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**SATELLITE TELEVISION USE AMONG ZIMBABWEAN PROFESSIONALS:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO AUDIENCE CONSUMPTION OF SABC AFRICA'S
'60 MINUTES LIVE IN AFRICA'**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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by
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Abstract

Within the context of debates surrounding the consumption of global media by local audiences in Third World countries, this study explores the reasons behind satellite television subscription, and consumption of international news among a sample of young professional men and women in contemporary Zimbabwe. The study seeks to uncover how the research participants respond to news broadcast on SABC Africa's '60 minutes live in Africa', a programme which they can only access via satellite television in their country. Working within the frame of audience studies which insists on understanding media consumption and reception in context, this study examines how the respondents, situated within the specific Zimbabwe context, characterised as it is by serious social, economic and political challenges, respond to both regional news and news about their country on '60 minutes live in Africa'

Within the frame of qualitative research the study employs a two-stage sampling procedure and data collection strategy to uncover the factors that underpin international media consumption and reception by professional men and women situated in a country undergoing rapid change. The findings of the study point to the various social and individual factors that underlie media consumption choices as well as to the different socially patterned reasons why local audiences are either attracted to, or reject global media.

The study found that SABC Africa's '60 minutes live in Africa' is more popular and better received than Western-broadcast programmes on channels such as BBC, CNN, and Sky News among Zimbabwean professionals. I also uncovered some evidence that cultural proximity and relevance are of supreme importance in determining which media audiences chose to consume and what level of engagement they bring to their reception of global media. These and other findings directly confront media models that privilege beliefs in cultural imperialism and the dominance of Western media and their effects on Third World audiences.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear parents, for their love, support and unwavering belief in my ability to achieve all the things I set out to.

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter provides a general background to this study. In it I highlight the research problem and explain the significance of the study. I also outline the objectives of the study, pertinent research issues and the data collection methods I employed. The last section contains an outline of the thesis.

1.0 General background to the Study

This study explores how professionals in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, respond to and negotiate meanings from the satellite-accessed news programme '60 minutes live in Africa', in an environment where their government has instituted legislative and other measures to block foreign news, ostensibly because of the harm it poses to viewers and to the nation.

Since the late 1990s, Zimbabwe has been experiencing multi-layered political, social and economic problems that have led to serious social consequences for the nation and its citizens. Government has partly blamed 'negative' content broadcast about Zimbabwe by international news agencies for causing many of these problems. Further, working from a media effects position, government blames international media, among others, for fostering national disunity through interference in the country's internal processes.

To 'counter' this alleged threat from international media, the government-controlled broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, cancelled all international news programmes and broadcasts in 2002. In the same year, the then sole private station, Joy TV, was instructed to stop broadcasting British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news, with government officials arguing that the nature of news broadcasts about Zimbabwe would hurt the country (Titus, 2002). This in effect made previously-available international news channels such as Cable News Network (CNN) and BBC television and their respective programmes unavailable on the national channel. Further, through the

Broadcasting Services Act (2001), government instituted a 75 percent local content requirement on all national broadcast channels, whether radio or television.

Partly due to these developments, there has been a steady increase in subscription to the satellite television provider DSTV by Zimbabwean audiences since the late 1990s. Today, the only way Zimbabwean audiences are able to obtain international news and current international entertainment programming on television is via satellite television. This study is particularly concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of the reasons behind Zimbabwean professional men and women's consumption and reception of global media messages, especially in light of their government's stance against it. The study looks at audience consumption of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's pay-television channel SABC Africa, specifically the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa'.

Although it cannot follow its tenets to the latter, this study takes cognisance of Gay et al's dialogic model of a 'circuit of culture', that is, the circuit "through which any analysis of cultural texts or artefacts must pass if it is to be adequately studied" (1997:3). In this model, du Gay et al argue that culture gathers meaning at five different moments, i.e. representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. Because cultural meanings are produced at a number of different sites and circulated through a complex set of reciprocal processes and practices, the examination of any cultural product thus necessarily requires an examination of the circuit as a whole. This, it is argued, is because "it is in the combination of processes, in their articulation, that the beginnings of an explanation are to be found" (du Gay et al, 1997:3). Thus if these 'moments' and the interconnections between them are studied thoroughly, all of the major viewpoints into culture appear to be covered and a holistic analysis of the object of study can then potentially be made.

In du Gay et al's (1997) model, each of the five 'moments' is conceived of as interlinked with the other 'moments' in an ongoing process of cultural encoding and dissemination. Any one 'moment' is thus conceived of as naturally affecting the other four. For example, the way culture is represented affects how it is identified with. It also affects the way it is

produced and consumed, and how it is regulated. Although this study looks only at the consumption 'moment' of the circuit of culture, because of the interconnectedness of all five 'moments' in the circuit, it is inevitable that in the course of the study I will, to a greater or lesser extent, touch on some or all of the remaining four 'moments'.

In another, but related conception of the importance of the 'circuit of culture' in studies of media, Johnson (1983) conceives of production, text, audiences and lived reality as 'moments' of the culture circuit. He identifies three models of research related to these 'moments', i.e. production-based studies, text-based studies and studies of lived culture. Although Johnson (1983) and du Gay et al (1997) recommend that media researchers attend to all 'moments' of the circuit of culture, different theoretical approaches within media studies tend to focus on different moments in the circuit, conflating that moment with the meaning of the circuit as a whole (Johnson, 1983; du Gay et al, 1997).

Necessitated by the size and requirements of this thesis, this study thus latches onto the differences introduced by media theorists and researchers in order to justify my focus on only the audience consumption or reception 'moment' of the television production process.

1.1 Statement of the problem and significance of the study

This research, which is part of a wider interest among media scholars and culture critics in the relationship between media texts and their audiences (Strelitz, 2002), attempts to contribute to a local understanding of the interface between global media and local audiences in a particular developing country. This study is especially useful in light of Bourgaault's concern with "the lack of accounts in the literature of day-to-day or *lived reality* of the mass media in sub-Saharan Africa" (emphasis in original) (1995: xii). Although the impact of global media on local audiences in Third World countries has been the subject of several media research projects (see for example, Ang 1996, Boyd-Barrett 1977; Schiller 1976; 1986; 1991; 1998; Hamelink 1983; Dorfman and Mattelart 1975), there are few studies by Africans on the global media/local audience interface.

The emergence and spread of satellite television in particular has given a new urgency to the question of information flow (Morley, 1992). Like other Third World countries, Zimbabwe is at the receiving end of media content from powerful multi-national corporations that have been variously accused of controlling the flow of information and distribution of media products. There has been a charge, which the Zimbabwean government appears to subscribe to, that the media products circulated by these multi-national corporations have the capacity to undermine local cultures or even destroy them. The government's idea that media have direct, immediate and powerful effects on audiences has been contested and seriously discredited since the 1940s. The findings of media researchers have emphasised the interpretive freedom of media audiences (see for example Silverstone, 1990; Bennett, 1982; Hall, 1982; Morley, 1989 and Dahlgren 1998).

Also, in response to the emergence of new media forms, current audience work emphasises the need to understand the increasing globalisation of the media and its use by historically specific audiences (see Ang, 1991; Morley, 1980; Morley, 1986 and Leibes et al, 1990). My study attempts to provide contextualised social knowledge on audience use and consumption of satellite television in a Third World country. It examines audience consumption from a Zimbabwean perspective, which would differ from a Western, or indeed another African national's perspective, derived as it is from a particular interpretation of Western experience. The study subscribes to arguments by Natrajan and Parmeswaran that:

Alternative knowledge may be better produced if Third World ethnographers write about the everyday lives of Third World people with an awareness of the political need for claiming legitimacy as Third World scholars (1997: 53).

My interest in producing 'alternative knowledge' as a Third World researcher necessarily impacts on the issues I address and the questions I pose in this study.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine individually motivated media uses as well as to uncover the situational and socio-contextual determinants of media use (Brown and Schulze, 1990). With reference to the symbolic distancing thesis, the cultural proximity theory and

Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter hegemony, this study examines the reasons why professional Zimbabwean men and women choose to subscribe to DSTV and to watch '60 minutes live in Africa'. It also aims to understand audience reception of regional news and news on Zimbabwe broadcast on the SABC Africa programme. The study specifically seeks to understand how the sampled professionals negotiate meanings from the programme's representations of Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues, in a context where government considers international news to be ideologically harmful.

1.3 Methods of the Study

This study, which is conducted within the qualitative research tradition, aims to understand and present an explanation of media consumption as it happens within the specific Zimbabwean context. The study examines the specific context underlying professional men and women's consumption and reception of international news accessed via satellite television.

Qualitative research aims to produce culturally and historically specific knowledge and is employed here for its emphasis on examining both the audiences and contexts of mass communication as socially specific objects of analysis (Jankowski et al, 1991; Jensen, 1991). Methods employed in this tradition are meant to produce quite detailed in-depth information, leading to a rich understanding of the informants' experiences (Morley, 1992).

In this qualitative audience research, I employed qualitative tools for different purposes. I used survey questionnaires to obtain initial bio-data from the respondents. I then employed focus group discussions for their usefulness in the study of audiences. I chose to use this method because the interpretation of media content and the generation of meanings is 'naturally' a social activity and audiences form their interpretations of and opinions about media content through conversations and social interaction (Hansen et al, 1998).

In this study I realise, as suggested by Schroder et al (2003), that audience research is naturally obtrusive. It is impossible to study audiences empirically without at the same time interfering with the very phenomenon we wish to study. The moment we begin our investigation into people's media-related behaviour, we become intruders in their lives, with the consequence that we affect their behaviour in ways that are neither predictable nor controllable. Because of this, audience research can never claim to find the truth about audience practices and meanings. It can only uncover partial insights about how audiences use the media in a specific context (Schroder et al, 2003: 16).

Further, Ang (1996:73) encourages qualitative researchers to admit that they "always speak and write from a position while at the same time acknowledge that all descriptions we make are by definition constitutive of the object we describe". Thus I must explain here that the interpretation and presentation of my research findings contained in Chapters Five and Six, while presenting a true reflection of the respondents' experiences with international media, are necessarily impacted on by my Zimbabwean nationality and location, my education, social knowledge, political awareness and a myriad of other factors.

This study is made up of seven chapters which contain the contextual, theoretical and methodological bases, as well as the partial insights that I uncovered during my research. The next section provides an outline of this thesis.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter One presents a general background to the study. It highlights the research problem and spells out the significance of the study. It also outlines the study objectives, methods of the study and pertinent research issues. Chapter Two presents a review of literature on theoretical arguments surrounding research into media reception that take into consideration the audiences' socio-cultural environment and the contexts of reception. The chapter outlines discussions around the popularity of satellite television among local audiences in developing countries, as well

as the debates surrounding television flow and the impact of global media on local audiences.

The third Chapter provides a brief outline of Zimbabwe's history. It also examines the broadcasting environment in the country and its influence on Zimbabwean audience's satellite television consumption practices. Chapter Four contains a discussion of the research methodology employed in this study. In this chapter I also discuss and support my choice of research design and methods of data collection. I discuss the physical location of the study, the selection of respondents, the data analysis and processing methods I employed as well as outline some of the challenges encountered in the study.

In Chapter Five, I present and discuss the first part of the findings of this study. I discuss the popularity of satellite television, and of the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa' among Zimbabwean professionals. The chapter contains insights into audience reception of regional news on SABC Africa. As a continuation of Chapter Five, Chapter Six contains a discussion of the study participants' reception of the news on Zimbabwe broadcast on a screened edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' within the frame of the cultural proximity theory.

Finally, Chapter Seven suggests some broad conclusions on professionals' consumption and use of the messages that they consume from '60 minutes live in Africa' within the specific Zimbabwean context. It also highlights further research questions raised by the study and makes recommendations in light of the study's findings.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Critical media research and the symbolic distancing and cultural proximity theses

2.0 Introduction

This study draws on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the symbolic distancing thesis and the cultural proximity theory to critically examine the interface of global texts and local audiences in a socio-cultural environment undergoing change. This chapter presents a review of literature on theoretical arguments surrounding research into the reception of media messages by audiences that takes into consideration the audiences' socio-cultural environment and the contexts of reception. The chapter investigates arguments and theories surrounding the popularity and growing use of satellite television by local audiences in developing countries and their use of it as part of their own culture. Also outlined are the debates surrounding television flow and the impact of global media on local audiences and communities, as well as some suggested foci for future research into audience consumption of global media.

Divided into ten sections, this chapter begins by discussing the media effects tradition that directly preceded audience reception studies. In this first section I briefly look at the 'effects' tradition in relation to the Zimbabwean government's position regarding the influence of global media on local audiences. Section two is an examination of the rise of audience research at the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) under Stuart Hall. In this section I outline the particular focus of audience research that makes it a suitable approach within which to frame this study. Section three carries a discussion of the development of satellite television, its spread and an outline of the debates surrounding the impact of global media on local audiences. Here I also outline previous audience research into 'new technologies' and possible future trends in research of this nature. In the fourth section I discuss the socio-cultural

approach to research, emphasising the importance of locating audience research within the specific environment of reception in order to gain a clear understanding of participants' consumption and reception habits.

Because the study is concerned with understanding the use of satellite television by professionals in Zimbabwe, the fifth section presents a discussion of the importance of class and social positioning in influencing media consumption and reception. Section six contains an examination of hegemony and the counter contestation of power in the choice of media and at the moment of message reception by active audiences, a theme that is carried over to section seven, which outlines debates around the 'active audience' within audience research. Section eight contains a discussion of the cultural proximity theory as it provides a useful framework for the analysis of television programme flow in developing countries. The ninth section looks at the symbolic distancing thesis and the conception of global media as a means by which audiences transport themselves from the difficulties in their everyday life. The last section concludes the chapter.

2.1 The media effects tradition

Before the widespread acceptance and use of the audience research approach that underpins this study, there were various conceptions of the media/audience interface that prevailed at different times. In the 1930s and 1940s it was generally accepted that the media had a strong effect on the behaviour, thinking and attitudes of media users, a view that was supported by isolated research findings of the time (Fourie, 2001). Mainly conducted by American psychologists using laboratory experiments and controls, studies using media effects research concluded that the media had (both positive and negative) direct influences and effects on people. These findings were reinforced in the 1930s by the work of some members of the Frankfurt School who had left Germany for the United States of America to escape persecution by Adolf Hitler. Frankfurt scholars Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer posited that the media had a direct and unmediated impact on audiences (Morley, 1992b), while Marcuse presented the media as irresistible carriers of prescribed, lobotomising attitudes and habits and promoters of 'false consciousness' (in Bennett, 1982).

This belief in the direct effect of the media on audiences was firmly anchored in the hypodermic needle theory, a theory which equates the influence of the media with that of an intravenous injection where certain values, ideas and attitudes are *injected* (emphasis in original) into the individual media user, resulting in particular behaviour (Fourie, 2001). The recipient in this tradition is thus conceived of as a passive and helpless victim of media impact (Bennett, 1982).

Researchers have often associated the hypodermic needle theory with the rise in industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation in European and American societies in the 19th Century. It is argued that the mechanisation of agricultural production and the subsequent migration of people to the urban areas in search of employment led to the breakdown of the communal and organic social relationships of the pre-industrialised age, throwing men and women into isolation and self-reliance (Bennett, 1982). This process is believed to have led to the breakdown of traditional human relationships and to the development of a new society of “alienated, culturally rootless, undifferentiated and anonymous people on whom the media could have a direct effect” (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988:7).

It has however, been argued that this conception of an organic pre-industrial community and the ensuing alienated mass society ultimately depends on a highly romanticised conception of the past, as is revealed by the fact that it has been impossible to prove with any precision when one ended and the other began (Bennett, 1982). Curran et al maintain that underlying this consensus that mass media exercised a powerful and persuasive influence was “a fashionable though not unchallenged view that, urbanisation and industrialisation had created a society that was volatile, unstable, rootless, alienated and inherently susceptible to manipulation” (1987:57). They maintain that this conception encouraged a relatively uncomplicated view of the media as all-powerful propaganda agencies brainwashing a susceptible and defenceless public.

There occurred a shift in media studies away from a position that foregrounded the strong effects that the media had on audiences, a shift that is partly attributable to the 1940s

work of Paul F. Lazarsfeld and others. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues argued that the media had a negligible influence on behaviour, significantly challenging the conception of the media as having direct, immediate and powerful effects. Further, Lazarsfeld et al discovered that the political alignments of the citizens of Erie County remained relatively unchanged despite their exposure to media messages. Other scholars found that media influence is greatest in informing people and creating new attitudes but least effective in changing attitudes and ingrained behaviour (Graber, 1989 in Drew and Weaver, 1991). For example, American researchers and campaigners found that 'safe sex' media campaigns failed to change people's sexual behaviour (Lull, 1995).

Although leading researchers such as Katz, Lazarsfeld and Klapper reacted strongly against the conventional view of the omnipotent media, they were careful to qualify what they said by allowing for a number of cases when the media may be or has been persuasive. They argued that media may be persuasive:

when audience attention is casual, when information rather than attitude or opinion is involved, when the media source is prestigious, trusted or liked, when monopoly conditions are more complete, when the issue at stake is more remote from the receivers' experience or concern, when personal contacts are not opposed to the direction of the message or when the recipient of the message is cross-pressured (Curran et al, 1987:63).

During the late 1990s and in the early 2000s, the government of Zimbabwe was facing challenges to the social, economic and political control and organisation of the country, challenges which will be discussed in full in the next Chapter. Within this environment the state broadcaster the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), evidently working within a framework of media effects, cancelled all international news programmes and broadcasts in 2002 as government officials argued that the nature of news broadcasts about Zimbabwe by international agencies would hurt the country (Titus, 2002).

Soros, however, argues that the real reason behind the cancellations was to stop widespread circulation of reports that were critical of the government and were therefore considered to be a threat to its existence (2002). The actions of the Zimbabwean government are in keeping with findings that have related the fear of media effects in

societies that are in the throes of change, to an individual or a group which perceives certain activities as seriously subverting the mores and interests of the dominant culture (Fourie, 2001; Watson and Hill, 1984).

This study attempts to investigate the reasons why local audiences access satellite television news sources and to understand how they receive the meanings circulated on international news by focusing on Zimbabwean professional men and women as regular consumers of global news content. The study will be conducted in light of the Zimbabwean government's concerns that international news programmes have potentially harmful effects and influences on audiences.

2.2 Cultural studies and audience research

This study is underpinned by the audience research tradition which was ignored for much of the 1970s in favour of the analysis of textual and economic structures that were presumed to have greater impact on audiences. Audience research only began to flourish in the 1980s at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) under the leadership of Stuart Hall (Morley, 1992b, Dahlgren, 2001). The audience research approach which is employed in this study represents a cross-fertilisation project that borrows from both its predecessors, Textual Analysis and Uses and Gratifications Research, which will be discussed below. It draws its theory from the humanities and its methodology from the social sciences (Schroder et al, 2003).

Audience research is premised on the belief that neither the semiotic analysis of media texts, nor questionnaire-based analysis of media gratifications is capable of grasping the complexities of the media experience. Further, audience researchers view mass communication as a structured activity that is largely influenced by the socio-cultural contexts of reception and thus they emphasise the study of media reception as a situated process (Hall, 1980).

The term 'audiences' as used in audience research denotes several groups divided by their reception of different media and genres or by social and cultural positioning (Dahlgren, 2001). Audience research thus focuses on the analysis of how differently

constituted audiences interpret what they encounter in the media as well as the exploration of the everyday contexts in which meanings arise (Schroder et al, 2003). In this study of the global media consumption practices of professional men and women in contemporary Zimbabwe, the audience research approach is employed for its specific concern of increasing the level of knowledge on how global media influence social and cultural processes.

Audience research tends to privilege conceptions of the audience as active in their media consumption practices, a trend which began with the Uses and Gratifications approach which preceded it. Uses and Gratifications research, which emerged from the functionalist perspective in American sociology, marked media scholars' departure from conceiving of the audience as a mass of passive atomised individuals to regarding them as active users of media content (Press, 2001; Dahlgren, 2001; McQuail et al, 1972, Watson, 1998). It was the first approach that went contrary to older audience theories in which individuals were assumed to be directly affected by passively consumed media content. Uses and Gratification research focused on the active processes by which audiences 'used' the media they consumed, in an instrumental fashion, to gratify a variety of needs researchers identified to be present in audience members (Press, 2001). The approach thus focused on the examination of what people do with the media, since different members of the audience may interpret media content differently (Jensen et al, 1990; Robinson et al, 2001).

This approach, however, proved to have limitations (Morley, 1989) which Cultural Studies scholars tried to redress by employing the audience research model. Cultural Studies scholars study culture and the impact it has on social power relations with a specific emphasis on the generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies (Fiske, 1987:254). Although there is this emphasised focus on the study of *industrial* societies (emphasis mine), the work of Levi Strauss has proved invaluable in studying the culture of both industrial and non-industrial societies (Fiske, 1987). Based on this previous use of the approach, my study will thus employ insights gained from Cultural

Studies to inform and underpin this study of the situated use of 'new' technology in the form of satellite television in pre-industrial Zimbabwe.

This research is undertaken within the frame of audience research because of its emphasis on increasing public knowledge on how old and new media can contribute to vital social processes such as the construction of identities, the building of social relationships, the ability to participate in democratic decision-making and the potential for cultural enlightenment through television (Schroder et al, 2003:5). Further, the audience research approach is employed here because of its interest in examining the interpretation of media messages by individuals from specific social backgrounds, with a view to establishing the role of cultural frameworks in determining individual interpretations of the programmes in question (Morley, 1992b).

The focus of this study on the satellite television consumption practices of professionals in the specific contemporary Zimbabwean context responds to calls by audience researchers and critics for the adoption of an approach to audience research that links differential receptions of media content back to the socio-economic structure of society. In her essay *Audiences* Press (2001) argues that audience researchers must seek to understand the decline in viewership of nightly national television news and of readership for major national newspapers as well as the concomitant rise of unconventional news sources such as MTV news and on-line news forms. She outlines how these developments have spawned new types of local audience research which focus on the processes of reception and appropriation of media specific to particular groups of people, in particular locations, at particular moments in time.

My study follows on calls by audience researchers such as Morley (1992b) for research that will show how different groups and classes that share different 'cultural codes' will receive a given message, not just at the personal, idiosyncratic level, but in a way systematically related to their socio-economic position.

2.3 Satellite television and evolving trends in audience research

The spread of satellite television in Africa and the globalisation of the media is a recent phenomenon which came about largely with the 1990s development of transnational media corporations that increasingly dominate the global media space (Strelitz, 2003). This development consequently raised the question in audience research of what cultural consequences global media have on local audiences, a question which this study attempts to answer, with specific reference to the Zimbabwean context. Empirical research points to the highly contradictory and unpredictable role played by global media in the lives of local audiences (Strelitz, 2002). The increasing use of satellite television by professionals in pre-industrial Zimbabwe is thus examined with the view to uncovering the factors underpinning audience consumption of international news accessed via this new medium.

