

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDIES SCHOOL OF
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF EBC 'CHILOT' PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study is conducted to find out how audiences of 'Chilot' make meanings from messages of the program, to find out if there are variations in interpretations of messages and factors that account for variations in meaning making of audiences and how this relates to the program's reception. The study also explored how external factors like social context, age and personal contact are present in the processes of meaning making of the messages of 'Chilot' program. Audience reception theory and communication model of encoding/decoding is used as a theoretical framework to conduct the research. Qualitative research methods, specifically focus group and individual in-depth interview were used to undertake this study. Qualitative content analysis of selected program items was conducted. Focus groups were organized in line with the salience of cultural features like religion gender age and educational background. Generally, respondents regardless of their differences are found to understand the message similarly. Audiences, regardless of their level of education, are found to be active and powerful in the meaning making process and in reshaping the content of media messages. Audiences did not simply accept messages. They seemed to have the ability to interpret messages and accept, modify or reject them altogether.

List of Acronyms

EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGD A	Young male and female College Students ages range (19-22)
FGD B	Retired and working factory employees male and female ages range (50-60)
FGD C	Female Muslim women with age range (17-39)
FGD D	Male and female with educational status of University Degree age range (30-40)
III	Individual in-depth interview

No. 1, 2, 3...Participants of each focus group

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

"Chilot" is a show on Ethiopian Television that presents legal issues and the courts in dramatic forms. The program is currently aired during the night time starting from 9:30-10:00 PM on Tuesday and a rerun of the program is made on Saturday from 11:00-11:30 AM in the morning. A single episode of "Chilot" program first presents in drama form disagreements that raise questions of law which will, in the second part, lead to legal confrontations necessitating a judicial settlement.

The word "Chilot" is an Amharic word that can be translated into English as "Court proceeding". The basic aim of "Chilot" program, as stated in the project proposal presented by the producer to EBC is the propagation of knowledge regarding the law to the general public through an entertaining approach.

In an interview about the way in which 'Chilot' presents the law in action the Program Manager says "Cases in the drama are usually adapted from real ones and often fabricated and played by actors. Regarding the steps followed in presenting cases and evidences the Program strictly follows the 1958 Civil Procedure Code of Ethiopia and also the 1954 Criminal Procedure Code of Ethiopia." 'Chilot' is a program presented in a government held television station that aims to inform and educate about the law by strictly following the law in force and its practice. Hence, in terms of genre 'Chilot' is not a reality court show. But then it is not like many law and court films and serials that give a wide range of creative liberty in terms of shaping and presenting their products.

As I have a law background and I have involvement in the legal research activity of the program I have had the opportunity of watching closely as messages are formulated and developed and eventually turned into a media text. This is even more so as I am recently involved in the court script preparation steps. My encounter with the script writers, camera crew, directors, editors and other production staff has raised a curiosity in me about the motives and also processes of production of media messages.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia has only recently emerged from long years of internal conflicts and war. The socio economic conditions of the nation are in their earliest stages of development. Efforts of poverty reduction and growth is now being conducted by the Second Five Years Growth and Transformation Plan adopted by the government.

The growth and effectiveness of the media sector is recognized to play a double role. The first is the media as a sector is itself an industry wherein huge capitals and services are involved. In this sense growth in the media industry will add up to the economic growth of the nation. The second role is that media is a means through which socio-economic developments are pursued. In this regard the observance of social and political rights -towards which media is expected to work- guaranteed under the constitution are understood to be the basis upon which any development endeavor is to be conducted.

Until only recently the media in Ethiopia had been in the government hands to the exclusion of others. It is traditionally used as means of propaganda and suppression with little or no regard for public expression of opposing or divergent views. In such situations the study of media from the perspective of the audience seem to have little to offer. But still some take it to be rewarding because, as Jensen (cited in Servaes ,2002:87)states“...we can listen to those who participate in them to discover the multiple ways in which they are enjoyed and understood as well as the ways in which they are disliked and deplored.”

The focus of this research is EBC ‘Chilot’ program that deals with law. The program demonstrates legal practices by presenting in a dramatic form court proceedings of litigation. According to a project proposal presented by the producer of the program to Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, the show aims to disseminate legal knowledge and thereby acquaint the people with the day to day activities of courts. This is a very important task in a country that has a very low literacy rate and access to justice.

Courts are generally associated with the powers and influences of government power whether local or central and those who participate in the practices are held in high esteem. The power and skills lawyers and advocates wield have earned them respect and

fear among the society. This is even more so with in a society that has little access to the knowledge of law and its practice. Mediated presentation of the law in action will no doubt captivate the general public evoking much interest on the messages it sends and as such its reception needs to be studied.

Dissemination of legal knowledge to the general public is expected to pass through challenges. These challenges include the need to shape and present legal messages in a simplified way so as to benefit large sections of the society without however lowering the standard and quality of the messages in particular and the program in general. One problems is as legal issues usually require some sort of conceptual understanding of abstract norms and logical reasoning, the question whetheror notthe message sent by the program reaches the audience as intended by the producer is also an interesting one to investigate.

It is generally accepted that law furthers economic and other interests within the society. Even though the Marxist notion of law as a mere superstructure that is completely subservient to the base (economy) does not have now many adherents, law is still understood to be an instrument of power in the handsof those that enact it. As various cultural and economic interests are played in different fields of activity, the law as well as the cultural production of knowledge of law through mediated presentations and representation are not deemed to be free from these interests. It is necessary to see how this interests are played out through the media and in what way the audience receives them.

Media owners and those who take part in the production of media contents are reputed to operate on the basis of their own intuitive judgment about their audience. They are accused of being under the high influence of advertisers, sponsors and partners rather than knowing the true essence of what the actual and the potential listeners mean. How much of this is true to programs that purport to be educative? So it is relevant to study if the program transmits legal knowledge that is relevant to the audience.

There are instances wherein the law is used for achieving social reform and in the process finds itself at odds with prevailing social values. In such situations the law together with the type of change it purports to bring is opposed by the society. How

media messages about law are received by the audiences in such situation is a very crucial one.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research is to examine audiences' reception of messages of EBC's "Chilot" television program. More specifically the study aims at:

- examining the interpretation of EBC "Chilot" program's messages as appropriated by the audience.
- identifying the interpretations vis-à-vis the producers objectives.
- Finding out the factors that might affect the audiences' interpretations of EBC "Chilot" program.

Therefore the present study set out to answer :

- How do audiences interpret messages from "Chilot" Program?
- How similar or different are such interpretations vis-a-vis the producers' intentions?
- What factor(s) affect audience's interpretation of "Chilot" Program's messages?

1.4. Significance of the Study

Reception study as an area of enquiry in Ethiopia is in its early stage of infancy and as such it will be worthwhile to make some addition towards it . In addition to this, there is no study to my knowledge conducted on how the audience interprets meaning from the message of "Chilot" television program. So identifying the gaps of communication (as discrepancies between the preferred message and the one accepted by the audience) and knowing what causes them will help increase the quality of services that the public gets with regard knowledge about legal matter.

The study can also help institutions like the EBC and others in the field of production of media texts to raise the quality of their products by showing how meaning is a common construct because of communication being systematically distorted.

1.5.Scope of the Study

What I tried to reach at is how certain members of the community make meaning out of what is presented to them by "Chilot" television drama. The study does not aim to establish them as representative of the general public and make projections or generalizations with respect to them. It is rather a study of the process of meaning sharing, making or rejection between the producer of the media message and some groups of the audience.

In order to study how similar or different audiences' interpretations are in relation to the producer's encodings, it is obvious that we have to understand the legal message the producer is trying to send. As such the discussion of the law was intended only to establish the content of the message rather than its authenticity.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

As I could not come across enough studies conducted locally on the study of law as a mediated product especially from the perspective of the audience, shortage of research and reference materials was encountered. As such I had to make use of mainly foreign reference materials and research results.

My data were collected from audiences in Addis Ababa and the town of Bishoftu. This was to help avoid the research from being locked contextually to the particular socio economic feature of a given locality. These two localities are spatially similar. But as qualitative research demands according to Creswell(2001:160) "the enquirer to be typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants", I could not make a choice for a different place further from Addis Ababa.

But still, in spite of the apparent spatial closeness of the two localities, they are further apart in the cultural aspects and lifestyle enough to provide varied research inputs. So I believe the choice of these two localities gives a chance of reaching at diverse results

as the participants are considerably varied from one another in language as well as ways of life.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I presented a review of literature that is related with the topics of audience reception studies in general and those made on some specific program items that are presented by EBC. In the second section a discussion is made about the theoretical frame works that informed the research.

2.1. Audience and Audience Studies

Apart from the etymological root of the word and the various picture of acts of attention that it may conjure up to our minds, what the word audience stands for in the contemporary world of communication is one that is deeply contested. Webster (2001: 213) holds that “[though] audience is one of the central elements of media studies ... the term connotes many different, sometimes contradictory things.”

For some like Jane Stokes (2003: 56) “in its broadest sense, the term ‘audience’ is almost interchangeable with ‘society’, for it is used to refer to the many ways in which the media relate to the broader social world...in a sense, [of] all people in a society constituting a potential audience for any media product.” Alternative approaches to conceptualization of audience that make the individual as a starting point are criticized for example by Martin Allor quoted in IenAng (1991:11) as “abstracted reification of the individual in front of the [television] machine which is a naïve epistemological realism”.

The persisting difficulty to conceptualize audience either as a precise group or in terms of its individuated experience has led Martin Allor quoted in IenAng (1991:11) to conclude that “the audience exists nowhere; it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourses” thus denying its objectivity as a social reality. But we know mediated communication between the sender and receiver takes place with in real physical and social place.

To say, on the other side, that the audience is the public itself is to reduce all social acts into an essentially mediated act of communication. It flattens communication with society as a whole and disregards institutional and structural settings with which it functions in the society. To conceive it only as a position within analytical discourses, on the other hand, robs it of its social reality.

So how should we conceptualize audience in today's multi-faceted mediated activities of communication? This is an audience reception study and as such it falls within the culturalist tradition of audience studies. So it is important first to have a concept of the audience which properly locates it within the cultural context of media use and meaning making. We need to have a conception that can offer a possibility for audience to be conceived from a position that gains for it some sort of autonomy within the social and institutional framework that makes mediated communication possible. To do this we need to look briefly in to the development of communication and of audience in a historical perspective.

2.1.1. Mass Communication and Audience

The term 'mass communication' came into use in the late 1930s, but its essential features had started to show much earlier. What is described as the emergence of mass communication generally includes the achievement of new scientific discoveries like the telegraph, telephone, film, radio and television and their entering in to the field of communication. The most obvious feature of the mass media is that they are designed to reach the many. Denis McQuail (2010:52) holds "potential audiences are viewed as large aggregates of more or less anonymous consumers, and the relationship between sender and receiver is affected accordingly." The sender is often the organization itself or a professional communicator that it employs.

The content or message of mass communication is mass produced with a standardized way of 'manufacturing'. This mass production and the manner of its use and reuse by large public exposed it to over production and overuse. Hence the relationship between the sender and the receiver is based on the production and consumption of

message as commodity. In the process content of mass communication lost its personal nature, uniqueness and originality.

There is now a physical distance between sender and receiver as well as a social distance due to the proprietary nature of ownership as exhibited by more authority, prestige or expertise by the sender. The relationship is not only unbalanced, but one-directional in flow and basically calculative or manipulative on the side of the sender. From this we can see that the concept of the audience has attained an all different character in that it is now unobservable impersonal and a highly dispersed one geographically and also socially.

2.1.2. Typology Of Audience

Taking audience as the addressee of a given communicative act with its own varied way of reception, we can typify it in many, though not clear cut, ways. A given act of audience hood may show aspects of communicative relations that may make it legible to be in more than one typology. The basis of typification can be varied. According to McQuail (2010: 332)

“an audience can be defined in different and overlapping ways: by place (as in the case of local media); by people (as when a medium is characterized by an appeal to a certain age group, gender, political belief or income category); by the particular type of medium or channel involved (technology and organization combined); by the content of its messages (genres, subject matter, styles); by time (as when one speaks of the ‘daytime’ or ‘primetime’ audience, or an audience that is fleeting and short term compared with one that endures)”

There are other typologies of audiences offered by scholars that take in to account their evolving characteristics. Nightingale (2003:360-381) presents a new typology that captures key features of the new diversity, proposing four types as: audience as ‘the people assembled’, audience as ‘the people addressed’, audience as ‘happening’ and audience as ‘audition’.

Audience as ‘the people assembled’ refers to the spectator audience that is paying attention to a given media presentation at a given time. Audience as ‘the people addressed’ refers to the group of people for whom content is shaped. These are the ‘inscribed’ or imagined audience. Audience as ‘happening’ refers to a contextualized

experience of reception as an interactive event in daily life. Audience as 'hearing' or 'audition' refers to participatory audience experience, when the audience is enabled to participate or to provide a response at the same time.

From these four types of audiences the second and third types can be seen to be more relevant for this study because 'audience as addressed' helps to narrow down from the larger group of potential viewers and guide us directly to those will make a relevant and meaningful experience of their mediated experience. The 'audience as happening' type is also helpful because it contextualizes the experience of reception as an interactive event in daily life which is more relevant for a cultural study of audience.

2.1.3. Traditions of Audience Research

Writers typify audience research into a number of traditions. The frequent ones are headed under structural, behavioral and social-cultural. While audience studies that are termed as structural came about from the needs of media industries desire to obtain reliable estimates of the likes of audience size and reach, the tradition of mass communication research termed behavioral was one that mainly preoccupied itself with effects of the media on the audience. Here the prevalent assumption was that the mass media are so powerful and the audience so weak and passive recipient that media can serve as tools of persuasion.

But Herbert Blumer cited in Staiger,(2005:44) criticized it by noting that "the approach has 'ignored three factors namely the variability of media contents, the variability of people's responsiveness to media contents, and the independent connection of all forms of communication.'" Schramm cited in Staiger (2005:44) also raised his skepticism about the direct effects approach saying that "the audience might interpret the message in a different manner than the sender's intention."

The cultural studies tradition rejects the stimulus-response model of effects for a view of media use as in itself a significant aspect of everyday life. Karen Ross and Virginia Nightingale (2003:76) put this approach as the 'latest phase' where emphasis is given to 'agency rather than passivity' As such the notion of an all-powerful text or message is denied credence. Cultural studies tradition emphasizes media use as a

reflection of a particular social-cultural context and as a process of giving meaning to cultural products and experiences in everyday life. According to Lindolf(1988: 89) from the culturalist perspective “media use is typically situation-specific and oriented to social tasks which evolve out of participation in ‘interpretative communities’.”

