AN ANALYSIS OF HOW ZIMBABWEAN FEMALE AUDIENCES DECODE MEANING FROM THE SHONA-LANGUAGE RADIO PROGRAMME *NGUVA YEVANHUKADZI* (*TIME FOR WOMEN)* AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES.

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DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES

Submitted by: Audrey Chihota-Charamba

Student 07c5692

Supervisor: Prof Larry Strelitz

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the Zimbabwean women listeners of a gender-focused radio programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* to find out what meanings they take from the programme.

Located within the broad theoretical framework of cultural studies and drawing on audience reception theories, the study focuses on the ways in which Shona-speaking women bring their understandings of their social roles, derived from their lived socio-cultural experiences of patriarchy, to their decoding of the text. The study was set in Harare's high-density suburb of Mbare and used the qualitative research methods of individual and focus group interviews.

The study was conducted against the backdrop of the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of September 2008, which ended the impasse among the warring political parties, ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC and introduced a new era of collectively tackling socio-economic development, including redressing gender disparities through women's empowerment.

This study examines the factors shaping the audiences' readings of the programme and seeks to establish whether the mass media has determining power on its audience in the reception of messages or if the audiences (women) have interpretive freedom. Using Hall's (1980) Encoding/ Decoding model, the study examines the factors that influence the audiences' choice in making preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings and the arguments they advance in line with those readings.

While the interviews revealed that most of the female listeners "negotiated" the dominant encoded meanings, seeking their relevance to their varied situations and contexts (O' Sullivan et al. 1994:152; Ang 1990: 159), of interest is the manner in which the women dealt with the discourse of patriarchy within the context of promoting women empowerment. The contestation between women empowerment and addressing patriarchy reflected the subverted notions of maintaining the status quo, while applauding the women's commitment and ability to interrogate the practicality of issues under discussion and drawing lessons relevant to their day to day lives prior to making the preferred reading. As such, the study revealed that preferred readings are not always automated, but can be a result of intense interrogation among media audiences.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who ignited in me an insatiable desire for knowledge and whose passion for excellence has motivated me even in the most trying situations.

You urged me to dream, even when sleep was impossible; to focus on the silver lining rather than the darkness of the clouds; your constant approval and celebration of my milestones made me realise the possibility of realising the most elusive of dreams.

To my sons Jabu and Mufaro: may no obstacles deter your desire and thirst for knowledge, for it is in knowledge that you will draw your strength and wisdom.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the general background to and motivation for the study. The chapter also outlines the structure of the thesis, states its purpose and aims, as well as the significance of the study.

1.1. Background to the study

This study seeks to explore how urban working-class Shona[1]-speaking women's lived realities affect their decoding of messages that are broadcast weekly on Radio Zimbabwe's programme titled *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*. The content of these programmes has to do with development and gender issues.

This study focuses on finding out what meaning women give to a media text at the moment of consumption, within the context of their lived experiences. It interrogates how the audiences (women) make sense of the discourses the programme offers – focusing therefore on the moment of consumption and the processes by which *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is received and decoded by media audiences.

1.2. Personal background

As a child, growing up with my non-formally employed mother, I was always fascinated by the way she would on a weekday, around mid-morning, religiously stop whatever household chores she would be doing to pick up her knitting or sewing and sit by the radio to listen to *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*. Often, the focus of the programme was to enhance the socially-ascribed attributes of being a woman; home-making through cookery, home-craft, gardening and such activities. I could listen to the programme due to the hot-seating[2] arrangement at our school.

In the afternoons, my mother would meet with other women at the local club, where they would discuss the programme and try to implement the lessons learnt in their daily lives. There were times that I went with her and would listen to the discussions among the women.

[1]chiShona is one of Zimbabwe's vernacular languages in which the programme is broadcast.
[2]Hot-seating is an arrangement that ensures a dual scheduling of classes: some classes begin school in the morning and others in the afternoon to accommodate the high enrolment figures vis-à-vis limited resources. It is common in high-density suburban schools in Bulawayo

In some instances, the women would have different interpretations of the programme depending on their background and personal experiences. I remember listening to the women discussing the hosting of visitors and providing them with light meals during their stay. The women argued over what comprised a light meal in their contexts, not necessarily as articulated in the programme, as their setting was different and there were other economic variables to consider. This was my first encounter with women's reception of media messages and the resultant negotiation of meaning as the women struggled to find relevance of the programme to suit their context.

When I began my MA studies at Rhodes University, I became interested in cultural studies theories, particularly those concerned with audience studies. I began to appreciate the work of theorists such as Stuart Hall, John Fiske, Ien Ang and Richard Johnson, among others, as their interest in ordinary people as active contributors to texts in the circuit of culture evoked my childhood experiences. Then, I worked with a women's rights organisation which lobbies for gender equality by means of various media and communication strategies. Therefore, both the circuit of culture and the encoding/decoding model were relevant to me. I wanted to explore whether the work we were doing was being understood according to the intended meaning and would empower women, which was our objective. I reflected on popular radio stations' gender programmes and, inevitably, my mother's favourite programme came to mind. I noted that the programme was still being aired. My practical experience helped me to understand the importance of audiences as active participants in meaning-making as well as the relevance of the encoding and decoding theory.

1.3 Gender programming on Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) radio

The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) derives its mandate from the Act of Parliament Chapter 12:01 of 2001 which defines it as a 'public broadcaster'. Through its four radio networks, ZBC provides a mix of programme genres in a diversity of languages. Though the Act is silent on deliberate gender content, ZBC ensures the inclusion of programmes dealing with gender issues in its schedule within the context of public service broadcasting. ZBC then, provides access to information and knowledge for all members of society (including women) that enables them to fully exercise their roles as citizens (Ndlela & Moyo, 2006: 29-30).

Radio Zimbabwe, in its efforts to strike a balance between chiShona and siNdebele, broadcasts the programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* in both languages.

However, for the purposes of this study, the focus is on the chiShona programme. This choice was deliberately made because chiShona is the researcher's home language and the subjects in the chosen geographical area are predominantly Shona-speaking.

1.4 The research problem

According to UN Women, gender inequality is an issue of concern the world over. A direct correlation of gender inequality is violence against women and girls, which has resulted in an annual economic toll amounting to billions of dollars in lost productivity and higher costs for health and judicial services (UN Women 2011 Annual Report:14). According to the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki Mon, women need support more than any other group as they are marginalised by lack of economic and other opportunities (UN Women 2011 Annual Report:14).

During the period 2000– 09, Zimbabwe experienced a socio-economic and political crisis. During this time, women were subjected to various forms of violence. They also struggled to be breadwinners in a socio-politically volatile environment (Research and Advocacy Unit, 2010). Despite Zimbabwe being a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there has been no effort made to inculcate an environment conducive to implementing these. One of the MDGs, which is of particular interest here, was goal number three: achieving gender equality.

The warring political parties in the country (ZANU-PF, MDC and MDC-T) signed The Global Political Agreement (GPA) in September 2008 to end the political and economic crisis. This agreement did not have any gender-specific clauses. Women are still largely excluded and under-represented in the social, economic, political and governance spheres and processes of Zimbabwe (SADC Gender Protocol Barometer-Zimbabwe, 2012). The civil society organisations in Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development have called for a multi-pronged approach to ensure that gender issues are conscientiously mainstreamed in the processes being undertaken for socio-economic recovery in the country (WCoZ Women's Conference Report, April 2009). Media campaigns directed at women's economic empowerment are envisaged to be part of this drive, utilising existing slots on the country's sole broadcaster.

This study argues that the media is an important tool in redressing gender inequality through effective and relevant programmes, and that messages on women's empowerment could help improve the lives of women. Drawing on Hall's theory of encoding/decoding, the

study argues that media messages that communicate issues of women empowerment based on real life experiences will have a reaching out effect on target audiences (i.e. women) and help them, through meaning-making, appreciate discourses that can have an impact on their lives, enabling them to make informed decisions on their reading positions of those messages.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study seeks to enhance existing literature examining gender programming[3] on Radio Zimbabwe. It also seeks to build an appreciation of the issues shaping urban working-class women's negotiation of meaning in their consumption of the media. It is hoped that a clearer understanding of these issues may inform gender programming and promote women's empowerment.

1.6 Purpose and goals of the research

The purpose of this study was to undertake a qualitative analysis of audience reception to explore how urban, working-class[4] Shona-speaking women's lived realities affect their decoding of gender and development messages broadcast on Radio Zimbabwe. This homogenous group was chosen for three reasons: first, the programme was broadcast in chiShona, which is the women's mother tongue. Second, the programme is listened to by mostly working-class women who identify with the issues discussed; these include social beliefs and traditional values, which include patriarchy within a contemporary context. Third, it was felt that using this group would help the researcher to understand the extent to which working-class women "negotiate and use media texts in the course of their everyday lives, constructing their own meanings within an autonomous cultural economy[5]" (Curran, 1990, cited in Strelitz, 2000:38). The research questions were:

1. What themes about women empowerment does the programme emphasise, despite the dominantly patriarchal Zimbabwean cultural environment?
2. What readings do urban working-class Shona-speaking women make of *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*?
3. How do we account for the readings made by the women?

3 Gender programming is ensuring that there is a deliberate and conscious effort to incorporate gender issues with the sole purpose of promoting equal opportunities among men and women.
4 Working class here denotes the lowest rung economically on the social ladder.
5 This refers to the people's ability to define their socio-cultural values without unprecedented societal coercion

1.7. General structure of the thesis

The research is arranged in six chapters. Chapter one outlines the background of the study, states the research problem, gives the purpose of the research and the goals. The chapter also discusses the significance of the study and describes the general structure of the thesis.

Chapter two gives the social context of the study. The relevance of a programme dealing with gender issues is discussed. Also discussed are the listening patterns of the target audiences and the subjects that are commonly broadcast. The discussion is in relation to the general socio-economic and socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwean population, with a focus on the position of women. This is central to the understanding of the data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions and unpacks the tension between the central themes of women's empowerment contained in the programme and the culture of patriarchy (women's social roles and expectations) dominant in Zimbabwe.

Chapter three focuses on the theoretical framework and context of the research, citing relevant literature on audience studies and reception analysis (radio/media reception).

Chapter four examines the data collection methods employed. The justification for choosing qualitative research is discussed.

In chapter five, the research findings are discussed. In this chapter, the data is analysed and discussed in relation to the outlined theories.

Chapter six concludes the work; the study is summarised in terms of what has been achieved, areas that require further study are noted and further recommendations are given.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL CONTEXT

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the social context of the study. It explores gender issues within the context of a highly patriarchal society and the role of the media in addressing these. It begins by building an appreciation of the Zimbabwean populace and the geographical as well as the socio-economic and political context. It further interrogates gender dynamics within the outlined context.

Within the cultural studies tradition of audience research, a central element is an understanding of historical and cultural experiences of the group being researched (see Moores, 1993; Hall, 1982; Philo, 1993; Ang, 1996; Alasuutari, 1999; Strelitz, 2003). Thompson (1995) argues that mediated communication is always a contextualised social phenomenon and is an integral part of, and cannot be understood apart from, the broader context of social life. People influence and are influenced by their physical and discursive environments when making meaning from media discourses (Fiske, 1987a). Similarly, in her study of women's consumption of romantic fiction, Radway proposed that "people's daily lives must be the point of departure and object of research" (1988: 361). Similarly, Murdock points out that in understanding audiences, the cultural studies approach is about "how meanings are reproduced, negotiated and struggled over in the flow and flux of everyday life" (1995:94).

This chapter seeks to locate the Zimbabwean female subjects under investigation within the broad historical and social context of the country. The aim is to contextualise the location of this study, while giving the reader an introduction to the social conditions under which the texts are being produced and consumed. This is important in order to establish how the social context is interlinked with women, gender issues in Zimbabwe, and the meanings that female audiences take from the economic empowerment texts.

2.2 Socio-economic and political issues

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country, located in southern Africa, between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. It is bordered by South Africa to the south, Botswana to the west, Zambia to the north and Mozambique to the east. According to the latest census, conducted in 2002,

there are approximately 11.6 million people, with men representing 49% and women 51% (GOZ, 2004).

At independence in 1980, the country inherited a dual economy dominated by a wealthy white minority and a large informal sector comprising the black majority. The government sought to address the inequalities by prioritising poverty reduction. The focus was on increased social-sector expenditure, expansion of rural infrastructure and redressing social and economic inequality including land reform (GOZ, 2004). The success of these policies was measured as a strong social indicator for development. For instance, primary healthcare services were subsidised. Primary school education was free and by 1995 the country had an almost universal school enrolment of 86 percent (GOZ, 2004).

There was a turnaround of the economy in the 1990s. The key social indicators began deteriorating after what had been a commendable improvement in the same indicators during the previous decade. Reasons given included recurring droughts and that some of the economic recovery policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) had failed. Contrary to the expected benefits, the ESAP programme caused rampant inflation, widespread price increases and loss of jobs (Sachikonye, 1993).

By 1996 there was accelerated deterioration in the socio-economic situation. The government replaced ESAP with a "home-grown" reform package, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) in April 1998, which had its fair share of challenges, exacerbated by political unrest (Hungwe, 2007).

A decade of macroeconomic instability resulted in structural unemployment rising to about 80 percent in 2008, with only six percent of the population formally employed; a significant decrease from the 3.6 million people (30 percent) employed in 2003 (Adebajo and Paterson, 2011). Most people rely on the informal economy for survival and even formally employed workers are often unable to support their families, pay school fees or afford health services (Adebajo and Paterson, 2011).

Zimbabwe is predominantly a patriarchal society (GoZ, Zimbabwe Constitution, 1980). According to Brown (1991), patriarchy can be defined as rule by men. Within a patriarchal society, men are believed to be superior to women and their interests take precedence over the interests and needs of women. Folbre (1988) warns that patriarchy is an ideology that permeates all facets of life and may negatively affect the relationship between men and women. This study focuses on attempts to redress gender inequality and empowering women through the consumption of media messages. It seeks to examine the

extent to which the interpretation of media messages by women is, inevitably, influenced by the ideology of patriarchy.

The inequality of women in Zimbabwe has been maintained for several reasons, one of them being upholding of the Shona culture, in which patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control (Kambarami, 2006: 56). Though the Legal Age of Majority Act 1982 (LAM) gave African women of 18 years and above majority status for the first time in Zimbabwean history, many traditionalists discount this and continue to treat women as minors (Stewart et al., 1990, in Magaisa, 2001).

Thus, the position of Zimbabwean women as social minors and the heavy patriarchal constraints under which they live, results in most women finding financial and social security in marriage, while the unmarried, divorced and widowed women with no source of income are pushed to the margins of society (Magaisa, 2001). Some women withstand abusive relationships for the sake of financial security and respect in society, thus perpetuating patriarchal norms of power and women's dependency. The situation is no better at national level, where, even government initiatives, according to Bhatasara, "[have] diminished opportunities or spaces for women to be empowered and shrunk the democratic spaces for genuine participation of women in the development process …widening gender inequalities" (2011:316).

This study investigates the women who listen to this programme to find out what meanings they take from the themes broadcast and how they incorporate what they hear on the radio into their lives in the context of the existing tension between these messages of empowerment and the women's lived experiences. While the media messages contend that women are socio-economically self-sustaining and independent, the women's role within the patriarchal structure contrasts with the norms being promoted.

2:3. Gender Programming on ZBC

Although over 50 per cent of Zimbabwe's population are women, as noted above, the country remains a patriarchal society (UNFPA, 2008) in which, some have argued, gender inequality is the major obstacle to development (Genderlinks, 2009). In an effort to address this issue, the country's sole broadcaster, ZBC, has initiated a variety of radio programmes aimed at educating women about their political, economic, and social rights.

The ZBC has four radio stations: Power FM, National FM, Spot FM, and Radio Zimbabwe. These stations target different audiences[6]. Of the four channels, Radio Zimbabwe is the most popular, commanding the highest percentage of radio listenership in Zimbabwe (ZBC, 2008). This is because this station broadcasts in the two main languages chiShona and siNdebele spoken by the majority of Zimbabweans.

