would be that analysis which is able to discern or to expose the workings of power hidden in everyday life and not just in art (Mignolo).

A decolonial reading may also be understood as a practical way of departing from the established Eurocentric normalized ways of perceiving reality and acting. In this way, the subaltern classes, reject the established patterns, they delink from the existing norms and naturalized forms of everyday activities and representations, both transparent and opaque forms of domination and exploitation, including those which are institutionalized and legitimated in social institutions of power such as the media, schools and universities, religion and in cultural spaces.

According to Mignolo (2007), when “decolonial gestures” delink from western “performance”, mimesis, and representation and the imposition of western civilization as universal, they become part of decolonial options, attitudes, and turns, at the same time that decolonial options, attitudes, and turns need decolonial gestures and readings to be constituted, felt, seen, understood as such. Hence, by delinking and resurging, decolonial subjects and subjectivities become constituted.

The term “gesture” in decolonial language is used to refer to non verbal actions people use to communicate, which can be understood as having a hidden meaning. Put in other words, gestures have metaphoric meaning. According to Mignolo (2007), decolonial gestures seek to dismantle and disobey the categories that built and sustain the colonial matrix. This is a task that colonial subjects are undertaking all over the world, to delink and decolonize themselves, and from there, to engage in world-making not regulated by the colonial matrix.

Mignolo (2002) however points out that not all “gestures” that express disagreement and condemnation to the status quo are decolonial gestures, for example violence of any kind, war, exploitation and prostitution among those gestures which could not be considered

decolonial for the reason that the basic decolonial objective would be to confront any global design with the pretense of universality. However, on the issue of violence not being a decolonial gesture, one could along Fanonian³³ lines for the necessity of redemptive violence as a form of epistemic disobedience or as a gesture of self defence (Silverman 2005, Shatz, 2001, Nayar 2013, Frazer and Hutchings 2008, Omar 2009, Wilmot 2009).

Decolonial gestures therefore would comprise all gestures (fictional and non-fictional, artistic and non-artistic) that explicitly confront the colonial matrix of power. If the confrontation is implicit, it would be the process of interpretation that brings a given “gesture” in the decolonial frame (Mignolo). Decoloniality is an option that co-exists with other options in a given universe of meaning. Decoloniality does not seek to project itself as the sole epistemic alternative as to do so would be to contradict its very fundamental principle, that there are many ways of knowing. There is no one way of understanding or doing in life. Decoloniality believes in pluriversity or multiversality and reject the idea of a universe (Mignolo; Boaventura de Sousa Santos). This is why this research seeks to explore the workings of colonial matrix of power in news discourse on the Ebola disease in Africa, with a view to seeing how news is used to maintain domination and power and how media institutions in general are legitimized as instruments of perpetuating racism.

The colonial matrix of power is the very pillar of Western Civilization. This means that every day life is constituted and maintained through millions of “colonial gestures”. For centuries, the world has been hoodwinked into thinking that the western way of life is the universal way in which life ought to be lived (deSousa Santos). Decolonial readings thus seek to provincialize euro modernity by revealing the gestures of Europe which seek to assert western hegemony (Chakrabarty 2000). Decolonial gestures seek to reverse the epistemic ontology of Western Civilization, and also work toward reclaiming a multiverse or pluriversal society in which the imperial/colonial dimension of Western Civilization is erased and the emancipatory dimension is enhanced. Decolonial gestures envisage a world which acknowledges that there are many forms of knowing. This

research therefore seeks to apply the decolonial theory to explain how the CNN news framed issues around the search for cure of Ebola.

It has emerged that the object of decoloniality is to expose the fallacy that coloniality ended with colonialism. Coloniality is maintained alive visibly and invisibly in all spheres of life, in terms of what constitutes reality, who defines reality, what constitutes knowledge and who produces it, who benefits from that knowledge, what are the power structures and hierarchies of this world, concepts which are basically undergirded in the matrix of power which is co-construction and intersection of the coloniality of power, coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge. Decoloniality therefore seeks to confront the colonial matrix of power as an evil system which seeks to kill the African mind through a system of epistemicide. This is achieved through the systematic decimation of the indigenous systems of knowledge and demonization of local cultures.

In a nutshell, decoloniality therefore basically sheds light on issues of representation, how the humanity of others is premised on social constructs such as race and racism, how the construct of the inferiority of the black subject is premised on the construct of the superiority of the white subject. Decoloniality exposes the fallacy of the invention of the concepts 'black' and 'white'. Decoloniality seeks to expose how the black subject lacks ontological density and has to rely on endorsement from the whites as nothing more than a centuries long tool of domination and exploitation. Decoloniality also sought to expose how euromodernity imposes itself as a universal system and a global system and thus rejects that there are many forms of knowing and knowledge.

The theories of Representation

There is a significant body of literature highlighting the importance of the media in society and that much of what people know in society is shaped by their interaction with the media. Teun Van Dijk (1993) rightly claims that there is virtually no need to argue on the overall power of the media in modern information society. For him, media discourse is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies of both the rich and the poor in society (Van Dijk 1993), this view is corroborated by Schroder (2002:98) who

perceive the media as “constructing versions of reality which shape the meaning and values that inform our attitudes and behaviors. Nick Lacey³⁴ however argues to the contrary, “media texts cannot show reality as it is by the nature, the media mediates (Lacey 1998). It must be pointed out however that the argument by Lacey does not water down the importance of the media as highlighted by Van Dijk. In fact Van Dijk is merely stating that whether reality is captured in its object sense or whether it is in the words of Chomsky (1988), reality becomes ‘manufactured consent’, in a modern world people experience much of the world through their interaction with the media.

The above argument however shows that there are many perceptions of media representations, one that has the intentional approach, which sees the media as capturing the reality out there in static form and the role of the media being to reflect reality as it exists (Hall 1997). The view of reality suggests that the media therefore is simply a conduit for reflecting the mirror, hence the metaphor of the media as a mirror of society. On the other hand, Lacey’s (1998) argument that the media cannot show reality points to some intentionality on the part of the media to impose its own meaning on the world, through language or that meaning is constructed because there are various factors which shape meaning. This means therefore that the media is an ideological site in the production of meaning. It is therefore the intention of this thesis to examine the underlying ideological force at play in the representations of Africans and Africa in the context of a health crisis such as Ebola.

Scholars such as Lacey (1998) agree with Bathes (1972), for Bathes, representation takes place through separate but linked processes. The first level is very much descriptive or denotative while the second must be linked with a wider theme which is ideologically framed. This level of signification, according to Bathes, is the level of myth³⁵. Semiotics therefore is a way of understanding how visual representations convey meaning. Meaning making therefore takes places by forging relationships between people, events and experiences (Hall 1997).

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³⁵ Myth is understood not in its everyday context but as ideology

Representation is the production of meaning through language. In other words, to represent something is to describe or depict it through description, portrayal or imagination. To represent is therefore to stand for or to symbolize. For Stuart Hall (1995) representation is a fluid two way process where producers encode messages on one hand and audiences decode meaning. Meaning making therefore depends on the encoding-decoding process.

Since representation is done through language in its broad context. The general term used for words, sounds or images which carry meaning is signs. Signs represent the concepts in people's minds; the term 'language' must be understood in a much broader sense to include visual images. Any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is therefore a language (Hall 1997, du Gay 1997, Mackay ed 1997, Hall 1997). For Saussure, in Culler (1976) in Hall 1997), signs could further be analyzed into the form, that is, the actual word, image or sound which is also called the signifier and the idea or meaning which the signifier is associated with, also called the signified. The sign is therefore the union of the signifier and the signified.

In visual language, there are three types of signs which are; iconic signs, those signs which bear resemblance to the physical things or objects they represent. They are therefore said to have denotative meaning. Written or spoken signs are called indexical signs, their meaning is arbitrary, and they bear no obvious resemblance to the thing, event or object they stand for. The third level of signs is called symbolic. Symbolic signs bear no connection to the idea they represent. They are cultural and ideological they are said to have connotative meaning. In connotative signs, the signifier enters a wider or second code which connects the sign to a broader theme and meaning (Hall 1997).

Culture is therefore at the centre of representation. In order for one to share or understand they need to be cultural subjects who understand the system and conventions of representation or the codes. An attempt to understand how representation of meaning through language works, there are basically three approaches namely; the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist/constructivist approach. These approaches seek to answer the questions, 'Where do meanings come from? And how can

one tell the true meaning of a word or image? In other words, how accurate are representations? The three perspectives are briefly explored below.

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The reflective theory is premised on the belief that meaning reside in the object or idea or event in the real world. Language therefore functions like a mirror, to reflect reality as it exists in the world. The role of language is thus, to simply reflect or imitate the truth that already exist. This approach is also called the 'mimetic theory' (Hall 1997).

Whereas supporters of the intentional approach believe that it is the speaker, or transmitter who imposes his or her individual meaning on the world through the language. In other words, signs mean what the sender intends them to. This therefore means that any representation is a reflection of the speaker's prejudices, biases, interests and suppositions (Hall 1997).

While the constructivist or constructionist view argues for the public nature or social character of language. It rejects that both events and individuals use of language can dictate meanings in language, that is, according to this approach, 'things don't mean' rather, meaning is constructed, through the interaction of representational systems, concepts and signs. The material world therefore must not be confused with the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate (Hall 1997). Saussure's approach to the study of signs in culture and of culture as a language is known as semiotics. In a semiotic approach, not only words and images but objects also act as signifiers in the production of meaning (Bathes 1967, Hall 1997).

Bathes (1972, Hall 1997) brought the semiotic approach to reading of popular culture, treating activities, events and objects as signs and as a language through which meaning could be communicated. For Bathes, representation takes place through separate but

linked processes. The first level is descriptive or denotative while the second must be linked with a wider theme which is ideologically framed. This level of signification, Bathes calls the level of myth. Semiotics therefore is a way of understanding how visual representations convey meaning. Meaning making therefore takes place by forging relationships between people, events and experiences (Hall 1997).

However scholars such as Foucault rejected the view that representation occurs in such predictable and simplistic manner. Foucault understood representation in a narrower sense, for him, production of knowledge and not just of meaning was of essence. Foucault was concerned with discourse rather than language. His views on representation were much more historically inclined and thus brought in a trajectory in the understanding of representation, from language to discourse. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. From a foucaultian³⁶ perspective, discourse is about language and practice. Discourse constructs the topic, it defines the way ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Discourse influences ways of talking, of conduct in relation to a given topic and construction of knowledge (Hall 1997). For Foucault, meaning and meaningful practice is constructed through discourse. Representation is not so useful outside its specific social and historical context.

Representation therefore is a much complex engagement than a mere reflection or reality. It is a complex social construct which works with and through what is visible and what is not visible, that is structured presence and structured absence. Therefore, meaning is not fixed in time and space but is always slipping making it very difficult to study representation from a structuralist perspective with the rigidity of law like precision often associated with quantitative research methodology.

Basing on the above argument, one may argue then that all representations are therefore re-presentations in the sense that they reflect the ideological assumptions of the sender of the message. Therefore if one is to understand media messages, one really has to answer questions such as who produced the text. Who is represented in the text? How is he represented? Why is he represented in the manner he was represented? And what frames

³⁶ A term derived from Michel Foucault, the French philosopher who is considered an authority on issues of knowledge, discourse and power.

of reference do the audience use when decoding? This is because according to Stuart Hall, audiences do not come into a meaning making process ideologically naked (1997). Representations are affected by a variety of lenses which affect way through which people view the world and some of these lenses are race, class, gender, religion and creed (Nyabala 2014). It is however the element of race which this research seeks to explore in the CNN news representations of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis.

For Achidie (2009) an exploration of representation also ought to be engaged within the context of power relations. She refers to representation as the creation of a story about a people. A single story³⁷ is one that is created from a specific point of view with all the biases and prejudices which cloud the vision of the creator of that story. To create a single story for (Achidie *ibid*), show a people as only one thing, and do so over and over and that is what they become in real life. This view also resonates with Van Dijk's (1993) contention that another strategy by the media to reproduce domination and power and hence perpetuate the discourse of racism is through the systematic association of blacks and Africans with problematic cultural associations. Put in other words, always show them as a problem.

The term 'race' is very slippery or elusive; it is very difficult to define. Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou (2014), racism may be defined as a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, socially and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world systems. Scholars such as however define racism from a biological perspective. This research therefore defines racism from a broad perspective as a system which privileges one group at the expense of another. This broad definition allows for a diverse conception of racism and hence avoids reductionism which reduces the understanding of racism based on blood and skin colour. Race is therefore defined both as biological and cultural. It is a social construct as well as biologically determined.

Media representations of blacks have traditionally been stereotyped on racial lines. Africans, Asians, Arabs, Latin Americans and indigenous and people have always been

³⁷ The Danger of a Single Story by

represented negatively in the media, especially in Hollywood cinema. In some cases, these groups have often been represented as absent, in other words, they have been structurally removed from the media as a way of 'representing' them.

The blacks, Asians and other marginalized social groups have also often been represented by whites in roles which were deemed inappropriate for blacks to represent themselves. Aggressive roles were often played by whites, representing the blacks; the opposite however, was not possible. Blacks could not represent whites. The definition of black was not restricted literally to colour but to blood. In the Euro-American racist discourse, just one drop of black blood was sufficient to disqualify an actress or an actor from representing whites (Shohat and Stam 2002). Put in other words, dominant cinema finds it convenient to turn "dark coloured" people into substitutable others while white people are seen ideologically as being "beyond ethnicity" and can therefore "stand in" for others.

Although African American, native American, have been allowed to 'represent' their communities in cinema, Shohat and Stam (2002) however, point out that an epidemically correct face does not guarantee community of self representation because the definition of race by blood and not by the colour of one's skin.

Media representations also ought to be informed by Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. According to Mistry (1999) the theory of hegemony is important in understanding media representations especially where the element of race is concerned because the theory is basically concerned with culture and ideology and these factors are at the heart of media representations. For Gramsci, argued that an understanding of media ought to be underpinned by the study of ideology and hegemony. Ideology in this context is understood as the attitudes and beliefs of the dominant class about the politics, economy and other strategic institutions of a country. In seeking to understand television and cinema as popular culture, attention ought therefore to be paid to daily routine structures and common sense values as key to understanding domination (Gitlin 1994, Mistry 1999).

Although racist images of the 19th century television and cinema were fast disappearing on modern media, Gramsci's theory of hegemony is still a very useful tool in exploring opaque forms of racism associated with media in liberal societies (Mistry 1999). This view is also shared by Achidie (2009) in her story on the dangers of a single story where she says that growing up in Nigeria; she believed that stories by their very nature had to have foreigners in them. She could not imagine people like her, black people being present in found in literature. Also gave an account of how a lecturer rejected her stories because they lacked African authenticity because characters in her books were too sophisticated. They were just like the professor and therefore they lacked a true reflection of what it meant to be African. The concept of hegemony here is constructed when things are naturalized for example when the black man is constructed as naturally poor and undeserving of positive representation.