This research is a cultural study of how meanings are derived from the law program by the various groups within the society. This is because the research question attempts to answer what implications age, educational level religion and gender have in how messages of ‘Chilot’ program received and interpreted. It is an audience study because activity and variety is relocated back to the audience legitimizing the constructions of meanings as unpredictable from the texts the media offers.

There are a number of audience reception studies of media products conducted by students of Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communication. Some of these deal with television audience satisfaction and reception of the media institutions as a whole or a given section of it and others deal with audiences meaning making of individual programs presented or out sourced by the media institution.

FrehiywetYilma conducted audience reception study of Shay Buna Talk Show in which one of the major findings is the close relation of audience interpretation of the message to the lived experience of individual audience i, e., the closeness of the question to the specific factor. In addition to this the research found out that education is among the main factors that affects meaning formation.

HenokNigussie made audience reception analysis on JihadawiHarekat documentary film among Addis Ababa Communities. The findings of the study indicated that the audience are actively involved in negotiating meanings. It showed in particular that though there was knowledge gap between the Muslims and non-Muslims in the understanding and interpretation of the documentary they both agreed that the contents of the documentary film are so biased and distorted to achieve certain hidden agenda of the government.

KibrewossenWorku made an audience reception study of anti-corruption television spots on Ethiopian television. This study showed that audiences accept, reject,

and act towards the TV spot's message based on their preconception of the concept, their lived experience and on the way of message presentation.

A cross-cultural reception analysis of selected commercials on Ethiopian Television (ETV) Amharic program conducted by Yonathan Alemu also found out that difference in the levels of education made little impact on whether audiences actively involve with media messages in the process of meaning making and that age was one of the influencing factors towards acceptance of preferred reading of advertisers.

A study on audience sense making of media texts conducted by Meseret Tajebe focusing on Betocho Drama also revealed the audience regardless of difference in gender, age, education and occupation seem to, more or less, share similar interpretations of the drama texts, which were largely in line with the dominant readings on offer and that there were a limited instances where the audience were seen taking a negotiated meaning.

As can be seen from this brief overview of some of the researches conducted along reception studies, audiences are found to be active in the making of meaning from media messages. And also a wide range of variety in the decoding of media messages alongside differences in age, gender, educational levels are observable. This study in the meaning making of EBC 'Chilot' program will try to find out if and to what level these differences in social contexts will affect the reception of the program.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

Pitout, (2001:243) groups into two the approaches that deal with how audiences interpret media messages as the "German reception aesthetics, also called reception analysis, and the encoding/decoding model of reception developed by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies." These are both currently described as types of the active audience theory. As the research tries to find out how the audience understands or interprets the message thereby making sense or meaning the encoding/decoding model of communication and audience reception theory will be appropriate.

2.2.1. Encoding and Decoding

Encoding-decoding model is the first to diverge not only from the previously established effects theories but also in its attempt to sketch a different model of communication. Stuart Hall introduced it in his seminal essay he presented in 1978 when he was working as a member of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies.” Hall’s model distinguishes three decoding options of media content: dominant/preferred, negotiated and oppositional. A dominant or preferred reading is one according to which the text has the power to propose or suggest particular ideological readings implying that the audience accepts the preferred meaning without question. A negotiated reading involves the audience understanding the preferred meaning, but opposing its application to specific cases.

Stevenson cited in Williams (2003: 195) says Hall is totally critical of the traditional effects study in that he believes “any understanding of modern media culture must focus on the fit between the discursive construction of the message and the interpretative understanding of the audience”. This quite obviously shifts the focus of the debate in the study of audience making the influence of media dependent on people’s interpretations and thought process

Morley was the first person to test Hall’s encoding/decoding model in his study of the audience of a British Television program called Nationwide. Williams writes (2003: 93) “Morley came to a conclusion supporting that of Hall’s in that people are not passive and different groups make sense of a message in different ways based on their social background”. However, he criticized Hall’s ideological assumption that class background was the dominant factor affecting the way audiences interpret media messages as he found out people from the same socioeconomic background generating different interpretation of the same media content. Accordingly Williams writes (2003:197). “Morley suggested that in addition to what Hall found out, social variables such as age, gender and ethnicity are often as relevant as class background in shaping the way in which people decode media messages.”

2.2.2. The Reception Theory-Concepts and Meaning

Davis and Baran (2006:276) define reception theory as “audience-centered theory that focuses on how various types of audience members make sense of specific forms of content.” The focal characteristic of this theory is its emphasis on the ability of audiences to appropriate the meaning they want from popular media and cultural forms. McQuail (2000: 366) writes “reception analysis is effectively audience research arm of modern cultural studies, rather than an independent tradition.” Hence the choice of theoretical frameworks that are complementing one another in the search for understanding and identifying levels of audience participation in meaning making of media messages is appropriate.

Reception scholars believe that media texts are open to a number of interpretations. According to Pitout (2001:245) this is because:

very few messages are self-explanatory and transparent, we must engage with or act upon a text to produce meaning...A text always contains blank (gap)...we fill these blanks with our knowledge, or private and public experience and our frame of reference, which is an inescapable part of our social and cultural life-world.

As can be seen from the research questions the research aims to examine the interpretation of EBC "Chilot" program's messages as appropriated by the audience. It also tries to identify the interpretations vis-à-vis the producer's objectives and find out the factors that might affect the audiences' interpretations. So theoretical frameworks that attribute active engagement of the audience towards interpretation of media messages is found to be relevant.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

In the previous chapter I have shown the gradual change in the understanding of the type of relationship that exists between the media and the audience, i.e., the eventual transformation from a powerful media perspective to active audience approaches which attaches due importance to audiences. As the research method chosen for this study is motivated by the statement of the problem and the nature of data intended to be analyzed in this chapter I hereby proceed to present the research methodology adopted.

3.1. Methodological Approach

Qualitative methodologies are better equipped to uncover the meaning making process than the quantitative method. Lindlof (1995:22) holds that "If communication is primarily a matter of signifying meanings and purposes, then qualitative inquiry is interested in how signifying occurs and what it means for those who engage in it." Active audience conception asserts that audiences might be influenced more by the intervening influence of other people than simply by the 'media messages' they receive. Therefore in order for to account for the power of the active audience, we need methods that could offer satisfactory mapping of the relations between media and audiences.

Qualitative research method is believed by many scholars of media and communication to be able to reveal these influences because the method puts the respondents into a social setting in which the personal influences that operate in social settings can be reproduced and observed. When justifying why researchers started to adopt qualitative methods, Morley cited in Gunter, (2000:54) writes "There was a growing recognition that audiences should be allowed to express their thoughts and their feelings about media content in their own terms." Also EyasuNegash (2008: 20) holds that "since mass communication is a process of meaning making, scholars understand using qualitative analysis of audience reception becomes invaluable because it primarily places importance to investigating the feelings and beliefs of respondents about media contents." As the main purpose of the research is to find out

what meaning audiences make of the messages from 'Chilot' television program adopting a qualitative research method helps better to uncover how meanings are made of the programs messages and why variations are observed in the reception of messages if any.

3.2. Research Design

The research is designed to constitute three phases of activities. The first phase is a qualitative content analysis. This is followed by the second phase of activity which is conducting focus group discussions. The third phase of research activity is in depth interview. The contents of chosen program items aired will first be analyzed and these will be presented to each focus group for discussion. Also in depth interview will be based on these item programs that are analyzed and discussed with in the focus groups.

A brief description of what these three phases constitute is made in the following manner. This is not like the stepwise design of quantitative study and does not mean that I do not follow a flexible research design. As such I can make use of interactive cyclical approach to sampling, data collection analysis and interpretation.

3.3. Qualitative Content Analysis

We have seen earlier that audience reception studies are basically about providing insights in to how audiences interpret media contents. As such the analysis of media content is an important tool in a reception study. According to Shroder et al. (2003: 154-55) textual analysis of media contents is imperative because it equips the researcher with the "knowledge on the media products." This knowledge helps not only in eliciting the relevant experiences of informants on media contents but also gearing conversations with the informants towards the relevant issues. As the study of audience reception using Hall's encoding/decoding model demands understanding of the of the encoder's intentions and objectives which texts were meant to serve various types of interviews with the media message producer was also conducted.

It is possible to make reception study of a given media text without however being expert on the issues that the text raises or entertains. Analysis can adequately be done at the surface level of the text. This can be done by the researcher only with a sense

of purpose to gain adequate knowledge regarding the program types, modes or format that the producers use to present the programs and the program contents in focus. Regarding The Nationwide Television Study Morley (1999: 153) writes:

“The programs were analyzed principally in terms of the way they are constructed: how topics are articulated; how background and explanatory frameworks are mobilized, visually and verbally; how expert commentary is integrated and how discussions and interviews are monitored and conducted. The aim was not to provide a single, definitive reading of the programs, but to establish provisional readings of their main communicative and ideological structures.”

As such it is a knowledge of the text at the surface level that is needed. Accordingly Strelitz (2005:121) recommends the task is “of a rudimentary level with the purpose of preparing oneself for the role of group and individual interviews.”

3.4. Focus Group Discussions

Lunt and Livingstone (1996:80) describe focus group discussion briefly as method that "Involves bringing together a group or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator." The application of focus groups in communication studies has a long history but their role as tools of investigating media audiences became widespread since the early 1980s. Strelitz (2005: 78) notes that after the 1980s “they [focus groups] have become closely associated with reception analysis.”

As we have seen in the preceding chapter reception study is found within the cultural tradition of audience study. As such the study should make the organizing principle of its focus group to be one that brings about the salience of cultural features to the foreground. For this reason I made age, gender, religion, economic and educational status of audiences the organizing points of the focus groups. This goes in line with how Morley (1999:147) “ attempted to construct a sample of groups who might be expected to vary from ‘dominant’ through ‘negotiated’ to ‘oppositional’ frameworks of decoding” in relation with the texts that will be presented for discussion.

As such the focus groups that I formed are Focus Group A constituted by female and male youth that are between the age of 17-25. Focus Group B is constituted by male

and female members who have only elementary and basic adult education level and are accordingly older in terms of their ages. Focus Group C consists of female members who are Muslims by religion and Focus Group D is constituted by male and female members who have the educational level of university degree and above.

I was planning to form two of my focus groups to be from the residents of the town of Dukem but I was able to form only one group and that is in Bishoftu. This is due to some inconveniences that made it difficult to get members in their natural set up like schools. So I had to resort to form a group in Bishoftu from students in Rift Valley University. I take this to be a minor change and the purpose of making a focus group out of Addis Abeba, i.e., maintaining a demographic variety that may add some light in terms of cultural diversity is still maintained.

As to the number of participants in each group, I made Morgan's (1997:157) suggestion my basis because he takes four to ten as an ideal one even though he does not disclose what he opts for. Even though the relative increase in the size of the Focus Group Discussion gives the chance of varied viewpoints that enrich the study anticipation of lack of volunteers as well as time and resources has made me limit the numbers of participants to five.

Accordingly each focus group except one have 5 participants. Focus group A consists four members only. This is because the fifth member had a problem of hearing and had to leave after sometime and the only available substitution could not manage to stay on more than one discussion session. It is my belief that this did not discredit the level varying points of view that we were to get because the minimum number of the focus group composition we came across literature review is still maintained.

Concerning the composition and nature of focus groups, some scholars like Jensen, (2002: 241) write favoring the idea of 'naturally occurring groups of like-minded people' affirming that "in media studies, focused interviews with relatively homogenous groups have proven useful for gaining access to their distinctive experiences of media content." As such I also used snowball technique of organizing my focus group participants. But as snowball sampling has the risk of capturing a biased set of

participants because of participants being recruited due to their link to the original informant I applied a mixed sampling procedures including that of convenience.

3.5. Individual In-depth Interviews

In depth interview is known to benefit a researchers serving as a means of creating better understanding about an issue under investigation. This benefit comes due to the nature of individual interviews that allow an interviewee to make additional reflections with the prospect, according to Schroder et al.(2003: 153), of building up 'an argument or a narrative in an hour than any group member does in the same amount of time' Individual in-depth interviews has the benefit of avoiding undue influence that can be encountered in group discussions.

I conducted individual in-depth interview with a total of nineteen viewers. Eighteen of the interviewees were resident of Addis Ababa, the remaining one being from Bishoftu town. Of the persons I held in-depth interview with eight are female and eleven of them are male. Equally persons with anticipated enhanced skill of communication and access to television were sought. This is because we will be bound to discuss about 'Chilot' program without viewing sample program items like we do with focus group discussion members. All of the in-depth interviews were held in interviewee's offices, homes and at other convenient places

Generally in-depth interviewees were constituted from different sections of the society in terms age, religious orientation occupations and educational levels. To reach to actual participant of in-depth individual interviews a mix of technique of snowball and convenience sampling was used.

3.6. Sampling

Although I could not find the exact number of 'Chilot' program items aired since the start of the Program on EBC four years ago, the general estimate given to me shows around 40 program items are aired within one year. This brings the estimated amount of program episodes aired up till now to be over 200. This totals a production item of over 80 hours and it would be unthinkable to include in this study all of these program items

as sources of data for the qualitative content analysis. It is impossible due to the time and resource shortage to include a significant number of them in a single study.

Three thirty-minute long television productions of 'Chilot' programs that were transmitted by the EBC were selected for qualitative content analysis and latter to be shown to each focus group. As mentioned above copies of the programs were chosen purposively in order to raise relevant issues that are related to organization of the focus group itself. Accordingly two of the three sample programs deal with criminal cases and the third is a civil case. One of the criminal cases deals with the commission of rape and the other concerns business malpractice. The civil case concerns a family litigation on issue of dissolution of marriage on grounds of bigamy.

Martin (1996: 522) holds that "an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers research questions." Research questions posed at the beginning make certain assumptions about the variations in the meaning making of audiences from media messages. It also makes an assumption that these variations in the meanings that audiences make out of media messages are probably caused by the cultural factors of which media audiences are constituted. Hence it would be helpful to make the selection of data sources from the program items that deal with issues related to salient cultural features of society. Some of the issues have a gender basis or religious implications. Others relate to lifestyles among members of the society and still others make sense in relation with the age difference within the society. As such we will not be bound to make a selection that is necessarily representative of all the program items produced. As Morgan cited in Strelitz, (2005:78) holds "overall samples in qualitative research need to be judged according to how well they serve the purposes of a specific study, rather than being judged by criteria that apply to other goals" Hence in this sense my sampling is purposive.