Because access to satellite television is gained through subscription to a service provider, audiences the world over are increasingly making conscious decisions to expose themselves to specific media products and content (Morley, 1992b). This has brought about calls by scholars such as Moores (1993) for audience reception studies to pay attention to the kinds of material that interest different cultural groupings and the patterns of taste that come up. Further, the development of new media forms such as the Internet and satellite television which give rise to alternative news sources have spawned new types of local audience research (Press, 2001). Research of this nature focuses on the process of reception and appropriation of specific media by particular groups of people, in particular locations and at particular moments in time. This trend is related to an express focus in audience research on examining the increasing globalisation of the media, the historical specificity of the audience and the segmentation and diversity of media audiences (Ang, 1991; Press, 2001). Towards this end Press maintains that:

the possible future trends of audience research will undoubtedly continue current insights into the nature of the media audience as increasingly fragmented into specific cultural 'segments' separated by race, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and lifestyle (Press, 2001: 930).

The question of what influence global media have on these 'segments' of audiences has seen a divergence of opinion among audience researchers. Theorists generally agree that the penetration of global media does have cultural consequences, although there is a lack of consensus on what these consequences are exactly. The emergence of satellite

television especially has given a new urgency to the question of information flow as new technologies are said to have worrying negative consequences for established national (and continental) identities (Morley, 1992). It is further argued that the potentially 'unpoliceable' nature of these technologies poses the threat of disturbing effects, not only in disaggregating established audiences/communities, but also in creating new ones across national borders (Morley, 1992:65).

Theorists note that audience access of, and the growth and development of the media has been conditioned by prevailing historical circumstances. Cultural studies research thus seeks to understand media audiences within a given historical moment (Dahlgren, 2001, Moores, 1993). This study is partly motivated by the absence of knowledge and studies on the lived reality of the mass media in Africa, especially with regards to the satellite television consumption practices of professionals in Zimbabwe. It is also important in that it examines the influence of international news programmes on Zimbabwean audiences enduring a period characterised by social, economic and political difficulties. Thus by creating new knowledge on media use in Zimbabwe, this research aims to contribute to an emerging tradition of cultural studies that is addressing the domestic uses of media technologies.

2.4 The socio-cultural approach to research

Because the meanings and the uses that people make of media emerge from the interplay between the contexts of reception and the formal properties of the text (Strelitz, 2002), in this study I emphasise the need to fully understand the context of satellite television consumption/reception by Zimbabwean audiences. Towards this end, in the next Chapter, I examine the role that Zimbabwe's culture plays in mediating global media messages and work from a position that emphasises the need to underpin my audience research with an examination of the socio-cultural environment of reception.

This study is underpinned by the conception of mediated communication as always being a contextualised social phenomenon; that it is always embedded in social contexts which are structured in various ways, and which in turn have a structuring impact on the

communication that occurs. Mediated communication is therefore an integral part of, and cannot be understood apart from, the broader contexts of social life (Thompson, 1995). Thus an understanding of the use we make of media must be contextualised by an understanding of the social world through which the media pass (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1990, in Morley, 1992).

In order to provide anything like a satisfactory account of the relationship between people's mass media involvements and their own situation and meaning system, it is necessary to start from the social setting rather than from the individual. This is because the readings made by media audiences are clearly related to deep-rooted social concerns in their everyday lives as the members of various communities and classes (Murdock, 1973 in Morley, 1992b; Brown and Schulze, 1990).

The work of British cultural studies theorists Stuart Hall, David Morley, Angela McRobbie, Paul Willis, Dick Hebdidge and Roger Silverstone has been instrumental in bringing to the fore the need to look at media audiences as individuals and groups of individuals who must be studied in the context of the rest of their lives, and whose nature as a part of the media audience is only one segment of an overall set of cultural practices that characterise their identities (Press, 2001). Following on this work, in this study the media audience is thus conceived of as already constituted in other discursive formations and social relations; as being influenced by their social and historical contexts as well as by other texts (Morley, 1980), factors which necessarily impact on the range of meanings that they take from international media.

Studies such as this one which are located within the audience research tradition must thus always take into consideration the heterogeneity of the television audience. This is necessitated by the argument that media messages are received according to the different meaning structures and frameworks of knowledge of differently situated audiences (Fiske, 1987; McQuail, 1994). Therefore, for my study, investigating as it is a particular group and class of people in a particular socio-economic environment and historic moment, it is important to outline discussions around the need to take into consideration

the context and roles in which media audiences are situated and in which they produce meanings as serving to influence the meanings they take from the media. The messages that professionals in Zimbabwe consume from international news programmes do not confront them in isolation. Rather they intersect with other explicit and implicit messages that they have received from other institutions, people they know, or sources of information they trust.

In line with this, Thompson maintains that:

Studies over the years have firmly put to rest the idea that the recipients of media products are passive consumers; they have shown time and time again that the reception of media products is a much more active and creative process than the myth of the passive recipient suggests. They have also shown that the ways in which individuals make sense of media products vary according to their social backgrounds and circumstances, so that the same message may be understood in different ways in differing contexts (1995:38).

The meanings that individual audiences take from media texts are constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledge, prejudices, and resistances) brought to bear on the text by the reader (Morley, 1992b). Further, it has been argued that social positions are influential in determining individual conceptual frameworks and that certain social positions allow access to a wider repertoire of available codes that affect the way individuals receive the messages they consume (Morley, 1992b). It is thus important for this study to adequately understand the situation of, and social positioning of professional men and women in contemporary Zimbabwe.

2.5 Class as a determinant of media consumption/reception

There has been much debate among audience researchers regarding the importance of class in determining audience consumption of media messages. Thompson (1995) argues that media reception takes place in a structured context and depends on the power and resources available to potential recipients. For instance, one cannot generally receive satellite television programmes unless one has the means to acquire the necessary equipment and pay regular subscription fees.

Bringing the argument closer to home, and to the focus of this study, in the African context, satellite television technology acquisition and consequently access to foreign programming is highly characterised by class differences (Bourgault, 1995). Given the prevailing economic challenges in Zimbabwe, the ability of audiences to access satellite television is inexorably tied up in their economic capacity to afford the technology and the viewer subscription fees, which is in turn affected by their social positioning and class. This is because individuals' ability to access certain resources is tied up in the 'fields of interaction' within which they are located. Individuals thus pursue certain aims and objectives according to inclinations and opportunities provided by their specific positioning in their fields of interaction, and the consequent power and resources that come with this positioning (Thompson, 1995:12).

Further the different sub-cultures and formations within which audiences are located, and the sharing of different cultural codes and competencies amongst different groups and classes, determine how different sections of the audience will receive media messages (Morley, 1992b). There is no question that the ability to access satellite television in Zimbabwe is tied to social class and economic ability, but the question of whether the ways in which individuals receive media messages are tied up with their social positioning, and consequently their class positioning, remains the subject of heavy debate which will be outlined in the next section.

Hall (1980) argues that occupation is a prime definer of social class and that in turn, class is the prime producer of social difference and therefore of differences in media consumption. He maintains that there is a necessary correlation between people's social situations and their reception of television messages. However, there have been various critiques to Hall's position (see Morley, 1981; Ang, 1985; Liebes and Katz, 1990 and Radaway, 1984). These scholars have established in various studies that Hall overemphasised the role of class in influencing media reception. Morley (1992b) argues that the differential interpretations that members of the same social grouping make from similar messages can be explained by the fact that members of social classes can be expected to inhabit different 'meaning systems' or ideological frameworks. Morley's

argument is grounded in the idea that individual viewers do not come to the moment of programme viewing 'culturally naked', they come to the text already thinking within their individual sets of cultural codes and frameworks, derived from their social and cultural situations and backgrounds (Morley, 1992b). The general argument is that the interpretation of television messages is not primarily influenced by class positioning, rather, the meanings taken from media texts are dependent upon the reader's "general framework of cultural reference... his ideological, ethical, religious standpoints... his tastes, his value system, etc" (Moore, 1993:18).

In his Nationwide research for example, Morley (1981) discovered that audience reception of television current affairs texts could not be reduced in any simple way to the individuals' socio-economic location or their class. Morley's interviews demonstrated that groups occupying broadly similar social positions can have substantially different responses to media texts.

In light of the various debates outlined above concerning the attempts by researchers to link audiences' media consumption practices to their social contexts as well as their failure to reach a consensus, my study departs from a position that foregrounds the plurality of media audiences. I worked from the position that the media consumption/reception practices of individuals within my sample, although located within the same class could turn out to be very different, a factor which would be attributable to the differentiated influences on their lives.

2.6 Examination of hegemony and the counter contestation of power

The Marxist assumptions that underlie most British work in Cultural Studies necessitates the examination of the contestation of power inherent at the moment of media reception by active audiences who decide whether or not to accept media messages as they are, or to negotiate meanings that are in line with their own feelings, thoughts, prejudices and expectations (McQuail, 1994).

In this process of accessing and consuming various media, media audiences remain firmly located within a particular social context. It has been argued that any society is not an organic whole, but is made up of a complex network of groups, each with different interests and related to one another in terms of their power relations with the dominant classes. All societies, divided along axes of race, class, gender, age, nation etc. are characterised by the domination of those without power by those who have it (McQuail, 1994). Society as the site of domination and subordination is never static but is the site of a constant contestation and struggle for meaning. In this struggle, the dominant classes attempt to 'naturalise' the meanings that serve their interests into the 'common sense' of the society as a whole, and subordinate classes resist them in various ways and to varying degrees, while simultaneously trying to make meanings that serve their interests (Gramsci in Fiske, 1987:255). The media, conceived of as 'ideological state apparatuses' have been and continue to be used as a means through which dominant classes attempt to control the production of meaning in order to remain in power (McQuail, 1994).

In Africa, the media have historically tended to serve the narrow interests and political aims of the controllers of power, particularly the heads of state (Bourgault, 1995). Further, most media on the continent are constrained in their contribution to social processes by their reach, content and the extent of state control exerted upon them. This means that where there are media that constitute a space outside the monopoly, they constitute a valuable diffusion of power on the whole (Berger, 1998). In the Zimbabwean case the national media, which are largely state-controlled, are employed to provide continuous and repetitive ideological messages in order to set the parameters of a stable national identity conducive to the consolidation of the ruling ZANU PF party, which, through its control of the national broadcaster, has been able to "saturate the public sphere with its particularist message to monopolise the flow of information" to the people (Raftopoulos, 2004).

Despite the power of ideology to reproduce itself in its subjects and despite the hegemonic force of the dominant classes, it has been shown that people still manage to make their own meanings and to construct their own culture within, and often against that

which the industry provides for them (McQuail, 1994). Researchers have also identified audience interpretations of media content as forms of cultural resistance and they have tried to delineate interpretations that run counter to hegemonic trends (Dahlgren, 2001).

Within an environment that constrains media such as the one prevailing in Zimbabwe, foreign materials have often been found to play a subversive and potentially progressive role by undermining the certainties of established national or local cultural hierarchies (Morley, 1994 in Strelitz, 2002). Attributing a certain power and influence to global media, Strelitz (2002) adds that in certain circumstances, global media can undermine local hierarchies of power, while in others they help to naturalise unequal power relations. Further, the use of satellite television by audiences in African countries such as Zimbabwe is believed to facilitate audiences' linkages with the outside world while eroding monolithic media control within (Phiri, 1999).

2.7 Debates around the 'active audience' within audience research

Underpinning the various conceptions of the contestation for meaning by different groups in society is an ongoing key tension in Cultural Studies that encompasses debates concerning the degree of semiotic power that should be accorded the audience relative to the media, and the question of the media's relative power and degree of autonomy. This debate centres on accusations that the 'active audience theory' has produced an improperly romanticised image of the media consumer which tends to ignore institutional questions of cultural power (Morley, 1997).

Some scholars contest the conception of the absolute power of audiences to resist ideology embedded in media messages. For one, Hall (1980) argues that audience power over media texts is limited because of the dominant way in which media texts are encoded, which leaves the text open to interpretations only to a certain extent. Hall (1980) maintains that audiences do not make the meanings they want to make from media messages. This is because a message or programme is not an object with one real meaning, there are within it signifying mechanisms which promote certain meanings, even one privileged meaning and suppress others. In agreement, Morley argues that

“some proponents of ‘active audience theory’ may have (mis)taken evidence of audience activity as an index of audience power” (1997:121). He maintains that “the power of viewers to reinterpret meanings is hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralised media systems to construct the texts which the viewer then interprets and to imagine otherwise is simply foolish” (Morley, 1997:125). Further, Corner argues that there are presumptions that forms of interpretive resistance are more widespread than those of subordination. He maintains that to follow that path is to underestimate the force of textual determining in the construction of meaning from media products (1991, in Morley 1997).

On the other side of the debate are the scholars and media critics who remain steadfast in maintaining the polysemic nature of media messages and the fact that audiences do have the power to negotiate meanings from media texts. In his argument, Berger (1991) foregrounds the importance of audiences’ socio-cultural environments in allowing widely differentiated readings of media texts. He maintains that because of the multiplicity of meanings that it is possible for audiences to take from their interaction with media, the text cannot be seen as a self-sufficient entity that bears its own meaning and exerts a similar influence on all its consumers. Thus media messages have a potential of meanings that can be activated in a number of ways (Fiske, 1987). Work in cultural studies by Ang (1985), Liebes and Katz (1990) and Radaway (1984) offer further counter-evidence to the ‘simple-minded’ dominant ideology thesis. Their research demonstrates that any hegemonic discourse is always necessarily insecure and incomplete.

This study works within the frame of the latter argument; that it is possible for audiences to take a multiplicity of meanings from a media text, since the meanings taken are a result of the interaction between the text and the socially and culturally situated audience (Fiske, 1987). My study foregrounds the role of culture in mediating media messages and works from the understanding that the cultural resources that people bring to media consumption are important to the meanings they take from media texts (Tomlinson, 1991).

I thus work with two assumptions, that audiences are always active in their consumption of media and the constructionist argument that media messages are 'polysemic', that is, that they are open to interpretation (Morley, 1992). Further, although Hall (1980) suggests a necessary correlation between people's social situations and the meanings they make from television, I work from a position that because of their different experiences, positions, social roles and responsibilities, audiences, even those who like my sample are located within the same class, can make variant meanings from a media text (Morley, 1992)

2.8 The cultural proximity theory and its critiques

In an attempt to understand the attraction of a South African-broadcast news programme to Zimbabwean audiences I employ the cultural proximity theory. The theory provides a useful framework for the analysis of television flow in developing countries (Burch, 2002). This audience-centred theory was born of a line of inquiry started by de Sola Pool (1977) that media audiences prefer locally produced content. It was first articulated as cultural proximity by Joseph Straubhaar in 1991. The theory posits that where it is available, audiences prefer media which reflect their own culture regionally as well as nationally. It will be employed in this study for its emphasis on the 'active audience', and for the important role it plays in furthering an understanding of why viewers embrace or reject programmes.

The cultural proximity theory is also particularly influential in that it directly confronts media models that are concerned with questions of cultural imperialism and with the dominance of Western media and their effects on Third World cultures. The term 'cultural imperialism' was first proposed by Schiller (1976) to explain the way in which large multinational corporations, including media corporations from the developed countries dominate developing countries and 'Westernise' Third World cultures.

While popular in the 1970s, the media imperialism thesis came under sustained attack in the early 1980s for being too limited in explaining the global media/local audience encounter. Critics of the approach maintain that the theory's major shortcomings are its

emphasis on media's ability to exert direct effects on audiences and its consequent failure to acknowledge the active media audience (Livingstone, 1998). Further, theorists argue that the conclusions reached by media imperialism theorists are based on textual and institutional analysis; missing from their analysis is any investigation of what meanings local audiences take from global media at the moment of consumption (see Ang 1996; Tomlinson 1991; 1999; Skovmand and Schroder 1992; Murphy and Kraidy 2003; Staid and Tufte 2002).

Empirical audience studies have shown that audiences prefer local programming if they can get it and if it is well produced (Straubhaar et al, 1996; Burch, 2002). Ratings further indicate that people frequently look for television programming that is more culturally proximate; that is, closer to their own languages, cultures, histories and values (Straubhaar and LaRose, 1996). For example, Iwabuchi (1997) found that young people in Taiwan see Japanese television and music as culturally proximate. Through television and music, these young people are able to share in a sense of 'Asian modernity', despite the language difference between Japanese and Chinese. This, it is argued, is because audiences as people tend to prefer what they can understand in terms of culture and aesthetic codes, codes which are not just driven by political, economic and technological pressures, but also by regional culture (Burch, 2002).

Straubhaar (2005) argues that media audiences' first preference tends to be for material produced within their own language and local or national culture. Further, research shows a strong preference for national productions among audiences. However, as interesting national programmes are only created and broadcast when economically possible and when the necessary expertise is available, audiences' second preference is usually for television programs produced within similar cultures, usually within a cultural-linguistic market defined by historical, ethnic, religious, linguistic, geographical and other similarities (Straubhaar, 2005).

For example, Straubhaar's (2005) research with Brazilian audiences suggests the salience of 'cultural proximity' in shaping media flows. He found that most else being equal,

people want to watch what is culturally closer, rather than distant signals that are less immediately relevant to their everyday lives. Straubhaar argues that audience preferences are formed within the overall trend toward cultural proximity within both national and cultural-linguistic boundaries. For this study however, the concept of cultural proximity will be stretched, as suggested by Straubhaar (1991), to imply not necessarily media texts produced in the home national culture, but rather a text that seems to provide local viewers with ideological content that does not challenge or question their own values and beliefs.

Although audience preferences are indeed formed within the overall trend toward cultural proximity within both national and cultural-linguistic boundaries, cultural proximity should not be conceived of as an essential quality of culture or audience orientation, but rather a shifting phenomenon in dialectical relation to other cultural forces (Straubhaar, 2005). Further, audiences' tendencies to prefer certain programmes over others are dynamic and relational; they change over time as cultures change, and they work out in relation to other trends. These trends may be broad across nations and regions while others may be very particular to the specific interests of groups and thus help mediate what people choose to watch on television and what sense they make of programmes as they watch them (Martin-Barbero, 1993).

While empirical studies have shown that most audiences respond most avidly to television programs from within their own culture (Straubhaar, 2005), it is important to concede here that the arguments by cultural proximity theorists outlined above fail to take cognisance of the obvious dominance and popularity of Western, particularly American programmes and products in Third World countries. This trend is evident in the widespread consumption and appropriation of Western cultural goods; television programmes, music, dress and language among others, by individuals in Third World countries, not least of all in Zimbabwe.

However, research finds that due to their greater traditionalism and loyalty to national and local culture, local or popular classes show the greatest tendency to seek cultural

proximity in television programmes and other cultural products (Straubhaar, 1991). Particularly, this desire for cultural proximity leads the *lower and middle classes (in terms of education)* (emphasis mine) towards national and local culture. It is argued that the same desire may not be as strong for elites who are conceived of as being more internationalised (Straubhaar, 1991).

Straubhaar's (1991) argument outlined above, as well as those advanced by media imperialism theorists, are challenged in audience studies such as mine which seek to understand and explain the consumption/reception of global news programmes by educated local audiences. This is primarily because while studies have found evidence that media importing markets have a preference for American *entertainment* programming (emphasis mine), that preference does not appear to extend to news programmes (Harrington et al, 2005).

Thus arguments by media imperialism theorists and their conceptions of the popularity and dominance of American cultural products in Third World countries do not add to this study's understanding of audience consumption of news programmes. Here, consumption seems to be motivated more by the cultural proximity of the programme and the content of the news than by anything else. Insights from the cultural proximity theory will thus be useful in underpinning explanations of why African-produced news is popular with Zimbabwean professionals, especially since they are able to access other international news programmes on competing satellite television channels, and since elites everywhere are conceived of as 'internationalised' and more attracted by global cultural goods in their entirety.

2.9 The symbolic distancing thesis

Besides the individual and social reasons that underlie an individual's media consumption choices, there are other diverse and socially patterned reasons why local audiences are either attracted to or reject global media messages (Strelitz, 2002). In his study, Strelitz highlights the interplay between individual choice and the structuring of experience by wider social and historical factors. Audience researchers thus need to

understand this phenomenon through the investigation of the interdiscursive connections which can account for the purchase of particular textual forms by particular categories of readers, under determinate socio-historical conditions (Morley, 1992b).

Related to Gramsci's theory of hegemony (in Fiske, 1987), the symbolic distancing thesis is part of a wider theoretical claim which argues that the artefacts produced by the culture industries provide the resources for cultural resistance to dominant or hegemonic societal meanings (Strelitz, 2002). The perspective posits that global media messages are often used by individuals in societies undergoing periods of rapid social change to provide conceptions of life and conditions which are significantly different from their own so that they can re-imagine aspects of their lives (Davis and Davis, 1995).

Theorists posit that because communication technologies have brought individuals and families into the presence of places and events that were previously distant or unknown to them, it enables them to identify with dispersed yet knowable communities and to imagine themselves as embedded in regional, national and even transnational collectivities (Moore, 1993). Further, Thompson outlines how local audiences, particularly in developing countries, who appropriate global media messages gain opportunities for what he calls 'symbolic distancing' from the "spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life" (1995:175). In this instance, the media are employed by audiences to transport them, for a moment, from the difficulties in their life contexts so they can lose themselves in another world.

This phenomenon is emphasised in the work of Davis and Davis (1995) who, between the early 1980s and 1990s, conducted research among young people in a semi-rural Moroccan town to examine how a variety of Western media made it possible for the youths to re-imagine aspects of their lives. They discovered that adolescents used the rapidly expanding array of media in a period of rapid change to re-imagine many aspects of their lives, including a desire for more autonomy, for more variety in heterosexual interactions, and for more choice of job and of a mate.

The symbolic distancing perspective emphasises the role of broadcasting as a 'technology of transportation', because it enables private household units to make imaginative 'journeys' to distant places and events in the public realm (Moore, 1993:73). Thus in researching the domestic consumption of satellite television, media researchers should be concerned about the kinds of mobility that the object and its texts offer viewers in order to establish to what new destinations media messages and technology promise transportation and who chooses to make the journey (Moore, 1993).

Communication technologies play an important role in providing audiences with an opportunity to 'travel' elsewhere and to re-imagine themselves as members of wider cultural communities at a national or transnational level (Moore, 1993). For example, Ronning (1995) posits that urban populations in Zimbabwe with access to a variety of modern media use television to relate to a global situation and thus relate to international identities. Schlesinger further notes that mass media have played a key historical role in shaping national cultures and therefore a range of cultural identities (2001). He maintains that throughout the history of mass communications, there has been a continuing interest in the relationships between mass media and cultural identities, driven by the general underlying assumption that different media variously form, influence or shape collective identities (Schlesinger, 2001). In an instance that illustrates the ability of global media to offer 'transportation' for audiences, in a study by Moore of selected British neighbourhood areas where satellite dishes had then been recently installed, a respondent, Mr. Harvey explained:

When I'm watching Sky-because it's from a European satellite--and when I'm looking at some of the other continental stations that are available, I very much get the sense of being a European (Moore, 1993:110).