In order to understand how white supremacy hegemony is pervasive in contemporary media, one ought to trace the racist stereotypes of traditional society (Mistry 1999). Hall (1995) identifies the slave image which is associated with old cinema. The blacks are stereotyped as very dependable, loving and faithful "field nigger³⁸" who was attached and devoted to his master (1995:21). This kind of a slave image is the one who catches a cold when the master sneezes. Although the widely acknowledged strategy of institutions of coloniality such as the media is to generally deny or limit access to counter the discourse or racism. The media also uses strategies which mask and conceal racism such as the assimilation of a few minority representatives who will deny white racism and legitimize the status quo (Van Dijk 1993).

The second image of the racist stereotype of the black according to Hall (1995) is the 'native'. This character is represented as loving although unpredictable, cunning, savage and barbaric. They are the type which is assigned the role of a villain in the movies, always disturbing the status quo. The white man is always juxtaposed to this role; the white man is portrayed as an individualistic fellow who is always minding his own business. The idea is to really show how bad the black man is.

The last image according to Hall is that of the clown or the entertainer, purporting to imply that the blacks have an innate character of humour, never to be taken serious (Hall, 22). Images of Eddie Murphy come to mind. A distinction is never made in these portrayals however, as to whether we are laughing with him or at the clown (Mistry 1999). Overt racism is now very rare in the media. Racism is now inferential (ibid). According to Freeth it now takes places in the atmosphere of smiling, middle class gentility, no one chants racist abuses at the blacks, and no one assaults the black people anymore, all they do is to feed people with a media diet of blacks as the problem (Freeth 1985:26).

Racism is now therefore inferred and reinforced in the routine structures of everyday thought (Gitlin 1994:517). This is what Gramsci calls hegemony. It nicely hails its subjects. It interpellates them. According to Gerbner in his cultivation theory, it cultivates into its recipients feelings of inferiority. It is in light of this fact that this research sought to use the theory of representation as a theoretical framework in analyzing the framing of Africa and Africans in the CNN news coverage of Africans suffering from Ebola.

The superficial emergence of blacks in the media in a positive light is only a token to reassure the white establishment of the docility of blacks, it is more like a modern day Uncle Tom image, while black comedy still perpetuates the myth of the black clown (Gitlin 1994; Mistry 1999). Pieterse (1995) even notes that stereotypes of minorities are usually reasserted when existing social hierarchies are challenged. Stereotypes have political and social capital imbedded in them. Rhodes (1995) notes how the stereotypes attached to any one race usually shifts to coincide with the political and social temperatures prevailing at a given time. Rhodes (ibid) further point out that the history of the media as a social institution is crucial in the construction of racial representation.

She however observes that the struggle between the representations of racist ideology and the corresponding efforts of the subaltern groups to claim control over their own representations is part of the broader struggle that has received minimum attention (1995). This failure to recognize and confront white hegemony in media production is therefore central in the perpetuation of offensive and oppressive representations of minorities. It is in light of this assertion that this research seeks to interrogate media

framing of Africa and Africans in the context of health challenges such as the Ebola crisis.

Commenting on the role of media companies in the perpetuation of stereotyped images of minorities, Freeth (in Mistry 1999) uses a metaphor of television companies as safari hunters to illustrate the persistence of viewing blacks as primitive especially to satisfy a white audience whose default image of black people is that of backward people. Representations therefore tend to confirm stereotypes of the other rather than to reflect reality (Hall 1997). This attitude of locating the problem within the victim community can be explained within the context of Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Strinati 1995; Mistry 1999).

The reproduction of dominance and power and the perpetuation of the discourse of racism are semantically signaled by the concepts of positive self representation and negative other representation. This generally refers to the use of language and therefore discourse is a primary means of representation. The choice of words or diction and various semantic modes of meaning also reflect general strategies for concealing negative elements of the group that wields power and the emphasis and invention of negatives properties and weaknesses in weaker groups (Van Dijk 1993). The deployment of language and how it is ordered is therefore a fundamental element in the study of representation. An analysis of the following elements of macro semantics, superstructure, speech acts, rhetoric, grammatical elements such as the use of pronouns, which identify with and separate others and verbs among other elements of grammar is a fundamental component in a study of representation.

Diction determines the discourse in news presentations and representations. A study of representations ought to pay attention to everyday language that is naturalized in the media such as how are minorities commonly referred to in news discourse, what choice of wording is used to refer to people who are considered different from those of the media institutions and the dominant group in society. Racism in modern media as alluded to earlier is appearing less and less as manifest and blatant but it is increasingly become masked and subtle in new language and euphemism, in stereotypes. For example, in the western media coverage of hurricane Katrina flood victims; a choice of different words

was deployed to describe people according to their race. A general pattern emerged that negative words were on one hand used to describe black people and on the hand, positive words were used to describe white people although the two groups of people were basically in the same situation.

In an image by Getty images, a black couple was described with a caption which read “with the food they had looted” while an image of a white couple in a very similar image were described with a caption which read “with the food they had found”. Racism was inferred in this representation in the sense that black people are said to have ‘looted’ while white people are said to have found ‘found’. Two verbs “loot” and “found” were used to describe a similar incident. Therefore, white people find food but black people loot food. This is a classic example of how the media deploys language in a racist manner but in a subtle manner that can easily slip the attention of many a casual reader.

An analysis of the theory of representation has yielded that there are many perspectives to the study of representations of the other, generally ranging from the reflective perspective which purports that representations generally reflect or mirror life events in an objective manner and present this to the audience to more complex perspectives which allude to the fact that they are various forces ideological, symbolic, political, social, economic, historical which all shape or impact on representations of the other and reject the notion of a simplistic version of reality out there that is waiting to be recorded and presented to the audience in its naturalist and objective form.

Media representations are therefore products of selection, structured absence, salience, framing, angling, repetition in ways which create a new meaning by those who control the instruments of representations, that is media institutions and as aptly captured by Achidie (2009) representation or how stories are told can not be understood outside the power structures of a society. These determine whose story is told and whose is not told, how the story is told or from what perspective is the story told (diction, discourse, angling and framing), by whom it is told (local or international news), how many times the story is told (frequency), what is not told (structured absence), where it is told (salience) and when it is told (time).

This chapter concludes by highlighting that this research study will be theoretically underpinned by both the decolonial theory and the theory of representation. It has been argued in this chapter that the two theories provide a complementary perspective and a fresh dimension to the study of representation hence making them relevant to provide a sound theoretical framework for this study. This chapter also established that media representations are not any useful in and by themselves but rather they must have a social transformative agenda which seeks or imagines a better world for its subalterns by seeking to expose how power and domination are masked in everyday reality and legitimized as common sense. Methodological decisions in terms of what data is useful to fulfill this research, how the data is to be collected and analyzed are therefore informed by decolonial theory and the theory of representation.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that sound research must be systematic and rigorous in terms of design and implementation of the study, collection and analysis of data as well as its interpretation and reporting (Fossey et al 2002:720). To satisfy this requirement, this chapter will discuss the choice and rationale for selection of the research approach, methods of data collection, and data analysis techniques used in this research.

4.1 Qualitative Research Approach

A study of news representations is based on the premise that texts are not neutral or innocent. All media texts be they news, music, literature or film are value laden. They seek to legitimize and valorize certain dominant ideologies and suppress subordinate others, just as others seek to subvert dominant ideologies (Durham and Kellner). All news therefore contains representations. The qualitative research paradigm is deemed to provide the most suitable methodological framework for a study which seeks to examine the reproduction of ideological domination in news and how racism is embedded in news discourses. Ideological domination by its very nature is subtle and hegemonic. It is naturalized in news content and presented as common sensical.

Qualitative research is defined by Fosey et al (2002:720) as that research approach which seeks to “address concerned with developing an understanding of meaning and experiences of human lives and social worlds”. It involves an in depth study of the research subject and its essence is to provide underlying reasons for the occurrence of phenomena and in the case of this research the main objective was to explore how representations of Africa and Africans was embedded in hegemonic power relations and hence power, discourse and ideology are opaque and therefore need a qualitative research framework in order to unmask their workings in news discourses. The qualitative research paradigm was therefore chosen because of its characteristics which include the emphasis of qualitative matter as opposed to mere quantification or occurrence of

phenomenon. It is a paradigm which seeks to help us to understand the world in which we live. It is holistic and it acknowledges that there is epistemic diversity, that is, there is not a single reality. This means that there are many ways of knowing which are unique to different people based on different perceptions and that what we know has meaning only within a given context (Joubish et al 2011). Qualitative research is also flexible and responsive to the context in which the research is carried out. This study therefore operated under the qualitative research paradigm as the basis which informed how data was gathered, analyze data and reported.

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The production of ideological domination and power in news is something that can be very smooth and intangible. CDA as a method basically unmask the work of ideology and power. It helps us to understand and critique how dominant ideologies and power are reproduced and maintained in society. News is a myth making machinery. Myth not in the sense of witches and all, but as understood by Barthes, in the sense of ideology. Hence news is always a source of myths.

Fairclough views methodology as a process which was interlinked with the topic of research and objectives of the study (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The appropriate method for data selection, collection and analysis therefore depends on the object of research. Critical Discourse Analysis therefore involves a discursive analysis of different texts. What data is selected, how it is collected and analyzed is determined by the objects of the research

Critical Discourse Analysis is interested on the nature and usage of language and how this usage both reflects and reinforces certain institutional policies and individual attitudes (Haig). According to Fairclough (2002), language must be understood in light of new capitalism, in terms of how contemporary transformations of capitalism such as neoliberalism, globalization, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and development have brought about a new form of economic development in the era of post cold war have altered the social and cultural fabric. For, Fairclough, these transformations have a close link to contemporary changes at the level of language and discourse (Wodak 2008).

Critical discourse analysis's goal is to develop critical media literacy which seeks to critique main stream media texts, practices and structures and to provide education on the ideological nature of the media. Janks and Ivanic (1992), drawing on Althusser's concept of interpellation to refer to ways in which media and other discourses create subject positions for readers and viewers of which they may not be aware of (Haig). The theory and practice of critical media literacy awareness has continued to develop and expand during the past fifteen years but there has been very little work published which seek the development of emancipatory practice of critical language awareness theory (McLaren et al 1995, Kress 2003, Haig). This therefore, points to a gap in literature which this research sought to contribute to.

Critical Discourse Analysis perceives language as a social practice. The context of language use is therefore very crucial in an analysis of language. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997) language and discourse shape society and they are in turn influenced by the same society. In this regard, language helps produce and reproduce the status quo and thus help maintain unequal relations of power in a society (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, Wodak 2008).

The concept "critic" in critical discourse analysis has its roots in critical theory as founded by the Frankfurt school based on Max Horkheimer's proposition that social theory should have social transformation agenda on society as a whole rather than to mere endorse and sustain the status quo like traditional theory which simply sought to understand and explain society.

Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with agency. That is it is concerned about who acts on whom in the news coverage? Agency in this context refers to how active victims themselves appear on the television screen and also how other actors present on the scene appear to deal with the victims of Ebola.

Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies how social power abuse, dominance and inequality are exercised, reproduced and resisted by text in its broad context and talk in the social and political environment (Van Dijk 1993). CDA research therefore departs from traditional positivism research in the

sense that it rejects the possibility of a neutral or objective science. The CDA focus on dominance and inequality implies that as opposed to other domains or traditions in discourse analysis, CDA do not primarily seek to further to contributions of specific domains of knowledge or theory but rather is primarily interested and motivated by more pressing social issues which it hopes to better understand through discourse. CDA has a social transformative praxis. It imagines better societies. It is considered a form of dissident research by scholars such as Wodak, Van Dijk, Fairclough, Moyo in the sense that it takes an explicit position in terms of how it seeks to understand, expose and resist social inequality.

Critical Discourse Analysis is not a one universal method of study but rather it has a variety of approaches, theory and methodology which are all located within the same tradition whose epistemic origin is in the Frankfurt school (Kuhar 2006; Haig, Wodak and Meyer 2001). These approaches are independent of each other and their central concern is how social power is related to language (Haig, Van Dijk). In a nutshell, Critical Discourse Analysis is characterized by a common interest to demystify ideologies and power through a systematic investigation of semiotic data (Wodak 2008). According to Van Dijk (1993) that is fundamental about CDA regardless of the tradition is that critical analyses seek to raise awareness concerning the strategies used in the establishment, reproduction and maintenance of both symmetrical and asymmetrical relations of power as enacted by means of discourse. The choice of tradition really becomes a matter of suitability, convenience and preference of the researcher. In any case the methodology is meant to be a means to an end and not an end by and in itself.

Hence, according to Fairclough (1985; Van Dijk 1993:254) CDA must focus on the discursive strategies that legitimate, control and naturalize the social order especially relations of inequality. News is generally believed to be informative and based on facts and institutions such as the CNN are considered to be authoritative in terms of their ability to bring news to the homes of millions of audiences, hence a critical discourse analysis of CNN news as myth making machinery is considered necessary and useful as a way of examining the reproduction of ideological domination and power in news about Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola outbreak in some parts of west Africa.

CDA was selected for this research because it sought to expose how language in news does not represent reality in a reflective way as a mirror does but how it interprets, organizes discourse in an ideologically laden way. Discourses are also dialectically inculcated not only in styles, ways of using language but they are also materialized in bodies, postures, gestures and ways of moving. This therefore influenced the decision in this research to television news coverage of Ebola victims in order to examine how images are used to reproduce dominant ideology and to perpetuate racism (Fairclough (1985; Van Dijk 1993).

In a CDA perspective, dominance is defined as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups such as CNN that results in social inequality that includes but not limited to race, political, class, gender, ethnic, cultural and sexual (Van Dijk 1993). Power on the other hand, involves control of a weaker group by a more powerful group in a manner that influences their behavior. According to Van Dijk, contemporary forms of power are often cognitive or ideological and are usually exercised by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation among many other strategies. Perhaps what is crucial for CDA is that these processes are not always visible and banal but may actually be enacted and reproduced through and by subtle, smooth, routine, daily forms of text and images that appear 'naturalized', common sensical and 'acceptable' (Van Dijk 1993).

The relevance of CDA in examining the reproduction of ideological domination and power is fundamentally premised on the fact that that these forms of dominance are subtle and smooth and seem so natural until they begin to be challenged (Van Dijk 1993). This is more so when the dominance has become hegemonic and appear to be done with and through the willingness and consent of the dominated groups (Gramsci 1971; Hall et al 1977). The major function of dominant discourse therefore is to manufacture such consensus, acceptance and legitimacy of dominance (Herman and Chomsky 1988).

The concept of hegemony therefore suggests that a critical discourse analysis of ideological dominance and exercise of power in and through the news is not an easy exercise. It masks dominance and makes it more opaque and difficult to extrapolate such intricacies. CDA therefore must seek to expose power and dominance that is organized and institutionalized it socially, politically, culturally or economically. A CDA must

therefore pay special attention to hierarchical forms of power and thus expose power elites (Van Dijk 1993; Wodak 2007).

Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze the myths or ideologies embedded in CNN news about Ebola. CDA was considered relevant because it is generally perceived as fundamental in understanding how discourse is implicated in reproducing myths within with groups and phenomena is framed (Moyo 2011; Fairclough 2003).

CDA focuses on texts as the actual instances of discourse occurring in some concrete audio or visual form (Johnson 2002:9; Moyo 2011). Texts are generally seen as rich in detail (Fairclough 2003). Fairclough (2003) further argues that texts simultaneously represent aspects of the physical world, the social world and the metaphysical world. According to Wodak (2001) CDA also examines the role played by genres as “conventionalized schematically fixed uses of language” (Wodak 2001:66). In agreement, Moyo (2011) points out that the news genre for example, follows clearly defined codes and conventions which are culturally and ideologically premised. Language is also as a medium of domination and social force (Habermas and McCarthy 1985:124; Moyo 2011). Language therefore serves the function of legitimizing the relations of power in a society.

From a CDA perspective, media representations of reality are therefore seen as not value free but as directly and indirectly linked to the “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control (Wodak 2001; Moyo 2011). This view is also shared by Achidie (2009) that representations are defined by power structures in a society, in terms of who tells the story, how the story is told, how many times the story is told are all closely related to the power structures of the world.

Following these scholars and others, the CDA variant used in this study concerned itself with the analysis of language such as the ‘semantic macrostructures, local meanings, direct and indirect meanings, implications, presuppositions, allusions, structured absence and omissions (Van Dijk 2001; Moyo 2011). Much of the critique in this research focused on issues of structured presence and absence in CNN news on Ebola particular emphasis on what was said (inclusion) and how it was said (diction, semantics and

images) as well as what was not said and asking why. In summary therefore, the CDA employed in this thesis is premised on examination of choice of wording or diction, rhetoric mode of text, modality, metaphors or the figurative use of language (Fairclough 2003; Moyo 2011). I will also analyze news angling, news framing and visuals.

According to Van Dijk (1993), CDA is only significant and makes specific contribution to critical social or political analyses if it is able to extrapolate the role of language, language use, discourse and communicative events in the production and reproduction of dominance and inequality through the exercise of dominance in text and talk in specific contexts such as the representation of Africa and Africans in the context of a disease outbreak like Ebola and how the discourse of racism is perpetuated in and through the CNN representations of the Ebola crisis.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Research data comprised news clips on Ebola coverage by CNN which were uploaded on YouTube. This means that this research can be classified as an archival research in the sense that the news was not watched live. The YouTube platform was chosen for easy of accessibility of historical news clips. Studies of news from international sources are generally difficult in terms of accessing news clips and therefore the internet and YouTube more specifically provided a convenient repository for data. Using the search word “CNN news coverage of Ebola”, the researcher was able to have at hand all CNN news clips on Ebola available for use in the study³⁹. It was from this pool of collection that a sample was drawn from. A library of news clips on Ebola was downloaded and recorded on disk. A characteristic of television news is that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and this was also observed in this research. Data analysis was done using thematic analysis and thick description which involved a repeated and intense analysis of the news clips until patterns and themes began recurring.

³⁹ Below is the link for all the news clips on Ebola by CNN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieHnFgKxGpM&list=PL6XRrncXkMaXUYNvLE4cIQNIWrtzfjEhN>

4.5 Sampling procedure

Sampling involves taking a representative sample selection of the population and using the data collected as research information (Latham, 2007). A sample is a sub group of a population, a representative taste of a group (Frey et al in Latham, 2007). The main reason for using a sample as opposed to the entire population is that it may not be feasible to do so in light of the large quantities of data. Qualitative researches because of their nature usually require a small sample as they require close analysis (Cormack, 1991; Vambe & Khan 2013; Fürsich 2009, Wodak 2008, Fairclough). News clips are generally short averaging five minutes long; the researcher immersed himself in watching a selection of news clips by CNN news agency in which the Ebola disease was the key subject. In line with the nature of qualitative research, the researcher will not be bogged down by numbers and statistical restrictions associated with quantitative research but rather data collection and analysis will be undertaken in an incremental pattern to substantiate on the themes and patterns as they develop from the data analysis.

Purposive or judgmental sampling is used in this research to select the data for analysis. This method is generally believed to be the most suitable for qualitative research because the researcher has to purposively choose those news clips which are considered relevant to the research. Qualitative data by its nature does not need to be representative the researcher purposefully select those elements which are suitable for the purpose under investigation. In the case of this research the samples were collected over a period eight months representing the period during which coverage was most intense. No samples were collected on the same date and also the clips had to be substantially different in order to be selected for consideration in order to ensure variety.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, an outline of the research methodology, method of data collection and analysis were revealed and reasons for selection were advanced. It emerged that this research methodology is qualitative and that there are many traditions in critical discourse analysis. The broad objective of CDA is that it has a social transformation agenda. In other words it imagines a better world, which is a departure from traditional positivist research. The critical discourse analysis variant used in this research is greatly influenced

by Fairclough, Van Dijk and Wodak. This version of CDA was considered most appropriate for this research because of its characteristics, flexibility and relevance to the examination of dominance and power in news as well as the perpetuation of racism in the coverage of Africa and Africans in the context of Ebola. This chapter also discussed at length what constitutes relevant data and how data would be analyzed. The research is also archival in the sense that secondary data was collected from a CNN news repository on YouTube. In a nutshell, this chapter therefore elaborated on the methodological framework which informed this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 **Introduction**

This study sought to establish how the CNN news reproduced domination and power in its representation of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis. The study also sought to find out the extent to which the CNN provided a conduit for the perpetuation of racism in and through the news. The study also sought to establish which discourses were suppressed and excluded in the CNN coverage of the Ebola crisis in West Africa. The study was theoretically informed by decolonial theory and theories of representation. A critical discourse analysis of news on Ebola established that Africa and Africans are broadly framed in the following themes;

5.1 **Africa as a place of danger**

This study established that CNN reportage on the Ebola crisis appeared to portray a picture of Africa as a place of danger. Africa is packaged as a place of danger where one is at risk of dying from strange diseases such as AIDS and Ebola. According to the CNN, in Africa, one is always at risk of dying of minor complications which the rest of the world appears to have conquered. In the words of CNN correspondent Isha Sesay, in her emotional report on Ebola⁴⁰, imploring the international community to do more to help Africa deal with the Ebola crisis. For Isha,

“..One is as likely to die from complications of childbirth or a broken leg in the countries of West Africa because the primary health systems have collapsed...”

This point is also echoed by Biden⁴¹, the United States of America Army General, who declared that Ebola and terrorism represented the biggest threats to America. He claimed that ISIS and Ebola are” on our door, the wolf is closest to the door...” Diseases of the magnitude of Ebola and AIDS are therefore termed ‘exotic’ diseases, as far as American is concerned. These diseases are associated with Africa, because Africa is the continent which is traditionally associated with strange diseases and plagues. This view resonates well with previous literature by scholars, missionaries and explorers such as David

⁴⁰ The new clip is titled “Emotional Ebola report of CNN Isha Sesay from Abuja, Nigeria” can be found on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lylR25ZlQqs>

⁴¹ Biden: ‘Ebola is a crisis at our door’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-B9yXOxXzs>

Livingstone and Joseph Conrad who described Africa as the heart of darkness, a place where death was common and life of the natives very cheap (Kothari 2010). Isha Sesay, in her emotional report for CNN warns the international community that if the disease is not dwelt with decisively in Africa, this danger could pose serious challenges for people living in the United State of America.

A CNN news item, titled “Nigeria versus Ebola, Boko Haram”⁴² in which the news anchor points out that the two forms of danger pose a significant threat to ‘that part of Africa’, where on one hand the people in Nigeria had to grapple with a public health crisis which the CNN sensationally claims that “it’s raging right around that part of Africa but the country is also seized with the struggle against Boko Haram”. It would appear all the challenges should fit into the wider extreme of the dangers facing that part of Africa. By linking two unrelated issues that is Ebola and Boko Haram without putting them into context, the CNN could be perceived as trying to paint an image of an Africa which is so dangerous that one is at risk of perishing in one way or the other, if not from a health calamity such as Ebola, then from an act of terrorism at the hands of Boko Haram. The CNN video footage of Africa is full of dilapidated buildings, dense forests and chaotic scenes in cities such as slums. On the streets pedestrians are shown jay walking and cars hooting in order to paint scenes of chaos and danger. Death is always imminent, when one is in Africa. These images all seem to be saying that danger is everywhere in Africa.

The structured selection and exclusion of images by the CNN news is done with the objective of fitting into existing stereotypes, the image of Africa as a place of danger. The CNN framing of Africa as a place of danger in the context of Ebola appears to resonate with the intentional approach to representation which is based on the premise that the transmitter of media messages projects its own meaning on the world through the language and selection of images. In other words, signs mean what the sender intends them to. This appears therefore to imply that any representation is a reflection of the speaker’s prejudices, biases, interests and suppositions (Hall 1997). It therefore rejects

⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-r3TX--m84>

the reflective view which purports that the transmitter merely reflects reality in the same way a mirror reflects an image.

The CNN representations of Africa in the face of Ebola, also concurs with the views of scholars like Achidie (2009), who opines that the representations of the other cannot be understood outside the hegemonic power structures of a society. For Achidie (2009), stories too are defined by power hierarchies in terms of how they are told, who tells them, when they are told and how many times they are told. CNN represented the story of Africa in the face of Ebola as the definitive or authoritative story on the Ebola crisis but a closer scrutiny as revealed by the critical discourse analysis of its story appears to reveal that the CNN is perpetuating long standing stereotyped images of Africa although in hushed or masked ways which may be elusive to casual readers. The frame of Africa as a place of danger further resonates with existing literature where Chinua Achebe in his analysis of Joseph Conrad's heart of darkness states that;

“..Keep away from Africa, or else! Mr Kurtz of heart of darkness should have heeded that warning, and the prowling horror in his heart would have kept its place, but he foolishly exposed himself to the wild irresistible allure of the jungle and lo! The darkness found him out” (Achebe 1975)

The above quote by Achebe aptly sums up the CNN frame of Africa as a place of danger where Africa is described as a place devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the adventurous European enters at his peril, as did the NBC camera man Ashoka Mukpo whose parents could not even stop their son's free spirit of adventure as he sought to help the people of Liberia⁴³. The frame of Africa as a place of danger captures the concern of coloniality of space, where some spaces are considered spaces of safety and others spaces of danger, therefore zones of being and zones of non being. Africa as a place of danger is viewed from a decolonial perspective as a zone of non being, where foreigners can forage at their own peril (Maldonado-Torres, deSousa Santos, Mignolo).

⁴³ Clip titled “did Ashoka contract Ebola from washing a car?": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7Kc7TjdxBY>

5.2 Africa as a place of disease

This thesis also established that the CNN news constructs an image of Africa as a source of disease⁴⁴. The over emphasis on which the Ebola disease is said to have originated in Africa goes beyond basic information dissemination to portray a picture of Africa and Africans as a source of disease. In a news item titled “Did budget cuts impact on Ebola research?”⁴⁵ The CNN anchor Dr Seema Yasmin, after pointing out that since Ebola was discovered in Africa in 1976, there still wasn’t a cure to date. She opines why “we”, implying ‘them, that is North Americans’ still do not know more about this disease. She posits that “Is it because of the people that it affects? Or is it because of the countries that it affects? The CNN here seem to be attributing the disease directly to Africa and to Africans. Through these rhetoric questions, the CNN seem to imply that Ebola is exclusively a disease from Africa. This geopolitics of the Ebola as a disease associated with Africa is also reflected through research by Barnett and Whiteside (2002; Sontag 1990; Treichler 1999; Bardham 2001; Kitzinger and Miller 1992) where AIDS was attributed as a disease which had something to do with Africanness and blackness.

The second question in which the CNN questions whether the west did not know more about Ebola because of the people the disease affects, seem to suggest that biologically, Ebola can only affect Africans or black people only. It appears as if people of other races cannot and do not get affected with Ebola by virtue of their biological makeup. This view resonates with the concerns of decolonial theory about the condition of being black, which Mignolo refers to as the coloniality of being.

In the CNN news, on “This hour”⁴⁶, a discussion on Ebola with two experts begins with the words “it’s now been three days since Ebola was diagnosed for the first time on American soil....” CNN’s Dr Sanjay Gupta points out matter of fact that “ ...given the fact that this strain of Ebola has not been in this western hemisphere, let alone in the United States of America”. He was saying this in reference to the Centre for Disease Control’s (United States of America’s supreme disease control arm) decision to repatriate

⁴⁴ Experts fight Ebola at its source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KueK0R2RhcY&index=24&list=PL6XRrncXkMaXUYNvLE4clQNIWrtzfjEhN>

⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB1WmpEt-X4>

two American citizens who had contracted Ebola while in Africa. For him and the CNN, their position was that people infected with Ebola, whether they were American citizens or not, should not have been allowed back into the United States of America. They were supposed to be treated at source, ostensibly, where the disease belonged.

The CNN framing of Africa as a place of disease confirms the concerns of scholars like Chouliaraki (2008) who point out that Africa and the third world are represented in the western media in general as a place of distant suffering. The representations of Africa by the CNN in the context of Ebola seem to insinuate that Africa is home to strange and exotic diseases. All efforts by western help agencies are meant to ensure that the disease does not leave its source.

The Ebola victims are portrayed with their backs turned to the camera, as if they are unaware that they are being filmed. The Ebola victims are denied a voice and in the words of Chouliaraki (2008:111), they are left without a face or expression. They lack the power to communicate to the audience the condition of their misfortune. The CNN news presentation mode does not seek to engage the audience in an emotional and reflexive way. The reporting claims objectivity at the expense of emotionality. Objectivity in the news, according to Chouliaraki (2008) is established by means of a description of facts and also by the use of a map or maps. The rationale is that cartography is traditionally believed to bear scientific disguise of accurate representation, although in reality, the map is actually a discourse of power that reflects how the world is viewed by those who are in a privileged position to interpret it. The map therefore is used by the CNN news to objectively reduce the Ebola stricken places as a drawing on a piece of paper instead of projecting it as a space that is inhabited by human beings. The net effect is that the CNN representations reduced Africa to distant sufferers who did not deserve any pity from the international viewers (Chouliaraki 2008).

The discourse of Africa as a place of disease perpetuated in the CNN representation of Africa in the context of the Ebola crisis resonates with Bleiker's observation representations of HIV/AIDS fit into established patterns of orientalism (Said 1979). The earliest media accounts of HIV/AIDS were premised on theories that traced the origin of the disease Africa. One theory claimed that the HIV virus had been present in Africa for

years without being diagnosed (2007:145). This assertion is shared by Hiltz (1988:2) who claims that the disease only became known when civilization reached Africa. Another theory claims that HIV AIDS must have evolved from a parent virus which was discovered in wild African green monkeys. The disease then found a human host in Africans who later passed it on to the rest of the world. HIV /AIDS is thus represented as having emerged from faraway places, from the bodies of “others” that then contaminated the rest of the world (Bleiker 2007). It can thus be concluded that the representations of the CNN fit neatly well into the stereotypical representation of Africans as the other and of Africa as the host to strange diseases and health conditions.