3.7. Shortcomings of the Method

One of shortcomings of qualitative work lies in its unrepresentative data. Data remain unrepresentative due to reasons of size as well as the manner of going about selecting the specific data. The other weakness of reception study relates to issues of

generalizability. The extent to which the small samples studied may be said to represent the larger population for which the researcher wishes the study to have explanatory power is questionable.

Some scholars point to the aim of the qualitative studies as not striving toward generalizations. Still other scholars argue that the issue of generalizability should not be taken as a measure of the weakness of the method. For instance David Morley (1992:161) writes “without generalizations, we risk floating in an endless realm of contextual specificity, a play of infinite difference, in which we are reluctant to make any generalization for fear of crudity.”

Without generalizability Barrie Gunter (2000:54) writes that “research outcomes will comprise little more than the application of highly personalized 'readings' of media or of audiences' conversational narratives about media.” By way of answering my research questions I intend to discern some broad categories of media audiences and to make some generalization about some similarities and differences in people's meaning making and interpretation of media messages.

CHAPTER FOUR

Content Analysis and Description of 'Chilot' Program

Using the sampling methods discussed in the earlier chapter I have chosen three items of 'Chilot' productions, two civil matters and one criminal. Under this section I give a general description of the development of the story, the conflict that ensued, This will be done to a level that enables us to see how issues are thematized with in the story revealing the particular moral standpoint from which the message maker intended the viewers to approach the conflicts and legal issues. The legal bones of contention, the issues addressed, the evidences weighed and the decisions reached at by the court are also outlined.

4.1. Content Analysis of Sample 'Chilot' Program Items

4.1.1. Program Aired On September 28 2015

4.1.1.1. Development of the Story

We see a young woman standing in front of a dressing table looking into a mirror applying lipstick to her lips. Her mobile starts to call and we are presented with a close shot of her mobile that the caller number is saved as 'my love'. We hear her calling the person as Miki. She tells him that she is dressing and won't be late. Then she gets back to her original position and begins to talk to herself. She prays and wishes that he turns out to be a good friend.

We see the young man on road talking to a person he calls "Nardi". He says that it won't be more than ten minutes before he gets there. He takes a cab. We hear his internal thoughts and plans. We hear him saying that 'if a woman agrees to spend long hours with a man in a private place it means that she is ready to have sex with him. He almost immediately begins to coax her to get in to a room. She resists weakly but he assures her that she need not worry as nothing is going to happen. She agrees. She tells him that agrees only to make him happy. We still hear her internal monologue as she is beseeched by her decision to move in to a room.

A woman takes them to their room. In the bed room we see him begin immediately to cajole her to sit on the bed. She resists but he manages to carry her over to the bed. After a cut we see the both of them fully on the bed him only in his 'japoni'. He puts up the demand to kiss her but she tells him that its unnecessary as they have already have their privacy to enjoy talking their heart's content. He seemed to agree to this for an instance but then begins to put her in his arms and more. We see agony on her face. As she resists him more he begins to manifest aggressiveness. He tells her threateningly that they love one another and that nothing else mattered. Just as he gets on top of her the camera takes us outside of the bedroom in front of the door where two women janitors are seen listening to the scuffle and scream inside the room.

4.1.1.2. Court Scenes

In the court we see a woman prosecutor. Miki is present with his lawyer. The charge of rape is read out aloud by the Judge and Miki pleads not guilty. Then prosecutor's witnesses are called upon. The first one to give witness is Nardos herself. Nardos tells to the court that the accused was her [boy] friend and briefly recount what happened that day. Miki's lawyer cross-examines her.

Then the Judge hears the second witness. The next witness is the sympathetic janitor. She tells the court that she has heard and seen as described above. After this the Prosecutor declares that she presents no other evidence. Judge then finds that a case against the accused has been made out by the Prosecutor on the basis of the medical evidence that proved the performance of sexual act, the presence of marks of bruises, and physical signs of assault on the victim's body. As a result he orders the accused to produce evidence to defend himself.

The first defense witness was the accused himself. The accused follows the narrative that his lawyer tried to construct. The next defense witness was the receptionist that gave them the bedroom and served their orders. She basically tells the court that the two of them looked relaxed and there was no hint of coercion or stress on the part of the woman. She also told the court that there was no complaint of rape was made to them that day.

The Judge weighs evidences produced by the accused as capable of establishing that the compliant got in to the bed room with no coercion on the part of the accused. Also the judge considered defense witness proved that compliant was on the bed with the accused with her close off willingly. The Judge puts the crux of the matter in this manner:

“The fact that a woman gets in to a bedroom or get on or lye on bed cannot make us conclude that she has decided to have sex. To think that once she gets in to a bedroom or on a bed a woman has relinquished her right over her body and desire is to deny her human right.”

Accordingly the Judge finds the accused guilty as charged. After this he asks the prosecutor and the accused to state their cases concerning sentencing. The prosecutor does not show any legal or factual basis that can aggravate the punishment. But the defense lawyer presents the acts of the young girl as seductive and therefore extenuating circumstance.

The court outlines that the offence is punishable with a rigorous imprisonment of five to fifteen years and after weighing arguments on the issue of punishment sentences the accused with a rigorous imprisonment of 7 years and closes the case.

4.1.2. Program Aired On November 8, 2015

4.1.2.1. Development of the story

After an establishing scene of a rural area we see two persons seated in a room talking and eating. One is an elderly woman and the other is a man-BosheDando. We soon learn that the woman is the aunt of the man. We see a much younger woman coming out of the inner room once in a while and pouring them some local drinks.

The aunt commends him on his increasing wealth and in his success as a good farmer and merchant at the same time. After a moment she advises him that he needs someone to keep an eye on his properties in town. He agrees that he is getting tired of going back to the rural area and coming back again. She suggests for him to marry as second wife the younger woman-Birinesh by name. She tells him that Birinesh is

pregnant from him. She tells him that Mr. Delebo have added wives and urges him to follow suit.

We are next presented with the older son of Boshe lost in thought and his mother comes to comfort him. Meanwhile Boshe is happy with the soon to be wife. We see the wife busy at domestic work when Boshe comes and tells her that he is going to the city. Dibu refuses to let him go. Argument ensues. She pleads with him that the children are missing him too much. He insists he has some work to do.

On another scene the aunt keeps on encouraging Birimesh that marriage with a married man is their own culture and that there is no problem with it. She tells her that the first wife will not worry about the matter as long as her domestic needs were properly covered. In a final scene Boshe comes to house of her husband's aunt in the city and accidentally meets the pregnant second wife of her husband AtoBosheDando.

4.1.2.2.Court Scenes

The judge calls up on the plaintiff, W/roDibuRoba and the two defendants ,BosheDando and BirimeshAlemu. The plaintiff first states her case why she asks for the dissolution of the second marriage. She tells of the toils of hard work they put to attain a level of riches which made her husband win the title of 'model farmer'. She says "Now when the wealth gets plenty those who want to take a share from it also get plenty."

The defendant also presents his case. The defendant tells the court that they live in accordance with the culture and traditions of their locality. He says that he works hard and on the plot of land that was awarded to him in the city locality for being a 'model farmer' he was then installing a ground mill and a shop. He tells the court that he found someone that oversees and manages this property for him and that he is not squandering as the plaintiff alleges.

The second defendant also briefly puts forward her case alleging that it was the custom of the locality and that she has no knowledge that it was a wrong thing to do. The plaintiff interrupts her alleging that she is merely trying to take a share of the property. At this Boshe interrupts his first wife and says "Thanks God the property that I have is

enough not only for the children that I have now buy also for those to come in the future and for both of you. What is wrong with marrying a second wife! I did it in the custom of our forefathers.”

At this the plaintiff interrupts him and challenges the status of tradition that the defendant tries to give to the practice and remarks that it is a harmful traditional practice. She adds “Some learned people tell me that it is a crime to commit bigamy.”

The plaintiff says to the judge “She is her sister. Their children are also brothers and sisters.” He continues to hint that the property in the city that the second wife holds is also their common property. At this the plaintiff interrupts him and rejects it outright. She wants her house and children to be left for herself. She suggests the second wife to make a home of her own.

The Judge then proceeds to ask them questions and adjourns the session for another day to hear witnesses about the conclusion of the second marriage. After AtoKetema and W/roLemo (the aunt of Boshe) give their testimony the Judge gives a decision. He decides that the second marriage to be dissolved from the day of the decision given. He indicates that the effect of the dissolution of the second marriage will be dealt with when presented to the court.

4.1.3. Program Aired On March 16, 2015

4.1.3.1. Development of the Story

We see a cobble stone production site in which workers are busy shaping stones. Then we see an establishing shot of a low income location. One of the young men we saw working on cobblestone is seen carrying ‘injera’ in a thin plastic bag-‘festa’. He comes to a woman lying on the veranda of a small dilapidated house. From what they talk we learn that the woman is his mother. She used to be a beggar on the street but now he is supporting her by his cobblestone work. He is a student in a night program in college. He tries to give her hope by telling her that will graduate in two years’ time.

We see an establishing shot of one of the shining tall buildings of the city. Then we hear a man dressed in white gown talking in his mobile phon. He says the college has no recognition from the Ministry of Education to teach Economics and Accounting. This is over heard by one student who just in time happened to get there. The student goes out and tells his friends about what he heard. They heatedly debate about it.

They remember listening to a radio advertisement about how the College is working in collaboration with Cambridge University on the fields of Economics and Accounting. But when they come to the reality they question the validity of the advertisement because they have not seen any activity that the College has with the said Cambridge University.

Then they decide to go to the dean's office to get the right information. The dean confirms that the college does not have the recognition from the Ministry of Education on those departments but assures them that they will get it before they graduate. He tells them to continue with their study without any worry. But the students remain unconvinced by the dean's assurances. They go to the Ministry of Education and find out the truth about the matter.

This student tells the dean that he is cheated by the false advertisements of the College into wasting his time and money on something that has no value. He asks the money he paid until then to be reimbursed to him at which demand the dean belittlingly laughs. The dean humiliates the students and throws them out of his office.

4.1.3.2. Court Scenes

In the court room we see the Judge in black robe seated high on the pedestal. The Prosecutor of the Consumers' Right Protection Authority is also wearing a black robe with a red stripes on it. The defendants are three 'persons', i.e., the dean and owner of the College, the owner of an Advertising Company and the owner of a Radio Station that broadcasted the advertisement. The second and third defendants are represented by a lawyer.

The defense lawyer raises objections on grounds of lack of jurisdiction by the court and absence of power on the part of the Prosecutor to charge his clients. He asserts that even if they were to commit the crimes as read in the charge they should be sued by a Prosecutor other than Consumers Right Protection and this in a different court and demands the court to dismiss the case. The Judge gives the chance to the Prosecutor to react on the objections. After this the Judge rejects the objection and proceeds with hearing the case. All defendants plead guilty. The Judge enters a plea of guilty. The Prosecutor asks for their conviction. The Judge convicts them for the crimes.

The court proceeds with the matter of sentencing. After some arguments on all the sides the Judge sentences the first owner and dean of the College to a term of 2 years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of one hundred thousand birr. The Advertisement Company and Radio Station are fined with three hundred thousand birr and four hundred fifty thousand birr respectively. The court then closes the case.

4.2. Description of ‘Chilot’ Program

4.2.1. Television Images in ‘Chilot’ Program.

Television as a visual communication medium uses images. Hill (2009: 1005) asserts that “The starting point for any theory of visual communication is the understanding that virtually any image can be analyzed as a type of sign.” In semiotics, the study of signs asserts that virtually anything can be a sign or symbol, which means that it stands in for and prompts in the viewer’s mind an object or concept distinct from the sign itself. For Gizachew (2013:41) “The point of departure in media semiotics is that media content is not reality itself, but a representation and an imitation of reality.” For example Hill writes (2009:1005) “Roland Barthes distinguishes between an image’s denotation and its connotation. An image’s denotation is simply the content of the image. The connotation, on the other hand, includes all of the values and emotions that the image may trigger in a viewer.” There are also specific selections and manners of camera movements and angles as well as closures that are characteristic of television images intended to produce particular effects on viewers.

4.2.2. Courtroom Settings

In many of the programs we are presented with the Judge arriving at the courtroom with a policeman parading in front of him declaring his arrival and ordering those in the courtroom to all rise from their seats. When the Judge arrives in the courtroom everyone (including the Public Prosecutor if the case is a criminal case) has to rise from the seats. The Judge is seated on a pedestal high and positioned centrally to the room. He is cloaked in a black robe and at his back are placed flags of the nation.

While litigants in a civil suit stand side by side in front of the judge, television image of a penal suit has a physical set up of space that is different from the civil cases. The prosecutor stands not in full view of the judge facing him but showing his side only. Unlike the accused and his lawyer, the Prosecutor will remain seated only obliged to stand when has to address or is addressed by the Judge.

4.2.3. Camera Presentation of the Judge

The Judge is cast in the camera so as he appears only at the center of the television. This means that there is no side shot of the judge. Production manager AtoEndeshaw H/Gebriel says “it is one of the rules of EBC that a Judge be shown as a figure at the center. Though each party has his own view of the Judge from the spot he stands, the Judge is shown as he sees them from his one position and not from different positions that parties to the litigation see him”. Also the editor MikayasTesfaye says “We do not take the image of the judge with a nose room left on the side of the direction he is addressing. We take the Judge from a central position only. The center position in a camera and television shows indeterminacy” We can here see the visual troupe or maneuver employed with the intention of presenting the judge as not swayed and unswayable in order to reinforce discourses of judicial impartiality or neutrality.

Even though I could not come across a written rule on this matter here in Ethiopia, Susan Bandes (2007: 644) writes of “the infamous Hays Code, which was in force [in America] from 1934 to 1968 that regulated ...the way in which law could be portrayed [and instruct] that “[t]he courts of the land should not be presented as unjust.”

Also camera techniques of pan or movement or zooming in and out on the Judge is not applied. The Production Manager says on an interview:

“These are some of the rules of EBC to which we have to adhere to. Of course we have some idea of what they are trying to achieve but for dramatic effects some of the techniques that cannot obviously affect the content of the program should better have been allowed.”