Morley advanced the notion of global media as constituting a space in which meanings in opposition to the dominant traditions of a nation's culture can be negotiated and expressed (1992b), while Walkerdine (1989; 1990) advances the notion of 'escape' to explain how media texts are appropriated by people in specific contexts to distance themselves from their life situations.

An early study conducted in 1969 by McQuail, Blumler and Brown concluded that people use the media as a diversion to escape from routine constraints (McQuail et al, 1972). For example, for the Sharmans, a middle class Asian family in Moores' study mentioned above, the non-Britishness of the station *Astra* (a European satellite television station) and its programmes was of particular significance in influencing the family's consumption of satellite television and in giving them an opportunity and some space from what they perceived to be the authoritarian and constrictive nature of British society. Comparing the modes of address employed by announcers on BBC1 and Sky News, Mr. Sharman comments:

With the BBC, you always feel as though the structure of society is there – the authority. Their newsreaders speak just like schoolteachers. They're telling you, like schoolmasters telling the kids. I think Sky News has more of a North American approach. It's more relaxed. They treat you like equals and don't take the audience for a bunch of small kids (Moores, 1993:115).

As the quote above illustrates, the preference for consuming international media by audiences has been linked to the belief that these media do not carry overt traces of national processes that local audiences find oppressive and irrelevant. Further, because global media are not as strongly rooted in the local as national programmes would be, they can better be used as resources for symbolic distancing (Strelitz, 2002).

There have been arguments that the attraction of global media for local audiences is drawn from the perception of these media as 'carriers of modernity', while audiences' positive feelings about satellite television programmes have been shown to be intimately related to their dismissal of established terrestrial programming as traditional and old-fashioned (Berger et al, 1976; Moores, 1993). In an era of globalised media and increased access to new media forms such as satellite television and radio as well as inexpensive foreign-produced videotapes and DVDs by elite audiences in developing nations, it is important to examine the role of global media, in this case, SABC Africa News, in providing professional men and women with a resource to think critically about their own lives and life conditions in contemporary Zimbabwe, and the space to, even momentarily, allow them cognitive escape from these.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review has provided the basis on which the complexity of the encounter of global media and local audiences in the consumption of satellite television news by Zimbabwean professionals is examined. The thesis draws on the various studies, theories and debates outlined in this Chapter in order to examine the audience/text encounter and the particular attraction of one international news programme among professionals in Zimbabwe. This encounter is analysed at the point of consumption within the specific Zimbabwean socio-cultural context. The study is further informed by an examination of how the social context impacts on the meanings professional men and women in Zimbabwe take from global media.

To contextualise Zimbabwean professional's global media consumption practices, the next Chapter provides a background on Zimbabwe's historical and contemporary social, economic and political environment. In the Chapter I also examine the country's broadcasting environment and the increased use of satellite television as a source of news in a country where the government banned international news programmes because officials believed the news content to be ideologically harmful to audiences and to the nation.

Chapter Three

The social context of the study

3.0 Introduction

Necessitated by the ethnographic audience research position that audience research must be rooted in an understanding of the historical experiences of the group being investigated, this chapter outlines the context in which Zimbabwean professionals access and consume/receive the SABC Africa news programme '60 minutes live in Africa'. The chapter provides a brief outline of Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic history, as well as the organisation of the country's broadcasting environment and its influence on Zimbabwean audience's satellite television consumption practices.

It is also important to contextualise the study because work within Cultural Studies starts from the premise that meanings and their making are indivisibly linked to the social structure and can only be explained in terms of that structure and its history (Fiske, 1987). This chapter discusses the role of satellite television as an alternative media choice to Zimbabwe's lone television station and links this occurrence to the socio-economic structure of Zimbabwean society between the late 1990s and 2005. Because of the inexorable link between past and prevailing socio-political conditions and the consumption of satellite television by Zimbabwean professionals, this chapter also attempts to locate professionals within the broader socio-historical, economic and political context of the country.

The Chapter is divided into seven sections. Section one presents some background to Zimbabwe's colonial history, here I also briefly describe the country's road to independence and examine its post-independent political and economic history. The second section discusses contemporary Zimbabwean history, examining some of the events of the early to late 1990s that have had a lasting impact on the economic, social and political face of the country. Section three examines the position that professionals inhabit in Zimbabwean society and also outlines the difficulties facing the Zimbabwean

employment sector. Section four contains a discussion of the development of the electronic media in Zimbabwe and presents an examination of the role of the country's current broadcasting environment in influencing the consumption of satellite television by Zimbabwean audiences. This is followed by an examination of the situational factors that have led to an increase in Zimbabwean audiences' consumption of satellite television. Section six contains a brief outline of the development of the satellite television provider MultiChoice, an examination of SABC Africa's ownership and funding structure, as well as a discussion of the mandate, aims and content of the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa' that is the focus of this study. Section seven concludes the chapter.

3.1 Zimbabwe's history

Zimbabwe became independent on April 18, 1980. Previously the British colony of Rhodesia, the country gained its independence through civil war after 90 years of white colonial rule. The country's progress towards independence and black majority rule began in the 1960s when Britain, in response to agitation by Black Nationalist movements, adopted a policy known as NIBMAR (No Independence Before Majority African Rule). However, in 1965, Ian Smith's hardline Rhodesian Front (RF) party won every one of the 50 seats in the white minority-controlled Legislative Assembly. In defence of white supremacy, the Rhodesian Front demanded full independence from Britain and the retention of a minority-rule constitution against the African uprising. When Britain refused, Smith instituted an illegal Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from her in November 1965, thus preventing the colony from being released into independence under a government representing the black majority. Smith initially claimed loyalty to Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, although he refused to recognise the authority of her Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs.

The settler regime named its new country Rhodesia and Smith declared her a republic in 1970, although the country was only ever recognised by Apartheid-era South Africa (Hatchard, 1993). Tensions intensified and matters came to a head between the indigenous people and the new settler government when the minority government banned

all Black Nationalist opposition political parties. This galvanised the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Zimbabwe Africa People's Union (ZAPU) into action. They turned to guerrilla warfare as their only alternative and the ensuing civil war, called the "Chimurenga", was fought between 1966 and 1979. It left 27,000 people dead (Hatchard, 1993).

The UDI government finally capitulated and agreed to negotiations for independence in the late 1970s. The Lancaster House Conference of 1979 allowed talks between the warring parties and produced a settlement which facilitated a peaceful transition to majority rule (Hatchard, 1993). This settlement led to the country's first democratic elections held in February 1980. The elections were won by ZANU PF and Robert Mugabe became the new leader of the country, a position which he retains today as President of Zimbabwe, 26 years after the attainment of independence.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked African country whose capital Harare, the site of this study, has the country's largest urban population of 1.4 million (Zimbabwe population census 2002 results, 2003). It has a land area of 390 757 Sq Km, of which 85 percent is agricultural land. At independence, the country inherited a diversified and productive economy, but one that was highly unequal. Zimbabwe had a dual economy characterised by a relatively developed modern sector and a largely poor rural sector that employed about 80 percent of the labour force (Bratton et al, 2005; UNDP Annual Report Zimbabwe, 2004).

Zimbabwe's is an agriculture-based economy where about 70 percent of the country's 11.6 million people live in rural areas, earning their living mainly from subsistence farming (UNDP Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals Progress Report, 2004). The country's economy has always been heavily dependent on agriculture. However, during the 1980s and the 1990s, its position as an agricultural exporter was based on a narrow commercial farming sector in which a small white minority, reduced to no more than 70,000 in a population of nearly 12 million, owned an overwhelming proportion of the most fertile land. This situation has been credited to the Land Apportionment Act of 1930

which essentially codified the white colonial land take-over, meaning that approximately 51 percent of Zimbabwe's territory was set aside for fewer than 3 000 white farmers (Olaleye, 2005). More recently, during the 1990s an estimated 70 percent of all arable land was in the hands of a few white commercial farmers. In the years since independence widespread consensus emerged within and outside the country in favour of redressing this imbalance. However, over 20 years of independence, government was unable to amass the legal, financial, administrative, and technical capacity to undertake more than token land reform measures (Bratton et al, 2005).

3.2 Contemporary Zimbabwean history

Once the fastest developing economy on the continent and considered the 'breadbasket of Southern Africa', Zimbabwe has, since the early 1990s, been beset with a series of political and economic problems that have led to high rates of unemployment and poverty as well as problems with health, education and housing delivery. There is starvation among the country's rural populations due to food insecurity caused by years of drought, reductions in food production and the impact of reduced foreign aid from the international community, most notably the European Union and the U.S.

Disturbingly, Zimbabwe's annual inflation rate was estimated at 800 percent for 2006, although some economists found these figures too conservative, arguing that inflation was more likely to have peaked at over 1 000 percent by year-end 2006 (Hawkins, 2006). Further, it is estimated that just over 75 percent of Zimbabweans are now classified as poor, while 50 percent live in abject poverty, well below the poverty datum line (Kambeba et al, 2005). Although there is disagreement about the specific cause of the economic crisis, there is general acknowledgement among the public, the World Bank and other economic actors that the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1990s and the lack of support for comprehensive land reform contributed to the economy's downward spiral (Kambeba et al, 2005).

The expiry of the Lancaster House constitutional guarantees for Zimbabwe's minority white race, followed by amendments to the country's Constitution in 1990 allowed

government to undertake the redistribution of land to landless blacks, a move which had previously been blocked by provisions in the Constitution. It has however been widely alleged that ZANU-PF decision to embark on a 'fast-track' programme of land seizures was "in response to a series of challenges to its political dominance" (Bratton et al, 2005: 78-79).

To facilitate the redistribution of land, around 2000 the government enacted laws authorising compulsory acquisition of land from white owners, and encouraged political supporters (the 'war veterans') to take the law into their own hands by invading commercial farms. Consequently the land redistribution exercise was violent, chaotic and corrupt. It has been maintained that the process ended up benefiting politicians and supporters of the ruling party while doing little for needy or qualified peasant farmers. On these grounds, the government's approach to land reform was condemned locally and internationally (Bratton et al, 2005) and some players in the international community moved to isolate the Zimbabwean leadership in order to force government to backtrack on the programme.

For example, in 2001 the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) which lays out a package of punitive measures on the country, including the imposition of 'smart sanctions' on the country's leadership and suspension of bilateral assistance and debt-forgiveness. The international community has also made concerted efforts to influence the International Finance Corporation's decisions on Zimbabwe's financial crisis.

In addition, both the U.S. and U.K. encouraged multilateral and bilateral lenders such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to deny assistance to the Zimbabwe government. Although the U.S. cannot by itself prevent these institutions from providing assistance to rogue states it has, as the largest donor, significant influence over the lending decisions and the support of other lenders. Thus in 2005 the IMF suspended already approved credit of US\$180 million in foreign aid to Zimbabwe after the government missed its performance targets and defaulted on its international debt

(Karume, 2005). This resulted in the further collapse of the economy and a worsening of the conditions under which Zimbabweans live.

In spite of the intense vilification of Zimbabwe by the West, however, African and other Third World countries have resolutely stood behind the country, much to the frustration of Western leaders. For example, South African President Thabo Mbeki, contrary to the expectations of many in Western diplomatic circles, has either come out strongly in support of Zimbabwe or engaged in *quiet diplomacy* (emphasis in original) (Mashingaidze, 2004). President Mbeki's quiet diplomacy has been seriously castigated by some in Zimbabwe and the international community. Many wanted President Mbeki to be more firm and proactive in solving Zimbabwe's political problems. However, others note that "since the land question which is at the centre of Zimbabwe's problems is so emotive in South Africa and other sub-Saharan countries, President Mbeki cannot condemn, at least in public, what is happening in Zimbabwe" (Mashingaidze, 2004:3).

The fast pace of the land redistribution programme and the haphazard policies that accompanied its implementation did adversely affect farming operations in the country, causing a substantial fall in production and export of the country's largest foreign currency earner, tobacco (Kambeba and Olaleye, 2005). This in turn negatively impacted on Zimbabwean's standards of living and quality of life. Since the late 1990s, Zimbabwe has experienced severe food shortages caused partly by drought, but also by the controversial land redistribution programme. The situation was so bad that in April 2003, food aid was being delivered to over 5.2 million people and the United Nations World Food Programme forecast that Zimbabwe had produced only half its food grain needs for 2004 (Bratton et al, 2005).

The difficulties caused by the land redistribution programme were magnified by the results of the economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) implemented by the government between 1991 and 1995. The SAPs were underpinned by principles that emphasised the reduction of the role of government and the public sector in the economy, while fostering that of the private sector. In line with the programmes, domestic and

external trade were both liberalised, leading to the collapse of many Zimbabwean companies previously shielded from external competition. This led to increasing rates of inflation and unemployment, causing deterioration in the welfare of the working class and ordinary Zimbabweans (Mbizvo, 2003). The subsequent high unemployment rates, low wages and unparalleled increases in prices of basic commodities caused by the implementation of the economic adjustment programmes led to widespread civil strife in urban areas during the nineties (Edwards and Flemmings Stock Market Report, 1998 in Dlamini, 2003).

The response to the worsening economic and social conditions came in the form of civil unrest and public sector strikes by the workers and trade unions. A public sector strike in 1996, a Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) strike in 1997 and mass boycotts at the end of 1998 pushed a revitalised labour movement to the forefront of politics, substantially changing the face of Zimbabwean politics. In late 1999 this labour movement, supported by a broad coalition of civic groups, launched the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) a political party which went on to become the strongest opposition party that Zimbabwe has seen to date (Kambeba et al, 2005).

The MDC's influence in Zimbabwean politics was soon felt. In the 2000 parliamentary elections the MDC won 57 seats to ZANU-PF's 62; it swept the board in the capital Harare and in Zimbabwe's second largest city Bulawayo. The party also did well in other urban centres, a show of support which has led government and the ruling party to view the urban-based middle class with suspicion since it is they who support and voted the MDC into parliament (Olaleye, 2005). In Zimbabwe, while ZANU PF tends to draw older voters and to be more popular in the rural areas, the MDC is more attractive to the young and is more likely to gain votes from the urban areas (Bratton et al, 2005).

This chapter has so far provided a brief outline of some of the events that have shaped Zimbabwe's social, economic and political face, and the role of the land redistribution programme and economic structural adjustment programmes in these changes. I briefly touched on the role played by civil society and the working class in the emergence of a

vibrant political opposition party and briefly described the site of this study, Harare. The next section attempts to locate professionals within this context in order that a situational understanding of their consumption/reception of global media may be possible.

3.3 Zimbabwean professionals

Zimbabwe's main source of professionals is the country's universities, college universities and technical colleges. It is here that individuals who have passed through the secondary and high education system with high grades are admitted and educated. Because of the lower number of colleges and universities as compared to applicants, access to higher education remains open only to a relatively small number of people in Zimbabwe. However, a university education is of such importance to Zimbabweans that those who can afford it turn to other countries. It is not uncommon to find Zimbabwean students at colleges and universities in Australia, Britain, Canada, South Africa and the United States of America. Some of them return to work in Zimbabwe after graduation. Still others turn to distance education and are enrolled with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and similar institutions, in order to become professionals in a certain field.

Freidson (1983:23-25) defines professionals as individuals in "a broad stratum of relatively prestigious but quite varied occupations whose members have all had some kind of higher education and who are identified more by their educational status than by their specific occupational skills". This corresponds to and illustrates the importance attached to university education in a post-colonial society such as Zimbabwe. Because of the underdeveloped nature of the indigenous and rural capitalist classes, wage employment in skilled occupations is the predominant means to upward social mobility, making higher education highly sought after and prestigious. Zimbabwean universities are thus largely considered the 'pinnacle of the education system' where young people are trained and educated for careers in professional, managerial and other high level occupations (Bennell et al, 1994).

Zimbabwe's tertiary education sector is comprised of eight polytechnic and technical colleges, fourteen teacher training colleges, eight fully fledged universities and three university colleges affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe. There are also over 350 privately-owned institutions, the majority of which offer commercial-based programmes (Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO et al, 2001). Official figures put the enrolment rate at the country's universities and university-colleges at 33 000 in 2000 (the last year for which figures exist). There is, however, a documented skew in enrolment that favours males in Zimbabwe's institutions of higher learning. For example, as at January 2001, there were 7 092 males (69 percent) and 3 171 females (31 percent) at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). The proportion of female students was particularly low at the science and technology universities such as the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) (16 percent) and at Bindura University of Science Education (19 percent) (Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO et al, 2001).

Despite the advantages that higher education affords them however, professionals in Zimbabwe find themselves in a dilemma where although their qualifications are at times instrumental in winning good placement in the employment sector where they receive good salaries and perks, the real value of these advantages is greatly eroded by the prevailing economic difficulties in the country. Zimbabwe's increased external debt; chronic foreign currency shortages; inability to procure raw materials, fuel, electricity and spare parts; high inflation; and rising production and labour costs have all led to declining real savings (Tevera, 2005).

The country's economic difficulties have had a particularly negative effect on the employment sector, supported as it was by foreign currency, foreign businesses and at times by international partnerships and funding, all of which have fallen away due to international isolation in response to the government's unpopular policies, the land redistribution programme as well as perceived irregularities in recent elections. The chronic shortages of foreign currency necessary for industry, mining and commerce have led to a collapse in the social sector, threatening job security and lowering formal employment opportunities (Olaleye, 2005). The situation is so dire that structural

unemployment is estimated at over 70 percent of the total population (UNDP Annual Report Zimbabwe, 2004).

Within this environment, a study by Tevera (2005) discovered higher levels of dissatisfaction amongst Zimbabwean professionals with the cost of living, taxation, availability of goods, and salaries than in any other Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) country. Tevera found that unhappiness goes deeper than economic circumstances to include provision of housing, medical services, education and a viable future for their children. Not only are levels of pessimism and dissatisfaction at an all-time high amongst Zimbabwean professionals, the next generation of skilled workers appears to be equally disgruntled

The economic difficulties, coupled with the lack of employment opportunities, job security and adequate remuneration for employees has led Zimbabwean professionals to be highly mobile. A Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) study into the reasons health professionals were leaving Zimbabwe in 2002 found that a majority (54 percent of those interviewed) cited economic factors. Around 30 percent pointed to professional reasons such as inadequate working conditions, and a further 30 percent cited political considerations as the main factor that prompted them to leave their birth country (BBC News, 2005). Thus since the late 1990s the country has been characterised by mass emigration of trained professionals for purposes of seeking employment in other countries. Reports indicate that close to three and a half million Zimbabwean professionals were working outside the country in 2004 (Mashingaidze, 2004). The destinations most popular among professional emigrants are Australia, Botswana, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and countries in Europe and North America because of their perceived higher standard of life and economic stability (Tevera, 2002; Tevera, 2005).

Those Zimbabwean professionals who have remained in the country find themselves in a difficult position, let down by the promise of a better life that the attainment of their advanced educational qualifications promised. A discussion of the challenges

professionals encounter in their daily and working lives has been necessary as it underpins the meanings that they take from satellite-accessed international news programmes. Having outlined the socio-economic and political context within which professionals consume/receive news on satellite television, the next section will discuss Zimbabwe's national broadcasting environment, paying particular attention to the changes between 2000 and 2005 that have influenced more Zimbabweans to access satellite television.

3.4 Zimbabwean broadcasting services

Broadcasting in Zimbabwe started at an amateur level during the colonial era, with radio in 1933 and thereafter, professional broadcasting in 1941. Television, which was initially confined to the larger cities and was mainly viewed by the white minority, was introduced into Rhodesia in 1961. It was the first such service in the region as South Africa did not introduce television until 1976. When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) became the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). Today, it is estimated that while radio reaches approximately 95 percent of the population, television reaches just over 50 percent of mainly urban dwellers (Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation website).

While the RBC was constituted as a public service broadcaster, broadcasting remained tightly under the control of government (Saunders, 1999), a set-up which was retained by the new Zimbabwe government as it embraced the existing legal and policy framework (Zaffiro 1984; Zaffiro 2002). This decision has called into question the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation's editorial and creative independence from state interference (Zaffiro, 1984; Zaffiro, 2002). Today, the ZBC, now re-named Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH) operates as a parastatal, a partly government, and partly private owned organisation enacted by an Act of Parliament, Chapter (248) revised in 1996 to Chapter (12:01). It operates the sole television station in the country as well as four radio channels, two of which are also broadcast live on the Internet as of June 2001 (Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation website).

The only television channel, Zimbabwe Television (ZTV), is a commercial station that transmits nationally 24 hours a day and reaches most parts of the country. It broadcasts three news programmes a day; the 30-minute lunchtime news at 1.00pm, news in the local languages Shona and Ndebele at 5:30pm and finally, the main news, called 'News Hour' from 8.00pm. The latter broadcast, 'News Hour', is the main source of news on television in Zimbabwe. It has however faced declining viewership levels since 2000, for example from 18 percent in the third quarter of 2003 to 16 percent in the third quarter of 2004 (MISA, 2005).

ZTV's status as the sole broadcaster was consolidated in April 2001 by a restructuring exercise in which the government passed the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) to establish the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), mandated with licensing broadcasting stations. The Act makes it very difficult for anyone to establish a radio or television station in the country and has been condemned by both media and civil society organisations. These organisations argue that the Act gives the Minister of State for Information and Publicity in the President's Office excessive powers over the broadcasting sector. For example, Section 7 requires the licensing of broadcasting services, while Sections 6, 11 and 15 provide the Minister with the authority to determine who gets a broadcasting licence and under what circumstances. Further, section 24 gives the Minister the authority to interfere with the content of broadcasting programming and the right to ban any broadcaster deemed to be a threat to national security (Broadcasting Services Act, 2001).

Within the frame of the Act, in 2002 ZBH cancelled all international news programmes and broadcasts on its stations. This was after the government blamed 'negative' content broadcast about Zimbabwe by international news agencies for causing many of the nations' problems and for fostering national disunity, interfering in the country's internal processes and especially for trying to reverse the gains of the state-sanctioned occupations of prime commercial farmland (Takaona, 2005:135).

Furthermore, the then sole private television station, Joy TV, which had leased a channel from ZBH since 1997 and was only available in Harare, was instructed to cease re-broadcasting British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news, with government officials arguing that the nature of news broadcasts about Zimbabwe would hurt the country (Titus, 2002). The television station was initially instructed to censor the BBC news bulletins. However, the BBC policy is that their news bulletins must be shown as is or not at all. Joy TV chose to do away with the news rather than risk having its lease agreement cancelled (Titus, 2002).

Banning BBC and other international news in Zimbabwe meant that the only source of alternative news remaining was the independent newspapers (Titus, 2002). This became a moot point however, as in the same year, 2002; government cancelled its lease agreement with Joy TV, apparently because the agreement was in contravention of the Broadcasting Services Act. This is strongly contested in the September 2002 issue of Parade Magazine which maintains that:

Investigations revealed that as the station's reputation grew, so did the animosity...The understanding was that Joy TV would not produce its own news. This forced Joy to resort to re-broadcasting BBC news, but this was not well received taking into consideration Zimbabwe's relations with Britain. Eventually the station...dropped the bulletin and when the relations with Britain deteriorated, the station was pressurised into taking out all stories on Zimbabwe, before completely doing away with the whole bulletin (2002:13 in Dlamini, 2003:43).

