

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDIA
IN INFLUENCING THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF EVELYN HONE
COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LUSAKA DURING THE DECEMBER, 2001
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ZAMBIA**

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DEDICATION

To my children, Hlambase, Mwansa, Taonga and Namunyuka, and my late parents
Mr. and Mrs. Jere.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Anglo American Corporation
ANC	African National Congress
ECZ	Electoral Commission of Zambia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
FDD	Forum for Development and Democracy
HP	Heritage Party
LONRHO	London Rhodesia Company
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MMD	Movement for Multi Party Democracy
NEC	National Executive Committee
NCC	National Citizens' Coalition
PAZA	Press Association of Zambia
PF	Patriotic Front
UNIP	United National Independence Party

UPND	United Party for National Development
UPP	United Progressive Party
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZANA	Zambia News Agency
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZIS	Zambia Information Services
ZIMA	Zambia Independent Media Association
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation
ZUJ	Zambia Union of Journalists

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relative importance of the media in influencing the electoral choices of a small group of Zambians, namely Evelyn Hone College students in Lusaka who participated in the December 2001 elections in Zambia. The study investigates the interplay of mediation between the lived cultural experiences of the sample of students and the impact of media messages. Students at Evelyn Hone College come from different ethnic groupings, social classes, religions and regions. They are exposed to both the state and the privately owned media, which represent a range of political viewpoints.

The outcome of the December 2001 elections in Zambia gave the impression that people in urban areas in Zambia were less likely to vote on ethnic lines because they had easy access to different media, ranging from print to electronic, which provided them with diverse information about the political scene, and probably shaped their electoral choices. Conversely, their counterparts in the rural areas appeared to vote along ethnic lines, seemingly because of lack of exposure to the media. It was also assumed that most people in rural areas were not as modernized as their urban counterparts who were more exposed to enlightened sources of information such as professional groups and other elite social institutions which helped them to shape their political opinions than most rural people.

The study attempts to establish to what extent the media impacted on the selected sample of urban students in the choice of their presidential candidates in the December 2001 elections in Zambia. The study further investigates to what extent other factors such as ethnic inclinations and other social predispositions influenced them in their choice of the candidates.

The interviewees for this study were randomly drawn from a population of Evelyn Hone College students that voted in the December 2001 presidential elections in Zambia. The sample consisted of 30 randomly selected students who were purposely stratified in three focus groups of ten each. Each stratum represented the approximate ethnic equivalence of one of the presidential candidates who contested the December 2001 elections.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background and motivations to the research.

My interest in conducting this research began towards the end of 2001. I had been keenly following the political events and issues leading to the December 2001 elections in Zambia. Like all franchised Zambian citizens, I had my own expectations of the likely outcome of the elections. The campaign period leading to the elections in Zambia is usually a short one, lasting for not more than four weeks. Despite this short period of electioneering, political activity is heightened to its peak compared to the preceding period. The atmosphere becomes much more frenetic as the deadline approaches. The mood in the country at the time, from the competing politicians to their supporters and sympathisers, fluctuated between high expectations and nervous anxiety. The opposition parties were confident of unseating the ruling party, the Movement for Multi Party Democracy (MMD), by capitalizing on the internal factions within the MMD. These had developed following the aborted 'third term' campaign in which the former republican president, Frederick Chiluba, had orchestrated a nationwide campaign seeking the opinion of the people to change the constitution to allow him run for a third term of office. The constitution at the time allowed an incumbent president to rule for only two consecutive terms of five years each.

Should the public opinion have been in Chiluba's favour, it would be a foregone conclusion that the Zambian parliament, which was then heavily weighted towards the ruling party would approve of the change. The state owned media was in the forefront of championing Chiluba's call for a third term of office. On the other hand, the private media offered resistance to Chiluba's calls and the Zambian people to dismiss his scheme. Although some sections of the Zambian society were for the idea for Chiluba's bid for a third term of office, there was also a generally negative response from the public to allow Chiluba to change the constitution to his advantage. As an indication of their protest, many motorists in Lusaka devised a plot to blow their car hooters every Friday at

5pm to show protest against Chiluba's 'third term' bid. The noise of the hooters was so deafening that the police in some instances arrested motorists and charged them under the Nuisance Act. The police action was seen by many as a move by Chiluba to use the state police to silence people opposing his 'third term' campaign. The situation within the MMD cabinet was no different. A division had emerged within Chiluba's cabinet with many senior ministers calling for his exit while some, especially those with similar ethnic backgrounds, sided with him. Chiluba reacted by dismissing all those ministers who were against his 'third term' bid. Among these was his vice-president General Christon Tembo whom most people thought would be his automatic choice to replace him, and General Godfrey Miyanda, the then Education Minister who was vice president before General Tembo replaced him in a cabinet re-shuffle. The two dismissed top politicians in no time formed their own political parties to challenge Chiluba. Tembo formed the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) while Miyanda incepted the Heritage Party (HP) after differing with Tembo on which of them would be leader of the FDD.

Chiluba realised that his bid for a 'third term' had failed and that time for the elections was running out. He had to look for a successor who would be loyal to him when elected republican president, as Chiluba would remain the president of the ruling party. The remaining ministers were divided as to who should replace Chiluba and stand as presidential candidate for the ruling party. In an attempt to diffuse the tension among the divided senior politicians, Chiluba had to look outside his cabinet for his successor. He had to settle for Levy Mwanawasa, an attorney who was Chiluba's vice president when the MMD took over power from Zambia's first republican president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, in 1991. Mwanawasa was later to resign his post in 1994, citing as his reasons, corruption and mismanagement among top politicians in the ruling government. He left politics to lead a private life as a practicing lawyer until Chiluba called on him to replace him. This did little to diffuse the divisions within the MMD. One of the aspirants expecting to take over from Chiluba, Michael Sata, who was then MMD National Secretary and Minister without portfolio, left the MMD to form the Patriotic Front (PF). He accused Chiluba of 'doctoring' the voting process for the party leader by selecting his own favourite, Mwanawasa in a meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

In the meantime, other political parties, who were not splinter groups from the MMD, were capitalizing on the factions within it. One of these was the United Party for National Development (UPND) led by Anderson Mazoka, a former chief executive of the Anglo American Corporation (AAC) in Zambia. The MMD spearheaded a campaign through the public media that the UPND was a tribal party which had been formed on tribal lines and that Mazoka once elected to power would run the country by giving advantage to his ethnic grouping, the Tonga speaking people from Southern Zambia. Mazoka defended himself and accused the MMD themselves of being tribalists. He substantiated his claim by using statistics to show that most of the cabinet ministers originated from Northern and Luapula provinces, the homelands of the Bemba speaking tribe to which Chiluba belongs. The private media joined the campaign in supporting Mazoka and many other fellow Zambians to remove the 'ethnic and corrupt' MMD government from power. Because of all these events leading up to election time, the Zambian media became polarised in its coverage of political issues and events during the period leading to the elections. The public media became a mouthpiece for government propaganda while the private media stood for the opposition.

It was not long before I came to notice that politicians in the presidential race were campaigning along ethnic lines especially in their homelands. For example, Chiluba told the people in Luapula and Northern provinces not to vote for someone who would overlook their interests, and advised them to vote for Mwanawasa as protector of their interests. Mwanawasa, who originates from the minority Soli and Lenje speaking people of the Lusaka region, was seen by the majority Bemba speaking people as someone who would fall under Bemba control and owe his allegiance to Chiluba and the Bemba people at large. The situation was not different in the Southern and Western provinces where the peoples of these areas appeared to have formed tribal alliances, and rallied behind Mazoka. In the Eastern province, General Tembo and other presidential candidates from that area like Tilyenji Kaunda, son of Dr. Kaunda, of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), appeared to have been the most preferred candidates other than those from other ethnic groupings.

It was not surprising to note that the results of the presidential elections in most rural areas of Zambia reflected ethnic voting. Mwanawasa won an overwhelming majority in Luapula and the Northern provinces but fared poorly in the Southern, Western and Eastern provinces. On the other hand, Mazoka won a convincing majority in the Southern and Western provinces, but lost a distance away from Mwanawasa in Luapula and Northern provinces. The situation was not different in the Eastern province with many votes going to Kaunda and Tembo who also fared poorly in the homelands of the Bembas, Tongas and Lozis.