The GPA signed in September 2008, which is the current governing document in Zimbabwe, under articles three and five seeks:

> [T]o give priority to the restoration of economic stability and growth in Zimbabwe. The Government will lead the process of developing and implementing an economic recovery strategy and plan...(with) the parties committed to working together on a full and comprehensive economic programme to resuscitate Zimbabwe's economy, which will urgently address the issues of production, food security, poverty and unemployment and the challenges of high inflation, interest rates and the exchange rate. (GPA, 2008:2)

In developing the framework for such socio-economic recovery, the Government of Zimbabwe sought to develop an effective empowerment policy, drawing on global best practices, in order to protect the socially vulnerable segments of society, including women (Adebajo and Paterson, 2011). Through its Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP), the government committed to "prioritise initiatives that are aimed at addressing gender equality and women's empowerment" (MoWAGCD 2011: v). The programme under study, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is one such vehicle for ensuring that gender equality and women empowerment issues are addressed. The programme is seemingly one of the instruments for redressing the tension between the dominant patriarchal culture and the desire by the government for gender equality in line with Millennium Development Goal number three, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which the programme, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*, provides its audiences with an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on their lived experiences, given that the women are constantly negotiating the infusion of their traditional values with the contemporary lifestyle and modernity in urban high-density suburbs. It takes into account that these lived experiences are within the context of the discourse of socio-economic recovery that was taking place nationally as a result of the recommendations by the GPA, which

[6]Power FM is a music station that broadcasts in English and targets the youth; National FM is an information and entertainment station that targets minority groups and broadcasts in the minority languages; Spot FM is an information and education station which broadcasts in English; and Radio Zimbabwe broadcasts in chiShona and siNdebele, targeting the broad indigenous population (ZBC annual report 2008).

> [r]ecognise[d] the need for women's access and control over land in their own right as equal citizens, the parties agree to...ensure that all Zimbabweans who are eligible be allocated land and who apply for it shall be considered for allocation of land irrespective of race, gender...(GoZ, 2008:2-3)

In her assessment of the Zimbabwean context, Professor Rudo Gaidzanwa of the University of Zimbabwe states that:

> [t]here are new factors driving poverty in Zimbabwe that have changed the gender dynamics in the country...in most families, women are actually increasing their responsibilities in fending for the family, such as vending and increasing their cross-border activities, leaving men to look after the children at home and in the process disempowering men and creating a reversal of roles (cited in the Institute of Environmental Studies UZ, 2011:9).

This study therefore seeks to examine the extent to which this reversal of roles has impacted on the women's negotiation of meaning of *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*.

Though the programme has been broadcast since 1980, its continued existence is evidence of the recognition of its value by both broadcasters and audiences as a vehicle for promoting women's development in line with the demands of the current environment of promoting gender equality. *Nguva yevanhukadzi* (*Time for Women)* is 30-minutes long and is broadcast on Wednesdays at 11.30 a.m. on Radio Zimbabwe in chiShona. It is a magazine programme with three segments of eight minutes each. In the first segment, the presenter introduces the programme and the particular subject under discussion for that day. In the second and third segments, the presenter discusses the topic with a maximum of three guests in the studio. The programme explores political, economic and social issues with the aim of promoting gender equality in these spheres. Topics have included abortion, polygamy, women in business, women in politics, women and the law and constitutional issues and are all presented from the position of improving the quality of women's lives. Its listenership ranges from women of 16 years and older and it is among the station's top three programmes, commanding 70 percent of radio listeners (ZAMPS 2008).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has articulated the geographical, social, political and economic context under which this study is premised. It has acknowledged the GPA as the context within which the discourse of economic empowerment is premised. This is within the context of economic revival for the country which experienced a decade-long economic crisis and resolved to end the impasse through the inclusive government as spelt out by the GPA. It has also examined

the gender relations in Zimbabwe, which are predominantly patriarchal, despite the population ratio being in favour of women who comprise 52 percent of the documented population. It has also outlined the nature of the programme under focus, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* within the context of ZBC's programming schedule.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature and theoretical arguments to do with the negotiation of meaning in media texts by readers situated within specific socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts. It is on the basis of this review that the conceptual structure of the study is grounded. It also offers the theoretical framework for analysing the research findings.

The chapter begins by providing an overview of cultural studies and follows this with an analysis of the approaches and findings of the main research traditions that have explored the nexus between the mass media and their audiences. The purpose is to build a basis for ascertaining whether the different socio-cultural, socio-historical, socio-economic and socio-political conditions under which the gender-focused programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* has been produced and consumed have impacted on the readings of texts by female audiences to create preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings and how this has happened.

3.2 Understanding the Cultural Studies Approach

Defining culture has proved to be a challenging task, as the term has been used to cover a range of concepts (Thompson 1990: 122, Storey 1993: 2). Inglis reiterates Geertz's maxim that culture simply is "the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves"' (1993: xi). Culture has also been defined as a way of life or as the production and circulation of meaning (Du Gay and Hall 1997: 13). According to Fiske, the word 'culture' in the phrase "cultural studies" encompasses all the meanings of a people's social experience within their lived context in an industrial society (1987b: 255).

John Hartley articulates an understanding of cultural studies that foregrounds the relationship between meaning and power:

> It's the study of power within the context of meaning. So if you're looking at the contemporary media, for example, cultural studies is classically the way in which media meanings reproduce relations of power, usually unequal relations of power, based on class or some other kind of demographic difference. That's the standard approach to cultural studies, these days. Power and meaning. (Hartley in an interview with Brooker 1998: 124)

In concurrence with the above, Kellner states that cultural studies examines the manner in which cultural forms allow the dominant class to entrench their domination and how subordinate classes resist this domination (1995:6). The field of cultural studies then, is “both more and less than political sociology” (Inglis 1993: 79) as it studies "culture in action"; also understood as "the making of meaning" (Inglis 1993: 247). Ang argues that cultural studies as a discipline is interested in why differences in interpretations of experiences occur (1989: 107-8). Researchers investigating media usage need to investigate, "just how 'complex' or 'contradictory' it is, for which types of consumers, in which social positions, in relation to which types of texts or objects" (Morley 1992: 274). The cultural studies approach also cites the media as providing the material for constructing identities, behaviour and views of the world (Kellner, 1995: 6, Hardt 1986: 110) and critical cultural studies enables readers to analyse artefacts of a contemporary media culture (Kellner, 1995: 8).

In exploring various aspects of “culture in action” different theorists appear to somehow concur with Ang that “cultural studies’ interest has always been focused on deconstructing relations of power in all its cultural contexts and configurations” (2006:184) thus remaining an unconfined, interdisciplinary field.

Despite the emergence of a number of theories about the media and society in the late 1970s (Livingstone 1998), this study focuses on Hall's theory of encoding and decoding in relation to the cultural studies' concept of the active audience. In arguing that people’s lived experiences contribute to their consumption of media texts, Hall cites Althusser’s ideology as "a diagnostic instrument for the analysis of motive" (of the encoders), while subsequent analyses of the ways in which people signal their resistance to or compliance with particular ideologies "has become part of the canon" of cultural studies (Inglis 1993: 84).

Althusser is known for his theory of ideology - a dynamic process that is constantly reproduced and reconstituted – and ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), which are the range of social institutions that encourage people to think and behave in socially acceptable ways (Fiske 1987b:256). As such, social institutions such as the media are strategically situated to disseminate information that will continuously reiterate the status quo and serve the interests of those in charge, retaining subservience among the working class. According to Althusser, these ISAs (including the media) are all powerful, working within the context of ideology. It is ideology that allows individuals to make sense of the world, and to create an image of themselves, while reproducing inequitable social relations (During 1995:6). Unfortunately such politico-psychoanalytical structuralism does not acknowledge the ability of communities

and individuals to generate their own meanings and effects (During 1995:6). Instead, the understanding is based on what is known as the effects tradition.

The effects tradition theory assumes direct effects, adopting a "hypodermic" injection concept of mass media. It is based on Shannon and Weaver's communication theory and "simplistically describes communication as transmitting a message from sender to receiver" (Waisbord, 2001:4). It argues that the media injects messages into the thoughts of the audience, who passively accept the attitudes, opinions and beliefs expressed by the media without question (Bennett, 1982: 30-55). According to the effects tradition, audiences are seen as comprising a mass of isolated individuals vulnerable to the influence of media such as cinema and radio such that American psychologists who believed in the effects tradition, using stimuli experiments and controls at the time, concluded that the media had direct influence and effects on people (see O'Sullivan et al. 1994:152). The media therefore was perceived as a kind of narcotic whose relationship with audiences was one where the audience could be 'injected' with a message (Brooker & Jermyn 2003:6). The assertion was that people exist only as receptacles for media messages, as passive groups whose behaviours and attitudes are the result of a powerful external force - the media (Mabweazara 2006:49). In her critique of this perspective, Ang argues that it,

> ignore[s] the fact that media audiences consist of human beings who do not merely respond to media output more or less passively, but who are actively involved, both emotionally and intellectually, with particular forms of media material. [It does not] take account of the fact that we do not consume media material as isolated and solitary individuals, but in particular social settings and cultural frameworks (1990: 158).

Despite its weaknesses, the effects tradition acknowledged the importance, relevance and centrality of media messages to people's 'real' lives (Croteau & Hoynes 2003:265). The different political perspectives and focus on short term behavioural changes or long term cultural and ideological changes by the effects tradition theorists (as noted by Strelitz, 2002: 13; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990:209), did not affect the conclusion drawn from their studies on media effects which indicated that the media are powerful institutions capable of injecting a repressive ideology directly into the consciousness of the masses (Morley, 1992: 45).

Further research resulted in evidence refuting the claims of effects traditions (e.g. Klapper, 1960; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Rogers, 1962; Gerbner, 1990 cited in Morley, 1992), resulting in a shift in focus from the question of what the media do to the audience to what the audience do with the media. This gave birth to new approaches built on the active

audiences, whose concerns were "uses and gratification, cultural studies and reception analysis stretch[ing] into the latest ethnographic research strand" (Morley, 1992:45-49).

3.2.1. Uses and Gratification Theory

The uses and gratification theory takes a more humanistic approach to examining media use. It focuses on the individual, psychological meanings rather than social ones (Seiter et al., 1989:2; Silverstone, 1990:177) and examines the patterns of media exposure, questioning what gratifications people get from the media. See for example studies by Herzog, (1944); Greenberg, (1974); Rubin, (1981) and Katz and Lazasfled (1985) cited in Fiske (1987a:62-83). In his widely quoted assertion, James Halloran sums up the uses and gratifications theory: "We must get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to the people and substitute for it the idea of what people do with the media" (cited in O' Sullivan et al. 1994: 155).

This new approach, largely associated with the work of Katz, Blumler, Halloran and the Leicester Centre for Mass Communications Research during the 1960s, signalled the conception of audiences as active consumers of media content. Studies revealed that people use the media for "diversion, personal relationship, personal identity and surveillance" (Jensen and Rosengren, 1990:210), thus generating particular expectations about the mass media. As such, different patterns of media exposure develop among audiences, resulting in both the gratification of needs and unintended audience responses (Jensen and Rosengren, 1990:210).

Of importance is the fact that different members of the mass media audience may use and interpret any particular media text or programme in a different way from the intentions of the communicator, or in different ways from other audience members (Morley, 1992: 50-51). It denies the possibility that the media can have an unconscious influence over our lives and how we view the world. As such, the "uses and gratification" theory investigates what audiences 'do' with texts (Livingstone 1998a:36) and focuses "on practices of consumption" helping us "to understand that meanings are… made in usage" (Du Gay and Hall 1997:85). Ang consolidates this by arguing that:

> [t]he use of media is a highly selective and motivated activity, and not just a mindless pastime. In general, people use the media because they expect that doing so will give them some gratifications – hence the name of this research tradition. These gratifications are assumed to be related to the satisfaction of social and psychological needs experienced by the individual (1990: 159).

In other words, audiences would only consume what may be seemingly relevant to their immediate needs, based on any of the four categories: information – finding out about society and the world, seeking advice on practical matters and satisfying curiosity and interest; personal identity – finding reinforcement for personal values, finding models for behaviour and gaining insight into oneself; integration and social interaction – gaining insight into circumstances of others, gaining a sense of belonging, finding a basis for conversation and helping to carry out social roles; and entertainment – being diverted from problems, relaxation, getting cultural and aesthetic pleasure, emotional release and sexual arousal (McQuail in Ang, 1990: 159).

Despite acknowledging the active nature of audiences, the uses and gratifications approach remained "severely limited by its insufficiently sociological or cultural perspective, in so far as everything is reduced to the level of individual psychology" (Morley, 1989:17). As such, it did not acknowledge audiences as a collective with social backgrounds which largely contributed to their interpretation of media messages, nor did it examine the audiences' relationship with the media text, thus divorcing the audiences from their social context such as class and ethnic subcultures (see O' Sullivan et al., 1994:157 and Ang, 1990: 159). In addition, the approach focused on the purpose of media consumption rather than the meanings and interpretations generated in the process as well as the manner in which the media are received (O' Sullivan et al. 1994:131), thus not paying attention to what people get out of a TV show, a book, or a pop song (Ang, 1990:160).

In an effort to address these limitations, researchers concerned with the ways people 'interpret and make sense' of media texts within the context of everyday life developed the reception tradition. The purpose was to consolidate the notion that the meaning of media texts is something constructed by these active audiences rather than something pre-fabricated by media producers, in line with the large body of research depicting media audiences as active interpreters of meaning. Croteau and Hoynes sum it up by asserting that, "real people with lives, histories, and social networks are the audiences for mass media products" (2003:266).

3.2.2. Encoding and Decoding model

The point of origin for reception studies lies with the development of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in the early 1970s, in particular, Stuart Hall' s 'encoding/decoding' model of communications. In his ground-breaking essay, *Encoding/decoding* (1980), Hall offered a way beyond the uses and gratifications model (Moores, 1990:14, Gray, 1999:27). With a basis in semiology and

structuralism, media texts were acknowledged as structured according to well-defined codes and conventions, with emphasis placed on the 'active audience' (O' Sullivan et al., 1994: 157). Hall's model therefore, was liberating the text from complete ideological closure, citing the reader as the site of meaning production, thus sounding the death-knell for the kind of textual studies of television that treat it as a closed text (Fiske: 1987:64).

In explaining his espousal of the Encoding and decoding model, Hall argued that while the transmission model of communication had been conceived of as a loop, it was also possible to think of it as a series of articulated, linked moments of production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction (1980:128). He explained that messages were coded by the sender, and decoded by the receiver. Problems tended to emerge when there was a "lack of fit" between the codes used by the encoder and the decoder (1980:131).

Hall explained that the encoding/decoding model was specifically constructed to oppose the transmission model and further interrogate the relevance of the media texts within the context of the audiences' lived experience; thus going beyond the immediate uses and gratifications model. The encoding and decoding model sought to challenge the view that audiences were powerless subjects (Fiske 1987a:62). He acknowledged "polysemy" as a notion that advanced the idea of one sign as having many signifieds, meaning that a single text could have more than one meaning and that despite its limitations, polysemy facilitated theories of cultural production and hybridisation; concepts that "help us describe how cultural products may be combined with new elements to produce different effects in different situations" (During 1995:6-7).

Hall hypothesised that there were three potential decoding possibilities: dominant hegemonic, when the viewer decodes and accepts the connoted message; negotiated, when the decoding contains adaptive and oppositional elements; and oppositional, when the viewer understands the message, but chooses to read it as opposite to the way it was intended (Hall 1980:136-8). According to Fiske, underlying Hall's two reading strategies – those that produce negotiated and oppositional readings - is Gramsci's notion of hegemony (1987a: 264). Inglis articulates hegemony as "the complex interlocking of cultural institutions…which won the wholehearted consent of the people to the way things were" (1993:76), while counter-hegemony is the subverting of and resistance to this process. As such, hegemony is not a static power relationship, as consent is continually sought – resulting in a never-ending process of struggle and negotiation (Fiske 1987b:259; During 1995:5).

Based on this therefore, the negotiated and oppositional readings take into cognisance the notion of continued interaction (or hegemonic process) between the audience and media messages, based on the audiences' lived experiences.

Hall's approach signalled a shift from one paradigm of understanding text-audience relations to another and examined the function of ideology in relation to maintaining or challenging the status quo (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 10). Drawing an influence from Laclau and Mouffe (1981 cited in Hammond, 1999), Hall acknowledged ideology as a field of class-neutral elements, within which there is a struggle to articulate such elements to different 'hegemonic principles'. For example, Mouffe argued that ideology is "…a battle field where the principle classes struggle for the appropriation of the fundamental ideological elements of their society in order to articulate them to their discourse" (1981 cited in Hammond, 1999:11). Hall drew an analogy with the structuralist point that ideology exists in language, and language is a field of variable meaning-production, rather than a set of fixed meanings, citing a plurality of alternative 'identities' as founded upon a scepticism about the 'universal class' as agency of social change (Hammond, 1999:10). In his introduction to Morley's *Family Television*, Stuart Hall explains:

> We are not "viewers" with a single identity, a monolithic set of preferences and repetitive habits of viewing, all exposed to a single channel and type of "influence" and therefore behaving in predictably uniform ways. We are all in our heads, several different audiences at once, and can be constituted as such by different programmes. We have the capacity to deploy different levels and mode of attention, to mobilise different competencies in our viewing. At different times of the day, for different family members, different patterns of viewing have different 'saliencies'. Here the monolithic conceptions of the viewer, the audience or television itself have been displaced – one hopes forever – before the new emphasis on difference and variation. (in Morley, 1986: 10)

Morley noted that Hall's notion of 'preferred reading' in which audiences took the encoders' intended meaning of a media text, while problematic, was preferable to the concept of the media text being open to any interpretation (1992c:282) as argued by Fiske and other 'cultural populists'. Morley acknowledged that the model had been "quite transformed" to the point "where it is often maintained that the majority of audience members routinely modify or deflect any ideology reflected in media content" thus doing away with either the preferred reading or structured polysemy (Morley 1997 cited in Strelitz, 2000:40).