The cancellation resulted in Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings once again becoming the sole broadcaster in Zimbabwe. It is interesting that government's cancellation of Joy TV programming in 2002 came just before the presidential election and after the MDC's surprise electoral performance and win of 57 parliamentary seats in 2000. With ZTV as the only remaining television station, during the 2002 presidential elections, there was a reported 'persistent imbalance in favour of ZANU PF' in election coverage (Research Unit, 2002). The Media Monitoring Project (Zimbabwe) detailed this imbalance, finding that 94 percent of television news bulletins were devoted to promoting ZANU-PF, together with 84 percent of election campaign stories (Research Unit, 2002).

Around the same time, and in line with the Broadcasting Services Act's preamble that maintains that the purpose of the Act, among others, is 'to encourage and develop the creative arts through broadcasting content standards', the ZBC undertook to broadcast 75 percent local content on television (Weza, 2001). The provision, government maintained, was concerned with patriotism and promoting local values and the cultural heritage of Zimbabwean people. This ZTV hoped to do by providing broadcasting in local languages and airing documentaries outlining Zimbabwe's rich culture and its development before and after independence. Nationalism, it was argued, would enhance a national identity and further social cohesion.

Further, by December 2000, the state media added a communication strategy on agrarian reform aimed at motivating people to apply for resettlement and to go back to the land. From 2001 to the middle of 2005 when the quota was reduced and the ZBC began to incorporate more international programmes in its line-up, there were no international news programmes and little broadcasting of international sitcoms, soap operas, feature films, drama or documentaries. Even with the gradual re-introduction of international programmes, international news remains banned from ZTV.

It is important to note that although February 28, 2002 was set by government as the deadline for registration under the Broadcasting Services Act, no licences have been issued to date, except to DSTV. The suspension of international news programmes on the national channels and the closure of Joy TV left a gap in alternative television news provision that Zimbabwean audiences have tried to bridge by turning to the only alternative - subscribing to DSTV. DSTV allows Zimbabwean audiences access to international news and entertainment programming and helps them to maintain links with the outside world.

Further, the limitations in Zimbabwe's national television broadcasting sector in terms of quality and the quantity of stations available to audiences has been a large factor in influencing audiences to turn to satellite television as an alternative to, and in some cases, instead of, the national broadcaster. The following sub-section outlines the satellite

television consumption practices of Zimbabwean audiences, characterised as they are by a leap in DSTV subscription rates in recent years. This phenomenon will be discussed in relation to Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political environment.

3.5 A profile of Zimbabweans' satellite television consumption

The developments in the broadcasting sector and at the national broadcaster discussed above have largely been criticised as attempts by the state to muzzle the foreign media and to deny Zimbabwean television audiences the right to freely access information. Audiences have however tried to bridge the gap between content provided by the national broadcaster and content they would like to watch by subscribing to DSTV and making use of the entertainment and news programmes it offers. This move to satellite television access has been gradually increasing from the late 1990s to date.

Bratton et al (2005) found that Zimbabweans reported being more sceptical of the news they received from media than any other African nationals in a survey they conducted. Particularly, Zimbabweans were less likely to place 'a lot' or 'a very great deal' of trust in the government broadcaster. Indeed, in 2004 as in a previous study in 1999, only four out of ten people reported that they trusted the content on ZTV. Bratton et al maintain that this is because the national broadcaster concentrates heavily on news about the president, contains editorials that trumpet the ZANU-PF line, run regular features celebrating Zimbabwe's nationalist history, and display commercials promoting land invasion and other revolutionary policies (2005:46).

It is thus not surprising that a survey by the Herald in Zimbabwe revealed that an increasing number of television viewers were opting to pay millions of Zimbabwean dollars a month to watch South African-based MultiChoice's DSTV programmes. Others resort to investing similarly large amounts of money on special decoders which allow them free access to foreign television stations, including Botswana Television (BTV), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channels and ETV (Mail and Guardian

Online, 2005). The news source reported that a substantial number of Zimbabwean television viewers were deserting the country's national broadcaster and opting for foreign networks via satellite as uneconomical license fees continued to cripple ZTV's programming (Mail and Guardian Online, 2005). This move towards accessing satellite television has caused a corresponding decline in ZTV's viewership figures (MISA, 2005).

An attempt to gauge the total number of Zimbabwean individuals or family units with access to satellite television is difficult. Although DSTV has about 20 000 subscribers in Zimbabwe, this figure does not reflect the total number of people who view free channels accessed on satellite dishes (Mail and Guardian Online, 2005). South Africa's SABC and ETV are accessible via special decoders known as Vivid, Pace and Fortec Star which Zimbabweans import from a number of countries, among them South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. Botswana Television (BTV) is also a favourite with Zimbabwean audiences because it is free on the MultiChoice decoder and carries a wide variety of local and foreign programmes, including popular Western soap operas, which are considered to be better produced and of higher quality (Mail and Guardian Online, 2005).

This study is however concerned with a programme that is only accessible on the DSTV's full bouquet, which in Zimbabwe costs US\$52 a month to access. Bourgault (1995) argues that the class differences in exposure to and acquisition of foreign programmes and technology mean that some sections of any society are more likely to have access to certain media than others. This study works on the assumption that the Zimbabwean urban-based middle class, of whom professionals are a part, can afford to buy satellite dishes and to pay the high monthly subscription rates. Thus they are likely to access satellite television programmes as a means of circumventing the government roadblocks to a varied and competitive broadcasting environment and the local broadcaster's inability to provide quality broadcasts and international programming. For Zimbabwean professionals, the satellite television company MultiChoice plays an important role in providing this alternative, especially as its DSTV is the only other broadcaster licensed to broadcast in Zimbabwe. The satellite television provider will be

briefly discussed below, and a short history of the news channel that underpins the interviews and discussions used to inform this study will be outlined.

3.6 MultiChoice and SABC Africa

MultiChoice, the satellite television provider for sub-Saharan Africa, is a pioneer of multi-channel digital satellite television on the African continent. MultiChoice is owned by the MIH Group, an international company committed to providing entertainment, technology and e-commerce services. The MIH group in its turn is wholly owned by Naspers Limited, which has ownership interests through MultiChoice South Africa and MultiChoice Africa in subsidiaries and joint ventures operating in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (MultiChoice website).

With headquarters in South Africa, MultiChoice started as the subscriber management arm of the analogue company pay television channel M-NET. It was one of the first pay television operations to launch outside of the USA, beginning its operations in South Africa in 1986. In 1995 the company launched its premium DSTV bouquet with an enhanced channel offering across Africa on a newly-constructed digital platform. Through its bouquets (groups of channels designed to appeal to different members of a viewing household), the company aims to provide 'premiere television entertainment' to more than 1.4 million subscribers in 48 countries in Africa and adjacent Indian Ocean islands (MultiChoice website). In each sub-Saharan African market, MultiChoice Africa generally bills its customers in U.S. dollars or U.S. dollar equivalents for access to a bouquet, comprised of 55 video and 48 audio channels 24 hours a day (Fourie, 2001).

SABC Africa, producer of the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa' which is the focus of this study came into being in 2003 when two DSTV channels, Africa2Africa and SABC Africa merged to form a new SABC Africa channel. SABC Africa is the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC's) pay-TV channel. As South Africa's national broadcaster, the SABC is controlled by a Board whose directors are selected through public hearings before being appointed by the State President. As the national public service broadcaster, the SABC has a unique funding system (MultiChoice website).

While other public service broadcasters in the world are financed principally through revenue from television licences and State grants, the SABC relies on commercial sources for the bulk of its annual operating revenue (SABC website). In effect, seventy-six percent of the SABC's annual income is derived from advertising and sponsorships; eight percent comes from areas such as the hiring of broadcasting facilities and from interest while income from television licence fees represents sixteen percent of the SABC's annual operating revenue (SABC website). This unique funding structure dissuades perceptions that SABC Africa, like numerous other African state broadcasters would be employed to further the objectives of the country's leader.

Available to Zimbabweans on DSTV's bouquet, SABC Africa broadcasts 24 hours a day and reaches 48 countries on the African continent. Its weekday line-up focuses on news and current affairs, with some entertainment programmes, while the weekdays have less news content and more entertainment and sports. The weekday programme '60 minutes live in Africa' which is the focus of this study is a news feature that uses Africa as a centre point. '60 minutes live in Africa' is broadcast at 8.00pm and comprises five segments; news, business, sports, weather and interviews. SABC Africa provides African news and information maintaining that, 'Unlike the usual dose of African news that concentrates on Africa's catastrophes, this show provides an innovative, constructive, informative, educating, stimulating and analytic reportage' (SABC Africa website).

3.7 Conclusion

This Chapter discussed the situational factors that led to the increase in satellite television consumption by Zimbabwean audiences. I have highlighted the specific context in which professional men and women in Zimbabwe make meaning from international news on satellite television. The Chapter also examined the country's specific historical, socio-economic and political context as it underlies the satellite television consumption practices of professionals. In the next Chapter I discuss this study's research focus as it influenced my choice of research methodology and the data collection and analysis methods I employed.

Chapter Four

Research methodology and data analysis

4.0 Introduction

In this Chapter I discuss the research methodology employed in this study. I also discuss the research design and methods of data collection, the physical location of the study and the selection of respondents as well as my data analysis and processing. Further, I outline some of the challenges I encountered in the course of the study. Deacon et al (1999) maintain that research and theory have to be interlinked as one informs what the researcher will look for and the methods the research process will utilise. In line with this argument, my methodological approach will be discussed in line with the theoretical framework and their relevance to the goals and aims of the study.

4.1 Methodology and research design

This study took the form of ethnographic audience research undertaken within the qualitative research tradition. Research under the qualitative research tradition is normally designed to discover what can be learned about some phenomenon of interest, normally where people are the participants or subjects (Palton, 1991). Further, Moores (1993:1) insists that “a critical ethnographic practice best equips us to map out the media’s varied uses and meanings for particular social subjects in particular contexts”. Thus this audience study of the reception/consumption of news broadcast on satellite television by professionals in Harare was undertaken within qualitative research because of its emphasis on context sensitivity, that is, understanding a phenomenon in all its complexity and within a particular situation and environment (Palton, 1991).

Also, this study is located within the qualitative research methodology because of its emphasis on examining both the audiences and contexts of mass communication as socially specific objects of analysis, for its fluid and flexible nature and because of its emphasis on discovering novel or unanticipated findings (Bryman, 1984; Jensen 1991). Qualitative research insists on the study of everyday life and its significance as perceived by participants. Thus studies undertaken within this methodology are conducted, as far as possible, in the respondents' natural contexts and researchers attempt to produce a unique explanation about a given situation or individual (Jankowski et al, 1991).

Further, I chose to locate the study within the qualitative research tradition because of its emphasis on the use of different research techniques to gain an understanding of social phenomenon, as well as its insistence on looking at phenomenon from the perspective of the researched. Bryman (1988:61) notes that qualitative research has an expressed commitment to "viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied". Further, qualitative researchers place emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records (Palton, 1991), a consideration that has a bearing on the data collection methods, as well as the modes of data analysis and presentation employed in this study.

The central concern in qualitative research is with exploring the ways in which people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social ritual (Deacon et al, 1999). Deacon et al (1999) further maintain that many questions are best tackled by combining different research methods, an argument that prompted me to employ a two-stage approach to examine the consumption/reception of SABC Africa news by Zimbabwean professionals.

I used survey research, in the form of a semi-structured self-administered bio-data questionnaire in order to elicit basic information on existing patterns of behaviour as well as to collect data on current attitudes and opinions (Hansen et al, 1998). The survey was aimed at obtaining respondents' socio-demographic data on age, sex, educational



qualification, employment status, family situation and satellite media use. Following on qualitative research's emphasis on *verstehen*, that is the importance of understanding behaviour within the context of meaning systems employed by the research target audience, (Bryman, 1984) this study also made use of focus group discussions which provided more qualitative information (Hansen et al, 1998).

Using non-standardised questioning for its importance in generating deeper insights into subtle perceptions and complex perceptions and beliefs (Hansen et al, 1998), I conducted focus group discussions with Zimbabwean professionals who watch SABC Africa's '60 minutes live in Africa' two or more times a week, to gain an understanding of the meanings that this audience takes from global media. I then categorised the responses thematically for qualitative analysis (Hansen et al, 1998). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, research and theory have to be interlinked as one informs what the researcher will look for and the methods the research process will utilise (Deacon et al, 1999). Similarly, the conclusions reached in this study depend on the theoretical narrative I employed, and the themes under which I categorised my findings.

In the following two sub-sections, I discuss and give justifications for my use of the survey questionnaire and focus group discussions as data collection methods. I will also outline how these research techniques were applied in this study.

4.2 The survey questionnaire

This study employed the group-administered survey, used when a group of respondents is gathered together and given individual copies of a questionnaire for self-administration, as an initial data collection method (Wimmer and Dominick, 1987). Prior to conducting the focus group discussions I simply passed out the questionnaires and requested my respondents to fill them out at their own pace. My decision to employ the group-administered questionnaire was motivated by the fact that since the respondents were assembled for the express purpose of completing the questionnaire, the response rate would be high. Wimmer et al (1987) maintain that this is because the opportunity for researchers to answer questions and handle problems that might arise generally means

that fewer items are left blank or answered incorrectly. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire employed.

4.3 Focus group discussions

The use of focus group discussion as a qualitative research method for the study of media audiences has gained popularity since the early 1980s (Deacon et al. 1999). Focus group discussions are good for examining what role media has in the lives of audiences and how audiences use media as a resource in their everyday life (Deacon et al, 1999).

Since the interpretation of media content and the generation of meanings is 'naturally' a social activity and because audiences form their interpretations of and opinions about media content through conversations and social interaction (Hansen et al, 1998), I was motivated to use focus group discussions as a data collection method in this research. Deacon et al (1999:262) maintain that the group basis in focus group discussions provides insight into the interactional dynamics of small groups and to mimic the way that everyday media interpretations tend to be 'collectively constructed'.

I specifically chose to employ the focus group discussion as my main data collection method based on this study's interest in understanding the reasons underlying the consumption of international news by Zimbabwean professionals. The focus group discussions were particularly useful in revealing the ways in which professionals collectively articulate their media consumption/reception practices in an environment with legislative measures in place that have been designed to constrain the consumption of international news and the discussion of national processes by the public.

I also employed focus group discussions for this study based on observations by Maykut et al, (1994) that focus group discussions combine some of the features of individual interviewing and participant observation. This is because the group interview is an opportunity to observe a selected group of people discussing the topic that most interests the researcher. Further, focus group discussions offer dynamics and ways, not available in individual interviews, of eliciting, stimulating and elaborating audience interpretations.

They enable the researcher to directly observe the social production of meaning as participants negotiate their readings of media material in an environment with strong consensual constraints (Schroder et al, 2003).

In line with this and as will be discussed later in this Chapter, through purposive and snowball sampling I obtained a sample of fifteen respondents who took part in focus group discussions. The group discussions were constituted of both male and female respondents from a variety of occupations. These respondents were chosen because they had home access to satellite television, they watched '60 minutes live in Africa' and because they fit the definition of 'professionals' outlined in sub-section 4.6. Respondents were also chosen based on their willingness to participate in the discussions.

Schroder (2003) maintains that reception research does not study media use as it happens in the natural situations of everyday life - it explores media experiences through the medium of extended talk. Following this assertion, I conducted these group discussions in the homes of one of the respondents from each group. As explained by Deacon et al (1999), in studies of media audiences, the start of a group discussion would often consist of the group viewing a television programme, which is then followed by the researcher asking the participants in very general and vague questions 'what they thought about the programme' or 'what the programme was about'. This gives the participants the chance to define not only the 'frame of reference' for discussion of the media and its content, but also, of course, the types of issues seen as important *and* the language for discussion (emphasis in original) (Deacon et al, 1999:274).

The sequence I followed for my focus group discussions was that of initial undirected general discussion about participants' media consumption practices and their attitudes towards satellite television. The discussions began with a series of general questions about the respondents' satellite television viewing habits. This was followed by a screening of a randomly selected taped news broadcast of '60 minutes live in Africa'. The screening then led to a discussion on more specific issues and topics to do with

participants' use of satellite television in general, their consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa' and their reception of the particular broadcast they had just watched.

The focus group discussions were very interactive and silences were minimal. The silences that did occur may have been caused mainly by the fact that I employed researcher constituted groups for the interviews. Some writers suggest that a limitation of the focus group discussion as a data collection method is that participants may be reluctant to disclose information in a group situation, especially when trust is low (Hollander, 2004). Further, in this research, the social context of the discussions, the relationships among the participants, some of whom were meeting each other for the first time, and between the participants and myself as moderator/researcher may have initially hampered the free flow of information (Hollander, 2004). These factors appear to have somewhat impacted on some respondent's ability and willingness to reveal and share their thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs. This was evident in one respondent's initial unwillingness to contribute to discussions on the interview section of the news edition, probably because it called upon him and fellow respondents to discuss the views and issues advanced by President Mugabe. This activity required participants to reveal or at the very least, to hint at their political views¹. I was however able to gain the respondent's participation as the discussion progressed.

Besides a few cases such as the one mentioned above, and one other to follow, there was a general willingness by respondents to participate in the discussions, which may have been encouraged by my being their peer. As a Zimbabwean woman with university

¹ The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (2002) makes it illegal for more than five people to meet without the approval of the police. It also specifically prohibits public debate on political issues. Such legislation and the general political climate in Zimbabwe cause a lot of people to be wary of revealing their political views in public, especially to people whom they do not know well.

education who was previously employed in the country, I share some of the respondents' context and frames of reference. Morgan (1995) suggests that having a moderator "whose background will put the participants at ease" is important for sensitive topics. For example, a moderator who shares similar characteristics with the group participants will more easily promote rapport, trust, or both (in Hollander, 2004:609)

In the process of this research there were moments, as noted by Bryman (1988), where the respondents did 'ramble'. I considered these ramblings to be of some use to my study since they revealed something about the participants' frame of reference and their concerns. On the other hand, there was a case in one group where one respondent, despite the attention and encouragement of the moderator, refused to cooperate with the research and would often maintain he had nothing to say. He was however the exception to the rule as the other respondents willingly participated in the discussions. Juluri (2003) highlights the importance of silences in conducting audience research by noting that despite the emphasis in reception studies on speaking, it is also important to note the pattern of silences in interviews and group discussions. He argues that silences may constitute the boundaries of not only what people would like to say, but perhaps what they are capable of saying as well. In other words, what is not said points out the 'limits of intelligibility' of certain discourses (Juluri 2003: 225).

Unlike the respondent I have mentioned above, it is unlikely that this respondent was uncomfortable among the other participants, prompting him to close up due to distrust. The group of five in which this respondent participated was made up entirely of people whom he knew, some very well, including his wife and close friend. He may have simply been uncomfortable in the research situation, with my presence, and with the topic under discussion, although this was revealed and explained to all participants prior to the day of the discussions. This respondents' insistence on being silent may find explanation in Hollander's argument that "Informants do not treat their knowledge lightly; they give only the information they believe to be appropriate to the situation and to the persons involved" (2004:630).

During all focus group discussions I did take note of the caution advanced by Hansen et al (1998) that participants in the group discussions tend to move towards 'consensus' and dissenting or different views might be marginalised. Because of this fear that pressures towards conformity would limit discussions, the opening instruction I gave to the group emphasised that I was interested in hearing about a range of different experiences and feelings. Further, through probes and follow-up questions I asked for other points of view during the group discussions (Hollander, 2004). I hoped that once participants realised that I was genuinely interested in learning as much as possible about their experiences and feelings, then the problem of conformity would not present itself.

The major disadvantage in using focus groups is that the discussion may become dominated by a self-appointed group leader who monopolises the conversation and attempts to impose his or her opinion on the other participants. Such a person may draw the resentment of the other participants and may have an adverse effect on the performance of the group (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991). Bearing these cautions in mind, I tried to control such situations before they could get out of hand. In this research process this was necessary because the respondent in whose home we were conducting the group discussion was almost always the most vocal, perhaps because they were comfortable in their environment. Although this presented a challenge, these respondents' contributions were good for breaking down any inhibitions that the other respondents might have had, meaning that the discussions got off to a good start. However, I made sure that I included, and gave due attention to, those who were quieter during the discussions, often probing them to elicit further information.

As Hansen et al. point out, "It is precisely the group dynamics and interaction found where several people are brought together to discuss a subject that is the attraction of this mode of data collection over individual interviews" (1998: 262). In the group discussions, my focus was on trying to listen for the potential heterogeneity or divergence in professional men and women's experience with and use of global media. I employed an interview guide (see Appendix 2) to conduct the group discussions, and I discuss its use and my role as a moderator in the next section.

4.4 The interview guide and my role as a moderator

Bagden and Taylor (1975:43) maintain that “the questions we ask will to some degree determine the answers we find.” They further assert that it is important for researchers to have a prepared list of questions, as the research questions that guide qualitative studies reflect the researcher’s goal of discovering what is important to know about the topic of interest. Further, because Wimmer et al (1987) maintain that the identifying characteristic of the focus group is controlled group discussion, I drew up an interview guide to ensure that the focus group discussions concentrated on the subjects and issues relevant to my research. The interview guide also enabled me to ensure that similar issues were discussed in the different groups to enable later comparison between groups (Knodel 1993; Deacon, 1999). However, in line with Morgan’s (1998) proposition, I did not rigidly follow the interview guide, but allowed the discussions and interviews to flow at length and when the necessity arose I probed a topic more deeply.

The fact that group interviews bring together several participants for an open conversation around a specific topic means that the researcher will have a less prominent role than in the one-on-one individual interviewing situation (Bagden et al, 1975). Thus my role in the group discussions was that of moderator and my main concern was with ensuring that the thematic topics outlined in my literature review as well as the issues outlined in my interview guide were covered during the course of the discussion (Deacon et al, 1999). Following Hansen et al (1998) and Morgan (1988), my purpose as focus-group moderator was to facilitate and stimulate the discussions and not to dominate the proceedings.

4.5 Physical location of the study

My study was conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe. Because research is interested in understanding people’s experiences in context, the natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover what is to be known about the phenomenon of interest (Palton, 1991). Morgan (1988) suggests the best-suited venues for interviews as the researcher’s office, at participants’ homes or at some neutral site such as a church while Lunt (1996) maintains that the setting of focus group discussions should be as

informal as possible, to stimulate group conversation. In line with these suggestions I chose to use the home of one willing respondent from each focus group as the setting where I administered the survey questionnaires and conducted the focus group discussions. In the next section I explain how I selected my sample of respondents.