The situation was different in the cosmopolitan province of Lusaka and some towns in the central province, where the results did not completely favour a particular candidate. I became interested in this variance and asked myself what the reasons could be for this disparity. My first consideration was that people who reside in cosmopolitan towns in Zambia where modernised and received different ideas from different social sources which help them to shape their opinions on given subjects of public interest, in particular political issues. Additionally, people in cosmopolitan cities and towns have easy access to a range of media, from print to electronic, which provide them with diverse information about the political scene. In contrast to this, I realised that most rural settings in Zambia, to a great extent, lack agents and facilities of socialisation, such as schools, the media and other communication infrastructure. In most of these areas, media exposure is limited to a few households who own radio sets, and newspaper and television coverage is not readily available to most. It seemed to me that most rural citizens were perhaps more likely to vote along ethnic lines because of a lack of access to a range of factors, including media exposure, which might influence their opinions.

With these thoughts mind, I began to explore whether my assumptions could be validated in one way or another. I wanted to discover firstly, whether the media in urban areas had an influence in shaping the voters' choices in electing their political candidates. Secondly, I wanted to ascertain if there were other factors besides the media that influenced the voters in urban areas in the choice of their candidates. Lastly, I wanted to

establish whether most modernised people exposed to the media in the urban areas voted along ethnic lines or not.

1.1 Research agenda

Although some research has been conducted in the past into how the political elite in Zambia have used the media to influence the electorate, (Banda, 1997), there is no known study that has examined the relative importance of the media in Zambia in conjunction with other factors such as ethnicity, lived cultural experiences and other social influences on voter behaviour. This study therefore seeks to explore the relative importance of the media in influencing the electoral choices of a small group of Zambians, namely Evelyn Hone College students who participated in the December 2001 elections. In doing this, the study will investigate the 'interplay of mediation' (Tomlinson 1991) between their lived cultural experiences and the impact of media messages. Students at Evelyn Hone College come from different ethnic groupings, social classes, religions and regions. They are exposed to both the state and the privately owned media, which represent a range of political view points.

1.2 General objective

This study will attempt to establish to what extent the media impacted on the selected sample of students in the choice of their presidential elections in the December 2001 elections in Zambia. The study will also investigate to what extent other factors such as the social predispositions of the students and their ethnic inclinations influenced them in their choice of the candidates.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

Arising from the general objective, this study will also inquire:

- To what extent the students were exposed to the media and what type of media, during the run up to the elections.
- To what extent the students resisted media messages which could have otherwise affected their choices of presidential candidates.
- How the students negotiated and interpreted media messages.

1.3 Research assumptions

The results of the December 2001 elections in Zambia gave me the impression that people in urban areas in Zambia were less likely to vote on ethnic lines because they had easy access to different media, ranging from print to electronic, which provided them with diverse information about the political scene, unlike their counterparts in the rural areas most of whom had been observed to vote along ethnic lines probably because of lack of exposure to the media. I also assumed that people in cosmopolitan and metropolitan areas were more exposed to different ideas from different social sources like professional groups and other elite associations that helped them to shape their opinions on given subjects of public interest, in particular political issues, unlike most rural folk with limited modernity and less media exposure which possibly made most of them to vote along ethnic lines.

1.4 Significance of Study

As earlier indicated, there has been no known study in Zambia which has attempted to investigate the effects of the media on voter behaviour, the findings of this study may therefore serve as a reference to those wishing to further explore how the media has impacted on the electoral behaviour of Zambian voters. The findings of this study may also be useful in general, to some scholars who intend investigate the effects of the media on its audiences, especially during the period of political elections.

1.5 Method of study

This study seeks to answer questions on the 'interplay of mediation' between the lived cultures of a cross section of students and media messages. I wanted to investigate the relationship between the selected sample of students and the media, with a view to establishing how the media and the students' lived experiences impacted on them in the choice of their presidential candidates (Tomlinson 1991; Deacon, 1999; Hansen, 1998). I decided to use focus group interviewing as my sole source of data. I wanted to interview a large number of students, but was limited by time and financial constraints. The interviewees for this study were randomly drawn from a population of Evelyn Hone

College students that voted in the December 2001 presidential elections in Zambia. The sample consisted of 30 randomly selected students who were purposely stratified in three groups of ten each. Each stratum represented the approximate ethnic equivalence of one of the three presidential candidates who contested the December 2001 elections.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis contains eight chapters starting with this chapter.

1.6.1 Chapter 2

In this chapter I discuss the past and current political and media situation in Zambia. I give a historical account of the interface between politics and the media. The chapter begins by tracing the political background of Zambia from 1964 when the country became independent from British colonial rule. The historical perspective of the media is then discussed in relation to the social and political terrain. Media freedom and ownership is also discussed together with the role of the media in the electoral process in Zambia. This chapter gives us an understanding of the media's position in Zambia's political landscape, and in particular its role in the electoral process which is the subject of this study.

1.6.2 Chapter 3

In this chapter I discuss the role of the media in a democracy. I look at the two schools of thought, the liberal and radical, on media influence and how they contribute to the debate on the regulation or otherwise of the media by the state. I also discuss the conflict between the private ownership of the media in a democratic state, and the liberal view that the media must serve a 'watchdog' role towards the state. I further discuss the notion of a free market media and media professionalism. This chapter sets a platform to conceptualise the role of the media in a democracy and its influence in the electoral process, which is the basis of this research.

1.6.3 Chapter 4

In this chapter I discuss theoretical and conceptual approaches to understanding the relationship between the media and society. I examine the media's influence on the electorate. I also give a brief background to the development of research on the effects of the media on society. The theories discussed in this chapter generally relate to the impact and effects of the media on its audiences - how audiences relate to the messages, whether the media has strong or limited influence, or whether they are other social factors that influence audiences in the negotiation of media messages. I then relate these theories to the media's impact on voter behaviour which is the main theme of this study.

1.6.4 Chapter 5

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology and method applied to this study. I begin by examining the epistemology of research methodologies. I briefly outline the philosophies, qualities, and characteristics on which they are erected. I then look at the methods and techniques employed by the qualitative tradition of research thus identifying their advantages and weaknesses in this study. I also attempt to justify my choice of focus group interviews as an appropriate method for this study. The chapter further looks at the sample, the data collection process, and the limitations to this study.

1.6.5 Chapter 6

This chapter presents the findings of this study. The findings are based on three focus group interviews which were conducted with an aim of investigating the relative importance of the media in influencing the voting behaviour of Evelyn Hone College students in Lusaka during the December 2001 Presidential elections in Zambia. The findings also seek to answer to what extent other factors such as the social predispositions of the students and their ethnic inclinations influenced them in their choice of the candidates.

1.6.6 Chapter 7

In this chapter I discuss and analyse the findings of this study. I give a brief overview of the findings. I then explain, analyse and interpret the findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework contained in chapter four of this study. I also relate the findings to the research objectives and agenda of this study.

1.6.7 Chapter 8

This chapter gives a summary of the outcome of this study by referring to its objective which sought to answer questions on the interplay of mediation between the lived cultures of the students and media messages, establish how these impacted on them in their choice of presidential candidates, and also determine whether they voted along ethnic lines. There is a general observation on the findings of the study and a comment on the perceived future role of the Zambian media in the electoral process in Zambia.

1.7 Conceptual definitions

For the sake of this study the following terms will be defined as follows:

- Media will refer to all mass communication vehicles, print and electronic.
- Electronic media will refer only to the broadcast media, thus radio and television.
- Print media will indicate newspapers and magazines and other printed mass media publications.
- Private and independent media will be used interchangeably to denote corporate media other than that owned by the public or State.
- Ethnic influence will be treated as a separate factor from other social factors, as it is one of the key variables of this study.

1.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have given the background to this study. I have also discussed the research agenda and objectives of this study. The research assumptions and the significance of the study have been outlined. This chapter has also shown the methods of study, thesis outline and the conceptual definitions of some terms in this study. In the

next chapter, I will discuss the political and media situation in Zambia. This will provide the reader with an understanding of how the media relates to the electoral process in Zambia which is the basis of this study which seeks to investigate the interplay of mediation between the lived cultures of the students and media messages in the way that these impacted on them in the choice of their presidential candidates during the 2001 elections in Zambia.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL AND MEDIA SITUATION IN ZAMBIA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the past and current political and media situation in Zambia. In so doing, I attempt to give a historical account of the interface between politics and the media. The chapter begins by tracing the political background of Zambia from 1964 when the country became independent from British colonial rule. The historical perspective of the media is then discussed in relation to the social and political terrain.

I will attempt also to explain the relationship that existed and that exists currently between media institutions and the state, taking into account the role of the media in the pre-independence and post-independence periods. The chapter further expounds on the freedom of the media to disseminate information, the related subject of media ownership and control, and the pros and cons of public and private media.