One example of the encoding/decoding model in action is that of Liebes and Katz's (1993) study on various ethnic groups watching the soap opera, *Dallas*. The authors point out those readings of *Dallas* differed, depending on specific frames of reference (Liebes and Katz

1993: 13). As such, *Dallas* was seen as "a supermarket of meanings from which its viewers [could] make their selection" (Fiske 1989a:138). Another example of reception using the encoding/decoding model is one in which Tomlinson cites the study, *The Export of Meaning*, as one of "a growing perspective in media research which sees the audience as active and the process of meaning construction as one of 'negotiation' with the text in a particular cultural context" (1991:47).

While audiences can, within the terms of Hall's model take any position of the three proposed reading positions, it is also highly probable that the meaning 'preferred' by the ruling-class encoders can be the preferred 'reading' of the working class decoders, because "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate" (Hall in Schroder et al. 2003:129). However, at the heart of the model is Hart's argument that the meaning is not in the text, but in the reading (1991:53).

3.3. Media audience reception theory

Cultural studies blends into reception analysis in several ways, as exemplified by the work of scholars such as Ang (1985), Morley (1986) and Moores (1993). Ang defines reception analysis as "the study of audience interpretations and uses of media texts and technologies" (1990: 242). It is concerned with issues of power, ideology and the circulation of meaning within a specific context, with an emphasis on the negotiation between texts and readers situated within specific socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts (see Hall, 1980; Morley, 1986; Moores, 1996; Kitzinger, 1993; Philo, 1993; Ang 1996; Alasuutari, 1999; Strelitz, 2000).

This does not mean that the reader's social position mechanically produces meanings in a way that would parallel the authoritarian way that texts are understood to work in the effects tradition. Instead, it means that the context of media production and reception sets the limit and boundaries of interpretation. These boundaries can be based on class, socio-cultural, socio-historical, and socio-economic practices etc (see Hall, 1980; Morley, 1989; Moores, 1993).

Reception analysis therefore assumes that meanings of media texts are not fixed, or inherent within the texts (Ang, 1990: 160; Hart, 1991:60; O'Sullivan et al., 1994: 84), nor are they merely transferred from the media to their audiences (Schroder et al., 2003). However, meanings are a result of negotiation between the texts and discourses of the socially situated

readers (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1989; Moores, 1993; Philo, 1993; Alasuutari, 1999; Strelitz, 2003).

Following Hall's encoding/decoding model, media audience research has tended to turn away from questions about direct media influence and effects to focus on audience behaviours and beliefs and on how audiences make sense of and interact with media content and the media (Hansen et al., 1998; Philo, 1993). In his discussion of approaches to understanding the relationship between texts and audiences, Strelitz notes that the meaning of a text is best understood by acknowledging the "moments of production/text/distribution and audience/consumption/lived culture" (2000:37). This research focuses on the analysis of audience reception with an emphasis on women's reception of media messages to do with economic empowerment, drawing on theoretical insights obtained from audience reception studies (see, for example; Morley 1986, 1999; Moores 1996; Alasuutari,1999; Ang 1996, Strelitz, 2003). It seeks therefore to ascertain the extent to which the women's production and circulation of meaning (Du Gay and Hall 1997: 13) could be a depiction that they view the media as providing the material for constructing identities, behaviour and views of the world (Kellner, 1995: 6, Hardt 1986: 110) or whether they instead resist the constructions of reality preferred by the mass media and construct their own, meanings from media texts (e.g. Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1984; Katz and Liebes, 1984; Turnball, 1984; Hodge and Tripp, 1986 and Palmer, 1986 cited in Fiske, 1987)

Reception studies scholars (Hall 1980; Kitzinger, 1993; Radway 1987) concur that audiences interpret what they hear and see in the context of what they already know or think. In other words, audiences bring their lived experiences to the media text and interpret media messages within their contexts. Hermes (1996: 110) argues that media consumption is a thoroughly precarious practice, structured not by psychological or sociological predispositions of individual audience members but by the dynamic and contradictory goings-on of everyday life.

According to Alasuutari (1999:8), the "discursive or constructionist view of the media and audiences" in media reception studies which incorporates the concept of contemporary media culture - particularly the role of the media in everyday life - and covers questions of meaning and use of media programmes by particular groups of people, is a result of the "ethnographic turn" (Moores, 1996), which, it is argued, represents the main tendency in cultural studies (see Gitlin, 1997; Kellner, 1997; Curran 1990; Strelitz, 2000).

In his work on the miners' strike, Philo indicated that differences in the reading of media messages can be attributed to the difference in lived experiences (1990:134) while

Kitzinger's study established that "people can 'know' something on one level but reject it on another, or they may know what they 'ought' to think but find it hard to act on it" (Kitzinger, 1993: 293). Simply put, Kitzinger acknowledges the notion of hegemony (what they 'ought' to think) and counter-hegemony among audiences, who exercise "subordinate power" (Strelitz, 2000:37) while "constructing their own meanings within an autonomous cultural economy" (Curran, 1990 cited in Strelitz 2000:37).

Morley's (1986) *Family Television* study shows the complexity of a reader as a social being who may negotiate a reading in a particular way, depending on the environment or social relations they are placed in. The introduction by Hall in Morley's study explicitly interrogates the complexity in audience reception by acknowledging the multiplicity of identities in media reception, thereby resulting in the "several different audiences at once…constituted as such by different programmes" (1986:115). In attempting to understand the polysemic nature of messages in *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women),* this study seeks to understand how women listeners make sense of the messages in the programme within the context of their multiple roles as mothers, wives and social beings with diverse economic challenges.

In his critique of the themes and tensions in cultural studies, Dahlgren argues that "if meaning is fundamentally polysemic and can thus never be fully stabilized, and, further, if meaning is socially negotiated, then media audiences have much greater interpretive freedom than traditional critiques of ideology give them credit for" (1997:55).

3.4. The importance of context

Many prominent theorists in the media studies tradition have agreed that it is vital to take into account the context of media reception when analysing media usage (Ang, 1989: 96). For example, Babbie and Mouton argue that the emphasis by qualitative research on the importance of studying events and actions in their natural context enables the researcher to describe and understand them with as much depth as possible from a holistic perspective, which can be hard to achieve if the same events and actions are analyzed in isolation from their context as is sometimes the case in quantitative research (2001: 272).

In his study of television audiences, Morley used Hall's encoding/decoding model as the framework (Gray 1999: 27), in which he showed the television programme, *Nationwide* to a number of groups in the UK, followed by discussion groups. This study was "genuinely seminal" (Sparks 1996:93), "an important landmark in modern media texts" (Moores, 1990:

15), because it "challenged the 'hard news' focus of existing work , …placed textuality clearly in the communication dynamic, and … was suggestive of different reader positions" (Gray 1999: 28). In other words, his findings confirmed that the social position of audiences affects the decoding process of media messages. Furthermore, Morley pointed out that in some instances, readings of media messages were determined by some knowledge of both medium-specific and broader cultural codes (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003:274).

Morley proposed that in their consumption of media, members of television audiences engage in a process of negotiation between their socially constructed position and their experiences (Fiske 1987a: 65-66).

In his later work, *Family Television,* Morley argued that the central thesis "was that the changing patterns of television viewing could only be understood in the overall context of family leisure activity" (1986: 13). As such, the consumption of media texts could only be understood within the context of the audiences' other activities and values at a personal rather than generalised and broader context of the Nationwide Audience study. At one point in the study he noted the parallels of his work with that of Janice Radway's research; specifically, *Reading the Romance* (1984), which is an investigation into the reading habits of a small community of American women who were avid readers of romance novels. Morley later described this as being a key work in the area of reception analysis (Morley 1993: 14).

Radway (1987), an American theorist, studied women's consumption of romantic fiction. She conducted in-depth interviews with women who had been identified as being avid readers of romantic fiction. The result of the research indicated that women's consumption of romance novels was a social event through which women blocked off the "demanding and emotionally draining task of attending to the physical and affective needs of their families" (Radway, 1987: 92).

In drawing a parallel with Radway, this study therefore seeks to explore the extent to which listening to *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is a social event in the female listeners' lives. It seeks to further interrogate whether like Radway's subjects, the women listeners find the programme as a form of temporary escape from their chores, or is incorporated into their regular schedules. This is in acknowledgement of Thompson's assertion that;

> …[R]eception is always a situated activity, it is also an activity which enables individuals to take some distance from the practical contexts of their daily life… and part of the significance that particular kinds of reception have for individuals derives from the ways in which they relate to other aspects of their lives (1995: 39)

As such, the focus of reception analysis is in the social meanings of a community, that is, meanings that are culturally shared. According to Ang, some reception researchers have used the terms ‘interpretive communities’ or ‘subcultures’ to denote groups of people who make common interpretations of a text (1990: 161). Such groups of people are not necessarily united physically in one location, but can be geographically dispersed and can comprise many different kinds of people who do not know each other but are symbolically connected by their shared interest in a media product. In concurrence, Jensen (1988: 4) notes that the central pivot of analysis is the interface between medium and audience, which interface is a social form rather than a direct consequence of the specific technology.

Given that reception is also a hermeneutic activity, and that each person brings a particular framework (their lived experience) to affect their interpretation, the manner in which people understand media messages will differ between individuals and from "one social-historical context to another" (Thompson 1995: 41). In line with the notion of reception analysis as concerned with "addressing contextual specificity in relation to broader structural factors" (Morley 1992: 276) and that consumption of particular cultural forms "takes place within particular socio-political contexts" (Strelitz 2002c: 4), this study focuses on the female listeners’ context within the Zimbabwean environment.

3.5. Conclusion

The chapter examined different approaches and the findings of research traditions focusing on the relationship between the mass media and their audiences. It outlined the different ways in which scholars have theorised the relationship between media and the society in which they function. In the early days, mass communication research was dominated by the transmission model of communication. Since then, there has been an acknowledgement of the role of audiences in interpreting media content.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how urban working-class Shona-speaking women's lived realities including their cultural understandings affect their decoding of gender and development messages broadcast weekly on Radio Zimbabwe's programme titled *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women).*

This chapter seeks to justify the methodological approach and the methods chosen. It discusses in detail the three stages of the research process including the specific qualitative methods used for data collection. It also discusses the physical location of the study and clarifies the sampling procedure, the research procedure and modes of data analysis employed. The researcher's role as the moderator and the use of the interview guide are also examined. There is discussion pertaining to the methodological approaches in line with the theoretical framework and the aims and objectives of the study.

4.2. Choice of Qualitative methodology

This study is an audience reception analysis, which is part of the qualitative (interpretivist) research tradition. The qualitative researcher seeks to examine what is assumed to be a dynamic reality and focuses on understanding particulars rather than generalisations on the universal laws of behaviour. On the other hand, quantitative research measures what it assumes to be a static reality in the hope of developing universal laws (Ang, 1996: 71). According to Christian and Carey (1989), in studying human beings, researchers are examining a creative process in which people produce and maintain forms of life, society and systems of meaning and value. They argue that,

> [t]his creative activity is grounded in the ability to build cultural forms from symbols that express the will to live and assert meaning. Humans live by interpretations. They do not merely react or respond but rather live by interpreting experience through the agency of culture. This is as true of the microscopic forms of human interaction (conversation and gatherings) as it is of the most macroscopic forms of human initiative (the attempt to build religious systems of ultimate meaning and significance). It is, then, to this attempt at recovering the fact of human agency– the ways persons live by intentions, purposes, and values – that qualitative studies are dedicated. Thus we do not ask "how do the media affect us" (could we figure that out if we wanted to?), but

> "what are the interpretations of meaning and value created in the media and what is their relation to the rest of life?" (1989:358-9)

Similarly, qualitative research seeks to understand the way people think and make meaning within their social context and how they express these understandings through communication rather than on establishing relations of cause and effect (Priest 1996:103). Bryman observes that "the *sine qua non* is a commitment to seeing the social world from the point of view of the actor – one's subjects" (1984: 77).

A qualitative approach collects ideographic data through hermeneutic textual analysis of 'audience' and 'content'; unstructured or semi-structured face-to-face interviews; focus group discussions; participant observation; discourse and qualitative content analysis. As such, the intended purpose of qualitative research is not to create universal laws to predict anything (Bryman, 1984) but to generate information about a situation as it is experienced by the people in their community. This in-depth information is used to enhance knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon such as the one at the core of this research.

4.3. Reception analysis methodology

Audience reception analysis is the empirical study of the social production of meaning arising from the consumption of a particular media product (Schroder et al. 2003:147). It combines a qualitative approach to media as texts, producing and circulating meaning in society, with an empirical interest in the recipients as co-producers of meaning (Jensen, 1988).

Schroder et al. further describe reception analysis methodology as being heavily reliant on data about the media product and its consumption. It interrogates media experiences through the medium of extended talk (2003:147). Reception analysis therefore seeks to clarify audience practices and experiences through "getting those involved to verbalise them in a non-natural but open situation of the qualitative research interview, in which informants have considerable power to influence the agenda" (Schroder et al., 2003: 147). It focuses on investigating how people understand the media they consume and on the meanings which people produce when they interpret media texts (Hobson, 1982; Ang 1985). Central to the analysis is the content of the texts and the intricate signifying process of the negotiation between texts and viewers situated within specific social contexts (Lindlof, 1991; Livingstone, 1998; Pitout, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the meanings made by the consumers of the radio programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for women)* within their social context, based on

the assumption of the qualitative approach that meaning is embedded in social action. This conformed to reception analysis, which argues that readers actively interpret messages according to their experiences, contexts and structural positions (Thompson, 1995).

The other aspect was the hermeneutic assumption of interpretation as "play". This means that audiences interpret media texts by playfully filling the gaps in the texts with their own fantasies, imagination and knowledge against the background of their social and cultural circumstances through conversations and social interaction (Wilson, 1993). In order to achieve the study objectives, the researcher chose a qualitative reception analysis approach.

A three-pronged research design was employed to generate empirical data on how Zimbabwean female audiences, based in the city of Harare, decode the radio programme under study. The approach included qualitative content analysis, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

4.4. The location of the study

Although the radio programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is broadcast nationally, this study focuses on a naturally-occurring audience: a group of females located in Harare, which is the capital city of Zimbabwe. The decision to focus on this group was based on a few factors. One of these was the need to contain the study. Other factors were that previous research had indicated that about 75 percent of the Zimbabwean population listened to radio, particularly during the day, and that of all the radio stations, Radio Zimbabwe commands the highest listenership (ZBC, 2008).

4.5. Sampling procedure

Sampling was done to select the research participants and the particular programme to analyse. The study employed a purposive sample, drawing participants from the 'naturally' existing communities, using the snowball sampling method (Hansen et al., 1998: 265). In line with purposive sampling guidelines, participants for the focus groups were drawn from the high-density suburb of Mbare.

This community is well known to the researcher as being easily accessible. The women have an interactive lifestyle and have regular informal gatherings to discuss issues affecting them within their locality. The practice of listening to similar radio stations is common as shared accommodation per household is the norm and contributes to enhancing community interaction. The sample was not representative of the general population, but is in

line with Hansen et al.'s claim that "having representative samples in qualitative research may be neither necessary nor desirable because the object of the study is simply to test a particular hypothesis" (1998: 242). In the same vein, Deacon et al (1999:54) argue that media research has rarely sought to obtain groups representative of the general population; rather selection of a sample is shaped by the research agenda.

The study sought to examine the active audience theory with a particular interest in establishing the extent to which the social context of these women influenced the audiences' acceptance or rejection of preferred readings encoded in the *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* texts. The main purpose was to establish whether the mass media had a powerful influence on its audience, or whether it was the audience who wielded the most power in the process of meaning-making.

Four local opinion leaders, who had been introduced to the researcher during her regular visits to the community, identified participants for the focus groups. Prior to the study, a general process of identifying women in the community who were keen on listening to the particular programme, was undertaken. This was to build a pool of participants for the focus group discussions. There needed to be at least six groups, each with an average of four to six regular listeners.