4.6 Sample selection and size

Qualitative researchers set out to build a sample that includes people selected with the goal of gaining a deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people. Given the qualitative nature of the research, I used a purposive or non-random sampling procedure, in conjunction with 'snowball sampling' in order to select people whom I felt represented the range of experience on the phenomenon in which I was interested (Maykut et al, 1994). Within the qualitative research tradition there are several strategies for purposive sampling. The selection of a sampling strategy depends upon the focus of inquiry and the researchers' judgement as to which approach will yield the clearest understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maykut et al, 1994). Also, as Deacon et al (1999) observe, there is no consistency in sampling procedures used in qualitative research and as a result, the various sampling methods used are often hybrids of existing sampling strategies.

Wimmer and Dominick (1991) explain that a purposive sample includes subjects on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities. A purposive sample is chosen with the knowledge that it is not representative of the general population; rather it attempts to represent a specific portion of the population. Thus my initial sample was selected from the Harare Chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce (JCC), a recognised leadership development organisation. The aim of the JCC is to assist and encourage its members to develop key networking opportunities with the larger business community, with whom the Chamber has strong links (Junior Chamber of Commerce International). With the assistance of the JCC's National Business Director (2005), Ranga Midzi, I was able to purposively sample willing professional respondents who have access to satellite television and who watch '60 minutes live in Africa' at least two times a week. Mr. Midzi introduced me to a number of JCC members and allowed me to explain the nature and

purpose of my research, enabling me to build some rapport with them and subsequently to gain their participation in the research.

However, because I could not obtain the cooperation of enough respondents who were willing to participate in this research at the JCC, I employed a snowball sampling strategy to gain more participants. In this strategy, like a snowball rolling down a hill, initial contact with an informant generates further contacts, who in turn may provide further contacts (Jensen, 1982; Deacon et al, 1999). In line with this, I asked my initial contacts to suggest other men and women who regularly watched '60 minutes live in Africa' and who I could approach for inclusion in the focus group discussions.

Hansen et al (1998) argue that one should have a minimum of six focus groups and Deacon et al (1999) maintain that the qualitative researcher normally stops gathering information once the researcher reaches 'saturation point', where the data collection stops revealing new information and the evidence starts to repeat itself. In sampling for this study, and in line with Bagden's suggestions, I assessed my personal resources of time, finances and the size and requirements of this thesis, as well as the number of people willing to participate in the sessions and decided I could not include more than a relatively fixed number of respondents (1975). I conducted three focus group discussions with the participation of a total of fifteen professional men and women.

This study relies on, and employs a concept of professions that refers to "a broad stratum of relatively prestigious but quite varied occupations whose members have all had some kind of higher education and who are identified more by their educational status than by their specific occupational skills" (Friedson,1983:23). Friedson adds that in this definition, the primary identity is not given by occupations, but by the status gained by elite education, no matter what the speciality (1983). In this study, the term 'profession' is recognised as a socially valuable label which carries the possibility of social, economic, political or at the very least symbolic rewards accruing to those labelled.

Further, because television use in Africa is an urban phenomenon, and satellite television an elite one (Bourgault, 1995), it is an assumption of this study that the status accorded my sample by their professions and elite education would go hand-in-hand with the desire to access satellite television as a status symbol as well as a link to world events. Bourgault notes that young elites in Africa demand programmes that are comparable to those which video has habituated them, thus they increasingly turn to satellite television to access such programming. Also important to note is that the majority of the professionals sampled for this study, because they lived alone or because they paid for the satellite subscription, had control over the television programmes that they watched and specifically over their choice to watch SABC Africa's '60 minutes live in Africa'.

4.7 Research procedure

Prior to my embarking on field research in Harare, Zimbabwe, I compiled a list of thematic questions with the assistance of my supervisor, Simwogerere Kyazze of the Journalism Department at Rhodes University. The thematic questions used in this study were arrived at after careful consideration of the research question, the goals of the research as well as some thought on what questions would be most helpful in obtaining relevant information for this research.

Also, in my attempt to obtain information relevant to this study I was careful to take cognisance of some ethical considerations. Fontana and Frey (1994) observe that traditional ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of 'informed consent' (consent received from the subject after he or she has been carefully and truthfully informed about the research), the 'right to privacy' and 'protection from harm' and the ability to get out of the research at any time during the research, even after the project commences. Research participants were also assured that the information they would provide would be used for the purposes of this thesis only. I have adhered to all in this research.

Before commencing with the administration of the questionnaire, I explained the purpose of the study to the respondents, lending weight to my explanation with a copy of a letter

of introduction supplied by my supervisor (see Appendix 3). The letter, printed on Rhodes University letterhead, clearly stated the purpose of my research. I supplied a copy of the letter to each participant in this study and was very careful to get participants' verbal informed consent to participation in the study and to having the focus group sessions audio taped. To ensure their anonymity, my respondents were asked to identify themselves by just their first names. This also served to assure them that their privacy would remain intact. To further guarantee respondents' anonymity, given the political nature of some of their responses, I attributed a pseudonym to each respondent which will be used to identify them during my discussion of the research findings.

My focus group discussions were comprised of between four and six participants each. Because I purposively sampled two people from the Junior Chamber of Commerce for each focus group and asked them to suggest other respondents I could approach, I ended up with researcher-constituted groups; that is groups that were constituted specifically for the purpose of this research. In this instance, group members remained bearers of particular demographics, while entering into an approximated natural group dynamic (Jensen, 1982). However, as noted by Deacon et al (1999) because of the snowball sampling technique I employed, each of the three groups was constituted of some people who live, work or socialise together. This proved important in that it helped to improve the length and the quality of the discussions since some respondents already knew each other and had previously interacted with each other. Excluding the time spent watching the taped edition of '60 minutes live in Africa', the group discussions lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour.

It is important at this stage to reveal that the research design of this study is a non-emergent one, that is, I pursued my focus of inquiry with qualitative methods of data collection and *then* analysed it (emphasis in original) (Bagden, 1975:64). Palton (1991:21) maintains that "the goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of the research topic". The next sub-section is thus a natural continuation of this section,

containing as it does a discussion of the data processing and data analysis employed in this study.

4.8 Data processing and analysis

By utilising the two research techniques discussed earlier, respondents were able to generate information on my research topic. Following Deacon et al's (1999:18), assertion that audience research should be in the business of locating "significant clusters of meaning" and that it should be charting the lives that join these clusters with the social and discursive positionings of readers, the mode of data analysis employed in this study is thematic coding. Jensen succinctly explains the thematic coding approach as:

[a] loosely inductive categorisation of interview or observational extracts with reference to various concepts, headings, or themes. The process comprises the comparing, contrasting, and abstracting of the constitutive elements of meaning. (1982:247).

According to Jensen (1982), such categorisation can in turn support inferences concerning, for example, the selective reception and reconstruction of news items by different audience groups. Thematic coding thus represents an attempt to identify, compare and contrast meaning elements as they emerge from and recur in several different contexts. Jensen adds that what distinguishes thematic coding from most quantitative content analyses is the emphasis on defining each of these elements in relation to their context (1982). The use of thematic coding as a tool of analysis for this research is embedded in the dictates of qualitative research, where the person or event under investigation can only be understood within context. Thus it is important to note that the findings that emerge out of my analysis are firmly located within the prevailing Zimbabwean context and are by no means universal results.

Before commencing my data analysis, I fully transcribed the focus group discussion sessions so that I could scan the comments and develop a category system. Each comment was coded into the appropriate category, which I arrived at by referring to the theoretical assumptions made in Chapter Two. After they were categorised and labelled, the responses were analysed (Wimmer et al, 1987).

In most cases, the responses fell under the categories that were spelled out in the thematic questions, although there were instances where the focus group discussions generated some unexpected responses. These were categorised and crosschecked accordingly. This information was then written in narrative form and pertinent quotations were selected to illustrate the major findings of the study as presented in Chapters Five and Six. This is in line with Bagden's (1975) argument that the results of a qualitative research study are most effectively presented within a rich narrative.

Following on this, I have made extensive use of verbatim statements and sentiments to allow the participants to 'speak for themselves' thereby giving you, the reader, sufficient information for understanding the research outcomes. On the whole, my analysis of the data followed the model outlined by Lindloff:

In the final analysis, qualitative reports are all about perspectives of lived experience. The researcher must decide what kind of author he or she will be, and what sort of story to construct of the 'facts' of the case...Qualitative research involves the production of knowledge, not its discovery. (1995: 24–25).

4.9 Challenges and limitations

I faced initial difficulties in getting all respondents for my focus group discussions in one place at the same time. Due to the various family, work, educational and other commitments of some of my participants, I encountered a few 'false starts' and had, on two occasions, to re-convene the discussions to another day. The various commitments that respondents had led to another challenge, that of two respondents who brought their toddlers to the focus group discussions over a weekend. Although one of the respondents brought her baby minder along with her and offered her use to the other mother, there were some disturbances when they both had to look in on the children. Although the interruptions caused were minimal, they did affect the flow of conversation.

A major limitation of this study is the fact that I was only able to get the participation of professional men and women in their 20s and 30s. Both my purposive and snowball sampling strategy failed to provide respondents of middle age or older. Considering Brody's (1990:68) assertion that "age is the strongest determinant of interests and

behavioural patterns”, the fact that comparisons of media use by professionals of different ages will not be possible poses a significant limitation to this study.

4.10 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have discussed the multi-step sampling procedures used in this study, the two stages of my research process as well as the modes of data analysis employed. I also presented the research procedure I followed, I explained the physical location of the study and outlined the various challenges I faced. I have shown that my choice of survey questionnaires and focus group discussions were best suited to achieving the purpose of this study.

In the next two Chapters, by drawing on the survey questionnaire and the focus group discussion transcripts, I examine the way Zimbabwean professional men and women receive/consume global media in their everyday contexts. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six I present and discuss my research findings according to the theoretical assumptions discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five

Presentation and interpretation of findings

Professionals' satellite television consumption and their reception of international news

Television news is watched for pleasure, as well as for top-down information; it is watched for its relevance to everyday life; its viewers do not simply receive the information it gives, they are productive, they do make their sense of its representations of the world. The struggle over meanings, the contest between top-down homogenising forces and bottom-up diversifying ones, still occurs. (Fiske, 1989:149)

5.0 Introduction

This study focused on the consumption of international news accessed via satellite television by professional Zimbabwean men and women situated in the contemporary Zimbabwean context. I set out to specifically examine the popularity of satellite television, and of a specific South African-based news programme, among professionals situated in a country undergoing change. In particular, the study sought to understand the motivations behind professionals' consumption of satellite television and to understand audience reception of the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa'.

Within the frame of Gramsci's theory of hegemony and the cultural proximity and symbolic distancing theories, I present and discuss the findings of the research in this and the following Chapter. The interpretation and discussion will be dictated by the objectives of the study and informed by the theoretical considerations outlined in my literature review chapter. In my analysis, I combine findings from the individual questionnaires and the focus group discussions in order to emerge with a holistic picture of satellite television news consumption and reception by Zimbabwean audiences. I present the findings and illustrate and corroborate my analysis with quotations arising from the survey questionnaires and focus group discussions under the following six major themes:

- **Socio-cultural context, professionals and satellite television**
- **Counter hegemonic contestation for power in subscribing to DSTV**

- **Global media as a vehicle for ‘symbolic distancing’ and ‘escapism’**
- **Cultural proximity and the cultural relevance of ‘60 minutes live in Africa’**
- **The influence of cultural proximity on audience interest in news on Zimbabwe**
- **The patriotic audiences’ concern for Zimbabwe’s international image**

It is important to note here that in practice, the themes outlined above are intertwined, but for analytical purposes I have found it necessary, and useful to treat them separately. These two chapters contain my interpretation of the research findings I obtained during field research with the following respondents:

Focus Group One

Kelvin, thirty-year old Architect

Nyarai, twenty-seven-year old Marketing Executive

Sarudzai, twenty-five-year old Trainee Stockbroker

Paul, twenty-eight-year old Information and Communications Officer

Focus Group Two

Daniel, twenty-nine-year old Financial Assets Manager

Namatai, thirty-year old Finance Executive

Rachel, twenty-seven-year old Cardiac Nurse

Ruvarashe, twenty-seven-year old Retailer

Patricia, twenty-six-year old Auditor

Tawanda, thirty-one-year old Operations Manger (Finance)

Focus Group Three

Isheanesu, twenty-seven-year old Chemical Engineer

Linda, twenty-eight-year old Medical Doctor- Paediatrics

Luckson, twenty-eight-year old Information Technology Manager

Noreen, twenty-six-year old Human Resources Practitioner, and

Tendai, twenty-eight-year old Asset Fund Manager.

5.1 Socio-cultural contexts, professionals and satellite television

The increased DSTV subscription rates and the consumption of international programming on satellite television by Zimbabwean audiences have undoubtedly been influenced by the type and quality of programming available on the national broadcaster as well as by the prevailing circumstances in the country. This study thus sought to understand the situated media use of a number of professional men and women in contemporary Zimbabwe.

In beginning my analysis of the consumption and use of satellite television by professionals in Zimbabwe I find it useful to start from an examination of the social setting of reception, rather than from the individual. This approach is motivated by the argument that as a contextualised social phenomenon, mediated communication cannot be understood apart from the broader contexts of social life (Thompson, 1995). Also, the Cultural Studies tradition within which this study is located insists on the study and understanding of media audiences within a given historical moment (Dahlgren, 2001; Moores, 1993).

This section thus begins with a discussion of respondents' conceptions of their socio-cultural contexts. This is because the significance and power of their stories can best be appreciated in the context of the complexities and dynamics of their realities. It is important to begin from an understanding of the way in which respondents conceive of

their contexts because audience reception of media messages is clearly related to deep-rooted social concerns in their everyday lives as the members of various communities and classes (Murdoch, 1973 in Morley, 1992b; Brown and Schulze, 1990). As Straubhaar et al (1996) argue, so much of the knowledge or cultural capital that people use in interpreting media, such as television, comes from their very local experience of daily life in a very specific culture and is shaped by their immediate environment, place and time.

5.1.1 'The situation in the country is bad'

While the researcher did not ask respondents to give an explanation of their social contexts, other conversations and discussions gave some brief but telling insight into their experience of the contexts within which they are situated.

For example, while explaining his satellite television subscription and consumption practices, thirty-year old Architect Kelvin casually acknowledged that “the situation in the country is bad”. Later in the discussion he alluded to the difficulties characterising Zimbabweans’ lived realities, his own included. He dismissed the national broadcaster as a source of entertainment or news, maintaining:

Come on, people are living stressful lives, they’ve got lots of things to do and they want their information packaged nicely. They don’t want to waste time watching mediocre things.

Kelvin was adamant that the difficulties he experienced in his day-to-day life in Zimbabwe should not be allowed to extend to his media consumption, so he subscribed to DSTV in order to satisfy his desire for well-produced and interesting information.

The manner in which respondents casually acknowledged the difficulties characterising their daily lives may, as suggested by Hall (1982), give an indication of the entrenched nature of the difficulties and the respondents’ acceptance of them as an unchangeable norm. In some instances, these difficulties were so casually accepted and naturalised as to be woven into the daily conversations of respondents. For example, an analogy by a respondent to support her media consumption practices made easy reference to the crippling fuel shortages Zimbabwe has been experiencing for many years. Dismissing the

national broadcaster, Sarudzai explained her consumption of satellite television news as an alternative to nationally produced news thus:

I don't think that my not accessing ZBC news is a barrier because as Kelvin has said, the information will come through in my interaction with people anyway. Like a colleague who comes to work and says he is sorry he is late, but it was beyond his control because there are no commuters [omnibuses] because of fuel problems will have passed on the information to me in that way.

However, despite the respondents' seeming acceptance of the difficulties in their lives, sentiments of frustration expressed at the situation in the country and its effect on the lives of individuals still emerged. Echoing other respondents' perceptions of a difficult national economic and social environment, Nyarai, a female Marketing Executive shows concern at "the situation with costs in this country". She also exhibits a general discontent with Zimbabwe's social and economic environment and her situation within it, complaining that:

...all of us are living in hard times. Everybody is struggling and there are certain opportunities that you can't take advantage of because of the things that are happening in Zimbabwe.

Given that respondents alluded to some of the problems that they face living in Zimbabwe during discussions of their media consumption, I feel confident in assuming that the conditions in the country and their negative impacts on respondents' lives would undoubtedly inform audience reception of '60 minutes live in Africa'. As Morley argues, the meanings that individuals take from media are influenced by the individuals' cultural codes and frameworks, which are in turn derived from their social and cultural situations and backgrounds (1992b).

5.1.2 Professionals' social and economic positioning and their subscription to DSTV

Discussions also uncovered the fact that professional men and women's consumption of satellite television is influenced by their social and economic positioning. In Zimbabwe, access to SABC Africa is only possible through subscription to DSTV which costs US\$52 per month for a full bouquet. The group discussions revealed the inequality of access and exposure to 'new' communication technologies and the accompanying media

in Zimbabwe. This is mainly due to prohibitive subscription fees and the equally high cost of the satellite decoders in the country. One respondent revealed his and fellow respondents' privileged positioning in terms of access to new technology and new media when he noted:

Such is life. There will always be people who can't access satellite television, and there will always be people like us who can. All I am saying is that I would rather have watching ZBC as an option. Satellite television is packaged in such a way that it gives you a variety of things, that's what it's about and that's why people go for it, but it's also expensive. The fact that we are talking about how bad the situation in the country is what Nyarai has just been saying, that most of the population doesn't have satellite television.

During this discussion, Kelvin further defended his desire for and consumption of programmes on satellite television by maintaining that programmes on national television "insult your intelligence because you've actually been exposed to things like satellite television". In this statement the respondent succinctly reveals the part that social experience plays in stimulating audience requirements from media (Blumler in McQuail, 1997).

By drawing on the social experience afforded him by his class, his education, his profession, and his consumption of other media forms, Kelvin keenly feels the inadequacies in national broadcasting. He thus subscribes to DSTV in order to access the quality and quantity of programming that he expects. Bourdieu (1984) makes reference to what he calls 'cultural capital' in order to sum up a series of identifiable factors that people tend to use when deciding what they want to watch on television and how they interpret what they watch. Cultural capital includes, among others, things like lifestyle, knowledge about other lifestyles, ethnic types, education, religion and values. Cultural capital also builds on politicisation, degree of consciousness about social issues and membership in socially aware groups.

Nyarai in turn noted that most of Zimbabwe's population could not afford satellite television because their wages or salaries are far below DSTV's monthly subscription rate. The revelation that satellite television subscription fees are too expensive for what she feels is "the majority of Zimbabweans" reinforces conceptions of the elitist nature of

satellite television consumption in Zimbabwe, whose 2006 GDP as estimated by the IMF is -4.7. Further, the government-set minimum wage is Z\$5 million, in an environment where one US\$ trades at Z\$99 200 and inflation is over 800 percent (Socialist Worker, 2006; Hawkins, 2006). Nyarai's revelation also serves to emphasise the class differences inherent in Africans' exposure to and acquisition of foreign programmes and technology, with the consequence that some sections of society are more likely to have access to certain media than others (Bourgault, 1995).

This phenomenon is explained by Morley's argument that any mechanism of communication that costs money to use will necessarily produce inequalities of access across social and economic groups. This in turn means that people's ability to participate effectively in the public realm will be correspondingly differentiated (1992). This assertion finds resonance with respondents' fears that the ability of those like themselves who are privileged enough to have access to satellite television is widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in Zimbabwe. Nyarai for one worries:

I don't see how it can be healthy to have two sets of people in a country where they are almost existing in a parallel universe kind of set up where one element of the population experiences one thing and the other another kind.

Jensen (2002) maintains that the technological media are necessary infrastructural resources in maintaining and structuring modern societies. In particular, the diffusion of communication technologies in developing countries has commonly been perceived as a necessary condition for material progress (Jensen, 2002). In the African context however, due to poor infrastructure and financial constraints, satellite television and other 'new technologies' create different and separate public realms that are accessible only to those who can afford the necessary technology. For the majority of the Zimbabwean population, particularly the uneducated and those who are rural-based, entry into this realm remains largely unattainable. Thus the social structuration provided by technological media is seen to increase inequalities between sections of a society and because of this, the airways can no longer be considered a shared public resource (Morley, 1992).

5.1.3 Effect of professional positions on audiences' media consumption

Because this study sought to understand the satellite television consumption practices of a particular category of men and women, and because of patterns that emerged, there is a need to follow Moores' (1993) suggestion to pay attention to the kinds of material that interest different individuals and the patterns of taste that come up. This study found evidence that respondents' consumption/reception of international news on '60 minutes live in Africa' is influenced by their status as Zimbabwean professionals. As Morley (1992) notes, the institutions and roles in which people are situated produce messages which intersect with those of the media.

For example, in explaining his motivations for accessing and consuming international news via satellite television, Paul was clear that he primarily watched news on satellite television because the nature of his job as an Information Officer for a development organisation required him to be informed about regional and international processes. He revealed that he subscribed to DSTV because the bouquet afforded him access to a wide variety of news channels and programmes. The African-produced '60 minutes live in Africa' was of particular interest to him because of what he perceived to be its superior (to other international news channels) carriage of regional news.

Further Sarudzai, employed as a Trainee Stockbroker, revealed that professional interest and need was a key factor in influencing her consumption of both nationally and internationally-produced news. She explained that she was influenced to watch satellite television because:

It broadens your view of the world because the information available in our country is distorted to a large extent and there are a lot of perceptions that they are no longer keen to look at. So things like international markets and the like are not available on the media that's available in Zimbabwe.

Speaking of her practice of 'channel-hopping' between ZTV's flagship 'News Hour' and '60 minutes live in Africa' Sarudzai added,

At eight o'clock, I kind of skip between the two channels. I watch the news highlights and if there is something in particular I need to look at then I go back to

ZTV and actually watch that. I like to look at the financial markets because I like to follow the indices, so I tend to go back to ZTV at about quarter past, to half past eight to look at the national financial markets. Then I go back to SABC Africa and actually watch something there. It's like I am trying to get as much information as I can from both channels.

In the same vein, a Paediatric doctor who watches SABC African news only when her husband is watching '60 minutes live in Africa' brought the influence of her profession in her media consumption to the fore in her contributions. Linda explained that for her, the screened edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' was of little interest to her because it carried no human interest stories that would have appealed to her. However, she revealed that her profession was influential in determining what programmes she chose to watch and the level of enjoyment that she could obtain from them. As mentioned before, the study finds that audiences draw on various cultural resources in their media consumption and reception. For respondents to this study, their professions and professional interest represented a strong cultural resource on which they drew to inform their choice of programme and the way in which they perceived the news, views and issues carried on '60 minutes live in Africa'. Linda for example clearly forged the link between professional interests and consumption of television news by maintaining "I am particularly interested in the malnutrition story because it's a professional thing".