Finally, this chapter discusses some of the characteristics of political parties in Zambia. Particular attention is given to the manner in which political parties have been organised and the voting behaviour of the electorate. The discussion further extends to the role that the media is seen to play in promoting and sustaining democracy in general, and its role in the electoral process in particular. The professional conduct of media practitioners is also taken into account. This chapter will provide us with an understanding of the Zambian media in general and how it impacts on the voting behaviour of the electorate in particular, which is the basis of this study.

2.1 Zambia's political background and the formation of political parties

Zambia became independent from colonial rule in 1964. Like most African states, Zambia adopted the multiparty political system. Yet by 1973 the country had become a one-party state, a trend that had become common among the newly independent African states. The nationalist leaders argued that most political parties in Africa were organised

on ethnic lines, and that this was the main source of political conflict in Africa (Senghor 1965; Bienen 1967). It was further asserted that multi party politics were unsuitable in Africa because of the absence of antagonism between a bourgeois class and a lower class as found in the Western capitalist politics (Marx, 1971). Kenneth Kaunda, the first President of independent Zambia, observed that the formation of many political parties was a waste of resources at the expense of development, and that a constant change of leaders would disrupt development programmes (Mwanakatwe, 1994).

It was envisaged that unity among the different ethnic groupings in the newly independent state was a prerequisite for economic and social development. The new leaders argued that multi party politics brought divisions and unnecessary conflict at the expense of development. The development of political parties and liberation armies along ethnic lines was seen as potentially subversive to the stability of the newly independent states which had succeeded the colonies. As Kellas observes, “only ethnic accommodation and ‘consociational democracy’ seemed to offer a way out of this predicament” (Kellas, 1994: 76).

African politics has historically been dominated by issues of ethnicity. For example Anber cites the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 as resulting from ethnic “hostility between the conservative Muslim Hausa-Fulani people of the North and the allegedly progressive Christian Ibos of the east” (1967: 44)¹. This communal violence was activated by the 1966 military coup in which the civilian government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Northerner, was ousted by Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Ibo, for alleged tribalism and corruption in favour of his tribes people (Randall and Theobald, 1985; Anber, 1967).

Some of the reasons advanced for the introduction of the one party state in Zambia were justified while others were questionable. For instance, shortly after independence during the multi party period, conflict developed among the nationalist leaders, some of whom

¹Anber (1967) explains that ethnic conflicts in Africa have created political instability such that political parties are formed on ethnic lines.

defected from the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) to form their own political parties along ethnic lines. In 1967, factional infighting based on ethnic lines took place within the UNIP ranks. The Tonga and Bemba speaking people wanted to unseat the Lozi and Nyanja speaking office holders (Chikulo, 1996; Turock, 1989). These hostilities spread countrywide and soon there was a growth of provincial movements based on tribal lines. These differences culminated into defections and formation of opposition political parties. As Mwanakatwe points out,

When Kapwepwe resigned from UNIP to form his own political party (UPP) in 1971, the dye was cast. Kaunda saw in Kapwepwe's action a clear sign that one of his boyhood friends might oppose him in an election for the office of the president of Zambia. Such a prospect could have aroused Kaunda's fears of bloody fights between UNIP and UPP followers. (1994: 86)

Kaunda's fears were justified in the December 1971 parliamentary by-elections when inter-party conflicts occurred in which many people were seriously injured. Mwanakatwe observes that "Kapwepwe had his own charisma and enjoyed popularity among the Bemba-speaking people in the Northern, Luapula and Copperbelt Provinces" (1994: 86). The question of ethnic politics was a serious concern of the UNIP government. The Lozi-speaking people in the western province opted to secede from Zambia to reclaim their historical territorial land, the Barotseland, which had a sovereign recognized by the British Monarchy during colonial days. This was mainly because the Lozi people felt that they were getting a raw deal from the new administration of Kaunda (Sichone, 1996).

2.1.1 Advent of the one party state

From what has been said above, it could be argued that the formation of different political parties on tribal grounds contributed to political instability in Zambia at that time. Hence, the advent of the one party state appears to have been a possible solution to resolve the acrimony that was rife among the many tribes in Zambia. However, it can also be stated that upon the introduction of the one party state, Kaunda took advantage of the situation to maintain the status quo and remain in power. In fact, Kaunda had a vision of becoming

the life president of Zambia without being opposed (Ihonvbere, 1996). Kaunda rejected the recommendation of the 1972 Chona Commission to establish a one party state from three presidential candidates within UNIP. Mwanakatwe observes:

There was strong opposition to the recommendation for an electoral competition between three presidential candidates. The party objected on the grounds that it would divide the party and the country along tribal lines thereby undermining the objective of the one-party system of uniting different tribes in order to facilitate the development process.

Consequently, the constitution was amended to provide for only one presidential candidate. (1994: 91)

Kaunda clung to power until the late 1980s when his government began to lose popularity. Although legally in power, its legitimacy had become questionable. The economy had collapsed as a result of mismanagement coupled with the dwindling prices of copper which is Zambia's core earner of foreign exchange, and the soaring fuel prices on the world market. The inflation rate rose and goods and services were in short supply. There were food riots on the Copperbelt in which about a dozen people were killed by riot police who tried to disperse the rioters. This contributed to the peoples' despondency towards the government. In 1990, there was an attempted military coup to topple Kaunda's regime. This was followed by mounting pressure on the government from a group calling itself the Movement for Multi Party Democracy (MMD) to reintroduce multi party politics. The MMD mustered its following from the trade unions as its leader Frederick Chiluba was the President of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). With the wind of change blowing from Eastern Europe where one party states were collapsing including its bastion, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Kaunda succumbed to pressure and allowed for an amendment of the constitution to pave the way for plural politics (Sichone, 1996).

During the one party state, Kaunda used the state owned media to popularise his rule, and won all the presidential elections held between 1973 and 1990 by a vote margin of 90 percent or more. This was not only attributed to the fact that Kaunda was the sole

presidential candidate, but also to the fact that Kaunda had managed to unite Zambians from 73 ethnic groupings through his socialist humanist philosophy under the theme 'one Zambia one Nation'. The media played a critical role in this campaign. The role of the media in multi party politics became even more important in ensuring that a proper balance was maintained in how the different political parties were portrayed (Mwanakatwe 1994).

2.1.2 Plural politics and a changing media terrain

In 1991, the first multiparty elections were held after 17 years of one party dictatorship. At that time, the state owned and controlled all media apart from the *National Mirror*, a religious publication which had become a vocal critic of Kaunda's regime. This resulted in Kaunda instructing all government institutions and parastatal organisations not to advertise in the paper as a way of crippling its operations. Another independent publication, the *Weekly Post*, had been launched, and joined the crusade against Kaunda's rule, thus signaling the gradual change of the media that had been suppressed by Kaunda's autocratic rule. However, Kaunda still controlled a strong section of the media which included the Zambia Broadcasting Corporation, *The Times of Zambia*, *The Zambia Daily Mail*, Zambia News Agency (ZANA) and the Zambia Information Services (ZIS). These media advocated Kaunda's cause in the 1991 elections. They all had a wide circulation and coverage, especially the ZIS (Kasoma, 2000).

Kaunda had vigorously campaigned in the elections using the state media. However, despite this, Chiluba who had little access to the public media, won the election in a landslide victory. Kaunda's loss could have been indicative that the media was just 'one factor among many others' that could have influenced the voters (Curran, 1983)². Although Kaunda had the whole media apparatus on his side with the best political propagandists at his disposal, his messages had little significance in influencing the

² Curran (1983) argues that there is a combination of factors apart from the media that influence the voting behaviour of voters exposed to media messages. These include their social predispositions and lived experiences.

voters who were swayed by the opposition due to 'social predisposing factors', as observed by Lowery and DeFleur (1988)³.

However, Kaunda managed to maintain popularity in the Eastern Province which is close to Malawi, the home of his late father. UNIP scored 74 percent against MMD's 26 percent (Mwanakatwe, 1994). Kaunda's popularity in the Eastern Province was boosted by his wife Betty, who also originates from the same province. After losing power to Chiluba, Kaunda's UNIP with 20 seats in parliament against MMD's 130 seats became the official opposition in parliament. There were no other political parties represented in parliament at that time. However, by the mid 1990s there were more than 30 political parties registered with the Registrar of Societies although most of these existed on paper with no meaningful following. Apart from the MMD and UNIP, other parties with meaningful membership included: Zambia Democratic Congress, National Party, Progressive Party, Agenda for Zambia, Liberal Progressive Front and National Lima Party (Sichone, 1996; Mwanakatwe, 1994).