By placing emphasis on origin of disease rather than concentrating on the underlying causes of infection and cure, stereotypical representations of Africa as the home of disease are perpetuated. Ebola is represented as having found its way to the human host in Africans from infected monkeys and bats and how the CNN is intent on constructing the image of Ebola having started in Africa and how it must be contained in Africa before it spreads to the rest of the world. The ‘rest of the world’ as used by the CNN news reads like a metaphor meant to represent the United States of America and the European Union.

5.3 Africa as a place of poverty

This thesis also established that Africa is framed as a place of poverty as evidenced by the selection of visual footage by the CNN which show dilapidated buildings, broken down vehicles, slums in reference to Africa and images of sickly looking black people in reference to Africans. All hospitals and treatment units are makeshift, made of plastic and other temporary material. For example, in a CNN video titled “CNN_ Inside Liberia’s Ebola crisis⁴⁷”, this video projects an image of Africa which is so poor just by the selection of broken down vehicles used as ambulances to ferry the patients to hospitals, which hospitals are totally unsuitable dilapidated and show every element of a broken down public health system.

In interviews conducted by the CNN, emphasis is always on how poor Africa and how a disease such as Ebola is exacerbated by poverty. In an interview with the parents of an

⁴⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wM9A-a2_Wk

NBC photojournalist who got infected with Ebola while in Africa, the parents of the victim seemed to express views more as experts on how poor Africa was, than to express their emotions for their ill son. The father of the patient expressed his optimism about his son's prognosis and went on to tell CNN about how a lot of people are dying in Africa from dehydration because of severe fluid loss, especially in an area which is under resourced such as Africa, where they do not have the option of availing intravenous fluids which for them in the United States of America, and in developed countries were just a common resource. This view is also echoed by Isha Sesay, a CNN correspondent who gave an emotional report about how poor Africa was and how Africa could not succeed without assistance from the United States of America and Britain. The Centre for disease Control and Prevention, a United States of America arm for combating diseases also weighed in the poverty in Africa mantra when its director pointed out that doctors without borders, MSF⁴⁸ has been caring for Ebola patients in Africa for many years without incurring a death in their team and that is in Africa where the infection control procedure is poor and cannot be compared to the one in the United States of America. The same official is quoted in same interview saying that Ebola does not need any advanced facilities for the treatment and containment of Ebola. What the CDC director tacitly implies here is that Africa is so poor that it cannot handle diseases which can be prevented by the very basic hygiene. The reinforcement of the Africa as poor construct is further reinforced by the accompaniment of visuals of slums, people in dirty, torn and tattered clothes, every time in apparent reference to Africa.

Tim Jagativ, a Canadian medical doctor with MSF adds to the poverty in Africa narrative when he compounds on how difficult it was for him to communicate about the disease the last time he was in Africa at the beginning of the Ebola outbreak. He is quoted as saying that getting the message out to the people affected was the biggest challenge as it was very difficult to communicate with people who did not necessarily have a radio, television or internet access both in the rural and urban area. A problem of communication is one of the characteristics of poverty in a modern society. This view

⁴⁸ Medecins Sans Frontieres or Doctors without Borders is an international medical humanitarian organisation founded in Paris, France in 1971. It has 24 associations which are independent legal entities bound together as MSF International with headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland: <http://www.msf.org/msf-movement>

also resonates with earlier research by Igbinoba and Emenike (2011) that media representations tend to depict Africa as a dark continent, which is still backward and with absolutely no means of communication.

If the failure to contain Ebola is not that of material poverty then it can also be attributed to poverty of skills and knowledge as the CNN anchor seem to reinforce in an interview with Tim Jagativ, when she says that Ebola is something that physicians in Africa are not familiar with. This statement seems to imply that physicians in Africa are not at par with physicians in the west in terms of knowledge. This view however seem to contradict the other frame which seek to portray Ebola as purely a disease that is associated with Africa. Perhaps one can infer that Africa is only there to provide case studies and theories and solutions must come from the global north. This is also one of the major concerns of decolonial theory that knowledge is viewed to be universal and that it only travels in one direction. That is from North to south and in the case of solutions to the Ebola outbreak, from the United States of America and European Union to Africa. The epistemic exclusiveness of western knowledge is therefore a chief cause of concern in the representation of Africa and African by the CNN news.

The poverty in Africa frame is also further reinforced in the CNN narrative on the Ebola crisis through the structured absence of those images of Africa which are different and do not support the discourse of a poor Africa. The CNN in its representation of Africa and Africans in the context of Ebola is conspicuous by its silence on the question of why Africa is in such dire poverty that is so glorifies in its quest to explain why Africa cannot contain diseases which are seemingly 'difficult' to spread as some of the experts on Ebola may want the rest of the world to believe. The CNN does not comment about the vast mineral wealth that is found in these parts of Africa. The CNN only provides a single narrative or a single story of Africa in the context of an Ebola crisis but it does not tell its viewers that this is only a single story as far as struggle to contain Ebola is in Africa. Viewers are not made aware of the dangers of the single story about Africa, in the words of Achidie (2009).

The CNN framing of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis resonates with Mourid Barghouti's⁴⁹ view that if you want to dispossess a people, all one has to do is to tell their story and to start with secondly. Start the story with the failure of the African states to establish a robust public health system that can cope with the numbers of Ebola infections and not with the colonization of Africa and one has an entirely different story (Achidie 2009). The CNN has created a single story of Africa as a continent of poverty, a place of danger, a place of disease and Africans have been portrayed as a white man's burden. They are stripped of agency and dignity in the CNN news, as far as efforts to control the spread of Ebola are concerned. The Africans are shown in images of hopelessness which strips them of their dignity. The CNN medical analyst in a news clip titled "Did budget cuts impact Ebola research?"⁵⁰ attributes the spread of Ebola to poverty and neglect in "that part of Africa". By consistently perpetuating the single story of poverty and disease in Africa, the CNN denies Africa and Africans of the opportunity to tell its own story. It robs Africans of the opportunity to be recognized as equal human beings.

5.4 The African as a white man's burden

This study also reviewed that CNN news representation of Africa and Africans appears to present an image of a situation where there is no internal agency from within Africa to combat the outbreak of Ebola. Africa and Africans appear to be totally helpless in the face of the disease. CNN news is silent on all efforts from within Africa which suggest that Africa is also actively involved in the struggle to contain the spread of the disease. In a CNN news video titled "Epidemiologist_ Nothing is slowing Ebola"⁵¹, the CNN news anchor poses a rhetorical question "...so can anyone stop Ebola?" She goes on to report that;

“.....leaders from around the world are giving that question full attention, today. British Prime Minister, David Cameron convened an emergency security meeting, EU security ministers in Brussels, In the United States of America

⁴⁹ A Palestinian poet

⁵⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

⁵¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MksSmbFXDiQ>

President Obama, cleared his diary for the second straight day as he pondered on how to stop this deadly disease...”

The CNN further asserts that if USA’s centre for disease control was having challenges containing this deadly disease, then what did it mean for everybody else? The CNN seem to advance the discourse of the United States of America in a paternalistic role as having responsibility for the affairs of other countries. The CNN seem to be advancing the subtle claim that it is the white man’s burden to save his weak and unable brother from the menace of a deadly disease which they describe as very deadly but easy to control, in the words of the director for the Centre for Disease Control, Dr Tom Friedman.

The subtle claim that it is the white man’s burden to bear the trouble of saving Africa from a possible annihilation at the hands of the Ebola virus is further cemented in the same CNN video⁵² by an expert on Infectious Disease at Imperial college in the United Kingdom, Roy Anderson who makes claims that it was only the United States of America and her allies who were doing anything to stop Ebola, when he says;

“...a massive western response. The United States is sending something like a massive 4000 military personnel, doctors, trainers, equipment and Britain has done something similar and is sending more to Sierra Leone and obviously the French are in Guinea. They are the only ones who can do this heavy lifting (and) is it late though?”

The CNN news here seems intent on painting a picture of a helpless Africa where the locals are totally rendered unable to do anything to stop Ebola. While it may be true that these countries were indeed involved in these charitable gestures, the CNN does not provide a context to why the United States of America chose to send aid to Liberia, Britain to Sierra Leone and claimed that France was ‘obviously’ in Guinea. The CNN conveniently omits to provide a historical context of the relationship between these countries, that they were their former imperial masters and that perhaps the gestures of giving aid specifically to those countries could be driven by a sense of guilt of the colonial acts of omissions and commissions which have resulted in these countries’ health delivery systems unable to cope up with the Ebola crisis.

⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MksSmbFXDiQ>

The CNN news does not raise these questions, what the newscaster simply do is to celebrate and call this gesture a “massive western response”, without going a little bit into context of why the status quo in Africa is that deplorable. The CNN representations of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis resonates with previous research and literature by Last Moyo⁵³ in a research on the CNN reportage of Zimbabwe in an election context, which revealed that the CNN reporting of issues is episodic and is devoid of context and background, especially in cases where that background exposes the historical injustices caused by slave trade and colonialism. In the Zimbabwean election, the CNN chose to frame Mugabe as an election thief and a murderer who murdered white commercial farmers and grabbed their land to appease his angry supporters and violated the private property rights of Zimbabweans by unleashing violence on opposition party supporters but the CNN did not provide a context into the colonial legacy and historical injustice surrounding the land issue in Zimbabwe. Similarly, in the case of the Ebola crisis, the CNN news simply hypes about the ‘massive aid that is coming from western sources but does not provide the historical context of why Liberians are supposedly incapable of assisting themselves.

The CNN conveniently skips the historical fact that Liberia as a country is a reminder of the history of slave trade and plunder in Africa. The CNN does not bring to the fore, the reality that Liberia is creation of the United States of America, as an outpost for the descendants of slaves who were captured from America and taken to the United States of America to build and develop America. But what CNN reporting simply does, is to paint an image of an incapable people who cannot save themselves from a disease such as Ebola, a disease which can simply be contained by observing basic health habits such as washing one’s hands on a regular basis. CNN backs this claim of unhygienic Africans in its news visuals where its news anchor rhetorically questions why the world still doesn’t know more about Ebola. She asks whether it was because of the people who are affected by the disease or the countries which it affects. This CNN strategically shows a visual of a white woman who is washing her hands against an expert opinion of Dr Xand van

⁵³ The CNN Defect: Representations of Race and Historical Justice in the Zimbabwean election in *Journal of International Communications* Volume 17 (2)

Tulleken, a CNN medical analyst where he seems to lament the inability of the global system to control a disease which should be relatively straightforward to control.

In a news story titled “Did budget cuts impact on Ebola”,⁵⁴ the CNN postulates that budget cuts by the United States of America could have impacted on the efforts to know more about the Ebola virus. This claim gives rise to the belief that North America is the only country in the world which is capable of finding solutions to problems facing the world. By blaming the United States of America for failure to get a medical breakthrough on the Ebola virus the CNN news seem to imply that indeed it is the west’s burden to contain or to find a cure for Ebola. This kind of portrayal gives an impression that there is no internal agency on the part of Africa to seek solutions to problems which the world say are inherently African. In other words there is absolutely nothing on the ground as far as Africa is concerned in terms of trying to seek solutions health problems such as Ebola. This gesture is actually an assault on the indigenous knowledge systems in Africa. Through out the news clip, images of black Africans have shown as the Ebola patients. The sufferers are shown facing away from the camera and in instances they are facing the camera, they seem oblivious of the fact that they are being filmed. These images are stripped of voice and agency. The images of the sufferers fit neatly into the stereotyped abstract images of disease. They are what Bleikly (2007) define as universalized and decontextualised notions of human suffering. They invoke feelings of pity for the sufferers and not sympathy. These are the images which fit into the preconceived image of what it means to be suffering and dying in Africa. They are meant to create in western viewers a reassurance that life in far off places like Africa is dangerous. They depict an image of Africa as a dark continent (Igbino and Emenike 2011).

5.5 The black man as a criminal vis-à-vis the white man as a saint

Africans are portrayed in CNN news as unreliable and untrustworthy such that one is always in danger when dealing with them. In the coverage of the “so called” first ever Ebola infected person to ever set foot in the United States of America, Thomas Eric

⁵⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

Duncan⁵⁵, CNN news hypes the claim that Duncan may have deliberately withheld information that could have led authorities to believe that Duncan had been exposed to persons infected with Ebola. The manner in which the CNN reports this issue, appear to vilify and accuse Duncan of deliberately ‘exporting’ Ebola to the United States of America is tantamount to portraying Africans in general as being generally unreliable and untrustworthy. They cannot be trusted with providing information that could potentially save people in America from a dangerous disease such as Ebola.

In a news clip, “Ebola’s twisting path to the United States”⁵⁶, the CNN tries to construct a discourse of how black people are a conduit for transmission of diseases and danger in general from a place of danger to a zone of safety. Through a black man, Thomas Eric Duncan, Ebola was transported to Dallas, Texas in the United States of America. The CNN constructs a narrative of how Duncan may have contracted the disease in Liberia when he helped transport a pregnant young woman to the hospital. The woman is said to have later died from Ebola. The idea it seems is to prove that indeed Duncan knew that he had contracted Ebola and that he was going to the United States of America, ostensibly to spread the disease knowingly. This view resonates with literature on media representations of black people in film where the black man is always portrayed in stereotyped images as a criminal. In these films, the black man is shown disturbing the people’s peace; usually these people are white, through heinous acts of murder, theft or robbery. In the case of Ebola coverage, CNN projects Duncan as a criminal type who commits a public assault offence according to the united states laws for knowingly bringing an alien disease to a place of safety, and therefore deserves to be punished.

The CNN even backs up that narrative with a news clip in which medical correspondent Dr Nancy Synderman appears from the bushes with a local Liberian man who is said to be the driver of a taxi which helped ferry the pregnant girl to hospital, in a news clip titled “Ebola’s twisting path to the United States“. The visuals do not show the images of the said taxi but only shows the man who was said to be taxi driver, they show Nancy Synderman and the “taxi driver” coming from a foot path in a jungle to a place where

⁵⁵ Thomas Eric Duncan is a Liberian national who is infamous for being the “first person infected with Ebola” to travel to the United States of America becoming the first Ebola case on US soil.

⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0tT-XsXko>

Duncan is said to have been living. A local man confirms the whole story stating that Duncan is the one who carried the pregnant girl by the name Marthalyn into a taxi, which however is not present and ferried her to the hospital. Duncan however denied ever staying at the place in question and also coming into contact with the said girl.