The influence of respondents' professions in determining their interest in international news was also hinted at by Cardiac Nurse Rachel's complaint that the screened edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' gave insufficient information on a particular story that was of interest to her. She complained, "I don't like the way that they sort of brushed over everything, the Libyans who have infected the kids with HIV and then they just move on to the next thing". Rachel's interest in a health-related story may be attributable to her training and employment in the health sector, especially situated as she is in a country that is as badly affected by HIV and AIDS as Zimbabwe is, with an estimated 24.6 percent adult prevalence rate.

5.2 Counter hegemonic contestation for power in subscribing to DSTV

Theorists have argued that in any society, “the delimited group, pursuing economic or political ends, determines which meanings circulate and which do not, which stories are told and which arguments are given prominence and what cultural resources are made available to whom” (Garnham, 1995:65). In these same societies however, power always activates counter power and subordinate groups often resist ideologies promoted by dominant groups within media texts and, to varying degrees, produce textual readings that serve their own interests (Foucault, in Strelitz, 2002).

In a good example of television journalism taking its lead from the dominant political forces (Connell, 1980) Zimbabwe Television screens government-backed documentary, talk-show and music programmes aimed at fostering ‘patriotism’ and promoting local values and cultural heritage daily (Weza, 2001). It is interesting to note that programmes carrying these themes were introduced around 2000, about the same time the social and economic conditions began to worsen in Zimbabwe. Further, with this background, the government-backed ‘communication on agrarian reform’ that aimed to motivate people to apply for resettlement and to go back to the land can be viewed as an attempt to advance certain ideologies conducive to the popularisation of the land reform programme and the consolidation of the present government.

Press (2001) argues that audience researchers must seek to understand the decline in viewership of nightly national television news as well as the concomitant rise of unconventional news sources such as MTV news and on-line news forms. She outlines how these developments have spawned new types of local audience research which focus on the processes of reception and appropriation of media specific to particular groups of people, in particular locations, at particular moments in time.

Considering that satellite television subscription in Zimbabwe increased substantially after the government banned international programmes, and after it took a keen interest in the broadcasting sector, it is inevitable that this study should reveal evidence of a counter hegemonic contestation for power in the act of shunning ZTV’s ‘News Hour’ and

subscribing to satellite television by Zimbabwean professionals. Evidence from my research supports this assertion as it was found that of the fifteen sampled respondents, fourteen had had access to satellite television for six years or less. This timeline more or less coincides with the initiation of broadcasting reforms in 2000-2001.

I must concede that since the respondents were all under the age of thirty-five, and many of them had not been employed for very long, their ability to subscribe to satellite television earlier than 2000 could have been hampered by lack of resources. However, my research findings indicate that only nine of the respondents had been employed for more than four years, meaning that at least some of the respondents had access to satellite television at the homes of their parents, who, the respondents revealed, were professionals themselves. Also by and large, the times at which respondents' first entered the workforce coincide with the times when they first started subscribing to DSTV, hinting at the top priority given to the acquisition of satellite television by young professionals in contemporary Zimbabwe. This section aims to explore one facet of the various individual and social reasons that underlie media consumption choices.

5.2.1 Resisting the perceived political interference and 'agenda-setting' on ZTV news

Whereas respondents may have learned to accept the difficulties in the country as the norm, as discussed before, there is evidence that they refused to accept the lack of alternative national television channels. This rejection of the limited choices available to them extends to a rejection of ZTV and its flagship 'News Hour' and the meanings that it carries. The act of watching alternative channels on DSTV by professionals who have rejected ZTV can be read as an attempt to gain some power over their media consumption, especially in light of government's refusal to register alternative channels. For one, Paul strongly emphasised his need for "options and choices" in his media consumption. If we consider the limited choices in national television channels, the specific lack of international news and the alleged use of ZTV as an ideological state apparatus; respondents' consumption and use of satellite television can be read as 'a direct response to the social context of the moment', as suggested by McQuail (1997).

The messages and images on national television, especially those concerning national news were rejected by most of the professionals involved in this study. The rejection of national news was attributed to an almost universally held view among respondents that there was a strong agenda-setting drive by the national broadcaster and the government to pre-fer certain perceptions and views at the expense of others. Chemical Engineer Isheanesu gave voice to audience perceptions that the national broadcaster lacked independence or accountability and that its content could therefore not be trusted. He explained his choice to access the SABC Africa channel thus:

For people like us, who have access only to media that is polarised, where you find that the national broadcaster is free to air anything without being challenged, SABC Africa provides an interesting world view. You find that they tell it as they see it.

Also, Sarudzai maintained that “the information available in our country is distorted to a large extent” while Kelvin felt that “there is a bit of a vacuum of information on the national broadcaster”. Speaking of ZTV news Ruvarashe added:

I am a bit sceptical about watching their opinion and the views they bring, so I would rather watch SABC than ZBC.

There is evidence that respondents conceived of ZTV as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ through which the government was attempting to control the production of meaning in order to remain in power. Some of the words used by respondents to describe the national news during the course of the interviews were ‘biased’, ‘extreme’, ‘skewed’, ‘rubbish’, ‘distorted’, ‘serving particular political agendas’, ‘lacks balance’ and ‘aggressive’, among others.

Respondents’ conception of the unbalanced, irrelevant and particularist agenda-serving nature of the national broadcaster is more fully illustrated by Nyarai’s exasperated reference to ZTV’s ‘communication on agrarian reform’ focus. She maintained that:

In this country with the national broadcaster you are talking about particular political agendas that are at the party level so you find that your news are very micro. It’s about cows and drought. It’s about how people have farmed and is fertiliser available and what has the national bank done, which is great, we must all know this. But then you find in an hour that fifteen minutes is dedicated to

talking to some unimportant civil servants about issues that by and large don't really affect, you know, the average citizen.

Sounding slightly amused, thirty-one year old Fund Manager Tawanda also had this to say about the content of ZTV news:

What I find fascinating is how on national news they will go out and do a street survey which I assume is random. Somehow everyone is always on the same side. There must be even one dissenting voice but somehow we never hear that, and for me when I am watching it, as a person who thinks a little bit, something strikes me as not quite right with that sort of situation. How can you interview a thousand people who all agree?

Respondents expressed a universal suspicion of the content on national television because of beliefs that ZTV is employed as an agent of social control in Zimbabwe. Thus for the majority of them, SABC Africa news is used in order to circumvent the need to watch media and consume messages which they feel are not in keeping with their positions, beliefs, attitudes and needs. As posited by Morley (1992), imported media products thus constitute a space within which oppositional meanings in relation to dominant traditions of the national media and the national culture can be negotiated and expressed.

Strelitz also argues that global media provides audiences with the resources for cultural resistance to the dominant meanings or the hegemonic societal meanings circulating in their society (2002). In line with this argument Nyarai, a little apologetic but adamant, maintained, "And here I am sorry to say this, but I don't think the national broadcaster can be taken seriously". Revealing that she uses global media to negotiate and perhaps escape the dominant traditions of Zimbabwean media and culture she added that she preferred the programme '60 minutes live in Africa' as a news source because

Their treatment of news and issues is refreshing. Here you feel like things are being presented to you kind of on an even kilt, where you are just told what is going on, this is it. Whereas in this country you are told that this is what is going on, but this is so bad because this person has done this because they are so evil since they were born. You feel to a certain extent more receptive because you feel that your intellect is being respected. You are being given information and being allowed to figure out what it means for yourself in a country where all around you people are trying to make up your mind for you.

For respondents however, the major bone of contention with the perceived unbalanced and agenda-serving nature of national television lay in the feeling that the approach deprived audiences of holistic information on national processes. Information Technology Manager Luckson insisted that his satellite television consumption was motivated by a desire to access information on national processes that he could trust. Noreen immediately concurred with Luckson's comment, asserting "Yes, because you get the truth from another channel. We never get the truth from Zimbabwe Television".

Further, asked why respondents choose to watch '60 minutes live in Africa' instead of the nationally broadcast 'News Hour' which is aired at the same time as '60 minutes live in Africa' Kelvin maintained:

... the reasons that have been mentioned before, that the local broadcaster will tell us when people have not weeded their plots of land and cattle are dying. You know, they don't want to tell us the in-depth stuff that we should really know because there is a political agenda somewhere in the background.

Kelvin's sentiment that the government, through the national broadcaster, withholds important information was echoed by another respondent's particularly revealing story. Nyarai explained an instance of what she called the "blackout" on ZTV news when it comes to reporting government-related news of a negative nature. Nyarai noted that:

With our national broadcaster it's like it's gotten to a point where if there is a problem, like with fuel, it simply won't make it into the headlines. And you cannot bring it up, even in passing. And then suddenly when one tanker comes into the country then service stations are reported to be awash with fuel.

5.2.2 Failure to relate to the 'reality' on national television

This research also revealed evidence of audience dissatisfaction with the content on ZTV in terms of its relevance to the needs of professional Zimbabweans. Some respondents explained how their consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa' was motivated by suspicion of ZTV news due to its perceived failure to provide an honest and balanced reflection of national processes. These respondents felt that because 'News Hour' did not 'reflect' the reality of the situation on the ground or provide them with the resources to

negotiate their contexts, the programme was of little or no interest to them as professionals.

Morley (1992) argues that the readings that audiences take from media messages are necessarily a negotiation between the social sense described in the programme and the meanings of the social experience made by its wide variety of viewers. In this context, insights from the focus group discussions suggest that the perceived fracture between the meanings in national media texts and professional's social experience significantly influenced their reception of ZTV's 'News Hour'. The respondents' perceptions and feelings about national news also provide hints as to their possible reception of '60 minutes live in Africa', whose content and approach is perceived to be the opposite of ZTV news.

This research found that the increased flow of international media into Zimbabwe is closely related to limits in national broadcasting. For example, Nyarai's reason for accessing SABC Africa news was because "ZTV is very boring, not rich in multi-cultural content and the current affairs offerings are not of international standard, being extremely biased and agenda-serving". Further, Tawanda explained that his satellite television consumption was motivated by "a desire to have access to a wider, varied and better packaged viewing selection". He added that "local channels tend to have a rather narrow and unbalanced view". From these responses it is possible to see that the difficulty faced by Third World broadcasters in producing news that audiences consider relevant to their needs has a great deal to do with what media content audiences choose to import across borders (Straubhaar et al, 1996).

Not satisfied with the content broadcast on the national channel, which some respondents referred to as "that rubbish", Zimbabwean audiences turn to satellite television. Through this act and by refusing to watch ZTV news or to accept the meanings it carries, respondents enter into a counter hegemonic contestation for power with the national broadcaster and by extension the government with its keen interest in national broadcasting. This assertion is well illustrated by one respondent's explanation of her refusal to watch ZTV programmes. Nyarai explained that her refusal to watch ZTV is

motivated by an inability to relate to the 'reality' portrayed in national news and on Studio 263, Zimbabwe's only soap opera. She revealed a conscious refusal to watch nationally broadcast television programmes or to accept the meanings in the texts, maintaining "I only watch ZBC when someone makes me". She added:

I watch Studio 263 once a week because I know it's the most popular programme in Zimbabwe and I want to relate and I look at them and I think "What the hell! Does she really want to do that, is she really impressed by that and is that really her life?" I can't relate, and it's that fracture, where this is someone else's reality and they want you to accept it and I am out here thinking "Oh hell no".

This respondent's attempt and failure to relate to the images and messages in national programmes due to their lack of realism for her situation can be related back to her perception of a gap between the meanings in the texts and the situation on the ground. Nyarai's consequent refusal to consume and accept the meanings in programmes on national television finds explanation in Fiske et al's (1978) suggestion that the more 'realistic' a programme is thought to be, the more trusted, enjoyable and more popular it becomes. Her position also coincides with Ellis' argument that "Notions of realism are some of the most enduring means of judgement of film and TV creations" (1982:6).

Nyarai was not alone in feeling that ZTV programmes are not 'realistic'. Kelvin also reported a failure to relate to the 'reality' represented on ZTV programmes to his own life and context. He simultaneously justified his inability and/or refusal to relate to the nationally broadcast news by asking,

But what is your reality if you are going to be shown something that is not what is actually happening on the ground? If you are not being shown what's happening on the ground your reality is still fractured by the rubbish you are watching.

In part, Kelvin attributes his failure to identify with the conceptions of reality on ZTV to the national channel's failure to portray 'the situation on the ground'. He therefore considers this media irrelevant to his situation or his needs. Ang (1985) notes that for some audience members, the represented reality in television programmes must coincide with the social reality of 'ordinary' people' and that it must be recognisable. Also, respondent Kelvin's flat refusal to consume or accept the meanings in nationally

produced news finds explanation in McQuail's (1997) argument that attending to news is influenced by an assessment of relevance to the audience member.

5.2.3 Realisation of ideologies embedded in international media

Interestingly, some respondents revealed an awareness that even the messages they consume from satellite television news are not neutral. The group discussions revealed that many of the respondents understood that all media institutions carry a particular agenda and seek to influence media audiences through the meanings they encode in their media texts. However, the same contestation for meaning inherent in respondents' consumption of national media was absent from the readings that respondents made from international media. I will once again illustrate this with a succinct quotation from Marketing Executive Nyarai. In giving voice to this realisation, she says:

...there is absolutely no media, not Internet, not newspaper, that does not want to take you from where you are and leave you at some place. It's just that I think on SABC Africa the agenda that they are setting, and the destination that they are trying to make us arrive at is a better destination.

Nyarai's negotiation and acceptance of the ideologies embedded in global media as opposed to those in nationally produced news can be explained by work done by Strelitz (2002). Strelitz argues that part of the attraction of global media is that its content contrasts with locally produced programmes that are more strongly rooted in national politics. Nyarai made clear that her rejection of the meanings encoded in ZTV news was, as Foucault suggested, a political struggle for meaning which is waged with the broadcaster and the meanings it pre-fers at the level of discourse (see Fiske, 1987).

She explained that her rejection of the meanings in national news was due to what she felt was the undue partisan political nature of news coverage on ZTV. She maintained that "in this country, with the national broadcaster you are talking about certain agendas that are at the party level". She also complained about the cost implications inherent in the wide airplay given to ruling party conferences, maintaining that this blatant attempt at promoting an agenda that is solely in the interest of the ruling party is "an insult to people's intelligence".

In contrast to respondents' consumption of national news however, their acceptance of the meanings in '60 minutes live in Africa' was aided by the fact that their consumption of SABC Africa news was a conscious choice. Fiske maintains that meaning is constituted as a result of the interaction between the text and situated audiences (1987). Thus the fact that respondent's consumption of the images and messages on '60 minutes live in Africa' is a conscious choice places them, as suggested by Fiske, in ideological centrality to accept the meanings in the text (1987). The process of audiences' engagement with and reception of the meanings in '60 minutes live in Africa' was evident in Tawanda's summing up of the screened edition. He noted that:

The presentation could have been better. But the content was striking in that it's very different from what's on ZTV. Much more measured, much more balanced, different from our local television which is more aggressive. Whereas here it dealt with the issues in a more, um, not so much professional and not so much intelligent, but more sort of thoughtful way and for me it appeals more because it was real, wasn't sort of rhetoric. It was interesting to note that President Mugabe wasn't in a mode where he just says anything. He was more thoughtful about what he said, mainly because he was anticipating that the programme would be viewed by an international audience. Here there was more focus on the issues and the President was really trying to address them.

5.3 Opportunities for attaining 'symbolic distance'

Audience use of satellite television subscription as a counter hegemonic contestation for power is related to the symbolic distancing thesis that explains the specific use of global media messages by individuals in societies undergoing periods of rapid social change. Davis and Davis (1995) have argued that audiences in such societies often use global media messages to provide conceptions of life and conditions which are significantly different from their own so that they can re-imagine aspects of their lives.

There is some evidence from this study to suggest that the sampled Zimbabwean professionals use international news to gain symbolic distance from the difficulties in their lives. For some respondents, news and images accessed via '60 minutes live in Africa' provide a resource for individuals to think critically about their own lives and life conditions. For one, Sarudzai explained that her satellite television subscription is motivated by a desire to "broaden my perspective on life". She described how '60

minutes live in Africa' provides her with an opportunity to "gain a view to how other people live around the world". By consuming images of news and events outside Zimbabwe on '60 minutes live in Africa', Sarudzai was able to gain some conception, however partial, of ways of life and life conditions which differ significantly from her own, paving the way for meanings that can allow her to take some distance from her day-to-day life.

Further, during a group discussion Nyarai digressed to ask,

Don't you find that you sometimes get a little disconnected from the world that we are living in, by being constantly connected to SABC Africa and BBC? Not just SABC Africa but the whole [satellite] dish thing?

Nyarai's feeling of disconnection from her situated context can be read as an instance of symbolic distancing. By constantly watching satellite television, Nyarai is able to maintain constant access to conceptions of life and conditions that are better, but removed from her context. Given the worsening economic and social difficulties in Zimbabwe, and Nyarai's earlier revelation that she did not watch ZTV programmes, this can be read as a deliberate rather than unconscious act. In this way Nyarai is able to regularly escape the difficulties that characterise her day-to-day life in Zimbabwe.

5.3.1 Momentary escape

Related to the symbolic distancing thesis discussed above is the concept of 'escapism' advanced by Walkerdine to explain how media texts are appropriated by people in specific contexts to distance themselves from their life situations (1989; 1990). Studies by McQuail et al (1972) support this thesis, arriving at the conclusion that people use the media as a diversion to escape from routine constraints.

For Nyarai and other respondents, subscribing to, and watching international news programmes is a way of resisting the dominant societal meanings circulating through national news. These actions find resonance with arguments that audiences' consumption of the global becomes a way of rejecting the local, and is in itself a form of resistance not only to their society's dominant meanings, but also to those circulating these meanings (Hannerz, 1996; Strelitz, 2002). Nyarai maintained that watching '60 minutes live in

Africa' not only provided her with information, but she was "allowed to figure out what it means for yourself in a country where all around you people are trying to make up your mind for you". In this light, Nyarai's consumption of international news can be viewed as providing her with the means to critically think about the dominant meanings circulating in Zimbabwe.

Another respondent made comparisons between the situation in Zimbabwe and those in other African countries, based on images and messages consumed on SABC Africa news. Referring to an edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' Paul explained,

I think two or so weeks ago they showed the fuel issues in Zimbabwe then they showed the fuel issues in South Africa, I think it was around the same time that South Africa had fuel problems. And they showed the fuel issue in Zambia, all in one programme, not the same problems, but in one programme. At the end of the day, you get the sense that the Zimbabwean fuel problems are not so bad.

The opportunities for making comparisons between the problems prevailing in Zimbabwe and the occurrence of similar situations in neighbouring countries that Paul found in his consumption of international news allowed him to rethink the difficulties prevailing in Zimbabwe. Paul used the news of fuel shortages in neighbouring South Africa and Zambia to rationalise and to some extent, naturalise Zimbabwe's situation, allowing him to get momentary mental distance from the difficulties he experiences in his life.

It is interesting to note that it was necessary for Paul to escape the difficulties in his life by feeding off negative news about other countries, instead of feeding off positive images and news to imagine massive improvements in his own context and circumstances. This phenomenon may be related to the respondents' acceptance and naturalisation of the problems in Zimbabwe as the norm. It may also be that they pessimistically consider Zimbabwe's problems too big to be rectified and therefore find it necessary to imagine countries in Africa as being in the same boat in order to attain opportunities for cognitive escape. The pessimism revealed by respondents regarding the potential for imminent social and economic improvements in Zimbabwe may also help to partially explain why professionals are emigrating from the country in vast numbers.

5.3.2 *Becoming regional audiences*

It has been postulated that media audience experience normally involves some degree of identification with a wider social grouping (McQuail, 1997). Because communication technologies have brought individuals and families into the presence of places and events that were previously distant or unknown, this enables them to identify with dispersed yet knowable communities and to imagine themselves as embedded in regional, national and even transnational collectivities (Moore, 1993). Within the African context, audiences are widely believed to employ satellite television to facilitate linkages with the outside world (Phiri, 1999). In the specific Zimbabwean context Ronning (1995) maintains that urban populations with access to a variety of modern media use television to relate to a global situation and thus relate to international identities.

This research revealed evidence that professional men and women appropriated and used the images and messages they accessed via '60 minutes live in Africa' to imagine themselves as part of a wider regional and continental collectivity. Respondents indicated that they employed the messages and images they accessed via international news to locate themselves in a wider social context in which they could take on regional or continental identities. Respondents' identification with the regional images and messages on '60 minutes live in Africa' and their consequent adoption of regional identities is evidenced by their sentiments quoted below. Nyarai supported her consumption of SABC Africa by maintaining that:

This is our world and it's completely unacceptable that we be ignorant of the issues going on in Uganda, about the issues in Mozambique or Botswana. We should have some idea of the political and other balances that we are facing. We should have some sort of even passing appreciation of what's going on around us.

On the other hand, Kelvin complained that the image of Africa portrayed in a video clip of jubilant Ugandan opposition party political supporters was sensationalist and sent the wrong message about Africans to the international community. He explained:

I mean they were talking about the celebration of this guy coming out of prison and all you see are people rioting. You don't even know where that was taken, they don't say anything. It's like a collage. The reporter just went for the most

amazing footage he could find and just showed us African people running around and it just makes us look confused.

In Nyarai's words above, her use of the word 'we' and Kelvin's use of the word 'us' to refer to themselves as part of the African population hint at the way in which Moores conceives of the images and messages appropriated via satellite television as offering media audiences 'transportation' into the regional arena (1993). Nyarai's argument that "we should have some sort idea of the political and other balances we are facing" and Kelvin's insistence that the report "just showed us African people running around and it just makes us look confused" helps to situate both respondents within the regional arena and to foreground their identities as Africans.

5.4 Cultural proximity and the cultural relevance of SABC Africa news

Throughout my investigation into the use of satellite television among Zimbabwean professionals, cultural proximity came up both as a factor influencing audience consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa' as well as a factor in influencing their reception of, and the amount of engagement they brought to their consumption of the messages in the news programme. This section will discuss cultural proximity as it impacts on the sampled respondents' choice to consume SABC Africa news. A discussion of the impact that cultural proximity has on audience reception of international and national news is contained in Chapter Six.

The cultural proximity theory posits that audiences prefer media which reflect their own culture regionally as well a nationally. It provides a useful framework for the analysis of television flow in developing countries and is important in furthering an understanding of why viewers embrace or reject programmes (Burch, 2002; Straubhaar, 1991). Studies have shown that audiences prefer local programming if they can get it and if it is well produced. Ratings also indicate that people frequently look for television programming that is closer to their own languages, cultures, histories and values (Straubhaar and LaRose, 1996).

Furthermore, cultural proximity and power are instrumental in determining the amount of coverage that a country or region will receive in the media. Studies have found that

geographical proximity to the news channel's location is a significant predictor of the amount of news coverage a country or region can expect on any channel (Swain, 2003). Still others have established that the power status of a country; a function of its economic, scientific and military power and its relative importance among nations, influences the amount of news coverage and attention that dominant countries will devote to it (Swain, 2003).