2.1.3 Ethnic voting

Ever since the reintroduction of multi party politics in 1991, Zambian voters, especially those living in rural areas, appear to have voted along ethnic lines (Sichone and Chikulo 1996; *The Post*, 1 January, 2002). This pattern of voting was more evidenced in the 2001 elections than in the 1996 elections in which the ruling MMD under the leadership of Chiluba easily swept the election. The UNIP, the only strong opposition in 1996, boycotted the elections. This was because of a calculated constitutional change that was aimed at barring Kaunda from contesting the elections because his father originated from neighbouring Malawi (Banda, 1997).

The December 2001 elections revealed a pattern in which presidential candidates received most of their votes from their respective provinces of origin. For instance, Anderson Mazoka of the United Party for National Development (UPND), who

³ Lowery and De Fleur (1988) point out that the lived cultures of people and discursive interaction influence the way that they interpret media messages.

originates from the Southern Province, received about 75 percent of his total votes among the Tonga and Lozi speaking people of Southern and Western provinces which are regarded as sister provinces (Electoral Commission of Zambia Provisional results, 2001). In the Northern and Luapula provinces, Mazoka, who proved to have been the main opposition to the ruling MMD, fared poorly - his votes accounting for less than 20 percent of the votes cast in those areas. Levy Mwanawasa who won the overall elections by a marginal difference of about 3 percent, scored about 80 percent of the total votes in Northern and Luapula provinces where Mazoka fared badly. Mwanawasa's performance in Mazoka's stronghold in Southern and Western provinces was also poor, with less than 20 percent of the total votes cast (*Times of Zambia*, 2 January, 2002; Electoral Commission of Zambia Provisional results, 2002).

Mwanawasa originates from Lusaka province, the home of the Soli speaking people. Nonetheless, he received extensive support in the Luapula and Northern provinces which are both dominated by the Bemba tribe. This was explained by the fact that the former republican president, Chiluba, who originates from Luapula, had spearheaded the campaign for his successor, and as such the people in those provinces appeared to have voted for Mwanawasa as a representative of Chiluba. The Eastern province remained a domain of the UNIP, with Tilyenji Kaunda, Dr Kaunda's son, scooping close to 50 percent of the votes in the province (Electoral Commission of Zambia Provisional results 2001; *Times of Zambia*, 29 December, 2001).

The situation was different in the cosmopolitan province of Lusaka and some towns in central province, where the results did not completely favour a particular candidate with an overwhelming majority over the others (*Times of Zambia*, 29 December, 2001; Electoral Commission of Zambia Provisional results, 2001). This variance could be attributed to a number of factors. It could be that people who reside in cosmopolitan towns in Zambia receive different ideas from different social sources like professional groups and other elite associations that help them to shape their opinions on given subjects of public interest, in particular political issues (Kasoma 2000). Furthermore, these people have easy access to different media, ranging from print to electronic, which

provide them with diverse information about the political scene (Banda 1997). In contrast to this, most rural settings in Zambia lack agents of socialisation and facilities such as schools, the media and other communication infrastructure (Eribo and Ebot 1997; Kasoma 2000). In most of these areas, media exposure is limited to a few households who own radio sets. Newspaper and television coverage is not readily available because of poor communication infrastructure (Kasoma 2000; Banda 1997, Moore, 1991). Arguably, it is because of this that most people in rural areas vote along ethnic lines as they are not modernised like their counterparts in the cities

2.2 The media landscape

The media have been an integral part of the Zambian society, and their functions have been critical to the social and political process. On the political platform, the media have acted as the fourth estate by playing the role of watchdog to check government's excesses and other malpractices that are against the public interest. During election time, they have supplied information and political comment upon which the electorate has based its opinions and decisions in their choice of candidates (Kasoma 2000).

Ever since the country attained independence, the media has played a significant role in the socialisation process of the Zambian society. The media was then the mouthpiece of political mobilisation through which the nationalist leaders propounded their socialist ideology to cultivate a sense of patriotism in the people towards the existing power structures. Upon attaining independence in 1964, Zambia's first republican President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda managed to shift the face of the media from that which served white interests to one which sought to promote the interests of his socialist government. During the colonial days, the news media had been primarily designed to perpetuate colonial rule and undermine black interests. Kaunda succeeded in systematically redirecting these media against capitalist imperialism (Chirwa, 1996, Kasoma, 2000). When Kaunda's government took control of the white private media, it succeeded in consolidating his power over the electorate. Kaunda effectively used the media to gain popularity and remained in power for 27 years (Kasoma, 2000, Moore, 1991).

2.2.1 History

The history of the media in Zambia stretches back to the year 1906, when the first local newspaper, the *Livingstone Pioneer* was set up. In 1944, a more active and larger scale newspaper industry emerged with the launching of The *Bantu Mirror* published by the Bantu Press, then a subsidiary of Southern Rhodesia's (now Zimbabwe) Newspapers. This was followed by the launching of the *Northern News* which was later to be called the *Times of Zambia* after independence. From 1906 to 1960 numerous publications emerged. These included the *Mutende*, *African Eagle*, *Central African Post*, *African Times*, *Sunday Zambia news*, *Zambia Times* and the *Central African Mail* which was later to be known as the *Zambia Daily Mail*. At the advent of independence in 1964, the newspapers that were being published were the *Central African Mail*, *The Northern News*, *Zambia Times* and *Sunday Zambia News*. All these newspaper were privately owned. After independence, these publications, notably the *Zambia Times*, (later the *Times of Zambia*, the *Central African Mail* and the *Zambia Daily Mail*), were nationalized and taken over by the state (Chirwa, 1996). Currently, there are two print media publications owned by the state: the *Zambia Daily Mail*, and the *Times of Zambia* with a circulation of 12,000 and 20,000 copies respectively. The state also owns the Zambia Information Services (ZIS) which has branches in almost all the districts in the country and feeds news to the public mainstream media (ie *Times of Zambia*, *Zambia Daily Mail* and ZNBC). The Zambia News Agency (ZANA), also government owned, serves the mainstream media with local and international news. There are several privately owned publications. These include *The Post*, *The Monitor*, *The Mirror* and *The Today*. Launched in 1990 as a weekly, *The Post* has the largest circulation among private newspapers, (30,000 copies), and is also the longest surviving private publication (Banda 1998; 2001).

The broadcasting media have historically been the preserve of government ownership. The first radio broadcast station was set up in 1941 in Kitwe, a mining town on the Copperbelt. It was owned by the colonial government. It was primary designed to communicate messages to the African population that were in the interest of the colonial

authorities. Television was set up in 1961 by a private company, the London Rhodesia Company (Lonrho). This was one of the first stations in the region. It mainly served the white mining and commercial community on the Copperbelt. In 1964, television was extended to Lusaka and became known as Zambia Broadcasting Services which later became the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation. Apart from the state owned broadcasting station, Trinity Broadcasting Services, set up in Lusaka in 1998 by an evangelical Christian Church, is the only private television station. There is also a multi-channel satellite subscription service called Multi-choice which was formed when the ZNBC ventured into partnership with South Africa's M-NET (Banda, 2001; Kasoma 2000).

When the Nationalists took over power in 1964, they nationalised the broadcast media to suit their interests to propagate their policies and also provide educational broadcasts to the people (Eribo and Jong-Ebot, 1997). In 1991, when the Chiluba government came to power, the airwaves were opened to private investors. A number of commercial community and religious stations have since started up. The first private broadcast station was Radio Christian Voice set up in 1994. In 1996, Radio Phoenix which transmits on FM in the Lusaka, Southern, Central and Copperbelt provinces was established by a local businessman, Erroy Hickey. Other private radio stations include Mazabuka Community Radio Station, University of Zambia Radio, Radio Icengelo, Radio Maria, Radio Yatsani, Radio Mano, and Radio Chikaya. The last five stations are owned by the Catholic Church. Large sections of the country are now served by at least one radio station. In 1995, there were 1,314,831 radio sets country wide, concentrated mostly in the urban areas. There are no statistics available to indicate whether this number has increased or declined (Banda, 2001, 1998).

2.2.2 Media freedom

The proliferation of the broadcast media has enabled many Zambians to be exposed to radio broadcasts. However, most of the stations have a small broadcast radius. The ZNBC is the only station to have national coverage. Additionally, the ZNBC, through the Broadcasting Act of 1987, is appointed by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting

to scrutinize the issuing of all broadcasting licences in conjunction with the Communications Authority of Zambia established under the 1994 Telecommunication Act. The broadcast media cannot be said to be truly independent because the ZNBC, itself a radio station, is partly responsible for the regulation of other radio stations. While the print media may be seen to be relatively free in the selection of their news content, this is not the case with the broadcast media. The state owned ZNBC most often reports selectively by reflecting the interests of the ruling class (Banda 1998).