This narrative seems to reflect Africans as a very dangerous people who can put the whole world at risk by willfully spreading alien diseases. The construction of the black man as a thief in the CNN coverage of the Ebola crisis runs parallel to the construction of the white man as a saint or a superior being. This is evidenced by news clips which show whites as responsible international citizens, for example, in the news clip titled “NBC cameraman test positive for Ebola”⁵⁷, the CNN, through its chief medical correspondent, reports that;

“.... My understanding is that when he found he had a fever, he quarantined himself, he recognized that this could be Ebola, he got a test and it took about twelve hours, that test came back positive and the rest of the team, Dr Synderman and her crew mates and everyone decided to go ahead and put themselves in quarantine because they had had contact with him and they are all going to be flown back to the United States. We believe that they would be flown back to Atlanta and as you know, Emelary hospital is one of the hospitals equipped to take care of patients with Ebola...”

This white, western crew is represented as knowledge and saint like, upon realizing that they had been exposed, they go ahead and get themselves tested and decided to quarantine themselves. A people who are capable of deciding to quarantine themselves can best be described as heroes. This is typical heroic act when compared to the behavior of people like Duncan who upon realizing that they had been infected with a deadly virus, they leave the continent and recklessly fly around the world in a willful bid to infect an unsuspecting public with a deadly disease. The only challenge however with the CNN narrative of the NBC crew is that it is not based on facts, it is merely a claim by its chief medical correspondent, who however does not substantiates his claim. What can be deduced however from a symbolic perspective of representation is an attempt to construct the image of one group of people as saintly while vilifying another group. This construction is made on racial grounds. It can be construed as racist in nature. This view

⁵⁷<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORd130KXRcs>

is further substantiated by yet another CNN news item titled “CDC director_nurse infection unacceptable”⁵⁸, where the CNN asks the CDC director how serious they viewed the violation by NBC news’s Dr Nancy Synderman, the violation of what they termed her mandatory quarantine, notwithstanding that previously the CNN had claimed that Dr Synderman and her crew had quarantined themselves. To which the CDC director classically responded;

“...for someone who is a contact or potentially a contact, the most important thing is to monitor your temperature everyday and if you have a fever or you have any symptoms at all, go immediately in, calling to say I haven exposed, I might be sick, I am coming in assessment. That is what we want contacts to do and that is the most important thing to do to protect the public. The first index patient exposed forty eight people and the second; a nurse exposed one that is the kind of trend we want to see...”

Upon further prodding if Dr Synderman had put anyone at risk, the CDC director responded that, “If she was not sick she was not putting anybody at risk”. The CNN appeared to find the responses satisfactory since there was no further clarification sought. It appears however that the laws and procedures are applied differently to different people. It seems that there are people who are considered capable of monitoring themselves voluntarily and there are others who are considered incapable of performing that act. Secondly, we are told that if Dr Synderman was not sick then she was not putting anyone at risk of contracting Ebola. There however appears to be a double standard here in the case of Thomas Eric Duncan.

When Duncan left Liberia he did not exhibit any of the symptoms of Ebola, he went through checks in Belgium, Washington DC and Dallas, still he did not present the symptoms of illness, again which means according to the general rule, he was not putting anyone at risk. Eventually when he did fell ill, he presented himself at a hospital but it appears that Thomas’s case was interpreted totally differently from that of Dr Synderman. The same authorities who seemed intent on proving Duncan culpable of public assault, it seems did not see any wrong in Dr Synderman breaching the terms of her mandatory quarantine. One can therefore then deduce that there could be elements of racial undertone in the manner in which black and white people are represented in and

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nSlmiNK47c>

through the CNN, in the context of the Ebola crisis. Whereas Americans are presented as responsible and generally safe, the same cannot be said of black people from Africa. It appears they are reconstructed as criminals and dangerous. This resonates with previous literature on media representation and it is also on the agenda of decolonial scholars that the problem of the 21st century shall be that of the colourline (Dubois). Race appears to be at the intersection of media representation of Africans, in the context of a health crisis.

5.6 The construction of Africa as the ‘other’

This thesis also established that Africa is not quite considered as part of the global society. This view is substantiated by among other evidence, the interview between CNN and Tim Jagativ, of the MSF or doctors without borders, in a news clip titled “CNN news Africa’s Ebola outbreak out of control, warns MSF”⁵⁹ had the effective of portraying Africa as a far off place which is not actually a part of the modern world. This is clearly elaborated through his consistent use of phrases such as “in that part of the world”, every time he was referring to Africa. This raises the suspicion that Africa is not quite part of the global village which claims to embrace all and sundry. The news anchor also adds weight to these doubts by her assertion that

“..that’s one of the issues in west Africa, because Ebola is not something that physicians out there are familiar with and also their customs such as touching the dead bodies et cetera, that are increasing the transmission rate...”

The above claim by CNN news is significant in two ways. The phrase by the CNN that “physicians out there” seem to imply that Africa is geographically not a part of the world the CNN is located; hence it brings out the “them and us” effect. Africa is definitely othered as not belonging to the regular part of the world and is described as a distant location. The title of the news story also further substantiates this view. By explicitly attributing the disease to Africa, as “Africa’s Ebola”, the CNN is in fact alluding to the fact that Ebola is not a global threat but rather it is Africa’s problem and Africa does not belong to the regular world, but is a distant other.

⁵⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqWoTEFSAn8>

This view of Africa as the other appears to be supported by the CNN claim in a news programme titled “This hour discusses with two experts⁶⁰” CNN highlights that it was now three days since Ebola was first diagnosed for the first time on American soil to which one of the experts pointed out that;

“...this patient Duncan who we know had his temperature taken in Africa. We also know that he was given a questionnaire to fill out and apparently we are being told from Liberian officials that he answered no to the question about whether he had come into contact with anybody with Ebola or exposed to the virus at all...”

By merely mentioning the fact that the patient had his temperature tested in Africa seems to imply an assault on African systems and procedures. It raises eyebrows about Africa’s capability to conduct routine checks and balances. It implies that maybe systems were not accurate; it questions the validity and reliability of the whole process. It paints a picture of Africa as the other, the weak link in the world system. This lack of confidence in Africa and African systems exposes the fallacy of the claims for ‘universality’ of the Cartesian science.

A fundamental principle of Cartesian knowledge and processes is that they lay claim to universal validity; this means that a routine procedure such as recording an individual’s temperature is supposed to be a standard practice across the world, what then could have been the significance of emphasizing that Duncan had his temperature taken “in Africa”. This may be read to say that we doubt if at all the temperature reading is accurate, or if the temperature was taken at all. It may imply that one can not rely on information obtained from Africa. This perception tallies well with previous notions of perceiving Africa as the ‘other’, as the weak link in the global system.

This view is further confirmed by the CNN expert who in the same programme “This hour...”⁶¹ points out that systems were not as tight as they must be, he says that;

“.....Do I think the screening is aggressive enough, no? I have been in airports just yesterday; I did not see the signs up anywhere. I did not see anything which says if someone next to you seems very sick, throws up, and then you do what....”

⁶⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB1WmpEt-X4>

⁶¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB1WmpEt-X4>

The above quote can be interpreted in a number of ways, all of which however confirms the construct of Africa as the ‘other’. By explicitly pointing out that the systems are not aggressive, it may directly imply that Africans by their very nature, they demand an aggressive approach to managing them. The system can only be aggressive in so far as dealing with Africans. This is because Ebola is according to the same authorities an African disease, and therefore it is the Africans who bear the greatest risk for spreading it across the world. This view finds resonance in documented literature which states that Africa is the poor in terms of all areas of human endeavor such as governance, administration and basic monitoring and evaluation of epidemics and therefore requires international help both human and material.

The call for more aggressive control measures could also possibly explain the use of the military in tackling the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. It is reported that the United States of America, United Kingdom and France collectively deployed more than four thousand military personnel to the Ebola afflicted countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. One may therefore in this light deduce that the ‘other’ comes into the western frame largely as a problem, which then must be dealt with heavy handedly by use of force.

This view resonates with the decolonial scholars concerns about coloniality of power and coloniality of being.

5.7 How many ways may we know?

This thesis also exposes coloniality of knowledge as exemplified by the CNN portrayal of physicians from Africa as inferior. By explicitly pointing out that “physicians out there”, in reference to physicians in Africa, are not familiar with Ebola. This claim by the CNN may be interpreted to mean that physicians from Africa are of lesser acclaim to physicians in the global north. The CNN news therefore implies that Africa does not produce knowledge but it is just a consumer of knowledge. Knowledge is produced in the global north. Physicians from African therefore cannot operate without endorsement from the centre or from the global north, which is a euphemism for countries such as United States of America, Britain, France and the European Union. This resonates with the

concern of decolonial scholars that Africa the west always claims epistemic exclusiveness to knowledge.

From a decolonial perspective, knowledge flows only in one direction, that is from north to south. Africa is for case studies and the west is for theories. In the case of the Ebola crisis, African physicians have to be schooled by their western counterparts about a disease which is occurring in their own backyard, a disease they are grappling with everyday. This is why in the CNN news clips used in this study, all experts and professional are white and they are from the United States of America, Britain and the European Union.

The whites are the doctors and physicians. They are the ones whose voice is heard as they battle to try and contain the situation in Africa. Heroism is built around the exploits of these white doctors and nurses. They are valorized and celebrated throughout the CNN. All the universities and research centres which are said to be working hard to produce a vaccine for Ebola are from Western Europe and North America, there is none from Africa and other parts of the world such as Asia and South America. Different health experts from these universities such David Sanders, Dr Charles Haas, are given prominence on the CNN as they express their personal views on the probability of Ebola mutating and changing its primary mode of transmission and also disputing the present understanding of the behavior of Ebola for example the widely held belief that if one does not develop symptoms of Ebola between 2 – 21 days then basically one is clear from contracting Ebola, Dr Charles Haas from Drexel university in Philadelphia, in the united states of America is quoted as saying;

“...I think the latest data shows more prolonged incubation times than in the first outbreaks so there is need to be a reconsideration of the yardstick....he further says that “I think that their analysis is still founded on the original outbreak in Zaire in 1976 without having assimilated the data of the outbreaks that have happened subsequently..”⁶²

The personnel views of these white, western males are given so much prominence in the CNN as does all the views of people from the northern hemisphere. This privileging of white, western males as experts in the knowledge production arena resonates with the

⁶² Clip title is called “What we still Don’t know about Ebola”

concerns of decolonial scholars who refer to this phenomenon as epistemic exclusiveness which can be interpreted as a form of epistemic racism or epistemic apartheid, whereby the views of one dominant group is universalized and the views of experts from subaltern groups such as African universities and African research centres are conveniently ignored. There are no black health experts on the CNN, neither is there a mention of African efforts towards the drive to contain Ebola. This is because they do not fit into the hegemonic narrative of viewing Africa as a place of case studies and Europe and North America as the source of theories. Knowledge is projected as white. This view that knowledge is indeed white and resides in the west is further substantiated by the CNN news clip titled “What we still don’t know about Ebola”⁶³. In this news clip, the Director of the US Centre for disease Control tells America congress that;

“there is really a lot we know about Ebola, CDC has an entire brain shed, an entire group of professionals who spend their careers working on Ebola and other similar infections, they go out and stop these outbreaks all the time”.

America and Western Europe project themselves as the sole source of solutions to the problems of facing the world. This view further confirms the CNN assertion in a news clip titled ”Did budget impact Ebola research”⁶⁴, the CNN interviews Dr Lesley Lobels, a senior lecturer at Ben-Gurion University who says;

“...the funding is not there, academia does not have enough virologists. I think we need to do a lot more in terms of infectious disease community as a whole and we just need to put a lot more resources in infectious diseases. We lost a lot of capacity over the years because we thought we conquered many diseases but in fact we have not”.

One is drawn to imply that the academia being referred to above is from the west and the virologists who are said to be in short supply are from the global west. Health experts from the global south are not the ones who are being referred to here. This deliberate exclusion of experts and academics from Africa and other subaltern groups is the epistemicide⁶⁵, which is considered a serious concern of decolonial theory. According to

⁶³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoU_IA5Nof0

⁶⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

⁶⁵ A major concern of decolonial theory which refers to the killing of the black mind through systematically disregarding knowledge and ideas by scholars and experts from the global south and conversely through the

Shohat and Stam (2002), theory travels and only in one direction, from the global north to the global south the reality on the ground however, is that the majority of African governments sent health practitioners and volunteers to complement efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. This draws one to conclude therefore that when they say “I think therefore I am”, that does not include the African professionals. It appears that thinking is generally reserved for white, western men and in a few cases women also judged the number of voices on and in the CNN on Ebola.

5.8 The myth of African culture as a hindrance to modernity

This thesis also establishes the myth of African culture as a draw back to modernity. This view is substantiated by the CNN strategy to lay blame on its failure on African culture, beliefs and habits. CNN claims that the spread of Ebola is largely due to the customs and behavior of Africans resonate well with previous research which claimed that AIDS was fuelled in Africa largely through the sexual behavior and habits of African people. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa was therefore explained as fundamentally different as it was seen largely as being heterosexual in nature; the disease thus aroused western interest in African sexuality. According to this school of thought, Africans have a huge sexual appetite and this is fuelled by a culture which permits multiple sexual partners. As a result, ‘African culture, poverty, ignorance and promiscuity’ were advanced as key explanatory themes by the UK media for the emerging HIV/AIDS crisis in the late 1980s (Kitzinger and Miller 1992). This view is also shared by Shohat and Stam (2002) who say that the west has bifurcated the world in terms of the west and the rest. The west is portrayed as being superior in all forms of life such as their culture and the rest’s tradition, their demonstration and the rest’s riots. This seems to imply that anything that comes out of Africa is bad and must be viewed in terms of how it is related to the global west.

Stillwagon (2003) points out that although the media does not use the word ‘race’, this however entered into the discourse on representations of Africans as “culture”. Culture was attributed as the cause of HIV/AIDS as the explanation for understanding the disease

in Africa. Africans were characterized as the social “other”, who are totally different from Europeans in culture and in social norms. It is clear therefore that the meaning of race has changed throughout centuries. The general view about Africans held in the west is that although Africans appear to be human, in every sense, in fact they are not human but humanlike subjects (Maldonado-Torres 2007). This view is also supported by Caldwell and Caldwell (1987:410) who says that the notions of race and racial differences cannot be understood separately from any western discourse which regards African culture as homogeneous and as the contributing factor to the spread of diseases. A CNN generalization of Ebola in West Africa is seemingly ignorant of the fact that West Africa is a vast territory comprising over eighteen countries and many different cultures. Former President of the United States of America Bill Clinton is also on record twitting that he had just touched down in Africa. The discourse of equating Africa to a single country is also one of the stereotypes of western media and CNN in its coverage of the Ebola crisis is refer to Africa as a seamless or homogeneous entity.

Therefore from the CNN reportage, Africa is framed as a place of danger, because of strange diseases that are associated with it and also because of the behavioral and cultural patterns of the Africans themselves. According to a CNN new guest, Tim Jagativ, a doctor with MSF, Ebola is a relatively difficult disease to be infected with, but “it is the behavior of the people which allows the disease to be spread in that particular part of the world”. He was speaking in concurrence with the new anchor who had posed that although Ebola was deadly, the disease was however not extremely contagious in the sense that it required some form of contact with bodily contact with an extremely sick person.