We see only medium shots of the judge on the screen. In no court scenes do we see close up images of the Judge. Editor Ato Mikias Tesfaye says in the interview “Close ups are taken to show the emotional status of the person or the physical features of that person that make him unique. So it will be rude to do this to official figures. Also television stations do not accept it.” The same is repeated by the Production Manager. He says “No purpose will be achieved by doing so [close up of judges]. It will rather disturb attention.” Hence camera power is not allowed to dodge what the physical structuring of the court room tries to achieve in terms of the Judge’s ‘distance’ and ‘altitude’. The Judge remains in his revered distance and in the loftiness of his pedestal looming high on everyone present.

The other visual discourse relates the presentation of a limited range of activities performed by the Judge like attentive stance, enquiry into matters and giving verdict. But it is not unusual in real courts to see judges laugh or get angry. Some of them even do certain things informal in nature like making a joking remark at some actions of parties or those present in court. In fact judges with their own idiosyncratic manners abound courts. But none of this is seen on ‘Chilot’ Program.

In an interview about the highly formalized and rehearsed performance of the Judges, the Production Manager says:

“We want to present the court scene not as a drama but rather as a real court as far as possible. Judges in real courts may make informal remarks or do some informal acts. But if we do this we may turn the court scene in to a dramatic part. As the aim of the program is to educate on the law the entertaining part is well achieved in the first part. The second part, that is the court scene is mainly a sober and serious affaire we like to maintain it that way. Our focus is more towards presenting fierce arguments on the law.”

But the court scene is a dramatic presentation and can be made sense of as a drama continuing to unfold in the Court. In fact characters of the first dramatic part that appear before the Judge more or less continue to play their character. About the representation of the judge in popular culture Papke (2006:7) writes;

“The judge himself ... showed little emotion or passion. We learned little about his motivation and goals, his personal history and politics. The judge lacked individualizing detail and was also static, that is, he did not develop or change in the course of the film, short story, or television show.”

Hence we can see that the highly formalized and rehearsed presentation of the judge functions to sustain, in addition to a sense of `realness` or seriousness of matters, what Bandes (2007:626) holds “the popular imagination [of] the upright judge [as] not a person with characteristics and values, but simply a placeholder for the rule of law.”

4.2.4 Language of the Judge

In all of `Chilot` programs we see the Judge referring to himself as `the court` and `we`. At no single point in the proceedings do we hear the judge referring to himself in the first person singular. About this the Program Manager says:

“Judges usually refer to themselves as `we` or `the court` when they are presiding on a case. This does not mean though that Judges in real courts do not occasionally refer to themselves as `I` or `me`. But then we follow strictly the manner of reference regularly practiced by Judges, that is, `the court` or `we`. Whatever the judge does or orders will be followed and built up on by the coming Judge until the case is closed. In this sense the manner of reference is appropriate. And also this has come from the early usage and we build upon it.”

We see here the language of the judge verging on the point of obscuring him: as if it is not him that is ruling on the matter but rather the law through him. True to what David Papke (2006:7) observed about popular culture representations of judges “...he [the judge] is an easily recognizable, stock character who lacked individualizing detail and was also static , that is, he did not develop or change in the course of ...the television show..”

Topic	Stories	Themes	Legal issues
Rape	A woman forced into sexual act by her boy-friend seeks justice.	young woman, innocent young woman, beautiful woman, mischievous man, man and woman in a relationship, love ,trust, breach of trust, traditional conception barrier getting help	Whether entering in to a bedroom and taking off clothes and performing other acts of expression of affections constitutes consent for sexual act Whether consent withdrawn (after once been given) changes the nature of the act making it uncovered or un envisaged by the law.
Bigamy	A woman whose husband marries a second wife in accordance with local tradition sues for the nullification of the second marriage.	An increase in family wealth, cultural practice, hardworking and faithful first wife, a young second wife, husband trying to run two families, children neglected by their father,	Whether the culture of marrying more than one wife supported by the law, whether the second marriage is to be dissolved by court,
False advertise ment and business malpractic e	A private College that enrolls students without proper qualification and license is brought to justice.	A poor sick mother, a young man works on cobblestone and supports his poor sick mother and pays for College education on the night program, a teacher that inadvertently exposed the crime of the College owner, a rich arrogant College owner, the student resilient in bringing him to justice	Who is accused for what and what is the penalty for the offence

Table.*Summary of content analysis of three sample program items.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents data from the focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews.

5.1. Presentation and Analysis of Data from Focus Group Discussions

FGD A

Demographic Information

These are residents of Bishoftu and its surroundings. They are currently studying Business and Accounting at Rift Valley University Bishoftu Branch. The group consisted of four students, two male and two females. They are between the age of 19 and 21. Three of them are bi-lingual, Afan Oromoo being a mother tongue with Amharic a second language. One mono-lingual student, Amharic being her mother tongue with a proficiency in hearing Afan Oromoo and little speaking ability. They are given numbers during the discussion. Hence No.1 is Alemshet Mame, Male, age 21. No. 2 is Tolosa Gemechu, male, age 22. No. 3 is Gizewerk Berhanu, female, age, 19. No.4 is Kidist Berhanu, female, age 20.

On Program Item about Rape

When asked to express what they think why the girl was made pretty in the drama:

No 1 says "I don't find her pretty. But the young man in the film thinks so. So he was very eager to ...have...sex with her."

No 2 says "It is to attract the man. It is mandatory for film that the girl be pretty."

No 3 says "The girl is pretty and her dressing is seductive. But even if she is not attractive the message could still be made. It is the intention of the man that determines. Even most rape is done to less pretty women,"

No 4 says "I don't think it is her attractiveness or dressing. Even if she was not so the film could have been made. It does not send a message that an unattractive girl will not meet such problems."

Here the two respondents' expression demonstrates their linking of the fact of rape to the beauty of the young woman. The other two asserted that the girl would still be raped even if she was not pretty. The presentation of a pretty young woman as a victim of rape was consciously negotiated with by the female participants while it was easily accepted by the male participants. The female participants are seen negotiating with the structure of the message i.e., while accepting it they still added their own version of meaning on it too. I think Morley's (1999: 86) observation that "the topic of rape as relatively distant or 'abstract' in relation to particular groups' own experience" has a bearing with how the females and males of the FGD members interpreted the message.

When asked to discuss in what way woman in the drama ended up being raped and what the program wants to say in that way we get the theme of unwise behavior on the part of the young woman running common in all comments of the focus group members. Also we see another theme, that of trust and its breach by the female participants particularly. For instance No 3 says:

"What became a cause is her entering bed room. And her dressing... she is bare. She aroused him by showing her bare body parts. This arouses the man."

In the discussion why the accused was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment while the law prescribes from 5-15 years of imprisonment they say the following;

No1: "7 years imprisonment is without his fault! These are friends. Rape is when someone that forces in the forest her ...but if this was rape the judge would have given him the full 15 years.... But this is not rape."

No 2: "Personal opinion and the law may not go together. They are ... both friends. They like one another. But the law forbids sex without her will. So the law is applied. Had I been the judge I would have set the man free. After the incident they may marry... you know... Why should the law... interfere ..."

No 3: "If rape is punishable from 5-15 years my question is why did the Judge reduce it? Whether it is done in the forest by force or in bedroom rape is rape. So the sentence is short. What is the reason for reducing penalty? Is it because she seduced him? If so the Judge should have said so.

I mean... I am angry she entered bedroom. They have been kissing ... and also touching. He will get aroused sexually. It is clear. Had the law not made 5 years the minimum I would have considered 2 as enough. If I were the judge I would give him only two years."

No 4: "I think the Judge gave him 5 years taking into consideration her involvement in seducing him to consideration. And 5 years is... as a lesson for the man... enough."

We see here basically two types of reactions to the message of the nature and consequence of the crime of rape as shown in the program item. The first one rejects the attribution of a legal meaning of rape to the act represented in the film. This is seen by the reaction of FDG number 1 and 2. They say the man should have been set free. The other negotiates with the message of the visual text by accepting the meaning given to the act as rape but remaining reluctant or unable to attribute total responsibility on the young man. Members No. 3 and 4 thus mistakenly invoke the apparently reduced sentence by the Judge as induced by the behavior of the victim as a contributing factor to the crime.

To the question "Do you think it would make a difference had a female Judge presided over the case?" all FGD members answered in clear-cut negatives.

I think this goes in line with what Law and Popular Culture scholars hold. For example Susan Bandes (2007: 626) holds:

"The popular understanding of the judicial role constitutes a literal reading of the aphorism 'of the rule of law. In the popular imagination the upright judge is not a person with characteristics and values, but simply a placeholder for the rule of law."

Members of the FGD were divided in to two on the issue of whether the act of young man constitutes a crime of rape. But here we see all members of the FGD express

a belief that there would not be a difference among judges on the amount of the penalty imposed least on whether the act is punishable as crime. We can gauge the strength of the popular imagination of the law and the judge as impartial arbiters of conflicts.

On Program Item about Bigamy

In the discussion all the members of the focus group agreed that bigamy impoverishes and exposes to diseases. For instance No. 4 says "There is no question about this. I agree with what they said. It impoverishes and brings disease, its bad very bad."

We can observe a preferred reading by all members of FGD of bigamy as an act that impoverishes and potentially expose people to diseases, meaning the message is decoded according to the encoding of the item.

Asked about the content of the Judge's decision and their feelings about it:

No1 says "The Judge saw all the evidences first and dissolved the second marriage. He says it is culture but against the law. I think this culture is ...it exists in our locality in the country side ...but it is harmful."

No 2 says "The law does not allow second marriage. It is a cultural practice but according to me I don't support it. There is even a problem of disease. We have seen this is one of the first wife's fears."

No 3 says "I understand from the decision that bigamy is crime and law is above some cultures"

No 4 says "Though this is tradition bigamy is crime. The tradition is about some section of society but law applies to all."

We see a preferred reading by all member of the group of the message that bigamy is a practice that is not worth preserving and hence legally deserving of dissolution. The group members have no doubt that the tradition of bigamy

This question was forwarded to the FGD members: While the performance of the second marriage was not denied the Judge still called upon witnesses on this very issue and yet dissolved it anyway. Why?"

To this three FGD members said they did not know and one member i.e., No. 3 said "maybe he was mistaken?" This shows that legal arguments are not grasped well by all of the participants.

On Program Item about Misrepresentation and Wrong Advertisement

They were asked how the program showed the students' attempt to challenge the perpetrators in relation to other government organs;

No 1 says "The students are in a very deep problem. If they keep quite they know the problem will continue. But with the help of the police and the court they challenged the criminals."

No 2 says "The dedication of the students is a lesson for everybody. Also the cooperation of the teacher should also be credited."

No 3 says "I see the government roll is low. Had there been controller this would not have happened. The advertisement is aired openly so why did not they control it?"

No 4 says "Even the last act of suing is an act done for the sake of doing. Had the students kept quiet I think the government would have also kept quiet. We cannot take this as a support or involvement.

Here we observe acceptance of the message of the criminals made accountable before the law by the male participants of the FGD while the females refuse to focus on what is presented and question the role of the government. They negotiate with the message and take it show case of failure on the part of the government organ's control.

When asked to reflect on the punishment the Judge gave they said in very similar words that they consider the punishments to be very small. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No.4:

“When we were enrolling in this institution we made a very extensive query from those who graduated earlier, from relatives, teachers... and many others. We used to get confusing information and it was very troubling for us and our family to decide. But take this in a big city like Addis Ababa. Bad people can play with your life. And to punish them with few thousands birr ...what is it? Someone made a jock of the lives of thousands of students call it a generation and is punished only for two years? What is it? ”

Asked as to whether the student(s) get justice they FGD member 1,3& 4 answered that the students did not get full justice because the College owner was not made to give it back. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No. 4.

No. 4 says “He did not get justice. He could have hospitalized his mother with the money or used it for registering in other places. What about his time and the toil?... all ...is lost.. But even if he gets his money back he can’t get his time back. It is such a demoralizing thing...”

But FGD member No. 2 asserted otherwise.

No. 2 says “This seems to me a criminal case. The students may seek their own justice based on this decision by instituting a civil case. So we can’t say they did not get justice.”

Here we see a negotiated reading of the meaning of message presented by the program as justice achieved by the court. They agree that the punishment of the perpetrators is justice but see it as justice not fully achieved. This is, we learn from their explanation, caused by the structure of the story which made the final confrontation between the student (protagonist) and the College owner over the reimbursement of the fees paid which the owner rejected.

To the question “What are the objections of the defense lawyer and why did the Judge reject it?” all FGD members said it was about the power of the court but “did not grasp the detail.”

FGD B

Demographic Information

These are people living in Akaki /Kality sub-city. They are factory workers. Three of them are men and the remaining two women. They are all between the age of 50 and 60. Their educational background is minimal reading and writing for the female and one male. The remaining two men are 6th grade and below. They are given numbers during the discussion. Hence No. 1 is AtoFkadu ,Male, age 55, 6th grade. No. 2 is AtoGugsu, male, age 57, 4th grade. No. 3 is AtoAdmasu, male, age, 60. No.4 is W/roAbebech, female, age 50. No.5 is W/roMenbere, female, age 50.

On Program Item about Rape

Asked why the woman in the film is beautiful:

No 1 says "I don't find being pretty as one exposing for rape. It is the inner inclination.

Even if she attracts the attention of men ...we have seen many...it is her behavior that exposes one to such things. As we saw from the film they both have the attraction already. If any woman does so it will happen to her."

No 2 says "There are many pretty women that make themselves respected by respecting themselves. Whether she is pretty or not unless she prepares the situation for it these things cannot happen."

No 3 says "We cannot say it is her prettiness that led to the act while she follows a man into a bedroom. It is the character and discipline of the woman rather than her prettiness or the opposite that determines."

No 4 says "Of course she is pretty. But not only the pressure from the man did make the thing happen. I notice the weakness in her behavior that exposed her to it. Even if she is not pretty it will happen to such kinds of woman."

No 5 says "No, it is not her beauty. Her resistance continually waned I think this is what the story says."

As can be seen all members of the discussion group accept the presentation of beauty as a point of attraction resulted in undesired consequences. But they maintain that this happened to any woman with a given character. The ethical standards by which they normatively weigh acts of the characters identifies the young woman as loose in character. From this they hold that it is her loose character that exposed her to the rape. We see here the introduction of a theme that is not anticipated till now.