The position of the private broadcast media is much different. The Broadcasting Act stipulates what can be aired in terms of news, entertainment and advertising - this is expected to conform to the interests of the state. Against this background, media institutions such as Zambia Independent Media Association (ZIMA), Zambia Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA) have been advocating and lobbying parliament for media law reforms. The advocates are calling for among other things, the establishment of an Independent Broadcasting Authority, the repealing of the ZNBC Act, an autonomous licensing regulatory board and the introduction of a freedom of information bill to give journalists more access to public records (*The Post*, 6 November, 2002).

2.2.3 A changing media platform

The advent of multiparty politics in 1990 changed the media terrain in Zambia. An independent and fearless media emerged. There was proliferation of a vociferous print media within a short time. As Kasoma observes, “ for the first time in the country’s history, press freedom, journalistic professionalism, and the role of the press in a democracy became issues for serious discussion” (Mbayo et al, 2000:208).

Zambia, being one of the first two countries along with Benin in Africa to reintroduce plural politics in the early 1990s, attracted a lot of interest from the international community regarding the relationship between the media and politics. Prior to the reintroduction of plural politics, the Zambian media was controlled by the autocratic rule of Kaunda who wielded great influence over the press, including the appointing and

dismissing of editors. However, the situation changed upon the advent of multiparty politics in 1990. As Kasoma observes,

Suddenly, in the 1990s the flood gates were opened. Zambia had, for the first time, had very outspoken, independent newspapers and privately owned radio stations. These new media competed with the official media in news reporting and editorialising. For the first time Zambians had a choice between official media and the independent media. (2000:207)

The government of Chiluba did not, however, sit idle to watch the sprawling private media which it considered a threat to its continued existence and soon started to find ways to neutralize the media.

2.2.4 Political regulation

Despite the fact that Chiluba's new government had promised to unshackle the media from excessive government control and ownership, a few years in power revealed that Chiluba's administration was in fact trying to gain more control over the media. In his first five years of leadership, Chiluba put in place more legal measures to control the media than Kaunda did in nearly three decades of his authoritarian rule (Kasoma, 2000). In 1994, the Chiluba administration made an attempt to enact a law under the Parliamentary and Ministerial Code of Conduct. The aim of this law was to compel journalists to appear before a tribunal to answer questions on stories deemed to be defamatory to the leadership (Chirwa, 1996).

Chiluba is also on record as having banned a *Post* publication in 1996, saying that it was inimical to public interests. He used the Criminal Defamation Act of the penal code to punish journalists and sections of the media perceived to be anti-government. Chiluba later tried to legislate a media council with a view to checking critical reporting against government. This was challenged by the Press Association of Zambia which sought a judicial review in the high court, contesting that the government could not impose a media council without consulting journalists (Chirwa, 1996; Kasoma, 2000).

The Chiluba administration had gone against its word that it would reform the constitution by including a clause related to media freedom. However, after 10 years of Chiluba's rule, there was still no dedicated constitutional clause relating to the freedom of the press. The only act which was applicable to press freedom was the Freedom of Expression Act of 1996. Chiluba's government thought that even this act allowed the press too much freedom, and so used some organs of the state to suppress and instill fear in journalists. As Kasoma notes:

In February, 1997, *The Post* again made history by being the first newspaper in Zambia whose reporter was jailed for contempt of court. Editor for Special Duties Matsauso Phiri was incarcerated for three months by a full bench of seven Supreme Court judges whom he had alleged in his column, *My Post Card*, to have received millions of Kwacha from President Chiluba as a bribe to have the case involving his qualification to stand for President in the general elections decided in his favour. (2000:214)

Although the media has been relatively free since the advent of plural politics in 1991, the MMD had made many attempts to stifle the operations of the media, ranging from the victimisation of journalists to imposing unfriendly legislation against the media. The current government of Mwanawasa appears to be sceptical about the introduction of media reforms that will give the media greater access to public records. It also seems to fear the deregulation of ZNBC and the establishment of an independent broadcasting authority, as this will weaken government control over broadcasting. The government wants to be able to continue to use the ZNBC as a channel of political propaganda, especially during election time (Banda 2001 and, Kasoma, 2000).

2.2.5 Ownership, control and influence of the media

The ownership and control of the media in Zambia cannot be analysed in the absence of the Marxist and Liberal theories of the media. The Marxist theory posits that the owners of the media, be they state or capitalist, will project their worldview on their audiences (McQuail, 1994; Thompson, 1995). The audience in turn can thus be manipulated by the

media they are exposed to. This power structure usually works in societies where those who own the means of production dominate subordinate groups and make them subservient to their interests (Curran et al. 1982; McQuail 1994; Bennet, 1982). The peoples' access to alternative sources of information and interpersonal exchange of views and ideas becomes very low. On the other hand, the liberal theory of the media is erected on the premise that the media should reflect the public interest and not represent the interests of a dominant class. The media plays the role of watch dog to watch excesses of the ruling class (McQuail, 1994).

It can be argued that the media in Zambia is polarised and reflects both the Marxist and Liberal traditions. On the one hand, the public media is owned and controlled by government. The public media is subordinated to the State and for most of the time represents the views of the ruling elite, and at times reflects public opinion, especially that which supports the State. On the other hand, the private media is owned by private individuals who influence its production and editorial content. The bourgeois who advertise their goods and services in this media also have some influence in the way the news commodity is produced and shaped. The private media however, carries wider public opinion than does the public media as a way of cultivating public support against the ruling class.

The bourgeois have often used the private media to advance their interests both economic and political. In fact it has been observed that the bourgeois, who are usually denied access to the government owned media, have used the private media to campaign against the ruling class whom they have often accused of trampling on their economic interests. An example of this was evident in the 1991 elections when the bourgeois, intelligentsia and leaders of workers' trade unions were in the fore front of the campaign that saw Kaunda ousted out of power. The situation has remained the same in the recent elections as the private media remains influenced by its shareholders and the bourgeois whose aim is to change government to that which protects and promotes their economic interests. The political economy of the media has therefore, in a way, contributed to shaping the Zambian media landscape (Banda, 1997).

In the sphere of public media, the appointment of board members and senior editorial staff has to be sanctioned by a board that is answerable to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. The politician is the main source and determiner of the news in the public press (Banda 1997, Kasoma, 2000).

Journalists working in the public media often seem incapable of reporting from sources other than the ruling elite. Politicians from the opposition rarely hit the headlines in the public media. If they do, the coverage will most likely portray the opposition in a negative light. In short, the flow of information from the media, especially television, is controlled by the State (Chirwa, 1997; Banda, 1998). As observed by Negrine:

In recent years, there have been several examples of governments excluding or controlling television cameras in order to control the flow of information and so minimise the political impact of the medium. In the early 1980s the South African government restricted television's movement in the townships and in 1987-8, the Israeli Government imposed restrictions on television's movement in Gaza and the occupied territories. These examples have their parallels in Europe and the United States: Britain did not let television loose during the Falklands campaign. Similarly, during the Gulf War in 1991, the media were severely restricted in what they could and could not do (1994:9)

2.2.6 Professional conduct

The liberal tradition rests on the notion that media communications from political institutions in society should represent the public good, and not excessively promote the interests of the ruling class (Curran & Gurevitch, 1982). Journalists should be protected from the pressure of reporting in favour of the ruling class and should be free to criticise it where necessary. Contrary to the Marxist theory in which journalists are seen to represent the interests of the status quo, the advent of plural politics has ushered in a liberal approach where some media practitioners both in the public and private media exercise their independence and professionalism by reporting outside the influence of the

owners and controllers of the media. Golding's observations about third world broadcasting institutions hold true for the media in Zambia:

Most third world broadcasting organisations are not separate from the state. Yet professional detachment survives as a goal at a second level, that of daily production and occupational practice. Thus journalists employed in broadcasting organisations which are simply an arm of an information ministry, nonetheless retain, at some level, a commitment to professional disinterestedness, impartiality and objectivity. (1993:300)

With the advent of plural politics in Zambia in 1991, journalists, especially from the independent media, gathered enough courage to expose malpractices in public office. This could also be seen among courageous journalists working for the state media. In 1995, an editor with the *Times of Zambia*, Author Simuchoba, was sacked from his post for alleged financial mismanagement. However, the government was accused by the Zambia Union of Journalists (ZUJ) of applying double standards. ZUJ officials pointed out that Simuchoba had been fired because of his critical editorials against government (Schoeman and Lush, 1996).