To further reinforce the image of Africa as a place of danger, the CNN news in one of its news clips titled “Epidemiologist_ Nothing is slowing Ebola”⁶⁶, features Roy Anderson, An Infectious Disease Epidemiology Professor at imperial college, in the United Kingdom who seemed to draw satisfaction from the report that the United States of America was sending a massive four thousand military personnel together with medical personnel, trainers, equipment and Britain and France were also doing the same in Sierra

⁶⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MksSmbFXDiQ>

Leone and Guinea respectively. However, deploying such a massive number of military personnel to a country that is afflicted by a viral disease paints a picture of a very dangerous place. The question which begs for answers is what is the business of military personnel in a country that is seized with a health crisis?

In contrast, the United States of America, through its Director for Disease Control told the CNN that it had a totally different strategy for dealing with Ebola virus in the unlikely event that the disease spread across the East Coast, into the United States of America, that strategy however did not include the deployment of military personnel. According to Dr Tom Friedman, the CDC Director, Ebola was a disease that is easily inactivated with standard cleaning solutions in hospital, people feared the disease because it was unfamiliar but as authorities, they would not let that unfamiliarity distract their reason about the possibilities, likelihood and availability of effective infection control in hospitals throughout the United States of America. He further declared that Ebola was a huge risk in Africa, but it was not going to be a huge risk in the United States. The US strategy to control Ebola in the America did not involve the use of the military or any degree of force for that matter, but what was the reason for sending such a huge number of military personnel to Africa in the fight against a disease, if not to reinforce the stereotype of Africa as a place of danger? This view of portraying Africa as a place of danger resonates well with views by Carter (2014) and Rothymmer (2011) that western journalism sometimes co-opts African stories based on preexisting images or stereotypes about Africa as a place of danger in order to satisfy their audiences or hegemonic positions.

This CNN framing of Africa could be viewed as a capitalist discourse to promote capitalism by demonizing the culture of the other in favor of the culture of the white westerners. By stopping from eating bush meat, this implies that perhaps the more modern supermarkets and butcheries are the safer places to get safe food supplies and also by demonizing the traditional medicinal philosophy as fuelling the spread of Ebola, the CNN is pushing the discourse of capitalism which seeks to market drugs and medicines from the west. This can be read against the major concerns of decolonial theory which reject the dictatorial tendency of white supremacy which claims of the

existence of a universal knowledge and argue for a pluriversal world. The western tendencies to claim that the Caucasian way of life universal, is considered as arrogant by the decolonial scholars such as Mignolo, Do Santos, Maldonado-Torres, Ngugi, who argue that there are many ways of knowing, and that the American way of knowing is just but one way and hence argue for epistemic diversity whereby the west acknowledges that solutions for the Ebola crisis do not only reside in the west but could also come from Africa.

By annihilating the efforts of local systems, health systems and knowledge systems, the west is in fact committing an epistemicide or is involved in an exercise of epistemic apartheid. Relations between the CNN and Doctors without Borders have been explored before and it appears these organizations complement each other to achieve each other's objectives. The CNN it has been observed does not usually go on the ground to report from inside the Ebola epicentre, as it might want to claim but usually covers issues about disease from a safe distance and rely for information from organizations on the ground such as doctors without borders and other professional news syndicates such as Reuters, Getty pictures and NBA whose camera man Ashoka Mushko contracted the Ebola virus and was immediately evacuated to the United States of America, for superior treatment. Aid organizations such as MSF also rely on the CNN news for publicity for the work that they do in Africa and other poor parts of the world.

The discourse of white supremacy is also perpetuated in the CNN news representations through the manner in which white people are represented as independent, flexible and able to exercise freedom to pursue their individual interests whereas black people appear to be tied to their environments. On one hand, Tim Jagativ the Canadian doctor with MSF is portrayed as the symbol of white freedom to chase after his destiny as he shuttles between North America and Africa as he battles to save the Africans who are dying from Ebola. The same picture is painted of Ashoka, the CBN photo journalist who contracted Ebola and was immediately evacuated to the United States of America. On the other hand, Thomas Eric Duncan is portrayed as a villain who spends his whole life bound in poverty in Liberia and the first time that he attempts to live his home land of Liberia, he becomes the first person to take Ebola from African soil to the United States of America.

Thomas becomes the figure of the Ebola virus's twisted path to the United States of America, whereas Tim and Ashoka could determine their own destinies, the African's destiny is represented as doomed as represented by the fate of Thomas Eric Duncan. This therefore perpetuates the discourse of white supremacy. This portrayal of Africans is consistent with previous research documenting unfair representation of minorities (Taha 2014; Bird 1999; Van Dijk 1991 and Weston 1996). The Africans are marginalized, dehumanized and victimized in media representations.

The negative representations of Africans by the CNN news appear to suggest that the CNN want to assert the discourse of 'American superiority over other nations, thereby furthering "them" and "us" binary. CNN images appear to depict American culture as superior to African culture; this is achieved through degrading and devaluing the other. A typical example of these images is that of the images of the hospital in the United States of America where Thomas Eric Duncan is said to have "walked into"⁶⁷ when he discovered that he was suffering from a disease. The CNN shows some brightly coloured images of the hospital which appeared to be frozen and change to black and white when the image of Thomas Eric appears, "apparently suggesting that things were going on well until the peace was disrupted by the arrival of this black man from Africa".

5.9 The celebration of western Aid organizations' heroism

The CNN news on its coverage of Africa in the context of Ebola seems to be intent on reinforcing the myth of Africa as a place of danger where death is a matter of routine. The death of many Africans is pronounced as a matter of routine. For example, a CNN news anchor who interviewed a Canadian doctor who was returning to West Africa was asked if he was surprised at the level of deaths because of Ebola. This question could have been inspired by the fact that CNN perceives Africa as a place of danger such that it should probably not be surprising that Africans could die in such big numbers.

⁶⁷ Could be interpreted idiomatically to mean that he presented himself into the hospital most likely the way a dog would stroll into a room, no wonder why he was sent away from the hospital with a painkiller only. On the other hand, when Ashoka, the NBC camera man discovered that he had a fever, he 'checked himself' into a health facility to get himself tested for Ebola. There are certainly some racial interpretations in the manner in which language is deployed selectively depending on the race of the person involved. In the coverage of the Hurricane Katrina floods, the same was raised when blacks were described as having 'looted' while whites were said to have 'found' some food.

Furthermore in the same news item titled “West Africa Ebola Outbreak”⁶⁸, the CNN news anchor emphatically declares that the biggest Ebola outbreak ever in history and asks the guest, a Canadian doctor with Doctors without Borders (MSF), if he was surprised by the scale and numbers of deaths and the infected in his last stint in Liberia, to which the doctor Tim Jagativ responded that he was not and declared that in fact what the world was made to understand was in fact a tip of the iceberg, as the situation on the ground was actually worse than the world was made to understand. This view resonates well with Rothmyer (2011) that international aid agencies tend to concentrate more on what has not been achieved rather than the successes that have been scored. She stresses that these Aid institutions, tend not to focus on the gains but rather on convincing people how much remains to be done. This view further resonates with previous research which states that this perpetuation of stereotyped images which are far from the representation of reality as motivated by the need to fundraise is also shared by the following scholars Benthall (1991; Charney 1991; Moeller 1999; and Ibrahim 2013). This is further strengthened by the manner in which the CNN news anchor concludes the interview with Dr Tim Jagativ, which she says

“Good luck to you Tim Jagativ of MSF, admirable organization that has seen work in the field in many disaster zones and conflict zones always (doing) amazing work, thanks to you and good luck on your trip to west Africa in a few days”

The above close seem to be coming more from an MSF public relations officer than a news anchor or a broadcaster whose objective is to give news to viewers in a balanced and unpartisan way. But in this case, it appeared like an advertorial by MSF, this considering the fact that there are many international aid organizations which are actually in competition in the business of philanthrocapitalism. It must also be pointed out that CNN news relied for the most part on MSF or Doctors without Borders as a news source for most of its reporting inside the Ebola stricken countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. It also relied on Reuters and Getty pictures for video footage and still images. In all the footage analyzed, it appears that CNN never really went on the ground in any of the three countries most affected by Ebola. Only on one occasion when CNN claimed to

⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqWoTEFSAn8>

be reporting from “inside an Ebola treatment unit”, with their chief medical officer Dr Sanjay Gupta, the same footage used is also exactly the same as the footage that is used by MSF on some of its videos, raising suspicion that CNN may never really have been on the ground inside an Ebola treatment camp. In some of its news clips on Ebola, CNN news relied on archival footage and maps to complement a news anchor who reported from the studio in a mode of presentation which according to Chouliaraki is never meant to elicit the viewers’ sympathy. In other words, this form of representation portrays the suffering Africans as the distant sufferers who did not deserve any sympathy (Chouliaraki 2008).

5.10 The Construction of discourse of white supremacy

This thesis also revealed the theme of the construction of the superiority of the white man in the CNN coverage of the Ebola crisis. An example of this frame is in the CNN portrayal of the NBC cameraman, an American photo journalist who ‘mysteriously contracts’ Ebola while in the jungles of Africa and was so responsible that upon realizing that he may have contracted the disease, he according to the CNN news chief medial correspondent, Dr Sunjay Gupta, he quarantined himself, got himself tested and when the result tested positive for Ebola, the rest of the team led by Dr Synderman decided to go ahead and put themselves in quarantine, as they awaited being flown by private jet to the United States of America. This narrative seem intent on painting a picture of a responsible and trustworthy human being who has the sense and logic to quarantine himself after having realized that he may have been unfortunate to contract the disease in such a dangerous place. By highlighting that the camera man mysteriously contracted Ebola, the CNN may be viewed as implying that white people are supposed to be immune from diseases like Ebola. The CNN is not alarmed by the deaths of over 5000 people but the death of a white doctor sparked concerns about how safe America was.

Interviews with the cameraman’s parents who are identified as Dr and Mrs Mitchell Levy confirm to the CNN that the spirit of adventure had driven their son to travel to such a dangerous place such as Liberia in search of his destiny. The parents further point out that their son was away of the grave danger that the trip to Ebola posed for him but he decided to go ahead and fulfill his wishes anywhere in spite of the imminent danger. The

celebration of the CBC photo journalist Ashoka and Dr Brently, the white doctor who survived from Ebola is consistent with literature on the perpetuation of the discourse of white supremacy, where by the white, male character is comes into contact with an inferior culture in which he eventually conquerors and help the people of the inferior culture.

In the case of Ashoka, although he realized the grave danger of travelling to Liberia, he is represented as independent enough to decide to go there ostensibly because of his bond for the Liberian people. This action resonates with the white savior complex which portrays a white, western male as independent enough to decide his own destiny as opposed to Africans who cannot decide their fate but have to wait for a kind hearted white man to help them to overcome their threat, in this context the threat of Ebola. This is also the image in which Tim Jagativ is portrayed.

Africa is such a place of danger that the CNN constructs a story on preparations for getting inside an Ebola isolation ward in Guinea. The CNN chief medical correspondent Sunjay Gupta is shown making preparations to visit an isolation ward, he is captured on camera saying, in a dramatic fashion that these patients, referring to the Ebola patients lying on the floor in a makeshift Ebola treatment unit, are fighting one of the deadliest diseases in the world, Ebola. He further elaborates that the disease disarms the immune system of its victims, shuts out the ability of their bodies to clot up and that up to 9/10 patients die from this disease. He concludes that this horror is isolated in Conakry, Guinea. The CNN appear to evoke the greatest fears in the imaginations of any viewers about the horror not just of the disease but of the place in which the disease is said to be domiciled. That is why every CNN news clip is intent on stopping the spread of the disease outside the continent of Africa. CNN's Isha Sesay was at pains trying to intimate the international community to do all it could to stop the disease at the source before the disease spread to the United States of America and Europe.

Heroism is built around the efforts of doctors such as Tim Jagativ, of the MSF or Doctors without Borders, who is described by the CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr Sanjay Gupta as "Tim Jagativ, one of the doctors with Doctors without Border, he is from

Canada, he is not married, he has no children, that would be a job liability for him”.⁶⁹ This valorization and celebration of western doctors by the CNN news is similar to the media and cinematic images of white westerners who do belong to any tribe or culture, visit tribes in some far off places in Africa and helps these primitive tribesmen and builds this image of an icon or a small god. The locals are portrayed as child like adults or perpetual children. This white man is literally worshipped as he would have saved the tribesmen from perishing by administering his ‘magic’ drugs on an awestricken tribe.

These images are reinvented in the CNN news framing of the Ebola crisis when the likes of Dr Tim Jagativ, Dr Synderman, Dr as the white, western doctors who came to Africa to save the Africans from perishing from a deadly disease. This image is reinforced by CNN when they profile Tim Jagativ, with footage of many black children from a slum in Liberia where he comments that”...children, lots of children, still smiling...” By juxtaposing the footage of these black African children with the description of Tim Jagativ, in which the viewers are told that he has no children, as these would be a job risk, the CNN news may have been trying to construct an image of a superior other who takes it upon himself as his burden to dedicate his life to saving the black Africans from perishing from disease.

The comments, “...children, many children...” may have been an indirect way of implying that black people are more concerned with procreation like lower primates, they can not aspire to higher ideals in life. This view resonates with the Brokaw report and the Darwinism theory which viewed human beings in some kind of a hierarchy where the white western men occupies the highest position just after God and the angels, with the blacks lowest on the hierarchy of human gradation.

5.11 Africans as anonymous and identity less

This thesis also established that Africans are represented in the CNN as victims who are anonymous and are not given an identity. The Africans represented mainly as statistics for example, we are only told that so many people have died and so many have been

⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqWoTEFSAn8>

infected. For example, in a news clip titled “CNN news Africa’s Ebola outbreak ‘out of control’⁷⁰, the CNN screams;

“..the biggest Ebola outbreak ever, where you surprised at the scale in west Africa, these numbers we are seeing?...”

The CNN presents African victims of Ebola not as human beings but as numbers. By focusing on the statistics, the CNN may be viewed as representing the African sufferers in a dehumanizing manner. The African sufferers are not afforded agency or the opportunity to tell their own story. This is against the background that on the contrary, the CNN literally went to town about the identities of all the people who contracted Ebola who had come from America. Heroism was built by the CNN around the personality of Dr Brently⁷¹, who was celebrated as the only human being ever to survive an Ebola infection. This valorization of Dr Brently comes against the CNN’s reportage which seemed to emphasize the ever rising numbers of African victims. The CNN used terms such as the biggest Ebola outbreak ever, described Ebola as “ravaging some parts of Africa”.

Through the CNN news, we now know that there is Mushko, a CBC photojournalist and an America citizen who had been in Liberia for three years before contracting Ebola some two days after being hired by the CBC news. The same profile is given of Dr Brently, who became the first human being to survive an Ebola infection, a disease whose death rate is emphasized by the CNN as deadly.