They all described the situations in which the act of rape was committed as:

- No 1 "I think the main reason for the rape was she says ok for all his demands. The other main thing is she got in to class. Then it happened."
- No 2 "They were in a bedroom and embracing and kissing one another. She even took of some of her dresses. So what do you expect to happen? "
- No 3 "The whole situation was leading to that act. Even though they have made words for not doing it the situations were all leading towards that direction."
- No 4 "It is her looseness that is the cause for the rape. It was short time since they met but she was too fast for things like getting in to bedroom ..."
- No 5 "She was already in love. If she wanted talk can't she do it outside? She has no strength and even her strength continued to wane up till she was carried over to bed by him."

We see that the participants used normative theme of looseness as manifested by the entering in the bed room of the young woman. But there was no intention on the part of the dramatic writing to portray the young woman as ill mannered. In addition to this her act of going in to a bed room was not considered by the Court as an improper act what so ever. As Croteau D. and Hoynes W. (2003:269) writes:

"Audience may not know the implicit references, they may draw on a different interpretive framework, or they may focus on different components of the message than the producer had planned. Audiences, then, may not construct the meaning intended by the producer, nor do all audiences' members construct the same meaning from the same media text."

Members of the FGD reacted to the decision of the Judge to sentence the young man for 7 years of imprisonment as follows.

- No 1 "The Judge sentenced him 7 years because she willingly got as far as getting into bed. Had the man forced her into things starting from the beginning the Judge would have sentenced him for fifteen years. I think it is not light sentence, it is enough."
- No 2 "It is too much. It is also dangerous. This teaches bad women to hurt men by the same technique. A woman gets into bed with a man and then after everything is completed she will cry 'he raped me!'. What can you do? I do not mean he did not use force but was it rape?"
- No 3 "I generally think the sentence is a bit high. They seem to have done it together. But at the last minute she hesitated ...and then he pressured her...and she refused... and then he used force may be. So it looks high punishment. But to make him learn to restrain himself from such things a lower punishment was better"
- No 4 "It is because of mitigating circumstances like the man was his first time to commit crime and also that she has got on the bed on her own will. The Judge took these things in to consideration... and the Prosecutor was not pushing for harsh punishment. So the judge took the average. I think that is why. Had it been as in earlier times no one would sue the man. But now we hear the law says even a wife cannot be forced if she does not like..."
- No 5 "I think the Judge has not fully applied the law. Even though she follows the man in to the room as long as he used force against her will he should have been punished fifteen years. It is rape. The judge has considered the man has no crime before that. But these kinds of loose judgments make way for other crimes. The law has to be applied with full force."

We observe here two types of reactions to the message of the nature and consequence of the crime of rape. Four of the five members of discussion group seem to

agree to the attribution of a legal concept of rape to the act represented in the film but one openly questioned if the young woman was raped. He did not want to accept it.

To the question “Do you think it would make a difference had a female Judge presided over the case?”

FGD No. 1, 2, 3, & 4 said in similar words that the Judge is there to apply the law and that it would not make any difference if the Judge was female. FGD No. 5 says “I think... there might be some difference. But it won’t be that much.” This shows the belief of the discussion group members that the individual characters of Judges applying the law have minimal bearings.

On Program Item about Bigamy

Members agreed in the strongest of words with the drama that bigamy impoverishes and exposes to diseases and impoverishment. For instance No 5 says “I think this type of old practice exposes people to diseases and also poverty. Its against God’s promise. I agree with the first wife about her being exposed to poverty and also her fear of disease” ”

The structured meaning in the story is preferred by the group members. The message encoded that bigamy as an act that impoverishes and potentially exposes people to diseases is decoded is decoded preferably by all members of the group.

Asked about the content of the Judge’s decision

No1 says “Of course the Judge has seen the whole situation. But I think the second wife is damaged by the fault of the man. The Judge did not say anything for her and she is a loser...”

No 2 says “The judge’s decision is a bit narrow. She lived as wife for one year not as a servant. She is now pregnant. The Judge should have said something about her rights.”

No 3 says “There are points I agree with the Judge’s decision and also some points that I do not agree with the decision. What I agree about is the dissolution of the

second marriage. But I have seen that the Judge has left the second wife on the open field. I see this as a shortage.”

No 4 says “The law does not support bad traditions. Marrying more than one wife is not good for any one. One man is for one woman. It is even in our Bible. So I think it is a fair judgment. ”

No 5 says “The law is clear. It is also good. Had the law not forbidden more than one marriage men are not restrained by themselves. The decision of perfect”

We see a preferred reading by all member of the group of the message that bigamy is a practice that is not worth preserving and hence legally deserving of disallowance.

This question was forwarded to the FGD members: “While the performance of the second marriage was not denied the Judge still called upon witnesses on this very issue and yet dissolved it anyway. Why?”

To this three FGD members said they do not know. Two members i.e., No. 1 & 2 said “A Judge should not simply accept what others tell him.” This shows that there is a lesser understanding of legal arguments and reasoning.

On Program Item about Misrepresentation And Wrong Advertisement

To the question “How do you see students attempt to challenge the perpetrators in relation to other government organs?”

No1 says “I appreciate the students. They made the case come to the court. But as to other government organs where are they shown?

No 2 says “I think there is corruption in the crime. Why didn’t the Ministry of Education follow the situation? The advertisement is done every day in public. The College taught in public. Who is given the power to follow this? Our sons are learning in them. This is very questionable. I

No 3 says “I think the role of the government organs in the suit was not shown. Also there is no control. We always hear about these things on radio too.”

No 4 says "We can see that there is no government control on private colleges. Even this case is the result of the students' own effort. Had there been good government control it does not happen in the first place.

No 5 says "We only saw the efforts of the students. The criminals were charged due to the efforts of the students. Had they not done that the problem will continue for long."

When asked to reflect on the punishment the Judge gave they expressed the littleness of the punishment in very similar words. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No.4:

No. 4 says "The punishment for the College is trifling. But it is the main criminal. The children of the poor are exploited by the organized and cooperative work of criminals. No one suspects the College on such grave crimes because the media disseminates misleading information. Media is government body advertisement is government body. So such organized crimes should be punished seriously."

Asked as to whether the students get /achieve justice they all answered in the negative giving a similar reason. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No. 5.

No 5 says "When we follow the story the student asked the College owner to give him back the money for the education. But the man refused to give him. So when we see the Court part we were expecting the man to give the student his money and interest also. It makes him happy to see that arrogant College owner imprisoned but justice would be fulfilled if the student got back the money."

To the question "What are the objections of the defense lawyer and why did the Judge reject it?"

No. 1 says "It was about the court having no power but I don't grasp the rest."

No. 2 says “It is about the prosecutor that does not have power. But I don’t know why the Judge rejected it or why the defense lawyer raised it in the first place.”

The rest of the FGD members said they did not understand it.

FGD C

Demographic Information

These are a group of Muslim females of mixed age and educational status. Two are College students, one is a 10th grade student. Their parents are traders. The other two have got up to 8 and 12 grades and are a merchant and an employee respectively. The two College students are 21 years of age, the high school student is 17 years of age. They live within one locality in Addis Ababa.

They are given numbers during the discussion. Hence No. 1 is W/roMarya age 38, trader, 8th grade. No. 2 is W/t Zekiya, age 21 College student, daughter of a merchant. No. 3 W/t Rukya age 21. College student, daughter of a merchant. No. 4 is Hikma age 17 high school student, daughter of a merchant. No. 5 is W/roHanan age 39, 12th grade, government employee.

On Program Item about Rape

When asked to express what they think why the girl was made pretty in the drama they have the following to say.

No. 1 says “She is beautiful because she has to attract him.”

No. 2 says “She is beautiful. He was talking only about her beauty. I don’t know why she was made to be beautiful. But now as she is beautiful it happened to her.”

No. 3 says “I don’t think beauty exposes women for rape. But now she is made beautiful to make people see the film. It is to attract men to the film.”

No. 2 interrupts “Yes it is to make viewers ‘she is beautiful and I would have done it too’ ”

No. 3 continues “The whole drama is based on beauty so she has to be beautiful. As the drama is about a beautiful woman she has to be beautiful”

No. 4 says “I think he was attracted to her beauty. And if she were not so he would have looked for another beautiful woman.”

No. 5 says “She is beautiful because the man talks about her beauty... he also tells her this repeatedly. So she has to be beautiful. But I think ... we know from TV and others that men rape whether the women is pretty or not. They don't see that. When it happens they are blind.”

Almost all with the exception of No. 4 we can see a negotiated reading of the look of the woman with the message of rape. They agree that the story is about a beautiful young woman. The College students also observed that this makes viewers interested to see the show. But as they maintain that it happens to less beautiful women they comment it feels good for audiences to see attractive persons on the screen.

When the age of the offender and the victim was made a point of discussion FGD members said the following.

No. 1 says “Young people are highly forced by the feeling. It is their age. It is very tempting for them. I think it is because of that. But it happens to all. But I as a mother would like my daughter to see this.”

No. 2 says “We young people are in a very strong pressure from internal nature of feeling as well as from the pressure of the opposite sex. It is a very dangerous age. It perfectly shows our situation.”

No. 3 says “I think the actors are young and the writer wanted it to be played by young person. This is because young people are easily forced in to this situation. But rape is also committed by older persons or on older women. I think the writer only wanted to make his film attractive lest it happens to all.”

No. 4 says “I think the writer wanted to make a message to the young girls ... and also men.”

No. 5 says “I think rape happens to young and old. But the story has to choose one for the time...either young or older people.”

They described the situations in which the act of rape was committed as:

No.1 “Not related to any kind of influence of alcohol as we did not see them drinking. But the situation clearly exposes for rape. She is there alone with him in a class room. But as I think of his intentions from the beginning the bedroom alone is not...you know the reason... but when we see the dressing is very short it exposes her body too much. Even if someone has no intention he will be induced. She looks like she wants sex.”

No.2 “I think the situation is exposing...I think she has taken off her clothes. They were touching...but also she took extremely good care of her beauty. Look at her shoes and her skirt. Even the man said ‘waw!’ ”

No.3 “They were alone in the room it is very tempting. Also her dress is very seductive. I think it exposed her. This kind of dresses is mostly exposing our sisters for such accidents”

No.4 “Her dress is not good. Also she should not get in to a class with him. I think this exposed her”

No.5 “Look at her dress. She is bare. When she sits her legs are seen way up to her...almost her hips. What is a man to think seeing this? I think this exposed her”

We see the theme of dressing style along with her entering in to the bed room runs common in all their remarks.

When asked by which side of the argument they were impressed all the FDG members said they were impressed more by the litigation of the Defense Lawyer.

They reacted to the sentencing of the men for 7 years like this:

No.1 “It is a bit too much. The female is more than 18 years old. They are friends. They are both young. He may not necessarily abandon her....I mean ... I mean look at

the situation in which they are...the Judge did not go high because she should not have entered ... that it is difficult for the man after she enters the room.”

No.2 “As far as the act is concerned we may even say it is lighter sentence as the act is punishable from 5 up to 15 years. I think ... the judge took consideration of the accused as seduced in to the act... lest the offence is very serious.”

No. 3 “I think the sentence is balanced. The psychological damage to women in such situations is painful. And the judge gave good decision. The man deserves it.”

No. 4 “I think the man does not love her. He only wanted to do that. As he was prepared to do it and did so I think the punishment is unduly small.”

No.5 “I think the punishment is harsh. He may have intention from the start but she also made it hard for him to control himself. Men and woman should not be in these kinds of situations in the first place. 5 years is long time.”

The message of the program item is to say forcing sex on the woman is rape even if it occurs within a relationship and in particular situations of mutual sexual arousal. All FGD members generally take the preferred reading of the message. But FDG members No. 2, 3 and 4 comment that the penalty imposed was small arguing, mistakenly though, that the particular situation in which the rape occurred was taken as an extenuating circumstance.

But FGD members No. 1 & 5 accepted, here too mistakenly though, the reduction of the penalty accepting the particular situation in which the rape occurred as extenuating circumstance. This shows a negotiated reading on the part of FGD members No 1 and No 5, who are much older than any of the rest of the three members of the group, of the message of the nature of crime of rape as structured in the program item. They seem to accept the verdict of guilt and yet hold the punishment to be unduly high because they believe the situation made him do the act-which basically contradicts the verdict.

To the question “Do you think it would make a difference had a female Judge presided over the case?”

All FGD members gave clear-cut answers in the negative. This shows the belief of the discussion group members that the individual characters of Judges applying the law have no bearings.

On Program Item about Bigamy

When FGD members were asked whether, according to the drama, marrying more than one wife impoverishes and exposes to diseases;

No.1 says “For me marrying more than one does not necessarily make poor. Even it is the rich who normally do it. About disease I hear many say that. But it is unfaithfulness that brings the disease. We have seen much. I know it creates many psychological and other burdens on the wives.... But to think it causes poverty and disease.... I do not believe so.”

No. 2 says “Marrying more than one wife has a heavy repercussion on everybody involved in it. Even if we cannot automatically say that it impoverishes it is certain that it creates shortage. As to the disease the first wife in the drama was seen to be afraid of, she has truth in that if they were not first checked for HIV for example it is dangerous....but you know it is a difficult subject ...”

No. 3 says “We cannot directly connect having two wives to disease and poverty. It is a prevailing thinking in our country to identify disease and poverty with many children and more than one wife. We cannot identify them as one and the same. But I do not think bigamy an easy matter that is simply allowed by culture...and religion...”

No. 4 says “I think having two wives exposes to poverty. It also increases the risk for diseases.”

No. 5 says “One may live with one wife and die of impoverishment and ...say...also of diseases. It is not proper to identify this type of marriage with poverty and disease. It is not...”

The message of bigamy as structured within the economic and personal effect of poverty and disease is seen rejected here by all members of the FGD members except one, i.e., No.4. who is the youngest of the remaining four.

When asked to reflect on the decision of the Judge;

No.1 says "I am not comfortable by the decision of the Judge. I felt hurt for the second wife. Law is law but there are cultures. If what he did is not personal act but rather a cultural one there should have been some way for them to negotiate or agree among themselves and settle the issue."

No. 2 says "What I understand from the Judge's decision is that it is not totally allowed to have more than one wife. But the mistake is after proving the existence of the second marriage why does he dissolve the second marriage. I felt sorry for the second wife. Is there not a way to settle the matter? I don't think it is right."

No. 3 says "I don't agree with the dissolution of the Judge to dissolve the second marriage. She is pregnant. Also I don't see the reason why the second marriage be dissolved just for the sake of the first marriage. Do you scarify one life just for another one? And also there is enough wealth to sustain the two marriages."