Though in Zimbabwe gender inequality cuts across all age groups, social classes, income and education, the study sought to constitute focus groups among working-class women. In line with Hansen et al.'s (1998: 268) recommendation to constitute four to six focus groups or continue until the data becomes repetitive, six homogeneous focus groups consisting of four to six voluntary regular radio programme listeners were constituted. This is because homogenous groups often generate better information compared to heterogeneous groups which have more variables in terms of age, geographical location and other factors, thus creating a challenge for the construction of a similar baseline. To encourage active participation by all group members, respondents were categorised according to the age groups; 24–39 years and 40 years and older. This was to ensure participants were at ease with each other and cater for group dynamics (Bryman, 1984) in view of their life experiences; although, fundamentally, their environments were the same.

In addition to the focus group participants, the study sought the participation of representatives from the encoders; that is, the programme producers who participated in in-depth interviews. The programme producers were the Head of the Radio Zimbabwe Station and the *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* producer. They were included to ascertain the

assumptions and considerations made in the packaging of the programme. This was to facilitate understanding and appreciation of the preferred readings of the programme.

A total of 13 radio programmes aired between1 July and 23 September 2009 were recorded. Though the programme focuses on the broad theme of women empowerment in various spheres, this radio broadcast season was deliberately chosen for its "economic empowerment" focus. It was out of these 13 recordings that the programme aired on the 9th of September 2009 was selected as the main focus for the purposes of the study. This programme was randomly chosen. It was broadcast in the eleventh week of the season, and was the third out of five programmes with the same theme of promoting women in mining.

4.6. The researcher's role as moderator and use of the interview guide

According to Hansen et al. (1998), it is often the researcher who acts as the moderator in media and communications research. The advantage of this is that the moderator is fully aware of the nature of the research and its objectives. In this study, the researcher facilitated all the focus-group discussions and the in-depth interviews; her role was to stimulate and facilitate the discussion and ensure that the conversation did not stray from the key research question of investigating what meanings working-class urban Zimbabwean women made of the gender-focused programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* (Hansen et al., 1998: 272; Morgan 1988:57). The researcher also ensured that thematic topics outlined in the literature review were covered and that similar issues were interrogated in the different groups to facilitate later analysis (see Knodel, 1993:37). The interview guide is appendix 1.

Central to the researcher's role was managing "group dynamics and interaction found where several people are brought together to discuss a subject, that is seen as the attraction of this mode of data collection over individual interviews" (Hansen et al, 1998:262). It was important for the researcher not to dominate proceedings but to ensure focus and that topics remained in line with the interview guide to avoid "unstructured chaos" (Hansen et al, 1998: 272 and Morgan1988:57). The purpose of the interview guide was principally to act as a menu for the topics, issues and areas of discussion to be covered. The guide also provided direction for the sequence of issues under consideration, the nature and extent of prompting and probing, the nature and use of visual or verbal aids, and the points at which these should be introduced during the discussion (Hansen et al, 1998).

Two interview guides were developed for the study (attached as appendices); one targeting the female respondents in the focus group discussions and the other targeting encoders for the in-depth interviews. Both employed the "funnel approach" of starting with general questions aimed at establishing perceptions of the gender discourse, followed by specific questions on how the target population discussed women empowerment issues and how their consumption of such media programmes played out in the context of their lived experiences (see Hansen et al., 1998). The interview guides provided direction and allowed discussions to flow at length. While not included in the guide, follow-up questions were asked during the interviews as the researcher deemed fit, in line with the recommendation by Morgan that during an interview, the researcher must be alert for opportunities to ask follow up questions as part of generating data (1998:56).

4.7. Methods of data collection and procedures

4.7.1. Qualitative thematic content analysis

Schroder et al. (2003:147) notes that audience reception analysis is the empirical study of the social production of meaning in people's encounter with media discourses. Qualitative thematic content analysis assumes a critical and interpretative approach, which entails investigating the meanings that are embedded in the media representations under investigation. It does not follow the characteristic quantitative content analysis, which seeks the frequency of particular themes as a reflection of particular phenomena. The overall aim of qualitative content analysis is to find out the patterns, ideas, thoughts, expressions and conceptions within the media in question. Thus, qualitative content analysis was conducted to enable me as the researcher to "probe into and discover content in a different way from the ordinary way of reading a book or watching a television programme" (Neuman, 1997:273).

The study followed the insights of Jensen and Rosengren (1990) and Morley (1992) in conducting a qualitative thematic content analysis. First, 13 episodes of *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for women)* radio programmes aired between 1 July and 23 September 2009 were recorded on an audiotape. The selected programme for study was then transcribed and translated into English prior to conducting qualitative thematic content analysis. This involved identifying the meanings embedded in the intonation, words and themes rather than looking at the frequency of particular themes (quantitative content analysis) (Deacon et al., 1999:133). The data generated from the qualitative content analysis provided the background for the focus group discussions.

4.7.2. Focus groups

Focus groups are typically defined as "bringing together a small group of people to participate in a carefully planned discussion on a defined topic" (Morgan, 1998: 115), in this case reception of the gender-focused programme, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women).* As a qualitative research method, focus group discussions gained popularity in the 1980s when they were acknowledged as being useful in understanding the differentiated meanings audiences make when consuming media (Deacon et al., 1999: 55).

Focus group discussions are compatible with the three key assumptions of qualitative research as outlined by Hansen et al. (1998), Brotherson (1994), Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) and Vaughn et al. (1996). First, in qualitative research "the nature of reality is viewed as phenomenological, and multiple views of reality can exist, therefore individuals are invited to participate in a discussion where their diverse opinions and perspectives are desired" (Brotherson, 1994:101). This acknowledges that many views and supportive explanations may be generated from a single data-collection session. Second, the discussions between the moderator and respondents, and among the respondents themselves, are recognised as having the potential to contribute in depth and dimension to the knowledge gained, creating a synergistic effect (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990:16). Third, "the nature of the truth statements is such that truth is influenced by perspective in relation to a particular context" (Vaughn et al., 1996:16). Focus group discussions also facilitate the generation of data by their speed, transparency, interaction, flexibility, open-endedness and the ability to note non-verbal communication (Gorman and Clayton 2005:147).

Focus group discussions enable the group and the researcher to identify how the programme 'speaks to' the audience and to revisit key thematic issues at different stages in the interview (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996:83 and Hansen et al., 1998:275). To undertake the reception analysis, participants were required to listen to the selected programme to stimulate discussion and obtain responses. The group discussions offered group interaction (which mirrored the way these programmes were listened to and discussed in groups). The researcher was able to observe the social production of meaning as participants negotiated their readings of the text in a familiar environment ; one in which they would naturally generate meaning (Schroder et al., 2003:111; Hansen et al., 1998:275). Interviews were held at the homes of community leaders in the high density suburb of Mbare, where the women regularly meet to discuss other issues related to their community issues and projects.

Six focus group interviews were conducted; two were with women in the 24 to 39-year-age group and the other four were with women aged 40 and above. The younger women

found it difficult to meet at specific times as they were often too busy with income-generating activities. Further, their demands over and above the refreshments that were offered exceeded the budget for the study. However the women older than 40 were keen to share their views as they felt that other than generating data for the study, they could also examine the feasibility of participating in the empowerment programmes. Generally, the discussion groups had an average of five participants.

4.7.3. Semi-structured interviews

Two in-depth interviews with officials from ZBC were conducted; the producer of the programme and the head of the radio station. The one-on-one interviews were semi-structured (or in-depth) (attached as appendices). A rational justification for the wide use of the semi-structured interviews in media studies is that "the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them" (Jensen, 1982: 240). Jensen also suggests that individual in-depth interviews emulate normal conversation and, since spoken language remains the primary and familiar mode of social interaction, interviews are well suited for tapping into social agents' perspectives on the media (1982: 240).

The researcher had planned to conduct in-depth interviews with specific members of the focus groups, intending to follow up on participants whose views had been marginalised during the discussions. However, in line with Morgan's notion of 'consensus' (1988:20, Hansen et al., 1988:263), it was decided that these were not necessary as participation by respondents had been animated.

The three-pronged approach to the methodology helped the researcher to develop insights into the relationship between the social context, production, reception and interpretation of gender-focused messages. It also enabled her to explain inferences and leads drawn from one data source and substantiated with other sources.

4.8. The interview setting

Hansen et al. assert that in audience research, the setting creates a frame within which the discussions take place which can influence the nature of participants' responses and those of the group as a whole (1998). As such, some audience researchers have recommended that the consumption of texts and qualitative interviews be done in the home context in order to gain access to natural domains and their characteristics (Morley, 1992). However, Morley argues that "the situational variable will produce differences within the field of interpretations, but the limits of that field are determined at a deeper level, at the level of

what language/codes people have available to them, which is not fundamentally changed by differences of situation" (1992:101).

The interviews were thus conducted in chiShona, the local language which is also spoken by the researcher. Translations of transcriptions were not literal but captured the essence of the discussions to incorporate the lingua franca as well as to avoid distorting the essential meaning through literal translation.

Drawing on the outlined theoretical insights, and considering the identification of certain women as being strategic participants, the interviews for the focus groups were conducted at these women's homes, particularly those accommodating more than one family per household[7]. This was to invest in the prevalent communal spirit in Mbare, so that participants were not removed from their environment. The encoders' interviews were conducted at their offices located also in Mbare. The aim was to enable all participants to feel comfortable in their settings (see Hansen et al., 1998).

4.9. Research procedure

Having made the conscious decision to undertake a reception analysis of the gender-focused programme, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women),* the researcher closely followed the programme's broadcast schedule. Anticipating that there would be the need to conduct a qualitative thematic content analysis, the researcher drafted a letter of introduction to the head of the Radio Zimbabwe station. She outlined the nature of the study and requested the thematic schedule of the programme, which outlined the programme's specific themes in the broadcast season. She also arranged interviews with both the head of the station and the programme producer. When invited to explain the nature of the request by the head of station, the researcher took advantage of the opportunity and began asking probing questions in relation to the programme. This helped shape the interview guide which was then used during the study, as key areas emerged from the somewhat informal discussion. The informal discussion also enabled the researcher to prepare in-depth for the formal interviews with the encoders.

The programme was recorded off-air during live broadcasts over the selected period. After the third programme, the researcher piloted the study with a randomly selected group of working-class women during a social visit to Mbare. Both of these activities (the interview

[7]It is general practice in the area for one household to have an average of three families – each allocated a certain number of rooms with a shared common area. Hence radio listening is generally communal except when the choice of radio station differs.

with the broadcaster and the pilot study) helped the researcher to revisit problematic questions on the interview guides and map a strategy for constituting the focus groups. Subsequent appointments were then made for the researcher to meet with selected respondents in the chosen community.

Ethical issues in conducting the interviews needed to be taken into account. Having considered observations by Fontana and Frey (1994:378) on the need to obtain informed consent, the researcher explained, in detail, the purpose of the study, the procedure that would be followed and her commitment to the respondents' 'rights to privacy and protection' prior to any recording. Despite having been given the option, none of the respondents chose to use a pseudonym as they felt that the topic under discussion did not in any way threaten their wellbeing and integrity. Almost all the focus group discussions lasted for about an hour and were conducted in chiShona.

The in-depth interviews with the encoders were held a few days after the focus group discussions, both on the same day. The 30-minute-long interviews were conducted in English and recorded on audio tape.

4.10. Data analysis

Data for analysis from qualitative interviews was generated by verbal responses, statements, opinions, interactions of the participants and their non-verbal actions. The researcher noted non-verbal communication which included facial expressions, body language and gestures as part of the assessment of meaning-making. As with other methodologies in audience research, the data and findings of reception analysis study should be seen as joint discursive productions by the researcher and participant's interaction in the research process and by the researcher interpreting the interview transcripts. Similarly, data was interpreted in the context of the socio-cultural system which was conceptualised as an historical configuration of social practices, contexts of use, and interpretative communities (Jensen and Rosengren, 1990: 218). As such, the data was disaggregated within the understanding of the women's contemporary urban culture in a patriarchal society.

There are many methods for analysing large amounts of data (see e.g. Pitout, 1998; Leaderman, 1990; Liebes and Katz, 1990). Leaderman (1990) argues that one of the most reliable methods is to use content analysis categories and to illustrate these categories with citations from the focus group interviews. In other words a researcher combines interpretative strategies with systematic coding. This study adopted an approach similar to Leaderman's

analytical approaches (1990:117-127), while fitting the main ideas and summaries into Hall's (1980) encoding and decoding model with three reading positions to determine the participants' interpretation of gender-focused messages. Auxiliary approaches used included the analytical approaches of Tomlinson (1991), Strelitz (2002), Liebes and Katz (1990), Philo (1993), and Kitzinger (1993).

4.11. Methodological issues pertaining to triangulation.

In defining triangulation, Bryman (1988:131) argues that it entails the need to employ more than one method of investigation and, hence, more than one type of data. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are acknowledged as being different ways of exploring the same data. Strelitz (2003:116) acknowledges that the two methods are based on different epistemological assumptions about the nature and purpose of research in the social sciences; the strengths of one tend to be the weaknesses of the other. This study employed qualitative research without the triangulation of quantitative research. Qualitative research is 'multi-method' in focus and attempts to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question through life stories, observation and interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2). In order to address issues of validity, Maxwell's proposition was followed. This was to ensure that the researcher did not distort data, but provided a valid description of what events, utterances and behaviours meant to the target audiences, since:

> The applicability of the concept of validity…does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts that do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that the account claims to be about. (1992:283)

4.12. Conclusion

The chapter focused on the research design of the study; that of qualitative research. It discussed in depth the methods of data collection employed, which included qualitative thematic content analysis, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to facilitate data analysis and the subsequent write up. The chapter has also outlined the research procedure, methodological issues pertaining to triangulation and the researcher's reasons for choosing not to triangulate, pointing out that qualitative research is a 'multi-method' and thus valid in securing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It was discussed that the scope of the study is audience reception analysis. The discussion also acknowledged that in qualitative research, generalisation is usually through the development of a theory that makes sense of the particular persons or situations

studied, also showing how the same process, in different situations, can lead to different results (Maxwell 1992:293).

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study, the objective of which was to analyse the meanings made by a certain group of female audiences in Zimbabwe of the radio programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for women).*

The main purpose of the study was to establish the extent to which the media has a determining power over its audiences as well as the role of the audiences in the process of meaning-making. The aim was to determine the extent to which the women understood patriarchy within their context, and how this then influenced their reading of the programme.

The discussion was informed by theoretical considerations in line with the objectives of the study and was validated by quotations generated from the field interviews consistent with the themes. It begins with a discussion of the qualitative thematic content analysis of the radio programme under consideration, which I undertook to familiarise myself with the proposed media product so as to well prepare me for the in-depth focus group discussions that would follow (Schroder et al. 2003: 154). This chapter interrogates particular women's media consumption habits and the women's notions of meaning-making against the themes established from the content analysis, juxtaposing these with their lived experiences. Thereafter, the concept of media power in relation to audience power is examined in line with the study's findings.

As was discussed in chapter four, the data was collected from interviews with a total of 28 participants aged between 24 and 60 in six focus groups. Each group comprised an average of five participants. The interview findings are discussed according to the interview themes contained in the interview guide. They are as follows:

1. Women's media consumption and listening habits
2. Negotiating gender and women's empowerment messages
3. The role of language in attracting audiences to the programme
4. Media power versus audience power

5.2. Qualitative content analysis

Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women) is a magazine programme that is broadcast weekly, focusing on women's empowerment. The episode under study was 30-minutes long and was part

of the series that focused on women in mining. It was divided into three distinct segments. During the first segment, the presenter introduced the three guests in the studio: two women from Harare Women in Mining Association and a development worker from a women's rights organisation. Key themes articulated in this particular programme were the importance of women actively participating in economic empowerment activities such as mining; the importance of addressing gender imbalances by dealing with patriarchal attitudes, albeit subtly; the importance of teamwork and perseverance in the face of adversity; and the importance of active lobbying for government support in driving the women's economic empowerment agenda.

The notion of participating in empowerment programmes is a thread that runs throughout the programme. The signature tune's lyrics, '*ndimaivanogona kutungamira, kurongaronga' ('it is the woman who can provide leadership, who can organise')*, were buttressed by the presenter's remarks that women should get involved in activities that would single them out as 'able'. In stating that "in this programme, we share ideas on empowerment strategies in relation to women's rights", the presenter suggested that sharing was a learning opportunity for the listeners, who may not have had exposure to these strategies. She further asserted that:

> [T]he purpose of the programme is to enhance the uplifting of the status of women and a space for us to encourage each other to go on and permeate even the male dominated spaces, if that will contribute to women empowerment. (*Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*, broadcast on 9 September 2009)

In the ensuing discussion, the two female guests were asked whether they actually went underground to mine. The women articulated that contrary to the discourse of women being subservient to men in a patriarchal society, they were the ones in charge. In the mining domain, the women reflected a change in the discourse of patriarchy, as they became 'the employers' who 'oversee the actual mining'. This therefore depicted not just their participation in women empowerment activities, but also their being in control – a key aspect of the entire process. As such, in this discourse, the subject of power seemed to be discursive – having moved from the men in the social context of patriarchal dominance in the home to the women within the context of the business environment; that is, in the mining processes (see Foucalt, 1998: 92). The women in the programme reflected their possession of power as owners of the means of production. The declaration by one of the guests that she owned mines in different areas – Guruve, Goromonzi, Chegutu and Chakari – was also the discourse of affirmation that indeed women could do it, further leveraging on the key theme of empowerment. The women were able to create

employment for the *makorokoza*[8], who were involved in informal mining activities. Not only were the women empowering themselves, but also the communities in which they worked by contributing to creating formal employment. Having had the knowledge to apply for mining claims and access to the process of seeing this process through as an organised group, the women are depicted as advocates for utilising opportunities available to all Zimbabwean women wishing to access economic empowerment resources such as mining land.