His counterpart at the state owned *Zambia Daily Mail*, Emmanuel Nyirenda, who was also being investigated for the same offence, was left untouched because his editorials were supportive of the state. Simuchoba was extolled by the ZUJ for his impartial editorials while Nyirenda received serious condemnation for his unpalatable editorials (Schoeman and Lush, 1996).

Although the content and outlook of the media in Zambia reflects, to a large extent, the class policies and agenda relating to political and economic interests as indicated earlier, there is however, a growing trend in which Zambian journalists are becoming more liberal in their approach by detaching themselves from the whims of the owners, and striving to owe allegiance to the public (Banda 1997, 2001).

2.2.7 Media and the electoral process

To my knowledge, there have been no published studies to assess the impact and effects of the media on the voters in Zambia. The media has nonetheless played an important role in the Zambian electoral process. It has not only provided information for voters to make informed electoral choices, but has also fostered political awareness in the population in general by introducing political debate into its content (Mwanakatwe, 1994, Banda, 1997). However, questions have arisen as to whether the media in Zambia occupies a neutral or partisan stance, especially with regard to the manner in which it has reported electoral issues during election campaign periods (Moore 1991, Banda, 1997).

During and in the run up to elections, the media in theory has to abide by a code of conduct. In practice, this is not strictly adhered to. One aspect of the code is that all the election campaigns of the respective parties should receive equal coverage in the electronic and print media. The national broadcaster, the ZNBC in particular, has been found to be wanting in this area. The ZNBC has been shown to have sided with the ruling government by availing more air time to the ruling party during campaign time. The print media are also expected to provide equal space for the various campaigns of the competing political parties, but have to some extent not adhered to this regulation. Television has remained the biggest concern, because of its capacity to convey messages that are more potent than other media like radio and newspapers. This problem is associated with the question of ownership. Political interference in television programming goes back to the one-party era when Kaunda used the ZNBC to propagate political communications to consolidate his power. The situation has not changed to date (Banda, 1997, 2001; Kasoma, 2000).

Like his predecessor, Chiluba used the state owned media to consolidate his power. He vested the power of the appointment of the Board of Directors of all the public media in the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. The public media was his main instrument of political campaign. In the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections, Chiluba's administration was accused of having monopolized the ZNBC to its advantage, contrary

to the Electoral Commission's regulation of equal air time being given to all political parties participating in an election. (Kasoma, 2000). Chiluba was also accused of directing the ZNBC to censor all political advertising from the opposition by editing of material perceived to be critical of government, and interfering with the audio visual quality of the opposition's advertising. The ZNBC also slapped high advertising charges on political adverts from the opposition (Banda, 1997).

Similarly, the public print media turned a blind eye to the political campaigns of the opposition or only ran stories that trivialized their campaigns. On the other hand, the independent media portrayed the aspirations of the opposition by extolling their manifestos and attacking Chiluba's administration. In short, the private media played the role of the opposition. This polarity of the media did at times cause friction, to the extent that both sides accused the other of unethical reporting. It is interesting to note that despite such confrontations, both media resisted the government's attempt to introduce archaic media laws that that would infringe general press freedom (Chirwa, 1997; Kasoma, 2000; Banda, 1997; 1998).

I mentioned earlier that there has been no known published research on the impact of the media on voting trends in Zambia. Nonetheless, past and current voting trends indicate that Zambian voters are selective in the manner in which they have exposed themselves to the media and negotiated media messages. This is particularly the case in cosmopolitan urban environments where people are exposed to different media and have to interpret conflicting media messages in relation to the existing social context and their lived experiences. The voting patterns in urbanized areas appear to be diverse probably because of many conflicting opinions found in the media. However, this seems not to be the case in rural areas where media coverage and other socialising agents like schools are not easily accessible. Thus, the voting behaviour in rural areas appears to be largely influenced and shaped by cultural and ethnic factors. Voting tends to follow ethnic lines (Sichone, 1996, Banda, 1997).

2.2.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the political history of Zambia and the media landscape. It has examined the relationships that exist between the media and their owners, and the way the owners influence the content of the media in order to enhance their political and socioeconomic interests. I have shown that the Zambian media is polarised in that the public media is subordinated to the State and represent the views of the ruling elite most of the time, while the private media is owned by private shareholders who influence its production and editorial content which is mostly anti-government. I have also explained media freedom in Zambia and the related issue of political regulation. The role of the media in the electoral process in Zambia has been outlined and its limitations indicated. In the next chapter, I will discuss the media and democracy. In so doing, I will attempt to show the role the media plays in a democracy and also outline its limitations. This will cast the position of the media in the electoral process, which is focus of this study which seeks to establish the impact of the media in the electoral choices of a sample of students who voted in the December, 2001 elections in Zambia.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the role of the media in a democracy. I then look at the two schools of thought, the Liberal and Marxist, on media influence and how they contribute to the debate on the regulation or otherwise of the media by the state. From here, I discuss the conflict between the private ownership of the media in a democratic state, and the liberal view that the media must serve a 'watchdog' role towards the state. There follows a section on whether the individual members of the privately owned media community contribute or detract from the notion of a free press. I further discuss the professional conduct of the media and how it impacts on the democratic process. In this chapter, I will set a platform to understanding the role of the media in a democracy and its influence in the electoral process, which is the basis of this study which aims at establishing the effects of the media in the voting behaviour of a sample of students at the Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, during the December, 2001 elections in Zambia.

3.1 The role of the media in democracy

The media are seen indispensable tools of the democratic process. Modern democratic states have acknowledged the significant role that the media plays in the democratisation process. The media not only informs the citizens about the happenings around them but also interpret the significance of the issues and events that are reported. (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991). Furthermore, the media create a two-way channel between the governors and the governed (Negrine, 1994). In this way, the public is informed about the intentions of the governors and in turn the citizens convey and articulate their views and interests to the governors, who then make decisions representing their interests (Keane, 1991; Curran et al, 1996).

The media also provide a public sphere in which the diverse views and opinions of citizens on matters of national interest are debated without restriction (Habermas, 1992). The agenda setting role of the media in a democracy is a critical one if the citizens have to be drawn to issues of national interest. During election time the media provide information about the electoral process and also supply information upon which the electorate make informed decisions in the choice of their political representatives. Thus the media is seen as a vital instrument of democracy occupying a strategic position which is crucial in the democratic process (Curran and Gurevitch 1991, Mc Quail, 1994).

3.2 Liberal and radical theories

The liberal and radical theories of the media give two opposing views of the media's relation to the society. The liberal tradition depicts the media as bottom-up agencies of communication and influence. They are seen as autonomous organisations that give voice to the public and reproduce the collective conversations of society. This theory claims that the media is controlled through the liberal market and further places emphasis on the professional conduct of the mediation (Curran et al, 1996). This school of thought assumes the media to be a collection of autonomous institutions that operate independently from the power structures of society. Conversely, the radical tradition reflects the media as top-down instruments of control that are subordinated to, and influenced by the power structures that they serve. Their role is seen as that of reinforcing the established status quo (Mc Quail, 1994; Curran & Gurevitch, 1991).

According to the liberal theory of the media, the central role of the media is to act as watchdog to check on the state. In doing so, the media should, without fear, bring to surface the excesses and abuses of those vested with power and authority. This role is seen to be the most important one above all other functions of the media. In this way, the media is expected to operate independently from government control and interference. If the media gets subjected to public regulation and other methods of control, its watchdog role then becomes compromised, and its effectiveness to check those in the corridors of power becomes questionable. The state may even take advantage and use the media to

serve its own interests rather than public interest. This can be done through regulation of the media (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991).

3.3 State regulation

This liberal view is well established in the United States. It is argued that any reform of the media, no matter how necessary, should not castrate the watchdog role of the media. Nonetheless, it has been observed that the media that are regulated in one way or another are exposed to political interference, especially when the media are dealing with issues and matters that affect the political elite in power (Kelly and Donway, 1990). Because the media was perceived to be overly regulated, and therefore overly influenced by the ruling elite, there were calls to deregulate the media, especially during the 1980s.

Consequently, the television companies had to commit to a fairness policy, which required them to include alternative opinions on sensitive matters in their reports. Furthermore, the regulations restricting the concentration of media were softened (Curran & Gurevitch 1991; Horwitz, 1991).