The point is that CNN seemed to humanize certain sufferers at the expense of others. Put in other words, CNN seemed to attach more value on people from other parts of the world than local victims from Africa. The only African victim who is known by name during the 2014 Ebola outbreak is Thomas Eric Duncan. Thomas is vilified by the CNN as the African man who became the first human being to transport Ebola from Africa to the United States of America. According to the CNN, Thomas Eric Duncan became

⁷⁰ The America doctor who is said to have recovered from Ebola and on whom heroism is built. He describes himself as a medical missionary who was sent by God to go to Liberia to save the people of Liberia. He is an icon in America today

infamous for being the imagery of Ebola's twisted path to the United States of America, via Europe. In a news clip titled "Authorities criticized for Ebola missteps"⁷², CNN Chief medical correspondent described Thomas's trip to the US in the following terms;

"..what has happened over the past week is certainly historic from a medical standpoint. The first patient ever diagnosed with Ebola in the United States of America and even more than that, the first patient diagnosed with Ebola anywhere outside of Africa. In many ways this is historic. It obviously has concerns but it was not unexpected in so many ways as well as the idea that someone could get on a plane that have been exposed to Ebola but not yet sick is something that we were concerned and worried about at the same time and now it has happened and this is a test in so many ways for the united states and specifically for the city of Dallas.."

Thomas Eric Duncan became known perhaps one may deduce only because he had broken a world record albeit for the wrong reasons. He had become the culprit that brought disease from Africa to the United States of America and more than that, he had taken Ebola outside of Africa for the first time in the history of the disease. One may be drawn to deduce that if Duncan had contracted the disease and probably died in Africa, he would not have been known at all. He would have remained a statistic, a number just like the other more than eleven thousand African victims who succumbed to the Ebola virus. This scenario perhaps resonates with previous literature which states that the death of Africans in large numbers has always been treated as a normal event. Citizens of western countries who were unfortunate to succumb to Ebola were treated as mytrs.

This representation of blacks and Africans resonates with the concerns of decolonial scholars that Africans are taken as people of a lesser value. In fact, they are perceived not as fully fledged human beings but as human like species (Maldonado-Torres). Racial undertones become apparent in the CNN representations of Africans suffering from Ebola when compared against the representations of their white Americans who contracted the same. Not only do we know about the identities and profiles of the American victims of Ebola, but CNN was also exposed in terms of how tried to infer differences in American victims from African victims. For example, in the news clip titled, "CDC Director_ Nurse Infection Unacceptable"⁷³, the American victim is

⁷² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u5YQZgeGgM

⁷³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nSlmiNK47c>

identified as Nina Pham, 45 year old nurse who is white, CNN speculatively the CDC asks the CDC director if it was known yet how the nurse had contract Ebola to which the responds was;

“... we do not really know and we may never know but what we do know is that we have identified a number of things that can be improved in terms of the process of putting on and taking off personnel protective equipment...”

The CDC director’s response appeared well contrived to evade concluding that the method of infection of the American nurse could be similar to the common method of contraction of the disease in Africa. CNN and indeed international health authorities led by the same CDC appeared to have summarily concluded that Ebola infections in Africa are caused by customs and behaviors of African people such as touching the dead and eating bush meat from bats and monkeys but when it came to an American citizen, the CDC decided that they did not know and they may never know. The CNN was comfortable with that response. The same pattern was observed in the CNN handling of the CBC news photojournalist’s infection case. In a news clip titled “Did Ashoka Mukpo contract Ebola from washing a car?”⁷⁴ CNN reports that;

“...It is very interesting I spoke to several doctors including our very own doctor Gupta about how Ashoka believes how he may have contracted Ebola. He thinks it was from cleaning an infected car...”

In the above case, CNN appears to give agency to an American citizen to decide how he may have contracted Ebola but does not seem to give the same agency to African victims. In fact, the much publicized patient, Duncan is never even given a voice. The CNN appears to be content to infer from developments that he may have contracted Ebola on a certain date. They think for him. In fact, through CNN coverage, Duncan is also the only one who is referred to as a ‘patient’; the same tag is never given to Ishko, Dr Brently, Nina Phams and Embers. One may therefore infer that racism and discrimination is in fact inferred in the CNN reporting about Africans and non Africans.

Although Embers is a black person, her treatment by the CNN appears to confirm the claim by decolonial scholars that sometimes racism goes beyond skin color. One’s locus

⁷⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7Kc7TjdxBY>

of enunciations is crucial in understanding issues of race. Skin color may be deceptive, for example in all cases where CNN appears to report on issues where racial undertones may easily be inferred; they assign correspondents of color, for example, Isha Sesay, in the CNN emotional report on Ebola, where she appears to speak authoritatively on west Africa when in fact she sings the praises of United States of America, United Kingdom and France. This view also resonates with previous literature on media representations whereby people of color or black people are elevated or conscripted into the system as a way of masking institutionalized racism.

It is also made apparent that when the CNN says “we” that did not include the black subject. This was shown in the news clip “This Hour”, where the CNN rhetorically questions “Why don’t we know more about this disease?” the pronoun “we” does not include Africans. This observation concurs with the concern of decolonial scholars that Africans are not granted equal humanity with whites. When Descartes made the famous affirmation, “cogito ergo sum”, “I think therefore I am”, that did not include the black subject. The black person is therefore viewed as different from the white, western Europeans and North Americans.

5.12 The framing of Africa as a country

This thesis also established that the CNN also frames Africa as a place or a country; this is notwithstanding that Africa is a continent with over fifty four countries. In the news clip titled “This hour discusses Ebola with two experts”⁷⁵, where they were discussing the issue of the ‘first ever diagnosis’ of Ebola in America the CNN points out that the United States of America knew that Duncan had had his temperature taken in Africa. To generalize and say that Duncan had his temperature taken in Africa may be interpreted as an attempt to reduce the whole continent of Africa into a single place.

This observation concurs with the general stereotype of simplistically looking at Africa as a country. This is supported by evidence from Achidie (2009) who reflects that when she went to study in the United states of America, although she did not consciously identify as African, she became a reference point when ever the subject of Africa was mentioned,

⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB1WmpEt-X4>

notwithstanding that she knew nothing about places like Namibia, although she eventually embraced her new identity, as an African she however felt irritated every time Africa was referred to as a country, with the most recent experience being on a flight when an announcement was made of the charity work the airline was involved in India, Africa and other countries.

The condition whereby Achidie (ibid) has to assume an extra identity as an African resonates with the concept of double consciousness as advocated by Dubois(), where the black person must always have this double identity, with reference to ways by which black people have to double their identities.

The stereotype of reducing Africa to a country when in fact, it is a continent comprising many different countries may be seen as an attempt to generalize and reduce the vast diversity that that make up the African continent. In a news clip titled “CNN’s Dr Gupta _CDC director answers questions”⁷⁶, the CNN reduces the whole of Africa to a single entity as outlined below;

“The risk in Africa is that the health care workers who were caring for them [Ebola patients] and in the burial process. Those are the two things that are driving the outbreaks in Africa. We can prevent those risks from happening here”.

By asserting that the risk in Africa lie in the health care system and in the burial practice is to imply that Africa is country and African culture is a homogeneous entity, which is not correct. The simplistic reduction of Africa and African culture to a single entity resonates with long standing stereotypes of Africa as evidenced by a body of literature which generalizes Africa as a village and African culture as all the same when in actual fact Africa is a big continent with many diverse cultures.

5.13 The black man as poor, vulnerable, ignorant and primitive

This thesis also revealed that CNN generally constructed an image of Africans as poor, vulnerable, generally ignorant and backward.

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60NSc3fTgwc>

In the news clip titled “NBC Cameraman test positive for Ebola”⁷⁷, Dr Synderman, the CNN chief medical officer is shown interviewing a man who is said to be the taxi driver who, in whose car a sick pregnant girl who later died of Ebola and who is generally believed to have infected Duncan according to CNN investigations. The excerpts of the interview are outlined below;

Dr Synderman, “...You knew you were picking a sick pregnant girl but no idea at all that she was sick with Ebola?”

The taxi driver replied “...no no no, no idea at all!”

The above interview raises several pertinent issues of interest to critical discourse analysis. One issue has to do with the supposed ignorance of the taxi driver. The ignorance demonstrated by this man appears to show that the locals were generally unaware of the existence of the Ebola outbreak which had attracted world wide attention. The taxi driver demonstrates an image of a local who seem oblivious to issues surrounding a threat to their very existence. This view also seem to support an assertion by Tim Jagativ, an MSF doctor, in an interview with the CNN in which he raised as a serious concern to the battle to control Ebola when he said that;

“..the greatest is we have to get this message out and it is very difficult to do that because we do have this outbreak in rural areas so its very difficult to get this message out to people who do not necessarily have a radio or television or internet access. In the city, we also have multitudes of people who just don’t have access to this type of information [the outbreak of Ebola and its symptoms]...”

The above claim by Tim Jagativ, although it appears to provide answers to the general ignorance of the local population because of the unavailability of western methods of communication such as radio, internet and television, at the same time, this claim raises the issue of trying to define a people by western standards. Although the people do not have access to those media of communication, the question is do they not have their own indigenous methods of communication? This analysis resonates with the concerns of the decolonial scholars that the west imposes its own standards as universal standards. Who said that if a people do not have access to radio, television and the internet then they

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORd130KXRcs>

cannot communicate? Decolonial theory rejects this idea of defining the level of a people's development through western standards or standards of euromodernity.

Also arising out of the CNN claim that a “sick pregnant girl⁷⁸” was transported to hospital in a taxi implicitly point to the collapse or non existence of a health delivery system. In other words it implicitly compares the situation in Liberia to the system in the United States of America. So from a representational perspective, one can figure out that the CNN narrative is a carefully contrived representation of the situation in Liberia to paint Africa and Africans as backward and primitive. This view is further cemented by the images accompanying the news clips. Every time mention is made of the United States of America's health system, images of new ambulances and high rise buildings and hospitals are shown and the worst case of buildings, dense forests, people being transported in wheel barrows, and multitudes of stranded looking locals are shown each time the news anchor refers to the situation in Africa.

The mention of a ‘sick pregnant girl’ further implicitly compounds the multitude of problems bedeviling Africa and Africans. Quite apart from being sick, girls are not supposed to be pregnant, only women are. At best, girls are supposed to be in school, to enjoy their youth but implicitly this news item leaves it to the analytical reader to deduce the multiplicity of problems facing Africa. By being pregnant, it may imply that there is rampant abuse of girls in Africa or that Africans have nothing better to do but have sex and to procreate. This view resonates with existing literature that Africans are hyper sexualized. They cannot aspire for higher ideals in life beyond just eating, sleeping and having sex. It compounds to a people who are seriously in need of help from an outside agency, perhaps a male, white savior character in the form of the likes of Dr Brently and Dr Tim Jagativ among many other characters celebrated in the CNN news. This view is further substantiated by Achebe (1975) that this image of Africa was and still remains the dominant image of Africa in the western imagination. The ‘sacrifices’ made by the likes of Drs Tim Jagativ, Brently and others are reminiscent of the efforts of;

⁷⁸ Girls are not supposed to be pregnant, girls are supposed to be in school. This heading here appears to be carefully constructed to point to a system where things are fundamentally wrong. If girls are pregnant and taken to hospital in a taxi, questions which boggle the mind are: where are the authorities? Where are the ambulances and health care authorities? Hence this heading silently points to a system or a country which is broken down

“...that extra ordinary missionary Albert Schweitzer, who sacrificed brilliant careers in music and theology in Europe for a life of service to Africans in much the same area as Conrad writes about, epitomizes the ambivalence. Schweitzer says “the African is indeed my brother, but my junior brother” and so he proceeded to build a hospital appropriate to the needs of junior brothers with standards of hygiene reminiscent of medical practice in the days before the germ theory of disease came into being.” (Achebe 1789).

Put simply, Achebe is simply showing that the dominant image of the African in the eyes of the west has not changed since the beginning of the history of telling stories about Africa. What has only changed is that the images are much more subtle and the racial innuendo opaque and hence invisible. This justifies the use of critical discourse analysis in the study of media representations of the other as a useful tool to unmask the reproduction of ideological domination and racism in news. This also gives substance to the need for a decolonial agenda to seek ways to inoculate the African and the non western subject in general from the notions of eurocentricism and to unmask the construct of the inferiority of blackness and the superiority of whiteness in the media and in the news (Dubois; Rabaka).

5.14 The construction of the African as unhygienic, superstitious and emotional

The blacks still perish from diseases which are relatively easy to cure and which can be avoided by washing hands and desisting from engaging in primitive and unhygienic behavior and cultural practices such as touching the dead bodies, eating bush meat, not washing hands regularly, believing in traditional medical practices and bush doctors.

In a news clip titled “Nigeria versus Ebola, Boko Haram”⁷⁹ the CNN appeared to suggest the problem of Ebola could be attributed to African hygiene and that it was difficult to change the attitude of African over a short period. The presentation of the African as a problem may also be read as an implicit way of elevating the white people as retaining full responsibility for the problem of their African “junior brothers”.

“...so what are you talking about here, people coming to the United States, more health workers? What are the issues here? Just basic hygiene, the living conditions as well as the education can take years to change people’s attitudes towards hygiene because they don’t have running water in places like these. That makes it so much more difficult to fight the disease, now this requires a long term

⁷⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-r3TX--m84>

commitment to Africa and in many cases; many people have said Ebola is a wake up call here. If people are gonna help Africa, they need long term plans”

The mere mention of basic hygiene and the need for education to change people’s attitudes towards hygiene implies that Africans are by their nature dirty and that they can not change that dirty attitude without external help from the United States of America in the form of education and health workers. The CNN was responding to the call by Alhaji Lai Mohammed, a representative of the All Progressive Congress, a coalition of Nigeria’s opposition parties that the world needed to embrace Ebola as a global crisis and not as an African problem.