Through being active in the mining sector and understanding the mining processes, the women depicted knowledge as an empowerment tool which they used to assert themselves, particularly in managing difficult employees and dealing with subtle forms of patriarchy aimed at undermining their efforts. They said of the men they employed:

> They want to assert themselves over us as women and they manipulate such situations in the name of security. Initially, we really struggled because this was a reversal of roles – imagine the employee wanting to take over from employer by virtue of their masculinity? They resent having female supervisors at the mines and do not care; even when they know that the claim belongs to a woman. We have since learnt to be firm and know from the guidance provided by the Ministry of Mines that mining is a process. (*Nguva yevanhukadzi – Time for Women*, 9 September 2009 broadcast).

During the discussion, the women stated that they, "want the young men to be employed", while promoting the women empowerment theme. They acknowledged the need to 'demystify mining as a male domain' despite the 'unscrupulous' attitudes of some men who 'resent having female supervisors at the mines'. The purpose clearly was to engage the men in shifting attitudes, which 'are changing, though very slowly', going as far as also embracing female miners who 'take up the picks and shovels'. These assertions depicted the hegemonic relationship along gender lines which played out as the continual seeking of consent by the women, which resulted in the process of struggle and negotiation for gender balance (see Fiske 1987b: 259; During 1995: 5).

The women claimed that they had the support of their spouses and that [having to] balance the roles of being a woman and a business woman...[was] really 'no problem'. This was ironic in the sense that the women without spousal support had to play the dual roles of being at the mine and running their homes, yet their contemporaries (the women in the programme, assumed to have spousal support) claimed that the dual roles were being carried out with no problem. However, there was no further statement or evidence to this claim to substantiate the absence of challenges faced by the single women.

[8]Informal gold panners

The programme further consolidated the notion that successful women's empowerment is better realised through solidarity. The women stated that 'the land was specifically for our members. You have to join our association to access these things'. This was in addition to facilitating processes such as registrations, applying for mining certificates, surveying and pegging mining claims collectively. Empowerment to this particular group of women, while individually celebrated, was collectively accessed. Even the women's rights organisation's lobby processes were for an organised group rather than for individuals, as explained by the development worker on the programme.

Another theme that emerged from the programme analysis was that of hard work and perseverance in the face of adversity. The women featured on the programme stated that they had sought to penetrate 'male-dominated spaces' to become visible in the economic sector. The lack of equipment, access to resources and support from the patriarchal society demanded that the women stayed focused. They did this through team work and the creation of syndicates. The constant allusion to the 'association' suggested that this particular group was the women's source of strength. Despite them having received no financial support from the government, they had remained optimistic.

Though not discussed in detail, the theme of lobbying government for support and relevant interventions seemed to be important in ensuring the success of the women's empowerment programme. It is important to note is that the programme did not explore in any depth the discourse of patriarchy as a hindrance to women's empowerment. It chose, instead, to encourage women's active involvement in processes that would uplift their socio-economic status in line with the developmental approach.

In an effort to lead listeners' opinions, the women on the programme focused on and emphasised aspects economic empowerment while side-lining the issues of patriarchy. Their focus may be considered to be an attempt to direct the listeners' knowledge of women's empowerment, in line with Rogers' (1983) assertion that development communication seeks to direct the receiver's knowledge of an idea, creating or changing attitudes. In the interview with the programme makers, it emerged that ZBC had deliberately focused on topical issues such as women's empowerment in an effort to revamp the programme and attract an increased listenership. According to the station manager:

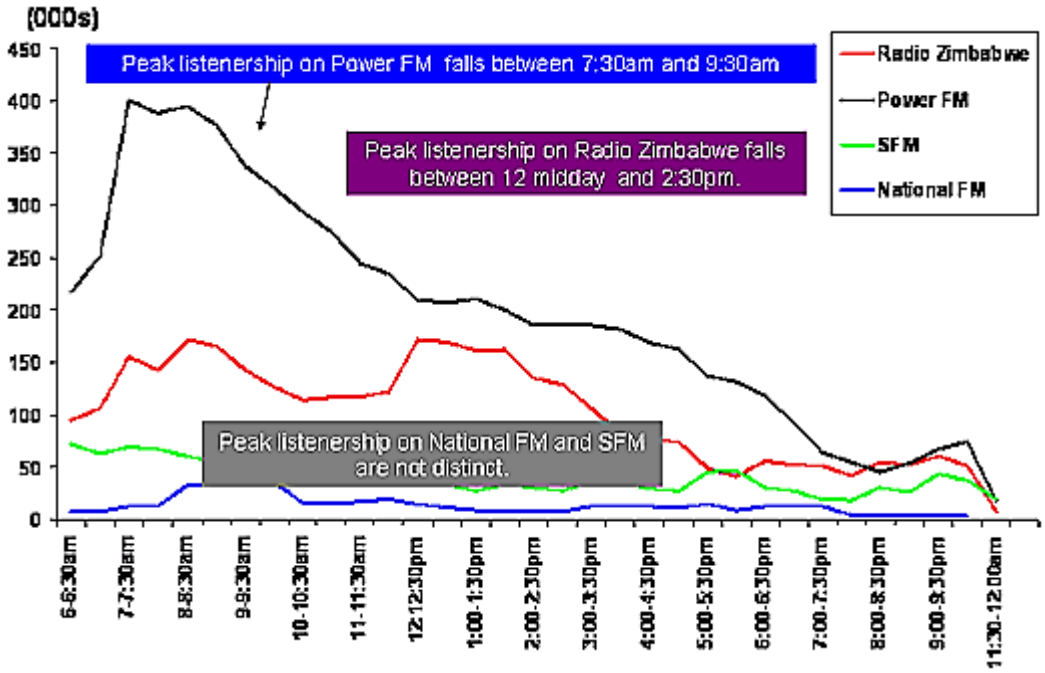
> Radio Zimbabwe strives to be current and abreast with issues that may be of interest to the women. Producers of various programmes propose themes considered to be appealing to listeners as current and relevant in line with the feedback received both from the listeners and the marketing department. For *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women),* the wave about economic empowerment has no doubt caught onto us here at

> RZ. So through the programme we sought how best to harness women's participation and hopefully increase our listenership figures against other radio stations. As you know, each of the radio stations is working flat out to outdo one another in listenership figures and subsequent increase in advertising. (Innocent Manase, ZBC Radio Zimbabwe Interview 2009)

According to the presenter of the programme, the strategy of harnessing women's rights organisations as regular guests to provide technical advice on the programme was an attempt to connect with other concerns in the working-class women's lives (Patricia Jacobs, Programme Producer, ZBC Radio Zimbabwe Interview 2009). This is in line with United Nations Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) observation that due to underlying institutional structures and social norms that define unequal roles, entitlements and responsibilities for women and for men in society, women have historically borne the brunt of economic adjustment during crises such as the Zimbabwean crisis (UNIFEM 2009:6) and therefore stand to benefit from any interventions the programme might have to offer.

In addition, the encoders acknowledged that the main purpose of the programme was to provide a platform for discussing issues affecting women, including women's empowerment. This was in accordance with the discourse of socio-economic recovery processes taking place nationally. The programme makers' constant reference to ongoing economic processes was a reflection of the recommendations by the GPA of September 2008, cited in chapter three, which was signed to end the decade-long socio-economic and political crises in the country.

In the interview, the encoders' articulated the preferred reading of the programme as imploring listeners to acknowledge and appreciate the abundance of opportunities for women's participation in the empowerment programmes taking place throughout the country. The programme urged the female audiences to harness these opportunities and to use the programme as a platform for showcasing their success stories to encourage others (Interview with Innocent Manase, ZBC Station Manager, 2009). The encoders also cited that this chiShona language programme, recapped in siNdebele at the end of each segment, targeted the wider female audience of the station in an effort to increase listenership. (The full transcript of the programme, translated into English is included as Appendix 3.) The programme's scheduling was organised to take advantage of the research findings by the Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS 2008) that, besides the music station Power FM, Radio Zimbabwe commanded the highest listenership among the ZBC's radio stations. The programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* falls on the listenership ascension prior to the peak hour of 12 noon depicted in the graph below:



ZAMPS survey accessed on www.zarf.co.zw/radiohtm (20/8/10)

The encoders also realised that they could use the programme to leverage on the campaigns by women's rights organisations for the implementation of instruments such as the SADC Protocol on Gender among other discourses for promoting equal opportunities for women. To that end, partnerships with the women's rights organisations in mobilising women and providing technical advice enhanced the involvement of the ordinary women on the programme (Interview with ZBC 2009).

5.3. Women's media consumption and listening habits

This section discusses the women's general media consumption habits, particularly their listening to the programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*. This is to facilitate the appreciation of media consumption as a part of the women's lived experience as it socially situates and is situated by the media. Reception analysis takes cognisance of the fact that the consumption of the programme is not an isolated and solitary experience, but rather is one experience firmly embedded in particular socio-historical, political and cultural circumstances which are subjectively experienced by the readers (see Fiske 1987:62; Ang1990:160; Ruddock 2001:119; and Thompson 1995:23).

Despite the diverse age ranges and varied lifestyles, the women interviewed in this study reflected that their listening habits were largely shaped by the environment in which

they lived. Most of the women's choice of radio station was particularly influenced by their socio-cultural circumstances as described in these interview extracts:

> **Mai Moyo:** If you listen to the other stations you find that you are living in your own world and tend to be left out of general community discussions. Radio Zimbabwe is the station for us here. Maybe those with teenagers have different choices, but here we generally listen to Radio Zimbabwe and enjoy most of the programmes. The announcers talk real life issues; things we can relate to.
>
> **Interviewer:** What kind of things do you relate to?
>
> **Mbuya Mazvita:** Issues that help us cope with the challenges in life, including this programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women).*

All the discussants cited that Radio Zimbabwe was their station of choice as it generally appealed to their interests in terms of the music played and the relevance of the issues often under discussion. This is in line with Schroder et al.'s argument (2003:25) that individuals in specific social groups acquire interpretive repertoires that are socially patterned and shared to a large extent. The programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* therefore had a ready audience in the study sample as evidenced by these assertions from the 24 to 39-year focus groups:

> **MaDube:** I just listen in my room and when I meet with my friends who are single parents like me, we discuss what we would have heard. We like to listen to the programme because it gives us ideas on how to survive as women in our community.
>
> **Mai Farai:** As a young widow, I feel the programme does not discriminate against us on the basis of our marital status, but provides opportunities for improving our livelihoods. Radio Zimbabwe is my station, and *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* my programme, though I have never really ever written to them to participate.
>
> **Rumbi:** All my life this has been the station that I have listened to. I identify with most of its programmes; more so now that I am a young adult. I find a lot of relevance in the issues explored.
>
> **Interviewer:** What kind of issues would you say are relevant?
>
> **Rumbi:** Everything. But the programmes that focus on livelihoods, opportunities and sharing wisdom especially as women, are more appealing, and this programme, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*; I have learnt to listen to it because it is not political. It does not seek our political party affiliations, but focuses on opportunities for women – we are always looking for opportunities you know...

Radio Zimbabwe studios are situated in the same high-density suburb of Mbare, Harare's oldest township and, according to the women, this proximity contributes to the sense of identity that the women listeners had. They believed that their way of life was understood by the producers of programmes; this included the sharing of accommodation where an average of three families could be renting rooms in one household. This was a factor that contributed significantly to the shared social and cultural values as illustrated by the discussion in another focus group of women over 40:

> **Mai Tinashe:** For us here we have to agree on who among us has what electric gadget switched on. It's good that we all like Radio Zimbabwe because it's a matter of increasing the volume so that we can all hear. When something interesting is said, we call on the attention of others so that we are on the same wavelength.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why, does it mean not all of you have radios?
>
> **Mai Ngoro:** We have five families here and the electricity amperage is limited, so inevitably we listen to one radio set while the others have something else switched on. In a way you could say we listen together, though no one sits down to say *yaa*, I am now listening to the radio.

The women's listening habits reflect that the programme was their 'space' that enabled them to take time out from their full-time commitment to their chores. They would ensure that the programme took a significant aspect of their time on that particular weekday, in line with Radway's study (1987) cited in chapter three.

The interviewees cited that the scheduling of the programme at 11:30a.m was appropriate for them. Listening to the radio remained a secondary activity for all the discussants as they could never sit down and concentrate on it as a primary activity. The scheduling, therefore, was at a time when most of them cited having slowed down in their chores, including their informal trading. Some indicated that the programme was broadcast when they were preparing afternoon meals in anticipation of the return of children from school after they had finished more demanding chores like laundry, going to the market and tilling their urban fields. The station's programming enabled the listeners to feel grounded in their space, as articulated by 32-year-old Mai Simba:

> **Mai Simba:** The station is a family station and promotes harmony and development. I have never really understood English stations because, being black, why would I want to listen to them? After all, I am not a *mu-nose*[9].Here in the township it does not work.

[9]Normally referred to as 'nose-brigades' – people who attempt to speak English through the nose.

It was clear from the interviews that the community identified with Radio Zimbabwe and its programmes. This concurs with the assertion that identity is something we continually shape and in which we position ourselves (Hall cited in Hartley 2002:84). The need to belong to the community and allusion to not being a *mu-nose* depicts how the women identified themselves within the context of their environment. The fact that the station broadcasts in chiShona and siNdebele contributed to shaping the women's socio-cultural identities. Their common language is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways, thus constituting a key symbol of identity as being a Shona community (see Kramsch 1998 cited in Mabweazara 2006:74).

5.4. Negotiating gender and women's empowerment messages

Having established the preferred readings of the programme from the encoders, the researcher sought to establish the readings made by the target audience who were the focus of the study – working-class women in the high-density suburb of Mbare. Almost all the participants in the study lived in shared accommodation. Approximately three families had rooms in a household, depending on the size of the house. The homogeneity was also consolidated by the fact that they were all regular listeners to *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* and conversant in chiShona, the language used to in the broadcast of the programme. Though none were formally employed, all had regular routines earning an income in the informal sector to sustain their families.

All the discussions began with establishing the demographics and setting the tone by playing the selected programme to the discussants. As anchor and moderator in the research, I then asked the women to identify the themes in the programme. This was to ascertain their ability to draw themes from the programme as part of assessing the value to them as listeners. The articulation of the themes would also enable me as the researcher to code the data according to the emerging themes and thus systematically discuss these with support from theoretical claims. In line with the qualitative content analysis, the female audiences identified the themes of:

1. Active participation in empowerment programmes;
2. Addressing gender imbalances by dealing with patriarchal attitudes;
3. Solidarity with each other and perseverance as pivotal to success; and
4. The importance of lobbying government to support women empowerment.

To consolidate their appreciation of the themes, the women shared their experiences during the focus group interviews. Agreeing with Livingstone's (1988: 66-67) findings of her reception analysis of British soap operas, responses from the women indicated that they listened to the radio programme for three reasons. First, that of realism: they related to the events and issues under discussion. Second, problem solving: they learnt about how others coped with problems and drew analogies with their own situations which seemed to reduce the intensity of their problems; and third, the critical response: that as listeners, they enjoyed the quality of the programmes while also enjoying being critical.

It was apparent, therefore that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* listeners made the effort to consciously and actively interpret media messages from the radio programmes they listened to, in keeping with active audience approaches. In trying to assess what value the women got from listening to the programme, it seemed a number of them had stories to share, albeit at different levels. The women indicated that in addition to the discourse of women's empowerment, the fact that there were a lot of women being featured on the programme sharing their experiences was a vivid example of the value that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* adding to their lives. Mai Tandi, a 42-year-old divorcee in one focus group, stated that her mind had been opened in many ways through listening to the programme. She indicated that through discussions with other female listeners of the programme, she had begun to appreciate the extent to which women constitute a community and that they could draw lessons from the programme:

> **Mai Tandi:** You have no idea! It's not just me. We have seen people's lives change – improve, because of these radios. We have told ourselves that we must listen to constructive programmes which give us ideas, and *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is one such programme because truly, it focuses on just what the woman needs in this environment. I am a true witness to this.