A similar advocacy to deregulate the media took place in Britain. Although this campaign received more resistance in Britain than in the United States, it forced the regulating authorities to reduce the regulation of broadcasting content, and also led to the reduction of a monopolised media (Goodwin, 1998; Murdock, 1989). The campaign for the easing of broadcasting regulations succeeded partly because it was seen to be in line with the regulation of newspapers⁴. Regulation of the print media was critically opposed by law in both Britain and the United States. In 1974 the American Supreme Court in Florida removed a law which infringed the press right of reply on the understanding that it would compromise and freeze meaningful debate (Baron, 1975.) Elsewhere, especially in mainland Europe, Asia and Australasia, a move towards the deregulation of broadcasting was advocated and bore fruit (Aldridge and Hewitt, 1994; Raboy, 1996; Avery, 1993).

⁴ The British Royal Commission on the Press (1977) contested any form of segregative newspaper subsidy by government as this posed a danger of political interference in the independence of the press.

Liberal media theorists argue that deregulation of the media is a key feature of a democratic society. This is because the media's watchdog role is an essential feature of the democratic functioning of the media. As Curran and Gurevitch observe:

Exposure of the Watergate scandal during the Nixon presidency or lesser-known exploits (outside their country) such as the disclosure of state involvement in the illegal sale of Bofors guns in Sweden or Nikiforov's exposure of local state corruption in the former USSR, leading to his murder in 1989, are all heroic examples of the way in which the media performed a public service by investigating and stopping malpractice by public officials. (1991:122)

Traditional liberal theory argues that the state should always be the legitimate target of watchdog vigilance on the part of the media, and that this is one of the main reasons why the media should exist at all. This view is derived from a time when the state was seen to be the only source of power and oppression in society (Curran and Seaton, 1977).

3.4 Private influence

Curran and Seaton (1977) however, argue against the notion that the state should be the main target of the media. They contend that this notion does not take account of the considerable power influences private shareholders have on the media. A large part of the world's media now belong to major industrial and commercial undertakings. During the last three decades, there has been a conglomeration of the media, and this sometimes has given rise to no-go areas where journalists were reluctant to tread for fear of stepping on the corporate toes of a parent or sister company (Hollingsworth, 1986; Bagdikian, 1977; Curran and Seaton, 1977). It has also been said that the media are in general less vigilant in relation to corporate than public bureaucracy abuse because they are part of the corporate business sector (McChesney, 1997).

In response to these claims, the classic liberal position contend that the state should remain the prime object of media scrutiny since the state owns the most awesome instruments of legitimated violence. Therefore, there is a need to keep a safe distance

between the media and the state bureaucratic system through private ownership of the media. (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991). It has however been pointed out that the sphere of government has been greatly extended, so much so that politicians and public officials are now often engaged in making decisions that may affect the profit media houses make. Media organisations are generally profit orientated, and as such they tend to cultivate economic relations with governments that may promote their business interests (Chadwick, 1989; Curran and Gurevitch, 1991).

In turn, governments respond readily to attempts by the media to cultivate good relations with them, as these media have the potential to influence the electorate in their favour. This scenario has at times given way to corrupt practice where governments have entered in alliances with private media in order for governments to consolidate control over the media and secure editorial endorsements, as was the case with the Labour Party in the 1987 British parliamentary elections (Chadwick, 1989).

3.5 Deception and manipulation

Curran & Gurevitch (1991) claim that even in countries where the media are seen to be more independent and have an adversarial relationship with the state, there can be deceptive and manipulative machinations arranged by the government and the market-based media. For instance, a team of media researchers in the United States which examined six investigative stories exposing official fraud, injustice and failure on part of the state, unveiled that all the stories originated from officials in powerful positions. Most of them were tip-offs and were part of a well-orchestrated strategy of either governmental reform, or were a public relations exercise. As noted by Curran and Gurevitch,

What these examples point to is the inadequacy of the liberal theory which explains the media solely in terms of the market theory. The media are assumed to be independent, and to owe allegiance only to the public, if they are funded by the public and organised through a competitive market. This ignores the many other influences that shape the media, including political commitments and private interests of media shareholders, the influence exerted through news management and the ideological power of

leading groups in society. In short, this extremely simplistic theory fails to take into account the wider relationships of power in which the media are situated. (1991:125)

Nonetheless, the public media, by their very nature, are more compromised by the state than the private media. The public media are constantly under pressure from the government, either due to restrictive laws and regulations or dismissals of staff (Curran et al, 1999; 1991; Negrine, 1994). These sentiments are supported by Herman (1999) who observes that in nations where the power of the media lies in the hands of a state bureaucracy, “monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite”(1999 :25). However, while it could be true to some extent that the state controlled media serve the ends of the government, it is nevertheless, naïve to think that there are no countervailing forces that act to neutralise government influence (Curran & Gurevich, 1991). For instance, public media practitioners in Western democracies have been known to resist government control in the selection of their news items. A case in point was in 1988 when the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Godfrey Howe, attempted to veto a broadcast that alleged that unarmed members of the Irish Republican Army had been mercilessly and unlawfully killed by the British Army in Gibraltar. However, Thames Television went ahead and showed the film. The British media condemned Sir Howe’s action (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991).

3.6 Professional conduct

Similarly, although the corporate media are seen to serve the interests of business corporations and their shareholders, it should be noted that the privately owned media have to remain focused on the interests of their audience in order to remain economically viable and make profit. In short, these media have to maintain public confidence and goodwill in order for them to survive. A key factor in achieving this is the professionalism of the staff. The function of the professional behaviour of journalists is described by Gurevitch and Blumler as serving the interests of the audience:

The centrality of the service function in the behaviour of media professionals is reflected in the claim commonly made by them to be concerned primarily to serve the audience members' right to know, as distinct from the primary concern of the politician to persuade them in the cause of political and partisan goals – the work rewards that media men enjoy also derive from their professional autonomy. Such an emphasis might clash with the politicians' often-held view of media personnel as essentially middlemen in the political communication process. This potential conflict becomes yet more acute when politicians, who commonly are disposed toward more ideological criteria of political truth, are confronted with the tendency of media professionals to adhere to more empirical, sceptical, perhaps cynical and many-sided descriptions of political reality. (1983:280)

Liberal researchers argue that journalists with a professional approach have achieved a high level of independence within the media industry. This is said to be as a result of a historical process in which media practitioners have realised the importance of their own status and have achieved a growing personal decision-making power arising from the increasing division of labour and specialisation within the media organisations (Gans, 1980; Alexander, 1981; Hetherington, 1985). However, other researchers argue that journalists play a secondary role in the definition of news, and remain by and large influenced by power structures. They point out that powerful institutions are the primary definers of news for the media while media practitioners are secondary definers by occupying an interpretative position on behalf of the primary definers (Hall et al, 1978).

3.7 The media as a mediating force in democratic states

Apart from its presumed watchdog function, the media are sometimes seen as maintainers of the democratic ideal in society. For instance, the media provide information to the electorate and shape the opinion of voters to make informed decisions and choices. Some see the media as creating a two-way communication between the governors and the governed (Negrine, 1994). The media articulate the needs and interests of the governed to

direct the authorities to make policies and decisions that represent the public interest. Thus the role of the media as mediator propels a cross-section of views and a round table for debate (Curran et al, 1996, 1991; Negrine, 1994). The notion is well explained by Habermas (1996), where he sets out a contemporary theory of the media as a public sphere of debate. As noted by Curran and Gurevitch:

A second key shift in Habermas' analysis is his revised understanding of the public sphere. This is no longer conceived of as private individuals coming together as a single public but as a network for communicating information and points of view that connects the private world of everyday experience to the political system. The public sphere is also viewed as much more differentiated, pluralistic and organised than before. Its key activists are said to be public interest groups and also radical professionals who identify, draw attention to, and interpret social problems, and propose solutions. They are the sensors of society who detect neglected issues, rise potentially above self-interest, and generate countervailing influence on behalf of the disadvantaged. Their interventions can also lead, with the aid of the press and broadcasting, to critical debate coalescing into topically specified public opinion and sustained pressure for a considered response from the political system. (1991:136)

This theory then sees the media as an enormous forum where democratic decision making is not monopolised by the state, but is rather a left to competing opinions from different interest groups. An American jurist Oliver Holmes says: 'the best test of the truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market' (Baron 1975: 320).