No. 4 says "The Judge has stated that when a second marriage is formed the first wife can ask for its dissolution and that in such case it will be dissolved. The law does not allow... bad practices. And I think the law cannot accommodate the culture because they are opposite. So the Judge is applying the law. If it is their culture and they come to court the law will apply."

No. 5 says "I think the judge's decision did not care for the second wife. We see the first wife smiling happily...what if he divorces her after this decision and then marry the second wife, cant he? But he did not want to divorce her. So now if he does not want to lose the second wife is he going to divorce her due to the Judge's decision? But divorce affects children badly..."

We can clearly see the structured meaning in the story in the drama that bigamy is a bad practice and hence deserving of dissolution in the court decision is rejected as

unaccommodative of ways of lives of those with different mores by all of the FGD members except one, i.e., No.4. who is the youngest of the remaining four. One may account the dominant reading of FDG member No.4 by one or another individual factor. Concerning individual readings that are divergent from that of the group David Morley (1999:269) writes:

“I can only reiterate my view that these are subsidiary differences... differences which are to be acknowledged, but which, I would argue, do not erase the patterns of consistency and similarity of perspectives within groups which I have attempted to establish at a more fundamental level.”

This question was forwarded to the FGD members: “While the performance of the second marriage was not denied the Judge still called upon witnesses on this very issue and yet dissolved it anyway. Why?”

To this FGD member No. 1& 5 said may be it is the law’s requirement. Member No. 2 and 3 said the same question was in their minds. No. 4 said she does not know why.

On Program Item about Misrepresentation and Wrong Advertisement

To the question “How do you see students attempt to challenge the perpetrators in relation to other government organs?”,

No. 1 says “I was thinking that the crime was committed on open air. So why does the government bodies do not follow up such activities. I was feeling sorry very much.”

No. 2 says “These are problems we hear about everywhere. We are confused by these things. It is better if the government declares whether a College has recognition or not. As I am myself a student in a private College I know the problems. The government is not helping much on the matter”

No. 3 says “I am myself a student at a private College. I heard from friends and relatives that the College has recognition. But I cannot be sure. If such things are done and we hear about it often it is such a loss of time and money. It is very alarming”

No. 4 says “Why does not the government body post their certificate of recognition on a visible place?”

No. 5 says “The dreams of many young people are devastated by this. If the government appropriately controls such things, this would not have happened. I saw the weakness of the Ministry of Education as well as the strength of the students.”

When asked to reflect on the punishment the Judge gave they expressed (except FGD member No 5 who said the imprisonment was enough) the littleness of the punishment in similar words. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No 2:

“I saw the crime was a simple crime. First I thought that such types of crimes were serious crimes but from the punishment I understood that it is a small or petty crime. It shows how less a place the government gave to educational service.”

Asked as to whether the student get /achieve justice they all answered reflecting a negotiated reading that the student did not get full justice because he did not get the money that he was denied by the College owner. For one we read here the reaction by focus group member No. 3.

No. 3 “I don’t know why he was smiling. He did not get the money back. But maybe he can now ask legally his money. If so he got justice.”

To the question “What are the objections of the defense lawyer and why did the Judge reject it?” FGD members 1& 5 said they did not get it while the rest members said it was about the power of the court but did not catch it well.

FGD D

Demographic Information

These are a group of persons with an educational level of first Degree and an income related with it. Their age ranges between 30-40. They are a mix of three men and three women. Some of them work in government institutions and others in private

institutions. They are given numbers during the discussion. Hence No. 1 is Yosef age 35, government employee. No.2 is Meseret age 39, runs a small business. No. 3 is Yohannes, age 40, employee at private bank. No 4 is Takele , age 40 employed at a local non-governmental organization. No.5 is Hiywet age 30 civil servant.

On Program Item about Rape

Asked why the woman in the film is made to appear beautiful:

No. 1 says “The young man in the drama refers to the Girl as very beautiful. I think that is why. But I think it is the same if she was not so. I think the director or the writer wanted the film to be...you know attractive too ...or may be...he thought women should be aware of their attractiveness?...”

No. 2 says “The woman in the drama is very beautiful. But I think she should not be made so because it may mislead people that it is her beauty is the reason for the rape.”

No. 3 says “I am not sure why the young woman has to be such a beauty really...”

No. 4 says “They selected a very pretty young woman and very stylish too. It is as if the man is to be excused or ...something like that. I do not know why films have to be made by extremely beautiful persons. The message is about rape and it can happen to every woman.”

No. 5 says “I think the young woman is stylish. But one may say she is beautiful and another may say she is not. And she gave extreme attention to her looks. I think she put herself in a trap she did not intend.”

From these expressions we can see that there is a negotiation going on between the audience and the text. The audience is aware that the formulation of rape as a criminal act does not necessitate either beauty or romance. The message of a young woman sexually violated by her friend as structured on association with beauty is negotiated with. Some of the audiences suggested that it had to do only with the intention of script

writer to make his film likable. It is the case of, according to Papke (2006:34) “the culture industry trying to incorporate popular attitudes and assumptions in its products.”

When the age of the offender and the victim was made a point of discussion FGD members said the following.

No. 1 says “They are presented as young but not as very young as such. I think even though rape is not a problem of only the young, you can pass your message through the youth also. I think their age will not make us disagree...”

No. 2 says “We all know rape is there with in all ages. Even most rapes happen by a forceful man on a weak woman or young girl. But here I am comfortable with their age.”

No. 3 says “I do not see any mention of their ages in the film. I do not think the film made any suggestion about their ages. But as I see them it perfectly suits the case. I got no problem with their ages.”

No. 4 says “We can say they are young. But they are not very young. So I think as a program that shows problems faced by the youth the choice of age is... normal... I mean as long as it is incorporative of other age groups also...”

No. 5 says “I think the age choice properly addresses the issues covered in the drama...like the naivety of the young woman... and the attitude of the young man.”

The age of the victim as well as the offender is seen by the focus group members to be not discounting of older age groups. It is also seen to be not too young to limit the message breadth in terms of age. So the preferred reading of the structured message of rape as encoded in the representation of the victim and the offender as young is observed here.

When asked to discuss in what way woman in the drama ended up being raped and focus group members used the terms ‘trust’ on the part of the woman in relation with

‘deception’ on that of the man while No 3 says ‘she let him deceive here’ which seems to be ‘she let him do it’.

In the discussion why the accused was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment while the law prescribes from 5-15 years of imprisonment?” they say the following;

No. 1 says “I think the punishment to be ok. It is proved by evidence that he had used force to make sex. But as the Judge can see it the situation of the commission of the crime is difficult... I mean she entered bed room and did all those things willingly and ...so I think the judge took that in consideration for him.”

No. 2 says “I think the punishment is generally lighter. Even though she has entered the room and took of her upper closes and may be even kissed him this cannot be an excuse to rape her.”

No. 3 says “My question in the first place is why do we say she is raped if she did everything just before sex with consent. Who says she did not want to do it? ... I mean like really, really did not want to do it? Just by struggling or crying and having bruises? What I say is how do we know...so I say we need very strong evidences otherwise it is difficult...it is also his life.”

No. 4 says “I do not have a problem with the punishment but I do not think that the fact of the young woman trusting the criminal and going to bedroom with him can be a reason for lessening the sentence. This is wrong. I think maybe the Judge reduced the sentence because of his age, education...and also that he did not do other crimes...these kinds of things...”

No. 5 says “I am not sure whether the punishment is small or big. But the man has raped. So... as a strong warning to everyone it should be higher. Now others may think lightly of rape. If it was ten years for example people will say ‘Oooooo... it is a very serious crime!’ you know...”

We can see here in how the attribution of the legal term rape to an act in the drama is accepted by some of the group members and rejected by the others. While No 1,

2, 4 & 5 seem to make the preferred reading of the act in the drama as rape, No 3 tends towards making an oppositional reading, i. e., towards rejecting it as an appropriate appraisal of the absence of consent on the part of the woman.

To the question “Do you think it would make a difference had a female Judge presided over the case?”:

No. 1 says “There may be some difference but it may not be such a big difference.”

No. 2 says “I do not expect a female Judge to be in favor of the victim. So I do not expect much different decision.”

No. 3 says “There may be some changes. Who knows?”

No. 4 says “There may be some difference but not because of her gender.”

No. 5 says “I don’t think a female Judge would give a different decision. I don’t expect a female Judge to do that.”

This relates to the conception of the role of the Judge in the administration of justice. No 1, 2, 3 and 4 asserted that there could be minor or consequential changes in the decision while only No 5 seriously doubted that.

On Program Item about Bigamy

Members were asked if, according to the drama, marrying more than one wife impoverishes and exposes to diseases. They said:

No. 1 “According to the drama yes. Also it is true that it can do so. The father gets it difficult to attend to the children. There will be nagging in the house...The man is expected to address issues of both houses ... it may be difficult to handle one house...you know...”

No. 2 “That is what I think. It does, does not it? ”

No. 3 “I think so. I think people have come to realize this. That is why the practice is being abandoned everywhere.”

No. 4 “According to the drama yes. But in reality also I think it exposes to such things. I hear some people say bigamy does not necessarily expose to poverty and disease. But they do not deny that it increases the potential which in any event may be realized...”

No. 5 “It is a bad practice. I do not think there is anyone who will seriously contest that.”

Here we can notice the preferred reading of the message by all members of the focus group. Member No. 1, 3 and 4 attempt to give reason why they associate bigamy with poverty and diseases while No. 2 and 5 seem to simply accept this message.

Asked about the content of the Judge’s decision;

No.1 says “The Judge is there to apply the law. What else can he do?”

No. 2 says “It is the right of the woman not to live with another wife of her husband. How can she? ”

No. 3 says “I think if the law says so it says so... what else is there to do?”

No. 4 says “I think the Judge had no option. If the law says so he will have to dissolve the second marriage. But what about the child of the pregnant wife? The first wife was smiling with victory as the Judge’s decision was being read. I mean...it was as if this will save her marriage...it is a bit naïve...”

No. 5 says “As a bad practice it should be discouraged.”

This question was forwarded to the FGD members: While the performance of the second marriage was not denied the Judge still called upon witnesses on this very issue and yet dissolved it anyway. Why?”

To this three FGD members said:

No. 1 “May be the law requires him to do so. I don’t know.

No. 3 “I think it has something to do with the child and question of property also in relation with the second wife... I am not sure...”

No. 4 “I think it is because he cannot dissolve what is non-existent. He must first get evidence of the performance of the marriage.”

No. 2 & 5 said they don't quite know for sure.

We see here members of the focus group were more reluctant to accept automatically the badness of bigamy as a cultural practice. They were also more on the defensive about the decision of the Judge to dissolve the marriage claiming the properness of the decision more on the law than the moral depravity of the act.

On Program Item about Misrepresentation and Wrong Advertisement

To the question “How do you see students attempt to challenge the perpetrators in relation to other government organs?”;

No. 1 says “Where is the government organ? Ministry of Education and...also the very institution that brought the prosecution...which is ...consumers' right protection? Where were they while the students were learning for two years? It begs a question. The program tells me that people are at their own risk when they choose a private learning institution ...”

No. 2 says “I do not see government participation. The advertisement was aired to the whole public. The College was doing its job in public. How come the government organs did not know of it?... don't you sense corruption there?...I don't know...”

No. 3 says “I think it is not only the government inaction that we see in the program but the general moral failure of the society. The radio station owner, the advertiser, the teacher himself, the College dean...and may be many others who are not mentioned openly...the program is telling us that everyone of us have contributed to the problem...”

No. 4 says “That may be right. But I suspect or see many implicated in the program. For example the College owner said he was expecting to get recognition. Why did not he get it? We hear there is a procedure by which Colleges start a given

program and in the meanwhile go through the process of acquiring the recognition. Why did those government organs deny him the recognition? May be they are corrupt and asking for too much. But the students alone..."

No. 5 says "The government is always slow. Its capacity is weak. It is a fact, right? It is happening everywhere...I think the program encourages citizens to fight for themselves."

The message from the program item is seen to be interpreted in various ways here. According to McQuail, (2005:73) 'receivers do not always follow the intended decoding, they "can read between the lines and even reverse the intended direction of the messages." This is also described as the excesses of meaning by many in the study of audience reception. Croteau and Hoynes (2003:269), also argue that:

"audiences may draw on a different interpretive framework, or they may focus on different components of the message than the producer had planned. Audiences, then, may not construct the meaning intended by the producer, nor do all audiences' members construct the same meaning from the same media text."

We see here that though legal texts are highly structured and closed with constricting interpretations, their application in the complex interaction of socio-economic reality forces a wide range of interpretation on them.

When asked to reflect on the punishment the Judge gave;

No. 1 says "It is small but what if you make the punishment higher and fail to protect people from being victimized? Will the punishment reinstate them?"

No. 2 says "It may be enough as a punishment on the criminals but what does it do to the victims and their families? In such situations protection should come first. Government negligence should not contribute to the agonies of the poor."

No. 3 says "It is a bit difficult for me to say the punishment is small or big. But whatever the punishment may be it is better in such situations to prevent such crimes from happening. Otherwise what good is for me if the government enriches its pocket high or low from the misery of the weak?"

No. 4 says "What should worry us is I think not only the level of punishment and degree of follow up but also the quality of education. Many are forced to pass through an education that is below standard due to this procedure whereby you start to enroll students and get the recognition in the meantime. I think it is dangerous. And only a handful few will get criminalized as a result of denial or delay of recognition."

No. 5 says "I cannot say exactly but I wish it were a bit higher. It would prevent it from happening..."

Asked as to whether the students get justice;

No. 1 says "...we cannot say they did not get justice. They got the College owner imprisoned. They got the other two fined. This is one justice. And maybe they can ask for their money after this. So I think I can say they are getting justice."

No. 2 says "We can say that they have got justice. They have disclosed the lies and cheatings of these people. As for the money I am sure they will get it by presenting this decision as evidence in court. I guess they can include even the other two for cooperating with the College in the misrepresentation."

No. 3 says "It would have been good if we saw the Judge say something about the students' rights to get their money. But it is clear that now it is easier for them to get it. I say they got justice."

No. 4 says "I think a Judge cannot say anything he wants. That is a place of giving decisions not lectures. If the students do not ask I think he cannot say. Can he? And the students can ask in a Civil suit. I think that is how it goes...our lawyer friends tell us."