It was evident that through the sharing of knowledge on *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women),* the women had a contextualised view of gender and women's empowerment in their environment. Two cross-border traders, both married, articulated their perception of the messages carried in the programme:

> **Mai Two:** I am not sure this programme is about male–female relations. Rather I think it presents opportunities available to women on improving our livelihoods. I would say it is about promoting gender equality in favour of us the marginalised – women.

> **Mai Tapiwa**: Our focus as women in this community is more about ensuring that we overcome economic challenges, and I guess the gender dimension will come across strongly when there are not enough resources.
>
> **Interviewer**: What is your understanding of the gender and women's empowerment within the context of the programme just listened to?
>
> **Mai Two**: When there is no food in the house, yes, you may want to talk gender, because now you are saying, who should bring what to the table? Who should undertake what role?

In negotiating the meaning of gender and women's empowerment messages, the women cited the various aspects of effectively participating in available economic and social programmes aimed at dealing with patriarchy, the importance of collective action in pushing their agenda as well as perseverance in all processes including lobbying for government support. The women cited their understanding of patriarchy as the static inequality between men and women, so naturalised in their context that it could not be questioned or challenged.

Despite this, the women's discussions acknowledged the reversal of roles in the gender relations as articulated by Gaidzanwa (2011), cited in chapter three. Through the discussions, the women reflected an appreciation of the gender discourse and women's empowerment as reminiscent of the rebuilding of the economy in line with the recommendation of the GPA.

When constituting the focus groups, the women were not grouped according to their marital status but it emerged in the demographics that all had had exposure to society's patriarchal norms either as wives, daughters-in law or sisters. All but two of the younger women were married while the older groups were mixed – widows, divorcees and wives. This therefore facilitated discussion around the male–female relations in the context of the women's lived experiences.

5.4.1 Messages on empowerment programmes

All focus-group interviews revealed the women's awareness of the importance of keeping abreast with ongoing empowerment programmes. They acknowledged that discourse in the country at that time were that women were pivotal breadwinners and heads of households due to the collapse of the economy as noted by Gaidzanwa (2011). According to widowed, 42-year-old Mai Shepherd,

> **Mai Shepherd:** When you know you have children to look after, you need to be alert for opportunities everywhere, especially on radio, and not just listen to music. Children don't eat music, but we can be creative around what we hear others doing out there. The opportunity to get into mining and be successful like the women in the programme is a reflection that nothing is impossible, even at my age.

In line with Schmidt's (1990) assertion that the practice of bringing preconceived notions to a text is a general practice across all social classes, Mai Shepherd acknowledged that as listeners they were cognisant of the male–female relations and the dominance of patriarchy, as dictated by society. She understood that the programme subtly addressed these:

> **Mai Shepherd:** We have always respected our men; it is the essence of our culture. In seeking our own empowerment as women, all we are doing is propping them up in looking after the family, because they are the heads of households. However, our Shona proverb *mushamukadzi* is to say, as women, we are the anchor for these men. This probably explains why the women in the programme will not want to be confrontational in talking about male–female relations. It's a subtle way of dealing with patriarchy and gender issues in general.

As such, the women were doing their best to prop the discourse of patriarchy as it is a notion that is "naturalised" within their context and an aspect of their socio-cultural values. While Mai Shepherd acknowledged that as women they were the anchors of their homes, it was without question that the men were the "heads" of households and therefore their integrity needed to be protected through the women's subservience. For 26-year-old Shingi, *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* presented her with the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the economy; she did not necessarily have to deal with patriarchal attitudes but could focus on spaces available for women. This was in addition to other empowerment programmes taking place on the broader scale, which included the indigenisation of various economic sectors:

> **Shingi:** I think women's empowerment is about ensuring that we have a role to play in raising our families. I think it is also a strategy to redress the economy without actually doing away with formal employment. I listen to the programme to enhance my ability to see available opportunities for women in a less crowded space –that is, without having to jostle with men who could be competing for exactly the same resources.

She indicated that the messages on empowerment opportunities, particularly in the mining sector seemed to come out clearly in the programme as listeners could follow up on issues discussed within the context of their environment. By citing the need to "play a role in

raising" family, Shingi was deliberately skirting the subject of challenging the status quo, but sought a more comfortable zone to co-exist. She did not talk about out-rightly "raising" the family, because the patriarchal discourse articulates that the family belongs to the man. She therefore acknowledged that she had "a role" to play in the bigger picture. In a way, the women acknowledged that patriarchy exists and cannot be wished away or challenged.

Given that the women in the study were not miners or living in mining communities per se, they sought to firstly interrogate the subject of mining within their context, and then understood the need to identify parallel opportunities to those presented in *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*, thus deciphering the messages in line with negotiating and using media texts in the course of their everyday lives, constructing their own meanings on the notion of empowerment within an autonomous cultural economy (Curran 1990 cited in Strelitz 2000:38). Chipo, a cross-border trader aged 36, stated that although the programme under focus was on women in mining, through discussion with other women in "mediating the message", it opened her mind to consider options beyond already crafted empowerment programmes:

> **Chipo:** Always when we listen to the programme, we ask ourselves what relevance the guests or topic under discussion has for us. Through our discussions in the community, we always come up with ideas relevant to our situation. Already, I have learnt that the notion of syndicates works well as a cushion to us as women in whatever project we may undertake. It is like a safety net as one can never count losses in the company of others.

Sharing her life story, Chipo indicated that from listening to the jingle *Ndimaivanogona (it's the woman who is able)* with her friends, they have learnt that the programme unlocks opportunities for them. Though married to a formally employed man, she acknowledged that selling snacks and sandwiches at the bus terminus did little to improve their livelihood. Pairing up with a friend who was already plying the Beira–Harare highway, Chipo developed the confidence to cross the border to Mozambique and began importing bales of clothes for resale at Mbare flea market. She boasted a ten-fold increase in income from her market stall. She attributed her success to the motivation received from listening to success stories aired on *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*:

> **Chipo:** One day I just said to myself: 'If these women can go to places they haven't been to before and earn a living, what is stopping me?' It is exactly the same gospel these women in mining are preaching. I am sure none of them ever studied the technical aspect of the trade, but they now own mines. Now from listening to this episode of the programme I have also learnt that I do not have to work alone, but perhaps establish a team with fellow cross-border

> traders and maybe employ men to run our flea market stalls as part of redressing the gender imbalance and challenging patriarchy.

Though she referred to challenging patriarchy by ensuring that she has income of her own, Chipo acknowledged that she had to be very subtle and submissive to her husband in negotiating to be "allowed" to leave home and order goods for the new-found project – the flea market. While her income has increased ten-fold, so have her responsibilities around the home as she has to fully account and justify to her husband the need to keep the business running.

In the discussion, Chipo and the other women under study acknowledged that patriarchal hegemony was there to stay; as such, the least they could do for themselves as women was to enjoy little niceties they labelled "economic luxuries" as a form of escape from their harsh reality of limited resources. The women cited that it was not something they saw as a site for contestation, but rather, an aspect they needed to manage to ensure that they retained their dignity and upheld socio-cultural values. Women like Chipo did not take their marriages for granted but learnt the art of skilfully enjoying their "freedom" as women through economic empowerment.

The women acknowledged that the programme's focus on women's empowerment programmes was aimed at making a significant contribution to uplifting their livelihoods and not necessarily at dealing with patriarchy as they themselves were not too worried about it. After all, they were the mothers of sons whom they wanted respected by their wives in the future, in line with tradition. They stated that the socio-economic and political crises had adversely affected their economic status and it was appropriate for government to commit to programmes that could uplift the women. According to 32-year-old Mai Rudo, it was important to seek relevance in specific programmes:

> **Mai Rudo:** *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* gives us knowledge on available opportunities for women, but it is important to sift what is relevant to our situation. It is also important to draw lessons from the different episodes. For example, the management strategy that the Harare Women in Mining Association employs is the major lesson for me in terms of empowerment. I now have an appreciation of the different roles women can play in a project, without necessarily being a member of the association. I have also learnt that even when women have challenges with their spouses, their choice to claim the existence of support may be a way of dealing with patriarchy; massaging the men's egos.

For her and other members of focus group interviews, all messages on the programme were 'open' texts, which as readers they had to project their own meaning (Strelitz 2000:39). This was because the women could not relate to mining activities, but had to see value in the

programme within their context as it was intended for them. As such, management and organisational structure was the text which Mai Rudo read from *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women).* While there were other programmes in the series which dealt with various issues, the women cited that they listened to all the programmes with an open mind, adapting the subjects of discussion to their situations. This concurs with the assertion by Fiske that media messages are polysemic, providing multiple potential meanings and pleasures (1987b:15).

Even when the women decoded the programme in line with the dominantly encoded meanings around women's empowerment, they were aware of their choices in inadvertently reading the messages differently. For instance, the women understood that because the particular programme's focus was on mining, they could have chosen to reject it as being relevant to those in the mining sector, or read the text to reflect the women on the programme as the privileged elite with special access to those in power (the GPA), despite the contending discourse in the country being women's access to many resources such as land for both farming and mining.

The appreciation of women empowerment as a key theme in the programme was examined in different ways by the group under study. Despite having articulated to the members of the focus groups that the research was purely for study purposes, some respondents sought to utilise the platform to tell the authorities in the inclusive government under the GPA that government was indebted to the people, hence the need for the operating environment to be awash with various empowerment programmes as part of rebuilding the economy. Somehow, the women expressed disillusion with the negotiated settlement of the inclusive government and felt the need to express this through the interviews. According to 46-year-old Mai Tinashe, there was the need to restore credibility among the people through some compensatory scheme:

> **Mai Tinashe:** They [the government] need to design programmes to uplift our lives. They have no choice if they want women as a constituency; they must support us. They damaged this economy, now they want an entry point. They know that there is a lot of negative talk about this mining, especially the diamonds, so by involving women they hope to attain a semblance of order in the mining sector. Through this programme, we are seeing that it is possible for us to harness these opportunities and be mine owners – or at least contribute to the value chain in the mining sector.

The women articulated their understanding of the politics in the mining sector and expressed that involving women in such projects would assist in ensuring more transparent processes in the economy among other sectors. Though not all were interested in mining per se, the

women articulated that it was imperative for women to take up these opportunities for the benefit of the country. Mai Tinashe reiterated:

> **Mai Tinashe:** Women are generally selfless creatures. We do things for our families, not just for social status. We have concerns of sending children to school and government knows that. Look now, how many youths roam the streets looking for money to *burn*[10]? It is only us who can do away with this culture through viable projects. Even elderly women would wake up in the morning to go and line the streets to *burn* money. What kind of life is that? It is only proper that they give us something worthwhile to build the economy and right now, the money is in mining.

Women in the 24-39 year focus groups also acknowledged the importance of the messages on empowerment programmes targeting women as a means of redressing gender imbalances. They stated that having stayed on in the country while their contemporaries left to seek greener pastures, it was appropriate that they be accommodated in development programmes as part of building the economy – in line with the contending discourse in the country. According to 24-year-old Rumbidzai, a young mother, the rolling out of empowerment programmes through *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* and other forums accessible to the ordinary person reflected political will on the part of government and the economic sector in improving the livelihoods of society:

> **Rumbidzai:** *Tisuanhuacho*[11]Our participation validates this government and can reflect to the outside world that, yes, there are people in Zimbabwe who are keen to work, to look after their families. We will take whatever is available. Right now, mining is the sector, and having women who have ventured into it on our programme is very empowering as it reflects that, indeed, this is not just rhetoric, but accessible to us as women. *Zvinhuzviyedzwa*[12]...you never know which lucky stone will transform your life.

Mai Bhule, a 38 year old member of a *Mukando*[13] club cited that the continued harping of messages on women empowerment on the programme assisted her club with ideas on the direction to take with regards to possible investments:

> **Mai Bhule:** As women with nothing really to lose, we have decided that our *Mukando* money can be channelled towards a viable project which we can replicate by listening to how others have done it or filling gaps already identified, instead of trying to find something new. As a group, we religiously listen to the programme in

[10]Colloquial term for changing money on the parallel market at astronomical rates, common in Zimbabwe at the height of the economic crisis and inflation against major currencies of the world in the period 2008-2009
[11]We make up the people
[12]It is important to make an effort
[13]An association in which people contribute a certain amount of money on a monthly basis to fund each other's projects on a rotational basis

> our different spaces and assess the successes and shortfalls of the projects showcased within our context. The programme on women in mining is definitely relevant as it has multiple learning points for us as a club.

5.4.2. Addressing gender imbalances and dealing with patriarchy

An aspect of this study was to ascertain whether the women acknowledged and appreciated gender issues as the primary focus of the programme. From the interviews, it was apparent that the women understood that, while these need to be addressed from a broader perspective, the current focus was to ensure that women shared economic space with men. They understood that having control, or economic power gave them certain leverage in terms of having a voice in their varied spaces, hence their enthusiasm.

The women cited that though they appreciated the importance of gender equality, the socio-economic and political crises in the last decade rendered those struggles economically peripheral. Their major concern now was to ensure that their families were fed. To them, the operating environment had ceased to be a jungle in which the fittest survived. The reversal of roles, described in chapter three, had become the norm and needed to be redressed in a broader context.

According to Mai Fadzi, the flea market stall she has been operating over the last four years has seen her provide for her family of four children and her spouse. The erosion of the Zimbabwean dollar through inflation rendered her husband's income insignificant and therefore irrelevant to the family's upkeep, yet pride kept him going to work.

> **Mai Fadzi**: It's no secret that the men's confidence has been eroded; so to avoid acrimony, as women we make sure we cover gaps and provide for the family without boasting about it. Who doesn't know that our men have been stripped of the role of providing for the family by this economy? Imagine if I am asked like the women on the programme about my husband's attitude? I will simply say he is supportive and let sleeping dogs lie.

By indicating the need to prop up men's egos, Mai Fadzi's assertion reflected the upholding of patriarchy without kindling acrimony in relations (see Brown 1991; Folbre 1988) despite the noted reversal of roles which may not have translated to the social relations. Similarly Joyce, who had been married for two years, cited that she had had a rude awakening when, as a pregnant woman, her husband could not afford to pay the registration fees for her delivery at a private clinic. They had to register at the local clinic and arrange payment terms so that

she would be attended to by the mid-wives when the time came for her delivery. She attributed her confidence in starting a small business to ideas she received from the programme.

> **Joyce**: It's a good thing that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is developmental in nature. I think if the programme sought to get us to challenge our men, I would not be one of their listeners. We are a young couple and if I start now fighting with my husband, I will not last five years in the marriage. Though I know the reality that my market stall largely covers our overheads, I dare not say it because it is not relevant to our relationship. I am sure though that if I were to mention that there are opportunities in mining as stated in the programme, he would race ahead of me, despite these being for women.

Some of the women generally understood the messages of addressing gender imbalances and dealing with patriarchy as a direct challenge to men, which somehow they did not perceive the programme doing as its focus was on women targeting female audiences. Some of the women, like Joyce quoted above, clearly did not read the notion of women empowerment to mean the holistic subject of equity and equality both economically and socially, but felt that economic empowerment was to "cushion" the women in dealing with patriarchy. Others clearly understood the notion of empowerment as giving them the opportunity to do away with the traditional niceties, as often patriarchy is propped by economic power. They understood that once economic power was in the hands of the women, they could be in full control of their lives.

However, most felt that for socio-cultural reasons, they were content to be in control economically on the one hand, yet subservient to their men on the domestic front. Confronting patriarchy outside their homes was one key aspect the women were enthusiastic about, while they were not keen to bruise the egos of their brothers, fathers or husbands at home. They acknowledged that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* sought to uplift their socio-economic status without directly confronting patriarchal issues, though that did not mean that those issued did not exist. Twenty-eight-year-old Nyasha expressed her desire to be economically empowered without necessarily challenging the status quo:

> **Nyasha:** Well, it's like this talk about gender is always negative and somehow elitist. All we want from *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is to learn how to cope in this economy and avoid being confrontational to our spouses as we need them.

Similar views were expressed by other women who believed that because the programme was not confrontational in addressing patriarchy or militant in promoting gender equality, it therefore did not adopt a women's rights-based approach. Most of the women seemed oblivious to the fact that that the producers of the programme focused on women's

empowerment in an effort to redress the existing imbalance in a society structured on male dominance, given that in their context, patriarchy was naturalised. All the women needed was a way around it, hence their ready consumption of the media messages. However, a deeper understanding of the discourse on patriarchy was reflected by other members of the focus groups who explained that while on the domestic front this may seem peripheral, the underlying struggles were deeper. On the business front it was more evident as the need for interventions to redress imbalances brought about by patriarchy was glaring. Mbuya Mazvita described her experience:

> **Mbuya Mazvita:** There are various forms of patriarchy. It may not necessarily be at your home, but even in the market place, you find that we have to deal with male colleagues who want to wrestle customers from us, but we have to assert ourselves. As women at the market we have to stand up for each other. The women in mining share this struggle with us even in the operations of their business as stated in the programme. Really, this patriarchy is inevitable, but it is about being assertive as the women in the programme have shared. It is also about being subtle in some instances, especially when the men have nothing to do in terms of employment.