Africans are also presented as superstitious preferring to be religious about matters which demand observing basic hygiene standards. Africans interviewed by the CNN eventually prefer to leave everything in the hands of their creators for example Duncan’s nephew says that he just prays to God that Duncan survives, so does Duncan’s half brother, whose son was quarantined together with Duncan’s girlfriend in an apartment in Dallas because they had come into contact with Duncan before he fell ill. Duncan’s partner or girlfriend goes as far as appealing to the government of the United States of America and to God to help save her partner saying that he did not deserve to die as he was too young. The mention of the United States of America and God in the same breath may be read as implying that America had the power to grant life. This view is supported by documented literature such as the Brokaw report and the great chain of being which advance the myth of a human gradation chain in which the Caucasian is ranked highest on the list of human beings coming only second after God and the angels. Duncan’s girlfriend responded to the CNN question that you must be very worried (that your boyfriend is ill with Ebola) responds;

“I am worried, I am sad. You don’t know how frustrated I am. I am just asking God and asking the American government the same medicine they are giving people that come from Liberia, the Ebola people that came. Please help him to save his life. He is too young to die”⁸⁰

⁸⁰<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

The above statement seems to confirm that in deed black people look forward to their more powerful authorities for their sustenance and that they observe the human gradation hierarchy. This view appears to find backing from the manner in which the Liberian president Madam Sirleaf Johnson is torn apart by Duncan's girlfriend for being angry with Duncan after being accused of traveling to America knowing that he was infected with the Ebola virus. Duncan's girlfriend responds;

“..I am so so angry at her. This president does not care. She does not care! She is not doing enough. She is not doing anything...”⁸¹

The manner in which the American government is mentioned in the same breath with God with a black person pleading for a life saving gesture can be viewed as perpetuation of the discourse of the superiority of whites and supporting the ideals of white supremacy. In the same vein, the deconstruction of the Liberian president, as a symbol of black helplessness, lack of care and incompetence, resonates with the decolonial theory's concerns on the construction of the supremacy and the construction of the black inferiority. From the symbolic theory of representation, CNN appears to frame issues in a manner that appear to project the white American establishment as having the powers of a god, that is to grant a life and at the same time to bring out the insensitivity and incompetence of black African leaders, as represented by the Liberian president. The CNN does not tell Duncan's girlfriend the full contextual background leading to the Liberian president's utterances. Previous research findings have often established that CNN at times reports on issues episodically. They do not provide full context or background when they report on certain issues. Research by Moyo (2010) on the comparative coverage of the CNN and Xinhua news agency on Tibet revealed that CNN news at times does not give adequate context. This view is also supported by Moyo (2011)'s research on the CNN news coverage of Zimbabwe in the context of an election where research established that CNN does not at times give adequate background information and hence influence the frame of its coverage. In the coverage of Zimbabwe's election, CNN does not give the background of the colonial question. They

⁸¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

just present a picture of Mugabe violently and shamelessly dispossessing land belonging to whites.

In the Duncan issue, the CNN tells the girlfriend that “the president of Liberia as you know she has made a statement that she is very angry at Thomas...”⁸² This statement may be read as an attempt to fuel the emotions of a woman who was already traumatized by the experience of a sick partner and hence present her as emotional and irrational.

5.15 **“The scramble for Africa”**

Thesis also established that despite the rhetoric of a humanitarian crisis facing Africa in the form of the Ebola health crisis, Ebola has actually created a new wave of a second scramble for Africa as the global west through its institutions of research; academia and drug manufacturing companies literally scramble in a bid to outdo each other in search of a vaccine for the deadly virus. Critical discourse analysis is interested in the application of language as this helps in unmasking the reproduction of ideological domination.

In a news clip titled “Did budget cuts impact Ebola research?”⁸³ CNN appear to lament the huge budget cuts over the past years as a possible reason for failure to find a vaccine for Ebola;

“...now we are suddenly scrambling for a vaccine or developing one since 2001. Have they not been those consistent cuts in funding, we may even have an Ebola vaccine to use right now”.

The use of the phrase “now we are suddenly scrambling for a vaccine or developing one since 2001” shows that there is an economic imperative in the ‘scramble’ for a vaccine. This view resonates with literature on the history of interaction between Africa and the west. In the late 1890s, in what became known as the scramble for Africa, when European countries partitioned Africa paving way for the formal colonization of Africa, they used reasons such as to civilize Africa, to help Africa. This exercise of balkanizing African states into colonial territories. They did not confirm their interest in the land, natural resources and African labour which was the real impetus behind the colonization

⁸² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

⁸³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGPZsSz-1Cc>

of Africa. Hence the mere mention of the term “scrambling for a vaccine” by the west under the guise of a humanitarian motive is reminiscent of the original scramble for Africa; it has an economic imperative hidden behind it. Global health is a mega business. The lessons learnt from HIV/AIDS in terms of its management and control shows that health is primarily a business and only secondarily a humanitarian cause. The CNN framing of America and Europe as the only source of likely solution to the problem of Ebola can read as an ideological move to position American drug companies as the only possible sources of vaccine for Ebola.

CNN positions the United States of America as the only hope for a vaccine for example, in a news item titled “US steps up efforts in Ebola fight”⁸⁴ president Obama is quoted saying;

“...the world is looking to us, the United States of America and it’s a responsibility we embrace”

The CNN further points out that the problem posed by Ebola was really a problem of countries that simply did not have the resources to fight Ebola and hence they needed help from outside. The CNN is silent about the efforts of the world in an attempt to find a vaccine for Ebola. The CNN also rubbishes internal or indigenous attempts to finding a solution to the Ebola virus by framing them as local customs and habits that help fuel the spread of Ebola. This scenario resonates with the concerns of the decolonial movement about who is producing knowledge, what institutions and disciplines legitimize it and benefits from this knowledge? These fundamental questions are critical from a decolonial perspective to question the CNN representation of America and the west only as having the epistemic exclusiveness for developing a vaccine for Ebola.

In a news clip titled “Could Zmapp be the cure for Ebola”⁸⁵, the CNN presents Zmapp as the only possible solution with their experts still questioning why the United States of America still scrambled to provide a vaccine, nine months into the Ebola outbreak. Africa only comes into the picture as the source of the disease, the black man only comes in the

⁸⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy8HJy_ycYc

⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mbiy0wS9lhY>

form of a problem and America is presented by the CNN as the only possible source of cure.

5.16 Conclusion

This thesis has generally established that the CNN representation of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis mainly frame Africa negatively. The African is represented as a problem and the blame is heaped purely on the African behavior patterns, customs and habits. The CNN representations of Africa in the face of Ebola appear to perpetuate the white savior complex, which seek to normalize the belief that blacks by themselves lack the internal agency to treat themselves of diseases which are fairly easy to control and that they need the intervention of a kind white westerner to help them to survive. Hence images are made of Africa as a place of disease, a place of danger, a place of poverty and the black man is packaged as a white man's burden, as a criminal

Chapter 6

6.0 Introduction

Against the background of a history of unfair and uneven news flow between north and south as expressed in the NWICO debate and culminating in the McBride Commission⁸⁶ in the 1980s. Thirty years on, amid the rising discourse of globalization, cosmopolitanism and human rights, this thesis sought to investigate the CNN representations of Africa and Africans in terms of how domination and power are reproduced and the discourse of racism perpetuated in the context of a health crisis such as Ebola. This chapter gives a summary of the aim of the study, the research questions, significance of the study, a survey of the literature reviewed; the theoretical framework which guided the research, the research methodology used and a summary of the conclusions and recommendations.

6.1 Summary of Conclusions

Grounded in the theory of representation and the decolonial theory, this study sought to find out how the CNN news framed the Ebola crisis and the extent to which racism informed the representation of Africans and Africa in the CNN coverage of the Ebola crisis. The CNN was chosen for this study because it was not feasible to study western media in its broad context. CNN is a giant media corporation which commands a global reach. It was therefore felt that CNN was a significant media player to warrant study, although the results of the study could not be generalized to western media in general. This was therefore one of the limitations of this study. This study was also archival to some extent in the sense that news was not watched live on television but data was collected from the CNN news repository on YouTube, so to some extent this could be viewed as a limitation in the sense that the news was analyzed as archival records and not in real time.

It emerged from this thesis that the CNN framed the Ebola disease as essentially a disease which was peculiar to Africa. The framing of the Ebola crisis it appears does not differ from the cold war frame in which Africa is represented persistently in a negative way. The CNN representation of Africa and Africans in the context is basically a different

⁸⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000400/040066eb.pdf>

version of the single story of Africa as a place of darkness, death and decay. The Africans are represented as childlike adults who are always in need. There is no agency from within Africa on the CNN suggesting that there is no internal effort to stop the disease. These are established concepts associated with the history of Africa from legendary stories of travel journalists, early explorers and missionaries such as David Livingstone who traveled to Africa as anthropologists and established these stereotyped images about Africa. The present day representations are however more subtle and more hidden and presented as a simulacrum of fair and objective reporting but a critical discourse analysis of the CNN coverage grounded in a decolonial theoretical framework revealed that Africa is still represented by the CNN as the source of the Ebola disease.

CNN news, in its coverage seemed more intent on attributing the disease to the continent of Africa than it was on exploring ways of stopping the disease. Persistent reports about the disease being discovered in Africa around the late 1970s and the sensationalization around what the CNN termed the first ever Ebola infected person and the hype around Thomas Eric Duncan, the Liberian national who became infamous as the imagery of the path of the Ebola virus to the united states of America and Europe after traveling to Dallas via Belgium in his first ever trip out of Africa seemed to suggest that disease by and large is domicile in Africa and all international efforts seemed fixated at arresting the disease at source, in Africa and stop it from spreading to the rest of the world. This resonates with previous literature and research on Africa in which disease such as HIV/AIDS and other strange disease have generally been framed as Africa diseases.

CNN representations of Africa and Africans also seemed to insinuate that Africa was a place of danger. This is consistent with established stereotypes about Africa where danger of any sorts is always lurking. Hence early assertions that the African or native life is short, painful and brutish suggesting that Africa is a place of danger, where if one does not die of strange disease, then they may die of attacks by wild animals in the jungle of Africa or perhaps from chaos of traffic jungle as shown by some structured selection and exclusion of images by the CNN which seem to support the narrative of Africa as a place of danger. Claims by the CNN that death was so common in Africa that one was likely to die while giving birth or from a broken leg, all add weight to the narrative of

Africa as a real place of danger where it is considered too risky to travel to Africa more so for what is termed non essential travel. Even to relief workers, the CNN also seemed to imply that Africa was so dangerous to travel to such that those who dared go there risked contracting the deadly diseases and would have their right to return to America questioned by the CNN as in the case of the CBN photojournalist who was repatriated to the United States of America after contracting the virus while in Liberia. The CNN quizzed the Centre for Disease Control for the decision to allow even a citizen to return to his homeland because they had contracted a deadly disease. This seemed to suggest that according to the CNN if their citizens (American) dared to go to places of danger, they risk losing their 'citizenship' if they contracted strange disease. In other words, the CNN implied that there were places of danger and there were places of safety. Africa occupied that space of danger.

CNN also frames Africans as the white men's burden. The Africans in the Ebola stricken countries if not the whole continent are represented as childlike adults. There is no internal agency on the CNN of local effort to contain the spread of Ebola. Africans are represented as dependent on the philanthropy of the white man who sacrifice their lives in typical David Livingstone style to saving the lives of the vulnerable African victims. There is a structured exclusion of the efforts of African governments, business community and the indigenous initiatives from the CNN narrative. In the CNN all health experts are white men and all victims are African.

Africans are also represented as criminal and as a problem as evidenced by the attempt to link Africans with felony accusations for willfully transmitting the deadly Ebola virus from its source to the United States of America. The attempt by the CNN to prove that that Thomas Eric Duncan could have deliberately travelled from Africa to the USA knowing that he was infected with the Ebola virus and the subsequent deployment of large contingencies of military personnel in the fight against Ebola could be viewed as a stance to label Africans as criminals.

The CNN representations of Africa and Africans in the context of the Ebola crisis generally do not depart from the stereotyped narratives of Africa and perhaps what is only changing in these representations is the subtlety of the language which perpetuates

racism. It appears that racism is being camouflaged by the discourse of culture⁸⁷. The emphasis by the CNN on how inferior African culture is from western culture and how the African culture is associated with the spread of Ebola resonates with discourse of ‘them’ and ‘us’ or the orientalization of the African (Shohat and Stam; Said 1979). The blame of African culture and customs on the spread of Ebola concurs with previous media frames which also blamed the spread of HIV/AIDS on the sexual behavior of Africans.

One can conclude that the discourse of race is masked in the rhetoric of culture. It appears therefore that the CNN may be a conduit for racism of the cultural type in as far as the framing of Africa and Africans in the face of the Ebola virus threat. The CNN tends to emphasize the differences between Africans and North Americans and Europeans. A critical discourse analysis of the CNN coverage attempted to unmask racial innuendo hidden behind a veneer of objective dissemination of facts associated with news reporting through the persistent use of stereotyped images and language which show Africans as architects of their own calamity without giving the contextual background of the poverty and backwardness.

The CNN complicit is further reinforced by the manner it includes and excludes images and narratives that reinforce the stereotype that Africans are nothing without the global west. They cannot even observe basic principles of hygiene such as washing their hands and neither can they also treat themselves of diseases which can be managed with administration of fluids and paracetamol as is done with Ebola. This appears to subtly perpetuate the discourse of white supremacy.

Though it appears there is no discernible shift in the manner in which the CNN frames Africa and Africans in the context of a disease outbreak, this study is significant in the sense that despite the rhetoric of discourses of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, human rights and globalization, these phenomena largely remain a façade of change in the representation of marginalized groups such as Africans. It appears that Africans are still

⁸⁷ It has been exposed in this thesis that by constantly referring to how different African culture is to western culture; the CNN is in fact implying a difference in race through inferences of culture. Scholars like Van Dijk expose this strategy of power to mask itself by creating euphemisms

not quite recognized as fully fledged human beings, despite the rhetoric of cosmopolitanisms which claim to advocate for world citizens who are not limited by the shackles of borders of nation states. In the CNN discourse, Africans must remain bound to Africa as they are criminalized as perpetuated by the framing of the likes of Thomas Eric Duncan, an African who became infamous as the face of Ebola's twisted path from a zone of non being to a place of safety. These phenomena appear to reinforce the differences of the Africans from others. This confirms the concerns of Maldonado-Torres that when we speak about human rights, we speak about rights that belong to human beings but the world colonial order still exhibit a colonial normative attitude which sees certain beings like blacks as subjects who are at most human like animals and not fully fledged human beings. Black people still lack the ontological density to be viewed as equal beings if not fully fledged human beings thereby perpetuating centuries long stereotypes. This confirms Maldonado-Torres's claim that the humanity of people has not always been equal, at most black people were seen as human like species just as contained in the Brokaw report and in the great chain of being.

Africa and Africans are therefore still seen in ways similar to those of the 19th century and before although this time around, the framing of the 21st century is now masked behind a smokescreen of grand narratives such as globalization and multiculturalism which appear to be nothing but an ability of capitalism to evolve and devise a language that masks itself, just as they also devised the discourse of development and democracy, globalization and cosmopolitanism, discourses which result in change without change for the representations and framing of Africa and Africans. The colonial matrix of power in the form of coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being and coloniality of power is perpetuated in the CNN representations of Africa and Africans in a subtle way. CNN constructs Africans as helpless and Americans as all powerful thereby perpetuating the white saviour complex where blacks will always need the service of a kind hearted white man to save them from extinction. This image is perpetuated in CNN news on Ebola as it features prominently in Hollywood film products, leading to the conclusion that news is film of a different genre. News does not convey objective reality as the media might want to portray to its unsuspecting viewers or audience. It is aestheticised ideology which portrays the white race in positive self presentation and the black race in negative

representation as always needing the white man for basic survival. Therefore in a nutshell, the outbreak of Ebola came as an opportunity for the CNN to demonstrate how superior the white race is, and how without the benevolence of the whites blacks would be wiped away into extinction by diseases which need nothing more than the observance of basic principles of hygiene for prevention.

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