No. 5 says "If they can get their money by using this decision I say they got justice."

Close encounter with those who know the law mentioned by one member and other opportunities to know about the working of the law seems to have informed these members understanding of the potential of the students to get their money back.

To the question “What are the objections of the defense lawyer and why did the Judge reject it?” FGD members No. 1, 2& 5 said it was about the power of the court and that the court has power to decide on those matters.

No. 3 says “It was not only about the power of the court but also about the power of the prosecutor to sue them. The Judge said, I think, that it was better for the accused themselves...something like that...I think...”

No. 4 says “The defense lawyer argued that a criminal court should not see their case because his clients did not do any crime. The prosecutor said that their punishment is money does not mean that it is not crime...I think. The Judge made the argument of the prosecutor as his basis to reject it. I guess it is like this.”

Here we observe a more clear understanding of the points of the arguments as forwarded by the defense lawyer and ruled over by the Judge.

Members were asked if they find the program item entertaining. They all replied in negatively in more or less the same words.

No. 4 says “It leaves you sad at the situations on the ground. It shows the incompetence and lack of accountability on the ground and people being victimized by it. But as to entertainment ...what is entertainment?... if it is happiness or laughter I am not entertained but if you ask we enjoyed watching it I say yes...you know....”

We observe that the message of program item on bigamy presenting it as a bad cultural practice that should be discouraged and prohibited by law was read preferably by focus groups A, B and D while the same was rejected by all (except one) members of the focus group C. This difference in the readings of the message can be explained in line with the religious orientations of the focus groups in that while only focus group C was constituted by Muslim members of society while all the other focus group were constituted by Christian members of the society.

The reaction of the members of focus group C, however does not seem to imply that they are supportive of the practice of bigamy or are personally approving of it. From their reactions on the matter as 'a complex' and 'a difficult subject to deal with' we can learn that it is as much to the closure of meaning on bigamy as morally and legally wrong that they make an oppositional reading of as to its presentation on mass media. Also in-depth interview with one member of this focus group reveals that the program item is seen as one potential incident of the downgrading and relegation of some cultural heritage by the application of the law that promotes a different value.

We have observed that members of all focus group exhibited a relatively correct understanding of the main issues of the different program items. They are fairly capable of comprehending the legal issue raised in the court. This is largely because as Papke (2007: 1230) writes on law as popular culture the works have "...in general,...a clear narrative direction and provide a sense of closure." But we can observe variation on the levels of grasp on particular legal arguments raised by litigating parties and also the Judge's rulings.

This variation appears to go generally in line with the educational state of members. We can trace this from answers given by members of focus group A, B and C, which are more or less similar, to question that probe their levels of grasp of legal arguments and reasoning. Their answers generally reveal that they did not know why the Judge had to hear evidence about the performance of the second marriage just to dissolve it. They also could not identify properly what the legal arguments raised by the advocate and the rulings the Judge made in program item dealing with false advertisement. But on both matters most members of focus group D came up with better and more detailed reflections on the Judge's ruling on both program items and also on the legal arguments of the advocate program item dealing with false advertisement.

The most divergent of all meaning makings was the one exhibited by this focus group relating the program item about misrepresentation and wrong advertisement. Failure of government organs in controlling business organizations was of course identified as one of the messages of the program. But members of FGD D go further and put in to question the program item's aim of presenting the setting in motion of the

criminal justice system in general. They pointed at the central position of government institutions in the making of the offence and generally despaired at the meaning and effectiveness of the legal punishments as providing justice. They purport to get the message that citizens are on their own in such matters.

Williams (2003 :109) argues that "Audience ability to interpret media message is determined by a range of individual, social, cultural factors." The largely divergent interpretation that borders oppositional of the administration of criminal justice is seen to be due to the close encounters and more intimate knowledge of the incapacity and inefficiency of government organs.

There is also variation in the conception of the position the Judge holds as an interpreter or applier of the law. All members of the FGD A, B (with one member having a different position), and C (with one member having a different position) express a strong view of the Judge as a mere applier of the law. They held that a different Judge will not come up with a decision different from what they saw given in the program item presented. Members of the focus group D, however expressed a reverse view. Only one member of this focus group D held a strong view of the Judge as a mere applier of the law while the rest of the members generally expressed expectations of variations of some sort in the decisions in any event of change in the person of the Judge. One member expressed a strong view in the individual personality of the Judge as determining the outcome of the case to a significant level.

Gender cross cutting along all the focus groups is seen to exhibit a pattern in one of the three program items presented to the focus groups. From the reactions on the program item about rape we find four males openly rejecting the attribution and application of the legal concept of rape to the action of the accused while none of the female participants did so. While only one male persistently and strongly agreed to the penalization of the accused hence exhibiting a preferred reading of the message criminalizing the act all female participants did so.

All female members of all the four focus groups expressed a preferred reading of the message about rape only negotiating on the level of punishment. All the views as to

the smallness of the punishments were given by women participants from across the focus groups. Variations in the women participants' views relates to the degree of punishment. Concerning rape Stenson and Sullivan (2001:190) hold that "Unlike the men, young women are aware of their potential victim status, particularly their vulnerability to male violence and so they welcomed coverage of such crimes." From the discussion held among various focus groups we observe this keen awareness to have prompted the preferred reading of reception of message rather by all the female members in contrast to the males. Rightly does Williams (2003:197) point out to gender as a "significant social variable that along with age and ethnicity in shaping the way in which people decode media messages."

Though FGD A B and D showed a preferred reading of the message of bigamy as a harmful cultural practice their acceptance of the structuring of the message vary in terms of degree of conviction and reason given. FGD B expressed a high degree of conviction on the depravity of bigamy and quoted religious authority to justify the Judge's decision. On the contrary FGD D were more on the defensive in terms of accepting the Judge's decision because they said that the Judge had no option and that he has to follow the law. On the other side FGD A did not exhibit any excess of conviction on the matter or lack of it either. They simply upheld the Judge's decision.

5.2. Presentation and Analysis of Data from In-depth Interviews.

Demographic Information

Of the ninety in-depth interviewees twelve are male and seven of them are female. In terms of age six of them are within their twenties, six of them in their thirties, four of them in their forties and two of them in their fifties and one above sixty. Almost all of the interviewees watch the program 'Chilot' with their families except Shtaye and Sosina who watched at the neighbors and at work place respectively. The students and also the civil servants and teachers who have and live with families watch it in that manner. Most of them said that there usually arises a dispute over which program to watch because someone mostly from among the youth would want to watch either a serial film or a sport show but more often than not 'Chilot' is seen after a brief negotiated settlement.

5.2.1. Identifying 'Chilot' program

The Amharic word 'Chilot' is a revealing name chosen by the producers as to the genre of the program with in which it falls, i.e., legal drama, court show or one of the likes basically dealing with the law. Even so it was the first question that is posed to every in depth interviewee. They more or less gave similar answers which shows that there is an understanding of what the program is all about. SosinaRedae who is 30, TesfayeHabtamneh who is 29, TolaOlana who is 22 MihretuTekle who is 27, W/roTafesYehuala, Genet Abera who is 50 and TakeleYismaw who is 40 all shared their understanding of the nature of 'Chilot' program in this way;

Sosina "For me 'Chilot' program is one that teaches us about the law, the courts and what you should do when you go to courts or when you are faced with a legal problem in an entertaining way. It entertains me to see when people who innocently are injured or taken advantage of come to a realization that there is law for everything and go there and ensure in public that their rights are respected. 'Chilot' does this always."

Tesfaye "Chilot is a program from which, by the time it is finished, you will have gained something concrete about the law. It is about how the law comes into someone's life."

Tola: "The Program is about law. As law is very important thing it is presented to the public as a reality. We may not understand it fully. We may also disagree sometimes. But it is presented as it is."

Mihretu: "Chilot' is for me where you get a very concrete point. Whether the issue is big or not is a different matter. But I get from the Judge's decision something concrete. It is not like talking long hours and no concrete point."

W/roTafes: "'Chilot' is a law program but also a social life program. All the cases arise from the things we do every day. It is not like other dramas of social life alone. It does not end by trivial but teaches big lesson and big information. It taught us many things."

Genet: "For me the Program gives very important lessons. About law and other things. The lessons given help individuals know about things of the court and the law. It also informs things to the government also sometimes."

Takele: "The program is one that is set on teaching about law in entertaining manner. I do not basically find it aiming at entertaining. I find the entertaining merely as a means "

From many of participants in the in-depth interview audiences expressed their confidence in the knowledge of the producers. This has very much to do with the reception pattern of the program generally as Rivers and Schramm (1997:12) state that "[Audience] acceptance will depend largely on the apparent validity of the message and on his judgment of the sender's credibility or prestige."

5.2.2. Figure of Authority

Sherif in (Griffin 2006) claims "highly credible speaker can stretch the hearer's latitude of acceptance". Interviewees that are asked about which figure they take as authoritative said the Judge with a different expressions and reasoning. TakeleYismaw aged 40, AlemayehuErko aged 40, HikkaGeleta aged 28, Sofyaaged 38, ShtayeMulugojam aged 30, TadesseChala aged 31, and SosinaRedae aged 30, AtoBayeBiyazin aged 73 and MehamedYassin who is 26 said the following.

Takele: "In class rooms the teacher decides what is right and wrong on the subject. In courtrooms the teacher is the one that decides. The opposing sides present their cases but the judge decides which one is right. Even if he may be wrong he is correct for that time."

Sosina: "I like to see the Judge being seated high and asking both sides questions. Everybody obeys him. ...Then he says he has given the decision and reads it. It gives me pleasure to see wrong doers punished. I do not doubt his decision let alone reject it.... What the Judge says is what the law says."

Hikka: "The Judge is the authority. But he decides by the law only. Sometimes you like the other side's idea and presentation. But if the law does not say so he loses."

Marya: “The Judge is the one that finally gives the decision. He is the judge you know... and knows the law. But some of the decisions are you know ... are difficult to accept.”

Alemayehu: “I feel happy when I hear different sides. I get swayed to one side and then to the other until the Judge gives decision. But when the Judge says at last you see your mistakes. What the Judge says is the same with what the law says... unless there is an issue of corruption you know... ”

Shitaye: “The Judge is the final authority. Everything he says has meaning. If somebody is going out of his line the Judge hits his hammer and rebukes him. He does not say anything without purpose. Everything he does is a lesson let alone the decision. He wears and sits differently because it is the sign of justice he gives.”

Tadese: “Of course the ultimate power must be with the Judge not really the law. But all the time I see the program the Public Prosecutor wins cases. So indirectly he is the ultimate power. Or the sponsoring agent wins you know... this may seem only in dramas but in reality the case is so. But in any way you see it...law is the means of the government. That is what I think...whether the Judge sits high or low or wears black or whatever...”

AtoBaye: “No one can be authoritative than the Judge. He represents the law. He is the one below the Creator on earth. ”

Mehamed: “Well the Judge is the highest one. But there are decisions I find difficulty to agree with. Yes. I have seen.”

5.2.3. Representation of the Law and Legal Practice

From what is seen on the screen people get a definitive view of the judicial process either in a way that may mislead them or that informs them in a significant way. It is increasingly being warned against by those who study Law as popular culture that the majority of media products of law and courts is so far from the reality that it is making a misleading impact upon the public. “This clearly concerns” asserts

Gies(2005:165) “the role of the media as a source of people’s familiarity with and knowledge of the law, a socio-legal tradition which mostly tends to attribute lay audiences’ poor grasp of the law to distorted media representations.” In in-depth interview TadesseChala who is 31, MaryaAbdulahi who is 38, SosinaRedae who is 30, MestawetDiriba who is 40, HasnaMenji who is 23 TakeleYismaw aged 40 and HikkaGeleta who is 28 said the following.

Tadesse: “It represents the law and its application in a limited and repeated way. It shows the Public Prosecutor always winning and the defendants always losing. ...And a government side does not lose. It is sometimes boring.”

Marya: “It is good I mean it shows how the courts work. Also how people get in to trouble and are affected by it. I think the law is shown correctly because it is broadcasted in government media.”

Sosina: “Before I used to be very much afraid of the Court and anything that has something to do with the law. I use to refuse to go to courts to be witness even for simple family matters.”

Hasna: “Except for the fastness of the pace of the decision the law and the process of reaching the decision are represented correctly. ”

Mestawet: “I have been to courts in many occasions. At one time in my life court nearly became my home. Law is interesting for me. I happened to encounter many Advocates. But you do not increase your knowledge from them. They confuse you. They basically live on that. I watch ‘Chilot’ and I give value for every additional knowledge I get from them. ”

Takele: “I do not find the basis on which they chose a particular subject for presentation. There seems to be a repetition in it. I think mostly they present the law in a real way because you see... otherwise it would be confusing to the people. The government will not allow that otherwise.”

Hikka: “I have confidence in their presentation of the law. This is because I have a brother who is a policeman himself at the Federal Police. He says the criminal

cases that are shown to the public is like the words of the law and in most of the steps they follow the real court steps. But the appointment time they give is very false. They say come tomorrow, come in the afternoon and then it is decided. They even sometime say take a seat till I decide it! Why? If they are lawyers they know the appointment the courts give. At least in the drama they should show that. This part it does not suit me.”

From what we see above and some other similar answers by interviewees the representation of the law and the process of reaching of the decision is not described as misleading or inefficient legally but rather as one that fails as a media organ a better and wider impact. For some it is not a true representation of the law as performed but rather a correct representation when applied by the Judge.

5.2.4. Representation of Parties to the Cases and their Advocates

Representation of parties in ‘Chilot’ relates both in the level of focus manifested by the repetitive production and presentation of a given type of cases and parties and on the manner of presentation of parties to a suit. For example media obsession of crime has been criticized for apparently making law, in the minds of many a short hand to criminal law. This is, Gies (2005:165) writes:

“partly because ... law in media culture tends to be heavily focused on fictional genres (such as movies, popular literature and television series) which for reasons of dramatic impact are more geared to crime and criminal procedure. Crime, like no other subject, is capable of providing a narrative of passion, transgression and suspense delivering audience catharsis while also generating the primetime viewing ratings necessary to secure media advertising revenues.

Also with a view to detect whether certain parties (eg. Criminals, females, persons with disabilities) to a litigation are presented in any typical manner signifying meaning in depth interview was conducted. Reflections of TolaOlanawho is 22, MirutsBeyene who is 30, HailuMamo who is 30 , MehamedYassin who is 26, TadeseChala who is 31 and SibaneBeshah who is 40 is presented herein bellow.