This broad outlook was corroborated by other discussants in citing the uneven playing fields in operational spaces. The cross-border trader, Mai Tapiwa explained her perspective:

> **Mai Tapiwa:** It is not easy for us cross-border traders. The issue of sexual favours is something which requires personal principle, assisted by opportunity. You have to be tough; because it is tough having to travel and bring in your goods when you don't have enough duty rebate...women have felt the challenge of being touched in the wrong places by male officials at the borders.

She cited that due to ignorance, most women who cross borders often lost their goods to unscrupulous male traders, having failed to negotiate their way out or requested storage facilities for a fee.

> **Mai Tapiwa:** But it is also about being able to speak the men's language and really be firm. Patriarchy is there whether we like it or not. Men just think they have more rights than women and want to assert themselves everywhere. And talking is just not enough, we have to act. So these women-specific programmes which give ideas and share experiences in different sectors actually give us a platform to interrogate strategies around dealing with some of them. From the programme we just listened to, I have learnt that it is important to understand your trade and the laws that exist; the women in mining have been interacting with their Ministry, and I think we must be able to do the same in our line of work.

The women in the study acknowledged that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* left no stone unturned in sharing invaluable information for equipping women with negotiation skills to enable them to deal with male dominance in different spaces. Without being confrontational, the programme had become a space that provided the opportunity to

articulate women's rights and strategies on how the women could assert themselves while dealing with patriarchy.

> **Mai Tinashe**: I don't know when this will end, but even little boys think they are superior to us older women. Sometimes adopting the patronising attitude of being a mother helps, though not all the time. I have learnt that the best way to deal with patriarchy is to be economically empowered. Dollar power...but not at the expense of your moral values... Also, as mothers, we have to begin working on these boys to avert some of these attitudes.

Almost all focus group discussants acknowledged that despite the importance of examining patriarchy as a hindrance to women's empowerment, the studio guests in the mining programme had chosen to avoid the discourse on patriarchy and gender imbalance altogether. Mai John, aged 51, said that women not talking about patriarchal attitudes both at home and in the mining sector reflected serious issues that the women in mining needed to address:

> **Mai John:** Perhaps it is an issue of not wanting to hang out their dirty linen in public, but how can the women claim to have support from their husbands when they have no access to collateral for their loans; even vehicle registration books? Their failure to access title deeds reflects that we still have a lot of women who do not necessarily co-own properties with their husbands. The fact that they actually mention the problem of collateral is a subtle reference to patriarchy at the highest levels in our society.

The women showed an appreciation of progress made in promoting gender equality through the programme, They cited that through experience-sharing and showcasing of success stories, the programme clearly articulated issues such as women's rights to owning means of production such as mining claims, to be professionals in their own right and to seek and exploit all possibilities for the permeation of male-dominated spaces as part of reducing gender disparity. The discussions on the deliberate drive for women's economic empowerment in contrast to subservience brought about by patriarchy reflected the realism of Foucault's assertion that power is discursive and is to be understood in the specific contexts of its exercise (cited in Strelitz 2000:39).The women acknowledged that occupation of key spaces by women contributed to reducing poverty and subsequently gender-based violence. Mai Ngoro, a 38-year-old hairdresser, shared her understanding of the programme thus:

> **Mai Ngoro:** Gender equality is still very pertinent, and poverty hampers it. I guess by ensuring that all opportunities for articulating gender issues have a focus on redressing the economic situation, the producers are subtly addressing gender inequality, as poverty contributes to the increase in the abuse of women by their partners. However, I do not think this particular episode of the programme speaks to gender issues.

Interviewer: What makes you say so?

Mai Tinashe: Ah, the producers just threw in the statement about male support, but I don't think they wanted to address the real issues. After all, the women's responses are dismissive – they claim support from their spouses yet there is no real evidence of that. How then do you begin to claim that your husband supports you when he has nothing to show for it? I think it is just superfluous and that it is not the focus of the programme.

Generally, the women acknowledged that the traditional expression *'Mushamukadzi' (the epitome of a true home is the woman)* holds true in all spheres; socially, economically and otherwise. As such, the programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* is pivotal in ensuring that the women are well-equipped to match the responsibilities the socio-economic environment has bestowed on them, as summed up by 44-year-old Mai Ngoni:

Mai Ngoni: The gender disparities are very serious. You cannot ignore them. This is why we are clutching at anything that gives us hope – that can help us live with these men both at home and in our operational spaces. You know you cannot say to a father in his face you are no longer head of house because you have failed to provide for the family. But we know that it is the women who have had the dollar power and that probably explains the aggression we encounter with the men we tend to share business space with.

The women also noted that despite all the empowerment initiatives, the programme did not make an effort to re-assign socially ascribed roles as often women have to cope with being breadwinners as well as fulfilling the traditional home-making roles. However, that was noted as being trivial in the face of empowerment, as economic independence tends to leverage women's ability to be in control of their lives, despite the existence of patriarchal norms.

5.4.3 Messages on harnessing teamwork approaches for collective success

When analysing how audiences make meanings from media programmes, theorists have underscored the importance of social interaction on the process of meaning-making. This supports the argument that audiences draw on knowledge as informed by their various social positioning and social interaction, both in a family set-up and at the workplace, to produce meaning (Roscoe et al., 1995:50). According to Fiske, "some meanings and pleasures are deferred… until they can be activated in later conversations with friends and other people in one's social formation, both before and after the event" (1989:174).

Almost all the women in the study acknowledged that the issue of teamwork propounded by *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* was pivotal in ensuring success in their endeavours. They cited that most of them had made strides through learning from each other. One focus group comprised women who belonged to a *Mukando* club, wherein they contribute money to each other on a rotational basis to facilitate the kick-starting of projects, while others belonged to different groupings or associations.

The fact that the women on the radio programme continually referred to their association as a point of convergence supports the notion held by focus group discussants that for each to benefit meaningfully, one had to be a member of a team. Mai Bhule, a married home-maker, cited that she learnt the importance of belonging with others in the community when she began experiencing marital problems:

> **Mai Bhule:** What the women in mining say about belonging to an association is very important. I must say, I lacked nothing materially, but when the entire extended family began to look to us for support, it was an emotionally draining situation. That is when I decided to belong to the local women's club, more for moral support than anything else. Sharing ideas with others, including learning to be a listener to *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* has helped empower me beyond just the moral support I set out to seek when I joined my colleagues.

Mai Bhule explained that it had never occurred to her that she could own a flea market stall to sell the crafts she made as a hobby, for extra income. Through her association with the women at the local club, she had learnt a lot more about home and people management and proffered advice to others who were less knowledgeable about making crafts. The women concurred with the women in mining who articulated that it was easier to access a lot of empowerment programmes and indeed other opportunities when organised as groups rather than as individuals.

Drawing comparisons with their own situations, the women noted that negotiating for services such as the surveying and pegging of mining claims would work out to be cheaper in the same way as purchasing groceries in bulk for their club members for sharing at the end of the year. Mai Fadzi indicated that even for cross-border traders, management of their projects was easier as they did not have to travel but could send one person while the others remained behind to run the market stalls at half the cost. Similarly for the *Mukando* clubs, as articulated by Mai Shepherd:

> **Mai Shepherd:** Being organised as groups within the community has worked very well in sustaining families here. As women, we undertake different projects collectively, even running community gardens. No one starves for as long as they are roped into these organised groups. The *Mukando* women are even better, because

> come Christmas time, our children will be celebrating like those with parents in the diaspora because of the bulk purchases of sugar, rice and other groceries.

Agreeing with this, Mai Ngoni said that sharing ideas was always the best source of progressive planning and implementation. Even lobbying government for support in specific projects is best done by groups instead of the individualistic approach.

> **Mai Ngoni:** Approaching the local leadership as a group is much easier for us here. It is true; there is power in collective action. We hear that in some townships people struggle with electricity bills. Here all we did was just approach the local Councillor and relay our issues as a group for a concession. If we had done that individually we would not have got anywhere.

The women also noted that besides just speaking collectively, coming together in groups helped them to fine tune the articulation of their projects and critique each other prior to implementation – therefore acting as de facto boards for each other. They said that the competitive edge amongst them helped challenge them in setting targets and benchmarking development within their community. Above all, teamwork helped them to cope during difficult times as explained by Mai Ngoro, the hairdresser:

> **Mai Ngoro:** When a problem like a funeral befalls you, then you will see that you are not clever. We need each other, be it in business or socially...that is township life – a life of sharing and caring for each other.

Teamwork also provided the women with perseverance skills. They said that most tended to be more committed to their projects because they felt accountable to the group which not only critiqued but advised and provided both moral and material support whenever the need arose. The programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* further entrenched the notion of collective organisation by constantly showcasing different projects by varied groups of women in a wide array of sectors as part of encouraging the women to participate in empowerment initiatives. One participant in the third focus group discussion with women aged over 40, Mai Tandi, explained:

> **Mai Tandi:** What we do is when we get together, we discuss the projects we would have heard on radio and say how best can we adapt them to our environment; or in the case of women farmers, we know none among us is a serious farmer, so what lessons can we draw from their style of organisation to enable us to achieve similar levels of success? At this time we also know that government is looking for mileage, so when we reflect that we know what we want, they are quick to respond to our needs rather than dictate to us what suits them – their agenda.

In a similar vein, Mai Fadzi noted that in having the opportunity to discuss what they had heard on *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* in her community, she had been enlightened through the discussion. By participating in the naturally selected community, discussing the challenges she experienced and wondering how to cope, other women in the community assisted her in adapting success stories on breaking new ground to her trade: hairdressing. This resonates with the active audience theory which stresses audience autonomy as opposed to textual determination (Strelitz, 2000:37) which, in this instance, enabled the women to decode the meaning of the programme in line with the preferred reading of encouraging cooperation and empowerment amongst themselves, having interrogated amongst themselves what they felt were validity issues of concern.

5.5. The role of language in attracting audiences to the programme

The women noted that the programme was attractive to them as it was quite uniting. All discussants, whether married, single, widowed or divorced, could listen to the same programme and still discuss its contents. They felt that because it embraced the challenges faced by the ordinary woman, it was a relevant programme and enabled them to reach common ground despite their social status. The women indicated that their living in the same geographical location automatically placed them in a similar class, yet the nuanced details of their marital status never surfaced as being relevant because these were not the focus on *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*;

> **Mai Tandi:** I have been an ardent listener of this programme for almost five years now. I like the talk about issues to improve the quality of life of a woman. They talk about issues of violence, yes, of gender relations, yes, but most importantly, it is about ensuring that the woman's livelihood is under focus. That is what I like the most.
>
> **Mbuya Zvose:** I go to the rural areas regularly but I never miss the programme because it is in a language that is acceptable and accessible wherever I am. It has no restrictions and does not require anything outside being a woman. It is not a husband bashing platform. I like it.

While most of the women in the study were against 'husband bashing', nevertheless they showed their loyalty to and appreciation of the programme which discussed issues of patriarchy and advocated gender equality, reflecting the importance of packaging of media messages to address these subjects. The women revealed that they understood the need to respect their spouses and to deal in a subtle way with patriarchy at the flea markets and during cross-border trade. They got ideas from the programme, yet they did not see *Nguva*

yevanhukadzi (Time for Women) as a militant programme in addressing these issues; rather as strategic in providing lessons from other women's experiences. The constant referral by the programme to available opportunities for the women in promoting their empowerment, again through experience-sharing, further depicted the importance of effective programming of the series *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women),* as further articulated by Mai Shepherd:

> **Mai Shepherd:** It has been a while since we began hearing about women venturing into mining. The most encouraging thing is that we know it is doable and that when you get into it there is support. On the day this programme was aired, I happened to be with my widowed sister-in-law who shared with me her experiences as a woman miner with this association over the last year. Truly, her life has greatly improved through these women-specific programmes. And she acknowledges *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* as having been her platform of encouragement. The opportunities are there and they are real.

The interviews further revealed that one of the major successes of the programme is the drawing together of women from various walks of life – single, married, divorced and widowed women under the common banner of women empowerment. Most said that the jingle, '*Ndimaivanogona' (It is the woman who is able),* was considered to be an important affirmation in encouraging them to work with confidence in whatever sphere they chose, despite their social dispositions. As such, the women acknowledge the programme as a 'common denominator' which had a unifying effect in their community.

It was noted that the language of the programme under focus was very accessible as most women who had begun to ply the mining trade were ordinary women without technical skills and expertise. The use of inaccessible terminology was always unpacked by the presenter, so the women in the focus groups also learnt a lot from the interviews. For most of them, the programme demystified seemingly difficult issues to ensure that women were encouraged to take part in the mining sector and to look for other opportunities that *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* seemed to present for them.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study, which sought to analyse the meanings Shona-speaking working-class women make from the gender-focused programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women).* The chapter examined the women's media consumption habits, their understanding of the gender discourse and specifically their interpretation of the programme under focus within the context of their lived experience. By means of interviews, the study revealed that while some of the women did not consider that

the programme addressed patriarchal issues, others noted the inevitable relationship between addressing gender issues and dealing with patriarchy. Most were able to draw the link between the two in the programme under focus and interrogate the implied discourse around patriarchy and women empowerment.

Generally, the women acknowledged that the accessibility of the language used in the programme was a major reason for their continued interest in the programme as it did not alienate them from seemingly technical issues. The need for economic empowerment in the face of poverty, coupled with the need to uphold socio-cultural status were the strongest factors in how the women made sense of the programme. The ideology of patriarchy, while acknowledged, seemed to slip into the background. In interrogating this, the women felt that their society was a long way in openly challenging patriarchal attitudes.

Some articulated that the irony was that as mothers, they even entrenched the patriarchal values and norms among their children, male and female, as this was something inherently naturalised among them. Even single and widowed women felt that the discourse of patriarchy was somehow not relevant as their primary focus was ensuring that they were able to provide the basics for their families. The scores for *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* therefore were that the programme specifically focused on the women and did not disrupt the status quo, thus maintaining the ideology of patriarchy as a contending discourse.

In other words, when it came to reception of the programme, men could take time out and not worry about having tables turned in favour of women as the women's success was "collective success". This concurred with Hall's assertion that it is highly probable that the meaning 'preferred' by the ruling-class encoders will also become the preferred 'reading' of the working class decoders, because "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate" (cited in Schroder et al. 2003: 129).

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This study sought to understand the meanings made by working-class women of the gender-focused programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* measuring this against the women's lived experiences in the high-density suburb of Mbare. Through qualitative content analysis and subsequent interviews, the study sought to understand the extent to which media messages on women's empowerment are understood and decoded by the women, in line with Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding model.

The study analysed the empowerment messages emphasised by the programme within the context of promoting gender equality while taking into consideration the patriarchal society in which the women live. It examined the readings by the selected group under study comprising urban working-class Shona-speaking women and sought to account for the readings, analysing the extent to which the women in their communities mediated media messages or whether the media had a great influence on their decodings.

6.2. The power of the media

One of the objectives of this study was to establish the extent to which the mass media has an influence on its audience, over the power of the audience of viewing and reading consumers. Through the varied discussions, the study revealed that the women were not empty vessels ready to consume whatever the media might have for them but instead would interrogate the content and decode meanings, having negotiated certain positions. While in most instances the women made the preferred readings of the programme, it was evident from the interviews that they negotiated the position, contrary to consuming the media as an all-powerful force working on them as the audience, and that, as audiences, they were active in interpreting media content, seeking its relevance to their varied situations and contexts (see O' Sullivan et al. 1994:152 and Ang 1990: 159), although most of them accepted the fact that the programme did not challenge patriarchy.

As such, the women were not subjects of an all powerful, determining media, but took the time to extract the meaning of media messages in *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* in their different "moments" in the circuit of production, circulation and reception (Johnson 1983, du Gay et al, 1997) of the messages. Their ability to query certain aspects such as the need to form their own Mining Association instead of joining the established Harare Women

Mining Association is a counter-hegemonic act which asserts their need for retain a measure of independence from the programme's prescriptive approach. This is despite the overall consent to the idea of taking on the preferred reading of embracing mining as a possible economic empowerment opportunity for them.

The repeated notion of discussion of the programme among the women as part of their making of meaning during the study resonates with James Halloran's much repeated phrase: "We must get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to the people and substitute for it the idea of what people do with the media" (cited in O' Sullivan et al. 1994: 155). In his discussion of television consumption, Fiske, one of the main supporters of audience activity theory, argues that media consumption:

> [i]s a process of negotiation between this existing subject position and one proposed by the text itself, and in this negotiation the balance of power lies with the reader. The meanings found in the text shift towards the subject position of the reader more than the reader's subjectivity is subjected to the ideological power of the text (1987a: 65-66).