5.4.1 Cultural proximity and SABC Africa

While the sampled respondents revealed that they watched news from a wide variety of international news channels via the DSTV bouquet, there is evidence that respondents' preference for South African-produced '60 minutes live in Africa' was influenced by the channels' proximity to Zimbabwe geographically, culturally, historically and regionally. Often respondents made comparisons between DSTV-hosted North American and European-produced news programmes such as BBC, CNN and Sky news and SABC Africa news. Many respondents maintained that they consumed SABC Africa news because its content and focus is more in line with their needs as professionals and Africans. For one, Nyarai maintained:

I think it's important to note the difference between programmes like this particular programme and BBC or Sky News. I mean really, they offer international news but it's so completely focused on what's going on in the U.K. and the States as to be almost completely irrelevant to perhaps an African professional. Look yes, it's interesting, yes it's relevant and you want to keep up to speed with it, but it completely ignores what's happening on the continent and in the country. Whenever there is Zimbabwean news on Sky, CNN or BBC there is a very obvious tilt to it that's almost as bad as watching the national broadcaster. Their dimensions may be opposite in terms of slant, but all the same...

Thompson (1995) explains that media audiences draw on the material and symbolic resources available to them, as well as the interpretive assistance offered by their experiences in socio-cultural contexts in order to make sense of media messages and to find ways to relate to them. Nyarai's sentiments reveal how she draws on her professional needs, her location within the Zimbabwean and the larger African context as well as her knowledge of the national broadcasting content in order to make a decision on the

relevance of Western news to her needs. While sceptical about the content on the other international news channels she watches, Nyarai finds it easier to relate to the content on SABC Africa. This is ostensibly because of the channels' coverage of African issues and its reflection of her lived context and her needs as an African and a Zimbabwean professional.

The choice of SABC Africa as a viable news source for the professional men and women is further linked to its perceived reflection of 'African values' that are in line with respondent's needs and in keeping with their conceptions of the needs of Africa. Nyarai maintained, "I find that CNN is serving a particular agenda that is never going to be in the interest of Africa, BBC same goes, Sky same goes". Other respondents emphasised their preference for '60 minutes live in Africa' because of the channel's understanding of the "African way of doing things" while Nyarai explained that for her, SABC Africa news offered

[A]n African perspective in a world where it's almost like to be current and relevant you need to know what BBC and Sky News are saying. But it completely ignores our continent like it is without value, but really there is so much going on here and this is where we operate.

This study finds that South African-headquartered SABC Africa is accepted as a source of international news by Zimbabwean audiences due to its perceived reflection of respondents' national culture. As evidenced by the extract that follows, even the programme's interview style was considered to be in keeping with 'African values' and was cited as motivation for audience consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa'. Speaking of the perceived lack of aggression on the part of the interviewer during an interview with Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, Tawanda and Namatai concur:

Tawanda: Maybe it's the African way of doing things. We just don't take our leaders to task in the same way that European media would do.

Namatai: That is not the African way and that is what sometimes influences my decision to watch SABC Africa as opposed to BBC or CNN. I think it's a bit more tempered a bit more within our culture the way we are as Africans.

5.4.2 The cultural relevance of SABC Africa content

Audience consumption of and acceptance of the messages on '60 minutes live in Africa' was also partly motivated by a realisation that media products originating in the West often serve Western economic and political interests. Thus respondents reported accessing international news channels such as the BBC, CNN and Sky News for their carriage of global news, although their messages were read with reservations when they provided news on Africa and African countries. Some respondents maintained the following:

Daniel: That's why you would find that I would switch to watch SABC Africa and then I would watch BBC or CNN in order to get a chance to understand the full-on global impact. But you find that you never get to hear an African voice trying to report it from an African perspective. You are always listening to an international organisation like BBC or CNN reporting it from their perspective and because of that I feel that there is a little bit of a gap.

Tawanda: The nature of international news for me is such that say if for example you are in England, whenever you hear Sky News talking about Africa, it's the same kind of news that you always hear, that Africa is a black hole and there is nothing positive here. Then they talk about Asia, America and obviously Europe itself but with Africa it's like there is nothing here at all and obviously that is the view that they almost propagate. We need something on the continent to counter that, okay I hate to sound revolutionary, but counter is the right word because it means as a black people we need to be conscious that obviously what we are seeing does shape us. So for me what I find to be more important is the shaping of attitudes, because that will galvanise us into action or inaction which will determine the Africa of tomorrow.

Swain's has argued that the lowly status of African countries in the hierarchy of nations mean that Western portrayals of Africa often focus on sensational news, political upheavals, pestilence, natural disasters and famines while minimising or ignoring positive breakthroughs (2003). Tawanda's sentiments find resonance with this and Morley's (1992) observation that by and large, audiences take the meanings from international news broadly but relate the messages to some concrete or situated context which reflects their position and interests. Tawanda voiced a strong objection to the portrayal of Africa and African issues in international media. His main concerns and frustration were with the perceived impact of these messages and images on African audiences, and their

subsequent impact on national and regional development efforts. Also, Tawanda's particular disappointment in European news further supports Burch's assertion that studies on cultural proximity provide a growing body of evidence of the 'contraflow' of media texts. Burch maintains that evidence of this nature is important in that it counters concerns that developing countries and audiences within them will become dependent upon the West for cultural goods (2003).

5.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I presented the findings of the research under four different themes, mainly socio-cultural context, professionals and satellite television, counter hegemonic contestation for power in subscribing to DSTV, global media as a vehicle for 'symbolic distancing', 'escapism' and cultural proximity and the cultural relevance of '60 minutes live in Africa'. I have demonstrated that the attraction of satellite television and audience consumption and reception of international news on '60 minutes live in Africa' is influenced by a variety of factors. Among them are the limitations in national broadcasting, the unattractive, and to professionals, the irrelevant government-conceived programmes and their failure to reflect the reality of professionals' lives. I also demonstrated that the consumption of international news on satellite television constitutes a means of resistance to the hegemonic culture in Zimbabwe.

The Chapter demonstrated how professional men and women use '60 minutes live in Africa' to gain symbolic distance and 'escape' from the difficulties in their lives as well as to locate themselves in regional and continental collectivities. Further, I discussed the part that cultural proximity plays in influencing professionals' consumption of SABC Africa news. I discussed how, because of SABC Africa's geographical, cultural and historical proximity, Zimbabwean audiences find its content more relevant to their needs than other international news channels.

At a glance, although the findings indicate that audience consumption of news on satellite television is underpinned by dissatisfaction with ZTV and with government's interference

in broadcasting, it is evident that government's fears of the (negative) direct and unmediated effects of international news on Zimbabweans are unfounded.

The next Chapter presents a discussion of professionals' reception of the news on Zimbabwe broadcast on the screened edition of '60 minutes live in Africa'. I analyse and interpret my findings within the frame of the cultural proximity theory in order to try and understand the ways in which the sampled professional men and women receive messages and views on Zimbabwe from an international news source.

Chapter Six

Presentation and interpretation of findings

Cultural proximity and audience reception of Zimbabwean news

Recent developments in media analysis demonstrate that there is a complex process of negotiation whereby specific members of a culture construct meanings from a mainstream text that is different from the meanings others would produce. These different readings are based, in part, on viewers' various histories and experiences. (Brooker and Jermyn, 2003:309).

6.0 Introduction

As a continuation of the previous one, this chapter contains a discussion of the range of readings that emerged from professional men and women's reception of the messages on '60 minutes live in Africa'. Within the frame of the cultural proximity thesis I specifically discuss the range of readings that the sampled respondents took from their consumption of Zimbabwean news on '60 minutes live in Africa'.

The edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' that I screened in order to stimulate discussion on the international news consumption practices of Zimbabwean professionals carried a thirty-minute interview with Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe. SABC Africa screened the interview as part of a 'reflection' collection of previously broadcast interviews that were re-screened in December 2005. This particular interview, which had been first screened in March 2005, just after Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections, focused on a discussion of the country's political, economic and social environment, the President's views on the elections and his vision for the country's future.

6.1 The influence of cultural proximity on audience interest in news on Zimbabwe

As discussed before, this study found that the professional men and women who participated in this research watch '60 minutes live in Africa' because the programme provides a platform on which Zimbabwean news and issues are frequently broadcast. Some respondents insisted that their consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa' was motivated by a need to watch a trusted source of national news. As one respondent from Focus Group Two enthused,

We actually got to see our President on television, being answerable to the public. We are not used to seeing that in this country.

Respondents revealed that they were very interested in the interview section, with many participants reporting that the interview was the most interesting issue carried in the screened edition of '60 minutes live in Africa'. It emerged that this interest in news on Zimbabwe was closely related to the perceived relevance of the topics discussed and the significance of the show's content to the respondents' own lives as Zimbabweans. And because they found some significance for their lives in the news on Zimbabwe, the respondents were more likely to actively engage with the meanings in the text.

My research findings also indicate that respondents were interested in Zimbabwean news on '60 minutes live in Africa' because they considered that news to be of greater relevance to their situations as opposed to regional news. Referring to the interview, one respondent noted "Maybe we felt so strongly about that last segment because we are so close to it all". The influence of 'relevance' in the sampled men and women's consumption of news on Zimbabwe on '60 minutes live in Africa' is best illustrated by an observation made by Rachel in Focus Group Two. She noted:

I think it's interesting that we are just discussing the President yet the programme was so long. We were sleeping halfway through the programme but when the President was speaking we were suddenly interested. It's relevant to me, being Zimbabwean to get information on the state of the nation and the way things have gone. So that was more relevant to me, whereas the rest of the programme focusing on the rest of Africa wasn't quite as interesting. Because of my focus on Zimbabwe I am less interested in what's going on out there.

Fiske explains that in order to encourage a wide diversity of people to want to watch it, and to remember and think about its events, television news must meet the criterion of relevance. He adds that relevance is largely a matter of content as media audiences try to match their life experiences with those represented in the text (Fiske, 1989). Rachel's sentiments thus serve to reiterate and support previous evidence that cultural proximity as well as the perceived relevance of news played important parts in influencing audience consumption of '60 minutes live in Africa'. Further, her assertion that "the rest of the programme focusing on the rest of Africa wasn't quite as interesting" can be explained by

Fiske's argument that "if there are no relevancies between a text and the everyday lives of its readers, there will be little motivation to read it, and less pleasure to be gained from doing so" (1989:187).

So great was respondent Daniel's interest in watching the Mugabe interview that he revealed that for him "the interview clouded over other issues". He related his interest to what he called President Mugabe's "controversial" nature and a curiosity to hear how "the person who has done a lot to affect a lot of people's lives" would conduct himself in front of an international audience. Fiske argues that audiences may watch news out of a vague moral sense that they ought to know what is going on in the world, but if it lacks relevance to the audience's situations, it will be "watched half-heartedly and will be rapidly forgotten" (1989:187). He explains that audiences prefer news which is culturally relevant because it allows them to "make connections between the text and their social experience" (1989:186). Thus SABC Africa's carriage of news on Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues on '60 minutes live in Africa' emerged as a strong motivator for some respondents' consumption of news from this source.

6.1.1 Positive reception - initial comments concerning news on Zimbabwe

Asked about their initial reactions to the interview, it emerged that some of the respondents, especially those in Focus Group Two were impressed with the nature of the messages that emerged from the interview. Perhaps because these respondents had reported that they trusted '60 minutes live in Africa' as a source of news on Zimbabwe they were situated in a position to agree with the messages carried by the programme.

In this instance, because of the respondents' trust for the channel, they accepted the meanings in the text. For example, Tawanda and Patricia, who brought up the issue of the differences between ZTV's content and presentational style and that of '60 minutes live in Africa' read the text thus:

Tawanda: The presentation could have been better but the content was striking in that it's very different from ZTV, much more measured, much more balanced, different from our local television which is much more aggressive. Whereas here,

it dealt with the issues in a more um, not so much professional and not so much intelligent but more sort of thoughtful way.

Patricia: I have issues with ZTV in terms of content and the like. If we take the interview, the way it was covered, here you find that President Mugabe wasn't all that emotional. But when he is being interviewed by Zimbabweans he tends to be so emotional and I think that's the difference between the two.

My findings however indicate that audiences' positive reception of the news on Zimbabwe emerged strongly only during audience articulation of their initial perception of the news. For example, outlining her initial reactions to the interview Namatai enthused,

I thought that the news clip was very good; bearing in mind that in Zimbabwe we don't get much access to information. Looking at satellite television and what it can do, it was really good in that it brought out what is really happening, the real issues in Zimbabwe. And that's a good part about watching '60 minutes live in Africa'.

However, once respondents became more engaged with the text and brought their cultural resources to the process of consuming the messages in the text, audience readings became more negotiated, impacting on the respondents' perceptions of the way in which Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues were portrayed. For example, it is interesting to note that once she became more engaged in her reading of the text, Namatai felt differently about the way in which the interview portrayed Zimbabwe; this is evidenced by her position as outlined in the next section. Namatai's reading of the text first in a positive manner, and then in a negative one supports arguments put forward by Gledhill and Berger. They argue that the general processes of media reception cannot be guaranteed in advance, adding that the importance of audiences' socio-cultural environment in allowing widely differentiated readings of media texts must not be underestimated (Gledhill in Morley, 1992b; Berger, 1991).

6.1.2 "Where is this country they are talking about?" – Perceived lack of realism and relevance of Zimbabwean news

Despite respondents' reports that they find '60 minutes live in Africa', especially its coverage of Zimbabwean issues, to be of relevance to their needs as Zimbabweans, they

expressed sentiments of dissatisfaction with the way the country was portrayed in the screened interview. For some respondents, the portrayal of Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues lacked realism for their daily situations and experiences as Zimbabweans citizens. Fiske argues that it is news' relevance to the everyday that produces important, engaged meanings and that it what makes news *matter* (emphasis in original) (1989:189).

In this study, the main cause of dissatisfaction for respondents was with the perceived lack of realism, and consequently, the lack of relevance of the programme for the Zimbabwean audience. For example, Kelvin felt that there was a fracture between the issues as discussed and his situated experience and knowledge of them. He maintained:

What strikes me the most is the last segment, the Perspectives segment and how most of what was discussed during the interview with President Mugabe is not what the situation on the ground is like...when you are watching the interview it's not very captivating because it sometimes lacks relevance for our circumstances.

Straubhaar (2005) explains that sometimes the experience of locality sharpens a sense of difference between the experience of local life and what is shown of global or national scenes on television. Kelvin's experiences in Zimbabwe and his feeling that what was discussed during the interview was not realistic caused him to fail to find the relevance of the information for his life and his situation. As Strelitz (2002) found in his study, for some media audience members, their ability to 'relate' to a text is dependent on its literal reflection of local 'reality' as it is known and experienced.

Further, as well as expressing a failure to relate to the images and messages in the interview to her own life and situation, another respondent's rejection of the messages in the interview was influenced by a belief that the content did not represent the issues as the 'ordinary Zimbabwean' would have done. The respondents in this study, located in the specific Zimbabwean context as they are, would necessarily have a different understanding of the images of Zimbabwean issues from other international viewers of the same news. Nyarai for example rejected the meanings in the text due to a professed failure to recognise her environment and her situation in the picture of Zimbabwe that the interview invoked. She maintained that:

I feel the whole programme casts Zimbabwe in a light that Zimbabweans would not cast our own views. Here it's like you don't know what in the world they are talking about.

Namatai, who had as discussed in the last section initially received the messages in the interview positively, had similar sentiments as Nyarai once she became more engaged with the text. She exclaimed,

I suppose the way Mugabe answered his questions gave the illusion that Zimbabwe is quite stable which will give the international audience the impression that things are not all that bad...Here honestly unless you are Zimbabwean you would not know what's going on. If I were South African all I could hear is that nothing is wrong with Zimbabwe and that had no reality to it, given from that perspective.

Nyarai and Namatai's sentiments can be understood in light of Ang's (1985) argument that for some audience members, the represented reality in television programmes must coincide with the social reality of 'ordinary' people' and that it must be recognisable. According to Richardson (2006), over the past half decade Zimbabwe has transformed from one of Africa's rare success stories into one of the worst economic and humanitarian disasters. At the time of researching and writing this thesis, the economic situation had not improved. Indeed by March 2006 due to spiralling inflation it took Z\$60 000 to buy a loaf of bread, even as a new Z\$50 000 note was being printed to 'keep up' with higher prices. Further, while the Zimbabwe dollar had been pegged at Z\$99 200/US\$ since January 2006, by May 2006, prices had increased by 80% (Richardson, 2006).

In reading the text, Namatai's failure to relate to the given explanation of the state of affairs in Zimbabwe and her rejection of the meanings advanced in the interview were shaped by the difficulties which she faces in her life context in Zimbabwe, as well as by her concern for the country's international image. Because of their own circumstances living in Zimbabwe, both Nyarai and Namatai failed to connect the representations of Zimbabwe contained in the interview with those prevailing on the ground. The two also felt sure that the text contained a picture of Zimbabwe that no 'ordinary' Zimbabwean would paint, therefore, as 'ordinary' Zimbabweans themselves; they rejected the

messages imparted in the interview. This finding supports Hall's (1980) argument that there is a necessary correlation between people's social situation and the meanings that they may generate from a television programme.

Namatai further worried that the wholesome picture painted regarding Zimbabwe's social, economic and political environment was misleading for the international audiences who watched it. Her feeling was that Zimbabwean audiences, with their intimate knowledge and experience of the situations and issues discussed could be counted on to realise that the 'reality' advanced in the text was a false one. It is the international audiences, notably South African audiences that she worried most about. She felt that lacking the situational knowledge and experiences of the issues discussed, audiences in the international arena would accept the meanings advanced in the text, meanings which she herself rejected. Namatai's contestation of, and ultimate rejection of the meanings in the text is clear in her insistence that the interview "had no reality to it, given from that perspective".

6.1.3 Presentational style and the range of readings

Still other responses made clear that the difficulties which respondents had with the meanings in the interview had less to do with the show's presentation and framing of issues, and more with the responses that the President gave to the questions he was asked. This stance can be explained by Lazarsfeld et al's (2003) explanation that the degree to which an audience trusts in another person's point of view may be due to his prestige, the plausibility of what he has to say and/or its relevance to one's interests. For the respondents to this study, their experience of the social, economic and political issues being discussed, as well as their perceptions of the government and the President that are discussed in Chapter Three were influential in their rejection of the meanings advanced in the text.

Further, because of the interview topic's proximity to audiences' interests and their context, and because of feelings that the discussion tackled important issues in a timid manner, one respondent felt that "what the clip basically does is rouse people's emotions since the person interviewed has done a lot to affect a lot of people's lives". In line with

this sentiment some respondents did indeed reveal that they were emotional in the way they engaged with the text, due to the proximity of the issues, and the programme's handling of them.

Sarudzai: I was very emotional about the President's interview because I have some strong issues about some of the things that they discussed. Also the way that he is putting them across, like it's nothing and it's not a big deal but we are experiencing them. People are feeling the effects of a lot of things that he was just talking passively about. So it really makes you angry that this is the man who is leading us and has your future in his hands and he's just passively talking about it like that.

Nyarai: I also think it's very disrespectful when all of us are living in hard times. All of us are living in hard times. Everybody is struggling and there are certain opportunities that you can't take advantage of because of the things that are happening in Zimbabwe. And to hear someone being interviewed by the Chief Executive Officer of SABC Africa or whoever that was, talking about how the nation is doing well, is extremely disrespectful.

Paul Willems (1978 in Morley, 1980) argues that media audiences must be studied as subjects in history, living in social formations rather than mere subjects of a single text. In line with this, this study finds that the readings that emerged from respondents' engagement with the meanings advanced in the interview were necessarily influenced by their experiences living in contemporary Zimbabwe. The two quotes above make reference to people "feeling the effects of a lot of things" while another respondent talks of "struggling". Further, Sarudzai's expression, and repetition of the feeling that President Mugabe was "passively" talking about issues of national importance hints at her frustration with the way in which he responded to the issues, and with her social and economic circumstances, other factors that position her, and Nyarai, in opposition to the meanings in the text.

Something else to emerge strongly from the group discussions was that some respondents tended to perceive the interview negatively, not because of what the President said, but because of what the interviewer asked, or did not ask. In relation to news production and the process of encoding meanings in media texts Hall explains that the practice of preferring a reading may be an unconscious stated intention of broadcasters, but it is

nevertheless the general ideological inflection of most news texts (1980). He maintains that:

The particular choice of presentational occasions and formats, the selection of personnel, the choice of images, the staging of debates are selected and combined through the operation of the professional code and is a way to reproduce the hegemonic signification of events (Hall, 1980:136).

Keenly aware of this, some respondents based their rejection of the messages in the text on their belief that the interviewer lacked aggression, was uninformed and that he basically shied away from asking the questions that would “give the answers to the people”. In Focus Group 2, one respondent complained that the interviewer was “very, very passive”, while another concurred, adding that he felt there was “a laissez faire approach to the interview”. Still other respondents felt that the questions asked of President Mugabe were not questing enough and allowed for ‘gaps’ in his responses. This, some respondents attributed to SABC Africa’s mandate and the channel’s approach to interviewing African heads of state. One respondent maintained that:

They seem to be more interested in cosmetic issues like whether they have given us enough African news. They interviewed President Mugabe, but whether or not they asked the questions that the people on the ground are interested in seems to be of no concern to them. It’s as though they are saying “We’ve interviewed him and you heard him”.

However, despite respondents’ difficulties with the presentational style of the interview, the focus group discussions were invaluable in revealing how media audiences engage with and negotiate meanings out of media text. For example, an exchange among some respondents in Focus Group One outlined below reveals the ways in which the meanings in the text were negotiated through group discussion. Some respondents remained adamant in viewing the messages in the interview negatively, but others were more willing to negotiate some meanings from the text.

Kelvin: Did you notice that the questions that the President was asked were questions that gave him room to say what he wanted to?

Nyarai: You know what you guys, in a situation like this, the interviewer was probably asked to submit his questions for vetting before he was allowed to

interview the President. Of course there will be questions which will be disallowed and he will ask only the questions that are allowed.

Sarudzai: If we can't get the information that we need from him then really is there any use hearing the same things that we have heard before?

Nyarai: I think that there is, I don't think that there is any such thing as no news. For me, his coming out on satellite television gives us a slightly different take than we get from the national broadcaster. In itself it communicates something to me.

While other group members were reading the messages in the text negatively, by accepting that the interview gave a 'slightly different take', Nyarai was able to make some meanings from the interview that she could accept. She however reserved the right to make a negotiated application to her own specific context and experiences in Zimbabwe.

6.2 The patriotic audience's concern for Zimbabwe's international image

Brooker and Jermyn assert that audiences' national and ethnic identities are very important to the range of readings that they take from media texts. They insist that "while texts may be open to any number of interpretations in principle, in practice these interpretations will depend on the viewer or readers' membership of specific cultural communities" (Brooker and Jermyn, 2003:275). In line with this argument, this research found that respondents' national identity gave rise to patriotic sentiments that influenced their reception of the news, particularly as it pertains to Zimbabwe, carried on '60 minutes live in Africa'.