Tola: “Those who commit crimes are shown punished. What matters is the information people get from it. I think it focuses on crimes that are related to culture ...”

Miruts: "I don't know whether crime or civil case is given much attention. But they do not give attention to crimes like terrorism, like extremism. "

Mehamed: "The accused is will be convicted. Everybody in our home knows that. I think may be it is because he is already seen in the drama making the fault. It is like what do you call (he says in Amharic 'yetebelaikub new')."

Haylu: "The criminals are always weak. They are arrogant in the drama but they turn to water in court. They admit their crime or when they are asked to defend themselves they say I do not have witness. Why are they made so?"

Sbane: "I think even though I did not see all I have seen most and I think maybe they incline on crime? And the accused is usually the loser. Why is it? Can't they teach us by releasing him also? I see this thing."

Tadese: "We see always bad people in the drama being punished by the law. Their lawyers do not help them much. The Program is educative. ...but it can educate without losing ... reality. Can't it?"

5.2.5. Representation of Lawyers

Concerning representation of advocates MestawetDiriba aged 40, Genet Abera aged 50, MehamedYassin aged 26, AtoBayeBiyazin aged 73 and TolaOlana aged 22 said the following.

Mestawet: "I had a bad experience with advocates. They are usually late on you, you may go through half of the case alone. They do not usually come prepared. All I have seen is the hustle they give till you pay the next round of payment. This is the real relationship between a client and an advocate. But you know these things are not shown on 'Chilot'."

Genet: "We all know advocates behavior. What they want is money. But in the Program we do not see this thing. "

Mehamed: "The advocates are repetitively the same. It makes 'Chilot' artificial. The other thing is I see no Muslim lawyers there. Why is that? Not only this... there are very rare Muslim characters."

AtoBaye: "Advocates are very cruel persons everyone knows. But we do not see these characters on 'Chilot' program. But they don't carry these advocates' bags. I don't see them."

Tola: "I do not know any advocates. But I hear from people that they are greedy and try to bend the law. We do not see such things in the Program. They are all honest and try to make their clients free..."

5.2.6. Relevance

Audience responses to certain texts according to Morley (1986:190) will be affected by their initial reaction to the relevance or irrelevance of the text to them." MaryaAbdulahi aged 38, ShtayeMulugojam aged 30, MehamedYassin aged 26, TesfayeHabtamneh aged 29, MestawetDiriba aged 40, HikkaGeleta aged 28, Tadesse Chala aged 31 gave the following replies. Here we see the relevance of this remark in the reaction of some of the interviewees.

Marya: "I find it relevant because it teaches many things that we do not know before. I want my children not to be faced with situations that are difficult for them...I want to tell them things that they should avoid and ...myself also."

Shtaye: "I am now working at our Kebele Social Court. I work as a court secretary and do other duties assigned to me. I aspire one day to be a Judge of our Kebele Social Court. For this I am now continuing my education. I love to view 'Chlot' program so much that I always go to my neighbor's house at three at night..."

Mehamed: "I do not directly find it to be much relevant for me. It is fun to see the dramas and later the judge making one of the two miserable. It is a very good program

you know better than many of the others but I don't give much attention about the law of you know..."

Tesfaye: "I find it very relevant for the decisions you make on various affairs. It is very relevant...it adds up to your knowledge of things..."

Mestawet: "I used to give little attention to such things earlier. But after what happened in my family life I become very sensitive. It helped me strengthen my thinking on some matters also.

Hikka "I know that law is a very important thing. I know this from my oldest brother. He always talks about such things and I understand from what he tells law changes your life for good or bad. But I watch 'Chilot' program because I love drama and theatre."

Tadese : " I do not find it particularly relevant for me. It is a Program for those who do not have a better access to the law and its application either from lack of education or... acquaintances you know...And also for those who believe the law is justice or the government media shows justice as it should be presented. Let others who want to fool themselves about the presence of justice in this country ...I see the whole Program as drama."

From the in depth interviews we can learn that 'Chilot' is held in high regard among the viewers. The program is sought after for its mix of dramatic scenes that take the attention of audiences with a definitive information as to the position of the law on the matter. The strict following of the legal procedure as practiced in real courts, though limiting its potential of wider influence as a social critic in the eyes of some viewers, has earned it a stature of authority and seriousness. This indicates that messages of the Program are likely to be interpreted in line with its encoding.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze audiences' interpretation of the messages and reception of 'Chilot' and what attitudes and frame of interpretations audiences bring to bear in watching and also what other factors influence audiences' receptions of the program. Qualitative data gathering techniques (content analysis, focused group discussion and in-depth interview) were employed to undertake the study. Using convenience and purposive sampling technique, a total of 34 study participants were selected for focus group discussions (FGD) and individual in-depth interviews.

The study began with a qualitative content analysis of the selected program items. Content analysis was not a very detailed one but was done to get necessary information about encoded message elements of the program items. The aim was to familiarize the researcher with the program items and help the researcher prepare for the next qualitative data collection step.

Individual interviews with the Program Manager and Production Manager were also conducted to understand clearly the nature of the stories and the legal issues designed to be addressed through them. Further interview with the production side was also conducted to gain a better understanding of how messages were encoded throughout the processes of media production.

Focus group discussions (FGD) were also employed to study audiences' meaning construction. A total of four focus groups were formed and utilized. In addition to this, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect information on how audiences interacted with the program. Some of the informants were recruited based on the activities and ideas they used to generate during the group discussions. This helped gain some data that the individual interviewees might not feel free to express while in a group.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the audiences were actively involved in making meanings from the program items presented to them. This was shown by the audiences' acceptance of some of the media messages or negotiating and modifying its meaning or even rejecting it. Not only was the audience observed to do this but also exhibited different ways of preferring, negotiating and rejecting messages.

The study also showed that there was predominantly a preferred reading of the messages from the program items. The presentation of conflicts and rights and obligations ensuing from it including the legal presentation and outcome were generally read preferably by the audience.

The study also showed that though messages were read preferably it did not mean that they were preferred in similar manners. The various groups shaped their preferred reading of messages according to the socio-cultural position they occupy. When one group made preferred a reading of a message based on or rather as a justification of previously held religious convictions, the other one was seen to do so merely by upholding the legal notions of right and wrong.

The study also showed that oppositional readings were observable more along with social factors either constituting or cross cutting the focus groups constructed than with individual tendency. Head-on oppositional readings of messages were encountered in the study by two social groups. One was as a focus group constituted by religious orientation and the other was a cross-cutting of the focus groups organized by the research-gender.

The preferred reading of messages of program items by most of the audience has shown that the message that is being formulated by the producer of 'Chilot' i.e., the encoder is similar with what the audience decodes.

Concerning the factors that contributed to the predominantly preferred reading of the messages the research showed that attitudes and frames of interpretation regarding the law had a large bearing thus determining the reception of the program by the audience.

Participants of in-depth interview identified the Program as an interesting mix of informing and 'entertaining' item that promises and virtually attains the two goals in brief time of transmission. Audience identification was known to be indicative of its expectations that shape its satisfaction. The fact that most have identified it as a source for legal knowledge and information is indicative of the type of reading of messages that ensues which is a preferred one and also the reception of the Program as a sight where in audience will encounter messages the active interpretation of which it will keep on entertaining him.

Most of in-depth interview participants and also instances of focus group meaning making encounters have shown that law and how it functions were truly represented in the program. Such convictions induced some audience members to take the program as class from which legal lessons were (to be) taken. The high esteem in which the Program is upheld in this regard can show (or even may be the result of) the conviction on the part of those who made oppositional readings to maintain that change of individual Judge would not result in a varied verdict.

Research showed that representation of parties, cases and their lawyers were taken to be not stereotypical or unduly focused of given subjects. The audience took the program to be a variety of issues enriching them in information and knowledge. This created an enthusiastic reception of the program which in turn maintained a high degree of desire and that of anticipation of the prospect of knowing new things.

The study has come to display that the program is more of educational. The majority of the respondents, regardless of social location, agree that they watch 'Chilot' program because of its educational value.

'Chilot' is considered to be relevant for decision making on some matters, informing oneself and family members. As the study portrayed, the participants paid attention to the message element which was more close, familiar and positive to their life reality. Most of the heated discussions in the focus groups also made inferences to lived experiences. The more audience found it relevant to the life experience the more they were able to interact with the message thus producing a myriad of readings. They

developed their structure of attention giving which was appropriate to their life experiences.

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Appendix – A

List of audiences respondent to in-depth interviews with their respective profiles.

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation
1	Alemayehu Erko	40	Male	civil servant
2	Baye Biyazin	73	Male	pensioner
3	Haylu Mamo	30	Male	unemployed
4	Hasna Menji	23	Female	student
5	Hikka Geleta	28	Male	unemployed
6	Marya Abdulahi	38	Female	trader
7	Mehamed Yassin	26	Male	collage student
8	Menbere Issayas	50	Female	house wife
9	Mestawet Diriba	40	Female	house wife
10	Mihretu Tekle	27	Male	collage student
11	Miruts Beyene	30	Male	taxi chauffeur
12	ShitayeMulugojam	30	Female	civil servant
13	Sibane Beshah	40	Male	civil cervant
14	Sosina Redae	30	Female	casher
15	Tadesse Chala	31	Male	attorney at law
16	Tafes Yehuala	55	Female	pensioner
17	Takele Yismaw	40	Male	teacher
18	Tesfaye Habtamneh	29	Male	mechanic
19	Tola Olana	22	Male	student

Appendix – B

List of respondent to interview from the production side with their respective profiles

Debebe H/ Gebriel	Program Manager
Endeshaw H/ Gebriel	Production Manager
Mikiyas Tesfaye	Editor
Tlahun Zewge	CastingManager
Behaylu Abayneh	Camera Operater

Appendix – C

List of participants in focus group interviews with their respective profiles

FGD A

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level
1	Alemishet Mame	21	Male	College Student
2	Tolosa Gemechu	22	Male	College Student
3	Gizewerk Berhanu	19	Female	College Student
4	Kidist Berhanu	20	Female	College Student

FGD B

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level
1	Fkadu Werkneh	55	Male	6th grade
2	Gugsa Yimer	57	Male	4th grade
3	Admasu Abate	60	Male	read/write
4	Abebech Workneh	50	Female	read/write
5	Mebere Isayas	50	Female	read/write

FDG C

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level
1	Marya Abdulahi	37	Female	8 th grade
2	Zekya Adem	38	Female	College Student
3	Rukya Dneka	21	Female	College Student
4	Hikma Nuri	21	Female	High School Student
5	Hanan Babekir	17	Female	12 th grade

FDG D

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level
1	Yossef Biratu	35	Male	College Degree
2	Meseret Derege	39	Female	College Degree
3	Yohanes Regasa	40	Male	College Degree
4	TakeleYismaw	40	Male	College Degree
5	Hiywet Amanuel	30	Female	College Degree

Appendix D

English translation of questions presented to in-depth interview participants.

1. Where do you see the program?
2. At what time do you see the program?
3. With whom do you see the program?
4. Do you have full control of viewing situation or is it under the control of others?
5. Do you discuss what you saw on 'Chilot' with friends or relatives?
6. Do you have lawyer friends or do you associate in any manner with persons of the legal profession?
7. Why is it good to see 'Chilot' program?
8. Do you ever feel that there are things that you did not clearly understand after the show is over?
9. Do you enjoy the dramas more or the court scenes also?
10. Can you make easy connections with the two parts?
11. Is the second part predictable from the first part?
12. Is the verdict predictable earlier in the show than is necessary?
13. Why does the judge and also the lawyers wear black robes?
14. Why is the judge seated high on a pedestal?
15. Do you understand what they say?
16. Why does the Judge refer to himself as 'we' or 'the court'?
17. Do you think the decisions you watch being given on the program are always correct?

18. Have you ever have had to disagree with what you saw on the program?
19. Have you ever seen cases similar to what you experienced personally?
20. Have you ever learned from the decisions given on the program?
21. What should be changed or improved about the program?

Appendix E

ከተወያዮች ጋር ለውይይት መነሻነት የቀረቡ ጥያቄዎች

1. ዝግጅቱን የት ሆነው ነው የሚከታተሉት?
2. በምን ሰዓት ነው የሚከታተሉት?
3. ከማን ጋር ሆነው ነው የሚከታተሉት?
4. በፈቃድዎነው የሚከታተሉት ወይስ ሌሎች ስለሚመለከቱት?
5. በችሎት ዝግጅት ውስጥ የሚያዩትን ከጓደኞቻቸው ጋር ወይም ሌሎች ጋር ይወያዩበታል?
6. የህግ ባለሙያ ጓደኛ አሉት?
7. ችሎት ዝግጅትን የሚያዩት ለምንድነው ምን ጥቅም ይሰጣታል?
8. ዝግጅቱን ካዩ በኋላ ያልገቡዎት ነገሮች ብዙ ጊዜ ያጋጥሞታል?
9. ድራማውን ከፍርድ ቤቱ ይልቅ ይወዱታል?
10. በድራማውና በፍርድ ቤቱ ክርክር ማሃል ያለው ግንኙነት በግልጽ ይታይዎታል?
11. የመጀመርያው ክፍል ለሚያይ ሁለተኛውን መገመት ይቀለባል?
12. የፍርድ ቤቱ ውሳኔው ገና ድራማው በመታየት ላይ እያለ ተገማች ሆኖ ያገኙታል?
13. ዳኛው ለምን ጥቁር ይለብሳል?
14. ዳኛው ለምን ከፍ ብሎ ለምን ይቀመጣል?
15. በፍርድ ላይ የሚያነሱት ክርክር ይረዳሉ ወይስ ይከብዳታል?
16. ዳኛው ለምንድ ነው እኛ ወይም ፍርድ ቤቱ እያለ የሚናገረው?
17. በዳኛው የሚሰጡ ውሳኔዎች ሁሉም ትክክል ናቸው ብለው ያስባሉ?
18. በፕሮግራሙ ሳትስማማ የቀሩበት ጊዜ አለ?
19. ከችሎት ዝግጅት ጋር ተመሳሳይ ጉዳይ ገጥሞት ያውቃል?
20. ከዝግጅቱ ትምህርት አግኝተዋል?
21. መሻሻል አለበት ብለው የሚያስቡት ነገር አለ?

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all sources of materials used for this study have been appropriately acknowledged.

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Signature: -----

Date of Submission: -----

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