Thus, in addressing the question of media power versus audience autonomy, Fiske's argument that audiences have more power over making sense of media products than do their institutional producers seems to hold true of the *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* audiences.

However, the audiences, through negotiating their meaning-making, seem to make preferred readings of the programme, albeit within the context of their own lived experiences, harnessing opportunities that come their way as they suit them. The programme under study does not overtly address male-female relations, yet the women in the study are able to decipher this. *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)* can be seen as part of "[a]n awareness that old-style patriarchal relations are crumbling and the desire to re-inscribe power relations between different genders and sexualities" (Jackson et al. 2001: 79).

Be that as it may, media texts do have cultural power in society. This is in line with Tomlinson's argument that the production of culture is the result of a complex interplay between the media representations of reality and the lived experience of audiences (1991). Tomlinson (1991) argues against the determining power of the media as producers of culture, asserting that culture is the result of a process of mediation between the audiences' lived experience and the media's representations of that experience. In saying that the 'spousal support' claimed by the women in mining is a way of 'massaging the men's egos and letting sleeping dogs lie', the women in the study are making oppositional or negotiated meanings,

which can be seen as supporting Tomlinson's claim that "media messages are themselves mediated by other modes of cultural experience" (1991:61).

The quotations cited in chapter five reflect the women as media-literate, analytical audiences evaluating programmes against their considerable pre-existing knowledge and experiences. As such, it can be argued that both the media and the audience have a significant power relationship, determining the manner in which the media messages are consumed and understood. While the media disseminate broad messages about identity and acceptable forms of behaviour, gender, sexuality, and lifestyle, the public have their own varied perceptions on the issues. The media's suggestions may be manipulative, but can never simply subdue contrary feelings in the audience. It is therefore appropriate to speak of a slow but engaged dialogue between media and media consumers in acknowledgement that neither the media nor the audience are powerful in themselves, but both have powerful arguments.

Tomlinson argues that we should view the relationship as a "subtle interplay of mediations" (1991: 61). While we may have the media as the dominant representational aspect of modern culture on one side, on the other we may have the 'lived experience' of culture. Tomlinson argues that overly strong claims about media power are the result of media theorists seeing the media as determining, rather than mediating, cultural experience (1961: 61). Following the assertions by the women in the study quoted in chapter five, their deliberations prior to making meaning (mostly preferred readings) reflect that the women, in their practices of consumption, make meaning in their use of the media messages as cited by Du Gay and Hall (1997:85).

6.3. Areas requiring further study

While the study sought to establish the meanings drawn by working-class women in the gender-focused programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*, it was confined to Mbare, a high-density suburb in Harare, which is Zimbabwe's capital city. In order to establish a more informed and rounded view of decoding by a wider population of working-class women, a well-funded study would add to the body of knowledge in reception analyses of such programmes.

Gender inequality cuts across all classes in Zimbabwe. The study deliberately focused on the working-class Shona-speaking women as a way of containing it, given the limited resources. The availability of resources could help facilitate further research in the reception of gender-focused programmes among other classes of Zimbabwean women.

6.4. Conclusion

The objective of the study was to understand how female audiences make meaning out of *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*, a gender-focused programme. The underlying aim was to examine the extent to which women understand and deal with issues of gender, women's empowerment and patriarchy within their lived experiences. Some of the respondents trivialised the issue of patriarchy and instead chose to focus on the economic empowerment within the broader spectrum of the country's socio-economic and political climate.

The research findings provide some evidence to suggest that audiences do make a multiplicity of meanings from a text and the research suggests that this process of meaning-making is related to audiences' socio-historical background. Though eventually depicting the encoders' preferred reading, the interviews reflected that one cannot simply prescribe what meanings will be made from a media text. To that extent, the study reflects that readers have substantial power over the way they decode the text, a finding that supports the view of the active audience as espoused by Hall (1980).

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Appendices

1. Interview guide

The purpose of this study was to undertake qualitative audience reception analysis to explore how urban working-class Shona-speaking women's lived realities affect their decoding of gender and development messages broadcast on Radio Zimbabwe. The research questions were:

1. What themes does the programme emphasise in relation to women empowerment, the gender discourse and patriarchy?
2. What kinds of readings do urban working-class Shona women make of *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for Women)*?
3. How do we account for such readings?

Thematic categories for questions:

1. **Demographics**
   Gender, class, education, background – rural /urban
2. **Gender and women's empowerment**

What kind of knowledge, attitudes and practices on women's empowerment are being communicated?

3. Socio-cultural practices

What are the existing attitudes and cultural practices that affect meaning-making?

4. Representations and construction of notions of women's empowerment

What meanings are being signified based on the cultural understandings of the women in Zimbabwe?

5. Educational and information value

What is the educational and information value audiences derive from listening to the programme? What do they learn from the themes, particularly in relation to women's empowerment processes and development?

6. Power of the media

What role do the media play in promoting women's empowerment?

Procedure

The researcher will start with focus group discussions with the women, which will be followed by the in-depth interviews with members of the focus groups. The researcher will introduce herself and:

a. Explain the purpose of the research exercise.
b. Inform participants that the interviews will be recorded and data recorded. Views expressed and identity of participants will be treated as confidential records.
c. Assure participants who may not feel comfortable with using their names that they can use pseudonyms.

The researcher will then start the recording tape and proceed with the preliminary interview, which aims to establish the respondent's demographics, as discussed below.

Interview guide for discussions with the decoders

Demographics

1. Kindly introduce yourself by giving me your name and your marital status.
(Married, divorced, separated, widowed, single, divorced, etc.)
2. What is your family status? (i.e. How many children do you have? How many are with you in your family? etc.)
3. What do you do for a living?

Thereafter the researcher and the participants will listen to *Nguva yevanhukadzi (Time for women)* selected programme of September 2009 (approximately 30mins). A general discussion of the programme guided by the following questions will follow.

2. Gender and women empowerment

How the audience negotiates gender and women's empowerment messages. What kind of knowledge, attitudes and practices on women's empowerment are being communicated?

(I) General Questions

1. How often do you listen to Radio Zimbabwe and pay attention to women's programmes?
2. Who do you listen with? How do you listen? (probe on whether this becomes a primary or secondary activity)
3. What do you think of the programme you have just listened to? To what extent is it relevant to you as a woman? (probe)
4. What are the specific issues being addressed in this programme?
5. Do these issues come out clearly?

After the general questions, discussion with the participants will cover specific issues (knowledge, attitudes and practices on gender and women empowerment).

(II) Knowledge

1. What do you understand by the message of women's empowerment?
2. Who do you think the message is directed at, and why do you say so?
3. To what extent do you think the issues in the programme have relevance?
4. From your experience, are women empowered by listening to the programme?
5. What in your opinion is missing from this message?

(III) Attitude

1. What do you think is the general reception of the programme and other women's empowerment messages by women?
2. Do you think the programme is reaching out to target audiences? Why?
3. Could it be that their media consumption of such programmes is limited?
6. What is your general attitude towards this programme?

(IV) Practice

1. What does the gender and women's empowerment message refer to?
2. Is it easy for you to follow the advice given in the programme to achieve your own objectives?

3. How has listening to the programme helped you in understanding gender issues and women's empowerment?

(V) Socio-cultural practices: To what extent do your socio-cultural practices influence your listening to the programme?

(VI)Power of the media: To what extent do you believe the experiences shared on the programme? What lessons do you draw?

2. Transcript of programme under study

Opening jingle : (music, fade in voice over) *Nguva yevanhukadzi* – the programme that focuses on different issues pertaining to women, in line with their empowerment in the various spheres of life, be it leadership, or general development.....

Fade out music

In Presenter: Welcome to this edition of the programme *Nguva yevanhukadzi*, the programme which gives you different conversations with a specific focus on issues affecting women. In this programme, we share ideas on empowerment strategies in relation to women's rights in leadership and various aspects of development. My name is Patricia Jacob, your presenter.

In today's edition of the programme, I have with me an officer from a women's rights organisation– *The Women's Trust*, to share with us her perspective on women's empowerment, Ms Patience Garikayi. In line with our current theme of women in mining, I also have two guests Mrs Dangarembizi and Mrs Maburutse from *Harare Women in Mining Association*. Good morning...

Guests: Morning Patricia, Morning listeners

Presenter: As you know, the purpose of the programme is to enhance the status of women and give us a space to encourage each other to go on and permeate even the male dominated spaces if it will contribute to women's empowerment. The women I have in the studio are in mining. Tell us, what exactly do you do when we say you are in mining? Do you actually go underground and mine?

Guest: We do not go underground, no. We want the young men to be employed, so ours is to be the employers. We oversee the actual mining.

Presenter: And just where do you do this? Are there mines? Rather, do you have mines in Harare?

Guest: We go to the areas where the mines are found. We go to different areas: Mashonaland West and Mashonaland Central. This is where we peg mining claims for our members. Not so long ago, we got a big piece of land in Guruve. Each of our members then got ten hectares, and there are about 100 women we are talking about. Now there is a lot of mining activity taking place in Guruve as we speak.

Presenter: How did you get this land? Is it available to anyone?

Guest: The land was specifically for our members. You have to join our association to access these things. This will also help you get a prospecting licence from the Ministry of Mines. We then process mining certificates for everyone so that you are then allowed to begin the work.

Presenter: Do you have mines in your individual capacities?

Guest: Oh yes, we have quite a number. I have a mine in Goromonzi, another one in Guruve in the Nyakapupu area, two in Chegutu and Chakari. I must say because this is a fairly new programme for us as women in Zimbabwe; the inputs are capital intensive. Our major focus is in Guruve. That is where we are working right now.

Presenter: Do you just pick and choose where to mine, or do you get some kind of technical assistance from the Ministry of Mines?

Guest: As an Association, we have a surveyor who goes before us. He shows us where the gold is. We always ensure that our members get land that has gold.

Presenter: So what is the total area of land that all your members have in terms of gold?

Guest: Out of the 100 women we allocated land in Guruve, each has ten hectares of mining land. We therefore have a total of 1000hectares.

Presenter: Wow! Where are your members from?

Guest: They are all from Harare.

Presenter: Oh, really? Ladies, is that fair? That all you women from Harare travel all the way to Guruve and start mining all the gold there without local women? How do you do that?

Guest: Ah, umm

Guest 2: Eeeh! Well, let me help you there...whenever we get into an area, we work with the local women there...this is because usually they are not able to stand on their own to move a lot of processes. They cannot peg on their own, they simply do not have the capital. You need USD50 for the licence; then to get a certificate you need another USD50. The surveyor must also be paid for identifying the mining area. What we do is to ask the local women to organise themselves into groups, say maybe groups of ten each. They then come up with a syndicate of their own and we help them with the pegging of the mines so that they have employment. We also employ them so that they have sources of livelihood, because the money is a problem. (Connotation – she has money, is more informed and superior)

Presenter recaps issues discussed. End of segment one.

Presenter: We are still focusing on women in mining in this edition of *Nguva yevanhukadzi*. The women I have today are from the Harare Women in Mining Association. Tell me ladies, do you have to find the surveyor and pegger consultants elsewhere or do you get them from the Ministry of Mines?

Guest: We get geologists from the Ministry; there the surveyors and the peggers are well known and these are people who were trained through the School of Mines.

Presenter: What challenges would you say you are facing as women in mining?

Guest: We have learnt that you need to persevere, like in all things, and work very hard. As women, we had to penetrate and demystify the notion that mining is a male domain. Then there is the physical work, using the pick and shovel; we are doing it. Then the attitudes from male counterparts – we always have to prove ourselves... the men look down on us; they do not take us seriously until we start working. I can say *yaa*, attitudes are changing though very slowly...

Presenter: What are the men like? Do they tend to want to use muscle?

Guest: We employ the *makorokoza* but always, the men are unscrupulous. For example, they will insist on keeping the gold ore that would have been mined; they say women can easily be attacked by thugs and lose the gold. They want to assert themselves over us as women and they manipulate such situations in the name of security. Initially, we really struggled because this was a reversal of roles – imagine the employee wanting to take over from employer by virtue of their masculinity? They resent female supervisors and do not care, even when they know that the claim belongs to a woman. We have since learnt to be firm and know from the guidance provided by the Ministry of Mines that mining is a process....when we get our ore, we must move it from point A to B in line with the relevant stages, and that you cannot leave it to the next person to do for you...

Announcement (V/O): For feedback, or to have your views incorporated on the programme, email or write to us at Radio Zimbabwe, P.O. Box, 9048, Mbare, Harare.

Presenter: Women can do it indeed, as evidenced by our guests. But how do you balance the roles of being a mother, running the home and work? Let's look at the social roles in relation to the men in your lives.

Guest: The men are supporting us, they are very supportive. They are coming along to the projects. They love it. Everyone in the family wants to help, even the children, all are interested in seeing the gold. We now have no one to leave at home and worry about... everything is flowing...

Presenter: Ummm…

Guest: However, the women who have no support from their men or are single tend to have other challenges... but there is always a way around this. Most will leave their mining claim for three weeks to tend to the demands of the home and return and still find their ore having been mined... they benefit both ways because they manage the home but also find their ore there. The women still balance the roles of being a woman in the home and a business woman...there is really no problem...

Presenter: Tell us more about the mining process. You alluded to ore, is it ready-for-the-market gold or what? How do you go about it?

Guest: We dig holes looking for what we call the belt. This belt is the route of the gold. They then find the little stones we call the ore. This ore is then taken to the mill where it is refined.

It is then milled and washed through mercury and the gold stands out on its own. The residue is left and we have our final product.

Presenter: All these processes, do you have the equipment?

Guest: That is a problem because we do not have equipment. We cannot afford the equipment. It is very expensive. We cannot access loans from banks because they want collateral and will not entertain us as women. They want title deeds and we do not have that. So we go to those with mills and we ask them to refine for us, so that we have our final product. The challenge therefore is in that we have to compromise the quantity of the final output because the owners of the mills must be paid, and it is usually by some kind of arrangement. This is because we have to negotiate with the millers and we lose out somehow...we are heavily compromised as women and we are really going all out seeking financial support, be it in the form of loans or otherwise to enable us to harvest our respective dues...we would like to have our own mills instead of relying on those owning mills.

Presenter: You work with Ministry of Women Affairs and Ministry of Mines; don't they have a mechanism to assist you through the government? Equipment such as separators, crushers, mills and so on?

Guest: We have had several meetings with the concerned stakeholders especially the Ministry of Mines, but the equipment is very expensive…the outcome of the meetings is that our government has said it has no money, though they have also said that they are going out of the country to seek resources for us to assist us in that regard.

Presenter recaps issues discussed. End of segment two

Presenter: As women in mining, what kind of support would you like from the government?

Guest: We would like support in the form of equipment. We would like to use jack hammers, because you get to where the rock is hard; picks and shovels are not good enough...we will be needing equipment like jackhammers to enable us to move. We need compressors to use with the jackhammers. The compressors help us to pump water. Usually where you find gold there is also a lot of water– of course it is not always the case. Usually wherever it is that you find alluvia there is water. So you always need to pump the water out first. So if government can give us this equipment, it will help us harvest well our gold.

Guest: In addition, if we could have money, it would help us. More women are failing to participate in these processes because they require money...if the national budget could allocate money to mining specifically for women, so that when we go to the banks we can access the money to uplift us through loans so that we can purchase our own equipment; even if its smaller equipment to get us started so that we can invest from there...in the areas that we are working, the roads are bad, there is no transport. We would like the roads fixed, even for the benefit of the local communities.

Presenter: Patience, you are concerned with women's empowerment. As an organisation, you work with different women in these areas. As you have heard, these women are seeking empowerment through mining. What assistance are you giving them?

Development worker: As The Women's Trust we are there for them in many ways. We advise them according to their projects and help them see different ways of overcoming hurdles. You heard about the banks and collateral issues. That is not unique to mining. As a women's organisation, we are working on negotiating with the banks on that issue and also looking into the possibility of sourcing funding for the women from other countries so that they can assist the women with financing for such projects as mining. We really want this economic empowerment to be a reality rather than a myth and are exploring various ways of facilitating this with concerned stakeholders.

Presenter: Well, I must thank you all for having made the time to be part of today's programme of *Nguva yevanhukadzi*. Special thanks to our guests from Harare Women in Mining Association, The Women's Trust and all those working behind the scenes, our engineers, who have made this programme possible. Till we meet again next week, same time, signing off is yours truly, Patricia Jacob.

Fade in Jingle:*Ndimaivanogona, kutungamira*.... (in... voice over with music under) *Nguva yevanhukazi*, the programme that promotes women's empowerment in leadership and development. Today's programme was brought to you by Radio Zimbabwe, in conjunction with The Women's Trust…(music and fade out).

NB:
makorokoza - these are informal, untrained miners
Ndimaivanogona– it is the woman who can do it (lyrics to the jingle)