The respondents' location within contemporary Zimbabwe, with its particular problems and difficulties must be taken into consideration as having a strong bearing on audience reception of media texts. This approach is in line with Morley's observation that media readers are subjects in history, living in social formations rather than mere subjects of a single text (1980). Fiske (1989) undertook to study the ways in which American and Israeli audiences read the portrayals of the Arab uprising on the West Bank in the mid 1990s. He found that because reading is "the making of connections between existing cultural knowledges and the text" and because the cultural knowledges of Americans

differed from those of Israelis, audiences from the two countries would necessarily be expected to have differential readings of the text (1989:188).

By tapping into their 'cultural knowledges' as Zimbabweans some research participants were apt to view the interview negatively, mainly due to their concern for Zimbabwe's international image. Some respondents revealed a belief that not only did the interview portray Zimbabwean issues improperly, but that the international media was generally biased in its coverage of the country's issues. However, the reasons for their negative reception of the interview's portrayal of Zimbabwe ranged from those respondents who felt that the international media was not negative enough in its portrayal of Zimbabwean issues, to those who felt that it is too negative.

The emerging sentiments were that in terms of highlighting the problems in Zimbabwe and bringing attention to the plight of the people of the country in hopes of attracting international attention and intervention, SABC Africa was not proactive enough. For example, Nyarai felt that African media and in particular the interview on '60 minutes live in Africa' do and did little to show the negative aspects of the situation in Zimbabwe, especially the effects of the land redistribution programme on the country's economy.

Drawing on her cultural resources as an individual situated in the particular Zimbabwean context and as someone who has felt these effects first-hand, Nyarai expressed disappointment with the way in which the international media, SABC Africa included handles Zimbabwean news. She was particularly worried about its consequences for herself and the 'ordinary person' in Zimbabwe and expressed concern for the impact that these messages would have on the wider African context. She complained that,

People have romanticised it, it always annoys me, the way Africans outside Zimbabwe have romanticised the land issue. In an attempt to say that Africa is great and it's a jewel that's evolving and coming up. There is so much rot that is just glossed over. We need to face that rot...It's quite romanticised and it's not romantic. Look, fine, the ideals maybe, but other countries in Africa are going to follow. Zimbabwe has been in a position where we got into a situation where we basically had little to lose. We say what we want to the international community because right now countries like America are not giving us much and from elsewhere there is so much aid that has been suspended. But other countries which

are going to follow the path that we have trodden, I think that the way this has been romanticised and the way that the land question in Zimbabwe has been romanticised is going to cause trouble for Africa because people are not doing enough to show the negative things. This is irresponsible and they really should find a way to balance out their reports.

6.2.1 *"They are making a mockery of this country" – audience loyalty to Zimbabwe*

However, other respondents felt that the way Zimbabwe was portrayed in the interview and in other editions of '60 minutes live in Africa' was too negative and made a mockery of the nation and the person of the President. For example, for some respondents, the fact that SABC Africa chose to re-screen the interview nine months after it had first been screened seemed odd, especially considering that the discussed resuscitation of Zimbabwe's social and economic environment by year-end 2005 had not come to pass. Bobo explains that when something in a media text strikes the viewer as 'strange', that viewer is likely to view the message negatively. When things appear strange to the viewer then he/she may then bring other viewpoints to bear on the watching of the film and may see things other than the film-makers intended, thus reading the text "against the grain" (2003:310). For one, respondent Tendai explained his discomfort when he revealed:

I have serious concerns with the fact that they showed a nine-month old interview now. I mean what are they trying to achieve? We all know, I mean the whole world can see that what President Mugabe was projecting has not come to pass, none of it has.

Also rejecting the idea and perceptions advanced in the interview Linda asserted:

I think that maybe I missed something, but for SABC Africa to bring out an interview like that, where it is so glaringly obvious that the things that are being discussed are exactly the opposite, I feel that SABC Africa is making a mockery of the President and of this country...I mean it appears that the interview was done in March or April, just after the elections. But to have them airing it in December and we have him answering all these questions about what he thought would happen and we have no evidence at all that any of this has come to pass. It's exactly the opposite; things have gotten worse as opposed to better.

Linda's rejection of the meanings in the text is due to a feeling that SABC Africa's re-screening of the interview within the context of Zimbabwe's failure to achieve substantial

economic and social improvements within the projected timelines was an attempt to mock Zimbabwe and its people. Her opposition to the ways in which Zimbabwe was portrayed and the issues dealt with on '60 minutes live in Africa' finds explanation in Burch's (2002) assertion that in their consumption of international media messages audiences seem to remain loyal to their own societies. Brooker et al also suggest that audiences seek pride in the images of 'themselves' that are portrayed in the international media (2003). Linda's reading of the images and messages on Zimbabwe portrayed on '60 minutes live in Africa' as negative was thus probably influenced by her strong identification with, and loyalty to her country of birth in the face of perceived external criticism.

Morley (1992) notes how different members of the media audience may use and interpret any particular programme in different ways from other members of the audience. In this research, whereas Linda and Tendai regarded the re-screening of the interview as problematic, and was thus wont to view the interview negatively, fellow focus group member Isheanesu had a more negotiated encounter with the meanings in the interview. He mused:

At any point as a nation it is important to take a look at what you have done, as well as to look at what you hope to achieve and where you are going, if possible. So coming from there, when you understand what was going on at the time of the interview, you can fortunately enough; retrospectively you can look at it objectively and see why he was saying some of the things he was saying. Not all of it was utter rubbish, a lot of it was, but what he was saying was something he could not have known. It went wrong here and there obviously.

There is evidence that while he shared Linda's patriotism and loyalty to Zimbabwe, Isheanesu incorporated the knowledge that the interview was part of SABC Africa's year-end 'retrospective' series to engage more favourably with the messages in the interview.

6.3 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have highlighted the salient points of the study's findings on the professional men and women's reception of the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa'. While Chapter Five revealed that professionals in Zimbabwe use satellite

television for its carriage of both national and international news, the range of audience readings outlined in this Chapter indicate that the respondents were more engaged in their negotiation of the meanings advanced in news on Zimbabwe. Although respondents tended to relate positively to the regional news on '60 minutes live in Africa', this Chapter found that local audiences tend to engage more with news content that is more culturally proximate to their situations, mainly because of its relevance to their daily lives.

As far as news on Zimbabwe consumed from an international source, this study found that local reception of global media is significantly impacted upon by audience perceptions of their socio-cultural contexts of reception. Also because the respondents, even though located within the same class, produced a multiplicity of readings of the same media text, this study challenges conceptions of media audiences as homogenous and uniformly and passively affected by media messages. Thus this study accepts that audience reception of global media can only be understood within the context of the audiences' socio-cultural environment and their position in this context.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter I sum up this study's key issues. The study explored the reasons behind Zimbabwean professional men and women's subscription to satellite television and their use of the international news programme '60 minutes live in Africa'. The study examined audience consumption and reception of messages on both international news and news on

Zimbabwe, particularly seeking to uncover the meanings that professionals within the specific Zimbabwean context take from both regional and national news.

In Chapter One I introduced the study, highlighted the research objective and explained its significance. Chapter Two covered the theoretical considerations underlying the study. Here I outlined the theoretical basis on which the complexity of the encounter of global media and local audiences in the consumption of satellite television news by Zimbabwean professionals was examined. Further, drawing on existing literature on audience studies, the chapter explored arguments and theories surrounding the popularity and growing use of satellite television by local audiences in developing countries.

In Chapter Three I contextualised the study by outlining Zimbabwe's history and explaining current events that have impacted on the country's economic, political and social structure and stability, as well as on local audiences' consumption of satellite television. The chapter was necessitated by the ethnographic audience research approach, as well as the Cultural Studies tradition within which the study was located. In turn, the Cultural Studies tradition was important in determining the research methodology and research methods employed. This led into Chapter Four, which contains an explanation of the research methodology employed in this study. Here I discussed the research design and methods of data collection, the physical location of the study and the selection of respondents as well as my data analysis and processing. I also outlined the challenges I encountered during the research process.

In Chapter Five and Six, I presented and discussed the findings of the study and interpreted them in line with the research issues and with Gramsci's theory of hegemony as well as the symbolic distancing and the cultural proximity theses. In particular, Chapter Five contains a discussion of the reasons Zimbabwean professionals subscribe to DSTV as well as an examination of their international news reception practices, with emphasis on their reception of '60 minutes live in Africa'. In Chapter Six I discussed the range of readings that emerged from professional men and women's reception of news on Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues broadcast on '60 minutes live in Africa'.

7.1 Summary

Although I took cognisance of the importance of looking at the complete 'circuit of culture' in the study of media, (Gay et al, 1997; Johnson, 1983) due to size limitations and the requirements of this thesis, my research took an approach that prioritised the analysis of the socially contextualised media audience as the best way in which to gain an understanding of the complexities of the media experience. Conceiving of the media audience as active, I sought to understand and increase knowledge on how global media influence social and cultural processes. I conceived of the research participants as individuals already constituted in other discursive formations and social relations and who would necessarily bring their social and cultural experiences as Zimbabweans, Africans, professionals etc. to their encounter with the content and messages on '60 minutes live in Africa'.

While it was exploratory in many ways, I feel that the research generated some useful areas for further inquiry into how global media, in this case, international news programmes, are received and read by professional men and women in the specific Zimbabwean context.

The study addressed some factors that influence and motivate professionals in Zimbabwe to access satellite television, not least the respondents' economic ability and the higher expectations from the media that their cultural capital; i.e. education, profession, class, and lifestyle among others, have fostered in them. The study found that other influencing factors are: the limitations in national broadcasting and the perceived lack of relevance of national broadcasting for professionals, as well as audience need to access regional information and to have an idea of how Zimbabwe and Zimbabwean issues are portrayed in international media. Further, the study found that professional men and women's consumption of satellite television is a counter hegemonic contestation of power, largely motivated by the need to circumvent government policy that bans international news from being broadcast on national channels. The study thus focused on the consequent subscription to satellite television as the only way in which professional men and women

in Zimbabwe can gain access to international news channels and the messages that they carry.

There also emerged some evidence suggesting that professionals used images and messages of life conditions that are better, and removed from their own to gain some symbolic distance from their own difficult circumstances. Respondents revealed that they used the positive images and programmes on satellite television to gain some symbolic distance from the difficult social, economic and political situations within which they are located. Further, where positive images were unavailable, some respondents used negative images of life outside Zimbabwe in order to naturalise their situations so as to get some cognitive escape from the harshness of their contexts.

The respondents' interests in, and consumption of satellite television were discussed through six major themes. The six themes were: the socio-cultural context of reception, professionals and satellite television, counter hegemonic contestation for power in subscribing to DSTV, global media as a vehicle for 'symbolic distancing' and 'escapism', cultural proximity and the cultural relevance of '60 minutes live in Africa', the influence of cultural proximity on audience interest in news on Zimbabwe, and the patriotic audiences' concern for Zimbabwe's international image.

7.2 Main arguments in the Study

In order to explore the consumption of satellite television and the meanings that audiences within a specific context and historical moment take from media, I employed the use of survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. Information that emerged from the focus group discussions was particularly important in explaining the manner in which local audiences consume global media. It was important in uncovering the ways in which audiences negotiate and discuss meanings from media and the way in which they collectively articulate their media consumption and reception habits in an environment that discourages consumption of international media and public discussion on national processes.

The data collection methods used proved very useful in uncovering the reasons behind local audiences' consumption of international news and the reasons and conditions under which they receive and negotiate meaning from global media. As contained in Chapter Five, this study found that the consumption of satellite television by Zimbabwean professionals is strongly tied to the limits in national broadcasting and audience rejection of the national broadcaster. The popularity and consumption of SABC Africa's '60 minutes live in Africa' among the sampled respondents was also influenced by their negative perceptions of other international news channels such as the BBC, CNN and Sky News when it comes to their coverage of Africa and African issues. The study found that professional men and women subscribe to DSTV and watch '60 minutes live in Africa' because it provides them with what they consider to be an independent and trustworthy African perspective on both regional news and news on Zimbabwe. This finding provides evidence that counters government claims that international media messages are ideologically harmful to Zimbabweans, based as the argument is on the belief in the (negative) direct and unmediated effects of all international news on audiences.

Throughout this study, it emerged that audiences are active in their media consumption/reception. I hope I have demonstrated that as well as being highly active in their media consumption, once positioned in relation to the meanings in a text, audiences do not necessarily remain in those reading positions. The study found that the range of readings that audiences made from a single programme are significantly impacted on by the level of engagement that they have with the different messages carried therein.

I also discovered, and outlined in Chapter Six, that although Zimbabwean professionals access satellite television due to their interest in consuming international news programmes which are banned from Zimbabwean television, they were more engaged in their readings of news on Zimbabwe than in their reading of international news. This study found that this was a function of the geographic and cultural proximity of the news and issues, and their subsequent relevance to the audiences' lives and situations within contemporary Zimbabwe. I also explained how the cultural proximity of a news item significantly influenced respondents' negotiation and reception of the screened edition of

'60 minutes live in Africa'. In this way it emerged that the use of satellite television by professionals in Zimbabwe, and their reception of '60 minutes live in Africa', particularly of the news on Zimbabwe, was directly influenced and impacted upon by their socio-cultural contexts and their situation within this context.

7.3 Scope for Future Research

While my study was exploratory, it has in many ways opened up a few useful areas for further inquiry. The study posed important questions regarding the satellite television subscription and consumption habits of professionals in a country that is undergoing rapid social, economic and political change. Because the study was conducted within a specific contextual frame, it raises important issues concerning the contextualised use of new media forms in Third World countries. Further research could thus adopt a micro approach which examines the study's major thematic issues individually. This would be done with the objective of obtaining deeper insight into why audiences in Zimbabwe access satellite television and how they make meanings from the variety of international news programmes that are available to them on the DSTV bouquet.

The research process also brought up important insights into the ways in which Zimbabwean audiences negotiate meaning from international news programmes broadcast from the West. For example, despite the arguments of media imperialism theorists and the evident popularity of entertainment programming and other cultural goods from the West, particularly the U.S., in Zimbabwe, in audience consumption of news programmes the trend among professionals was definitely towards culturally proximate news, images and messages. This study found, as outlined in Chapters Five and Six, that the closer the news content was, the greater the audience interest. Of particular importance is that this trend is evident among the educated, a social grouping which cultural proximity theorists conceive of as more attracted to global media and generally more prone to being 'internationalised'.

For the sampled professionals however, the importance of cultural proximity to their news consumption was specifically related to their conception of the realism and

relevance of the content to their lives and contexts, as well as the audiences' ability to recognise and identify with the images and messages in the text. The particular interest in culturally proximate news that was exhibited by participants to this study may have been motivated by the professionals' political and social awareness, as well as by their interest in understanding how international, particularly African, issues and decisions may positively affect the Zimbabwean situation, given the country's prevailing difficulties.

This is evidenced by the emerging sentiments of hope revealed by some respondents that the international media (most notably South African media) would give such coverage of the issues in Zimbabwe as to motivate the international community to intervene in a way that would reap positive results for the Zimbabwean people. Thus the specific preference by Zimbabwe's young educated class for the content on an African news channels may be specifically linked to the country's social, economic and political problems and their anxiety and concerns about finding relief from the worsening effects that these problems have on their lives.

It may thus be interesting and useful for future research to follow on these findings to investigate the contextualised consumption and reception of international news programmes, for example those on BBC, CNN and Sky News, by African audiences. Further, comparative studies on the ways in which African audiences receive/consume international news from African news channels as opposed to European and American ones would also be important in helping us to more deeply understand the reception and use of international news channels by local audiences.

Finally, considering that older professional men and women have different experiences and conceptions of the Zimbabwean situation and may therefore have different reasons for accessing satellite television (or any media for that matter), future studies could pick up where this research stopped. Future research could examine the use of satellite television by middle-aged and older professionals in Zimbabwe. Research of this nature would provide valuable information on the television consumption habits of professionals in other age-groups, which could then be used for comparative purposes with the findings

of this exploratory study. It could also provide deeper insights into the types of programming that interests middle class Zimbabwean audiences of different ages, as well as provide a deeper understanding of the meanings that individuals in different socio-economic circumstances and locations make from international news programmes.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Individual questionnaire

I would like to ask you some questions so that I can get to know you a little better before our group discussions. These questions are aimed at gaining an understanding of the context in which you watch '60 minutes live in Africa', your motivations for watching the show, as well as your personal circumstances. Participation in this interview is voluntary, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to speak with me. Please be assured that the information that I obtain from this discussion will be kept confidential and it will be used for this research purpose only and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I would like to know a bit more about you, your name, your educational qualifications and your present employment situation.

1. Sex of respondent (Please tick one)
 - a. Male _____
 - b. Female _____

2. Could you start by telling me your first name please? _____

3. How old are you?
 - a. 25-30 _____
 - b. 31-35 _____
 - c. 36-40 _____
 - d. 41-45 _____

4. What is the highest level of education that you have attained? (Please tick one)
 - a. Secondary School _____
 - b. High School _____
 - c. Diploma _____
 - d. Higher diploma _____
 - e. Some undergraduate study _____
 - f. Undergraduate degree _____
 - g. Some Master's study _____
 - h. Master's Degree _____
 - i. Doctorate _____
 - j. Other (please specify) _____

5. Are you employed? Yes _____ No _____

6. Are you self-employed? Yes _____ No _____

7. What is your profession? (Please tick one)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Medical _____ | Legal _____ |
| Education _____ | Financial services _____ |
| Information Technology _____ | Human Resources _____ |
| Accounting and Auditing _____ | Insurance _____ |
| Marketing _____ | Advertising and Sales _____ |
| Retail _____ | Engineering _____ |
| Research _____ | Media _____ |
| Hospitality Industry _____ | Agriculture _____ |
| Building and Architecture _____ | |
| Other (please specify) _____ | |

8. Since you left formal education, for how many years in total have you been employed? (Please tick one)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. 1-3years _____ | b. 4-6years _____ | c. 7-9years _____ |
| d. 10-12years _____ | e. 13-15years _____ | f. 16-18 years _____ |
| g. Other (specify) _____ | | |

I am going to briefly ask you about your family situation and the factors that influence your decision or the decision of members of your household to put up a satellite dish and to subscribe for service.

9. Including yourself, how many people live in your household? _____

10. Could you please give me a brief explanation of the relationships between the people who live in your household? _____

11. How long have you had access to the SABC Africa channel?

- a. 1-3years____ b. 4-6years____ c. 7-9years____
d. 10-12years____ e. 13-15years____ f. 16-18 years____
g. Other (specify) _____

12. What were the main reasons behind your decision to access satellite television? _____

13. About how many times a week do you watch '60 minutes live in Africa'? _____

14. Is there anything else you would like to add about your satellite television access or your viewing of '60 minutes live in Africa'? _____

Thank you for your contributions, I look forward to gaining more insight into this important topic from your during the focus group discussions.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Questionnaire

Focus group questionnaire

Hello everyone, I hope that you are all well today. My name is Petronella Mugoni; please feel free to call me Petronella, or Nella. I am an MA (Journalism and Media Studies) student at Rhodes University and I am currently conducting research into audience experiences with the news programme '60 minutes live in Africa' on SABC Africa. The information and understanding that I will gain from this interaction will be used in a thesis that focuses on Zimbabwean professional men and women's viewing of SABC Africa news.

I have asked you to participate in this discussion because you all have access to satellite television programmes and you regularly watch '60 minutes live in Africa'. This discussion is geared at gaining an understanding of the reasons why the programme interests you and to understand your perceptions, attitudes and opinions towards the programme and the issues and views that it covers. I anticipate that the discussion will be about an hour and a half to two hours long.

I value the opinion of each one of you and am very grateful to you for taking the time out to enrich this discussion by sharing your insights. The aim of this discussion is not to reach a consensus for you do not have to agree with another person's responses. However, I request that dissenting views be voiced in ways that are sensitive to other people's sensibilities. I am interested in everyone's participation and therefore hope that you will all fully contribute to the discussion. Before we begin let me assure you that all information shared during these discussions and other information involved with this study will be kept confidential and will be only used for my study. Also, your identities will not be revealed to anyone else. In the interest of anonymity, I request that you introduce yourselves by first name only.

Shall we go around and introduce ourselves? Could you share your first name and your profession with the group please?

Before we begin the discussion, is everyone comfortable?

Pre-screening questions

I would like to begin by discussing your television viewing habits.

1. Where do you usually watch the programme and who do you usually watch it with?
2. What influences your decision to watch '60 minutes live In Africa' as regularly as you do?
3. What aspects of the programme interest you the most?
4. Considering that '60 minutes live in Africa' is broadcast at the same time as the Zimbabwe Broadcasting (ZBC) News Hour, what are your reasons for choosing SABC Africa as a news source?

Post-screening questions

I would like us to discuss the broadcast of '60 minutes live in Africa' that we have just watched.

5. Could you give me your initial reactions to the programme we have just watched?
6. What are your feelings about the topics covered?
7. What is the most striking or interesting topic that was covered in this particular programme?
8. What do you think is the least interesting topic that was covered in this particular programme?

Questions specifically focusing on Zimbabwean news coverage

Now I would like to specifically discuss how this edition of '60 minutes live in Africa' has covered Zimbabwean issue.

9. What are your immediate comments regarding the news broadcast about Zimbabwe in this edition?

10. Do you agree or disagree with the images, opinions, views and issues as regards Zimbabwe that are raised in this programme?
11. I would like to discuss the presentation and framing of issues on '60 minutes live in Africa'. What do you think about the way the programme deals with issues about Zimbabwe?
12. Is there any other issue not raised here that you would like to discuss?

Thank you very much for your time and your contributions to this discussion, your insights have been very interesting and will be very valuable in informing my work.
Thank you.

Appendix 3: Study Introductory Letter

To whom it may concern

2005-11-15

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: THESIS STUDY INTRODUCTORY LETTER – SATELLITE TELEVISION
USE AMONG ZIMBABWEAN PROFESSIONALS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO
AUDIENCE CONSUMPTION OF SABC AFRICA’S ‘60 MINUTES LIVE IN
AFRICA’**

Ms Petronella Mugoni, an MA student at the School of Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University, is carrying out a research study to **explore how professional men and women in Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare, negotiate meanings from a South African news programme, in the particular context of their country with its unique problems, opportunities and hopes.**

You are kindly requested to take part in this research study. The research has no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life but your participation is voluntary. While there are no possible personal benefits from taking part in this study, there is the intrinsic satisfaction that you might feel for contributing to research that might one day have a positive and useful impact on the media in Zimbabwe and Africa generally.

Research records will be kept confidential unless you authorise their release, or if the records are required to be released by law (i.e., court subpoena). Your records will be used for this research purpose only and at the end of the study, they will be destroyed.

If you have any questions that cannot be answered by the researcher, please contact the undersigned at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University # 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa. Phones: +27 (46) 603-8336/7; Fax: +27 (46) 622-8447 during the week. Email: s.kyazze@ru.ac.za

Your help would be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Simwogerere Kyazze
SUPERVISOR