3.8 Free market media

On the other hand, it is argued that the free market media may to some extent inhibit publishing freedom in that ordinary people may not have the financial capacity to set up their own media, as was the case when the liberal press theory was initially coined. Low cost media sectors tend to be isolated and attract low audiences. The main arena of the

public sphere has been rendered inaccessible by the high cost of the market entry. As a result, independent media sources are marginalised, and can cater only for small sections of the potential audience, hence creating a lopsided output of the news commodity (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991). As noted by Murdock and Golding,

The effects of economic forces are not random, but work consistently to exclude those voices lacking economic power or resources...the underlying logic of cost operates systematically, consolidating the positions of groups already established in the mass- media markets and excluding those groups who lack the capital base required for successful entry. Thus the voices which survive largely belong to those least likely to criticise the prevailing distribution of wealth and power. Conversely, those most likely to challenge these arrangements are unable to publicise their dissent or opposition because they cannot command resources needed for effective communication to a broad audience. (1977:37)

It is therefore argued that the free market media, shaped as it is by politico-economic forces, actually reduces the chances of a genuinely diverse media forum because of the cost of access, (in many senses), to large audiences. Additionally, the media becomes polarised between the different levels of available information various outputs contain. There is information-rich media for the elites and information-poor media for the general public (Curran et al 1983; 1996). It is further asserted that by increasing human interest stories in their content, with a view to attract bigger audiences and make more profit, public information is reduced, to the detriment of the non elite groups in society (Mc Quail, 1994; Curran et al, 1983; 1996).

It can therefore be concluded that the media are in most cases collections of institutions that are closely linked to established sources of power, be they political or economic, but as Curran et al (1996) note, they are also exposed to countervailing forces such as professional demands. This therefore places the role of the media in liberal democracies in an ambiguous position. They are frequently neither fully independent of, nor fully subordinated to, the structure of power in society. (Curran et al, 1996).

3.9 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the role of the media in a democracy and the electoral process. The Liberal and Marxist theories of the media and their impact in a democracy have also been explained. Furthermore, the effect of state regulation in relation to the freedom of the media has been examined. The pressure of private media owners on the professional conduct of media practitioners has also been explained. In the next chapter, I will be asking the question: 'Does the media really have any impact on voter choices?' I will be drawing on theories of the media and society in general and relate them to the theories that examine the effects of the media on voter behaviour. This will make us understand whether the media has an influence in shaping the minds of the voters.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MEDIA AND SOCIETY

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I begin by discussing the media and elections and the media's influence on the electorate. I will then give a brief background to the development of research on the effects of the media on society. From here, I will move on to examine some theories on media and society. The theories generally relate to the impact and effects of the media on its audiences - how audiences relate to the messages, whether the media has strong or limited influence, or whether they are other social factors that influence audiences in the negotiation of media messages. I will then relate the theories to the effects of the media on voter behaviour which is the main theme of this study which seeks to establish the effects of the media in the voting patterns of a sample of Evelyn Hone College students who participated in the December, 2001 elections in Zambia.

4.1 The media and elections

The media always play an important role in elections and in the run up to them. They are the agencies of communication between candidates and the electorate. The media can affect voter behaviour and ultimately the outcome of an election. Some authors say that journalism has "an impact on the nature of the political struggle and political debates" (Negrine 1994: 152). Others argue that although the media may not change the minds of every voter, they nonetheless affect the political process. It has been asserted that the modern media have transformed the electoral process, and have had an impact in the way that voters choose their representatives (Curran et al, 1996).

4.1.1 The media and electoral influence

There is growing debate as to whether the mass media has a real influence on voter preferences (Lowery and De Fleur, 1988; Negrine, 1994). This question has been tackled

by many researchers, and to date, the findings have not been conclusive. This is mainly because they are open to many interpretations. Issues affecting the interpretation include the lived experiences of voters when negotiating media messages and the fact that most studies focus only on the short period of the election campaign rather than the long-term (Negrine, 1994). In Britain for instance, the general elections campaign is usually short, ranging from three to four weeks. Even though political activity is at its peak, the period of the actual campaign is very short in comparison to the term of government which follows the outcome. By focusing only on the campaign, there is a risk of overlooking the period before it, which may be significant in understanding the final outcome (Negrine, 1994). The British situation is similar to the Zambian scenario where election campaigns are conducted a few weeks before the polling date. However, the situation is different in the United States where the campaign starts many months before the actual voting date (Negrine, 1994).

While it could be true that political choices may change for some people during the campaign period, and that some of these changes could be attributed to the impact of the mass media, it could be argued that long-term social, political, and economic changes before the elections could be just as important in analysing the election outcome. As Negrine comments on elections in Britain:

The May 1979 election was preceded by the 'winter of discontent' – a period of public service pay disputes – which greatly damaged the Labour Party and ensured that the Conservatives entered the election campaign 21 percentage points ahead in the public opinion polls. The election gave the Conservatives a 7.2 percent lead over the Labour Party. A similar pattern of leading in the polls prior to the commencement of campaign, and of retaining that lead through out the campaign, was in evidence in 1983. Prior to the Falklands conflict in 1982, the Conservative Party's popularity had slumped; its support stood at 28 percent behind the labour's 30 percent and the Alliance's 42 percent. Margaret Thatcher was the most unpopular Prime Minister since polls began, with 64 percent dissatisfied with her leadership. By June 1982 – after cessation of hostilities in the

South Atlantic – the party's support stood at 47 percent and Thatcher's satisfaction rating was up to 51 percent. The Conservatives entered the campaign 15.8 points ahead and won with a 15.2 lead over the other parties. (1994:156-7)

Although late swings during elections can be as a result of many issues and events, the reporting of these events and issues will impact differently on various sections of the population. The influence of the media cannot be said to apply similarly to all sections of the population. The message an individual receives from a particular article may be completely different to that which another receives (Lowery & De Fleur, 1998, Negrine, 1994). A study of the 1964 British elections revealed that media messages have a different impact on members of an audience who read them out of political interest from that audience which simply watch television because of addiction (Negrine, 1994). Saying that the media may influence voter behaviour is one thing: asking how it occurs and to what extent is another thing entirely. It would be difficult to say that a certain change in voter behaviour can always be attributed to a particular cause (Negrine, 1994; Davidson, 1982; Dickenson, R. et al. 1998).

It therefore becomes necessary to consider a whole range of possible factors that may be at play. Evidence from research carried out on the media's impact on voter behaviour is weak, because it has only detected minor changes or shifts in the voting behaviour of the audience. In addition, the magnitude of the measured communication effect has typically proved modest and is unlikely to dominate over other forces (Negrine, 1994; Davidson, 1982; Lenart, 1994; Blumler, 1977; McQuail & Blumler, 1968).

I will now spend some time looking at some theories on media and society and later relate these theories to the effects of the media on voter behaviour. I will start by giving a brief history of the development of research on the effects of the media on audiences. I will then shift to examine the Marxist classical hypodermic model of strong media, weak audience, and move on to discuss the later Liberal theories of strong audience, weak media, such as uses and gratification theory and consistency theories. I will also spend

some time explaining some research traditions to understanding the media and its effects on audiences, like cultural studies and reception analysis.

4.2 History of media effects research

The history of mass communication from the early 1900s has seen the ever increasing development of different media – newspapers, books, journals, film, radio, television, and lately, the new digital and computerized media. Each medium has at various times encouraged speculation about its harmful effects, especially among weak groups in society such as children, and people with limited educational advantages. From the early 1900s to date, mass communication researchers have conceived diverse theories in determining the effects of the media on the populous (Croutea & Hoynes, 2000). Some scholars have observed that these theories go through a cyclical process of constant refinement. They start from strong effects, turn to weak effects, and then go back again. At the same time, the notions about the character of these effects have gone through many changes – ranging from the short-term, the direct and specific, and lastly long-term, indirect and diffuse effects (Klaus and Rosengren, 1990; Klapper, 1960; Levy & Windhal, 1985; Alasuutari, 1999).

4.3 Strong media, weak audience: hypodermic model

Proponents of the hypodermic effects theory argue that media messages have unquestionable impact on the audience. The media serves “as the main source of information about, and explanations of, social and political processes, and also as a major fund of images and suggestions concerning modes of self–presentation and general life styles” (Dahlgren, 1998:301). This theory suggests that the media dominates many aspects of our lives, and as such are a potent means of shaping the views of mass audiences. In discussing the hypodermic model, McQuail asserts that “the media will be controlled or run in a monopolistic way and will be an effective means of organising people in masses – as audiences , consumers, markets, electorates” (1994: 75).

4.3.1 Marxist view

The concept of the hypodermic media originates from a Marxist view that capitalist societies are class dominated. As noted by Curran:

The media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly in monopoly capital; media professionals, while enjoying the illusion of autonomy, are socialised into and internalise the norms of the dominant culture. The media, taken as a whole, relay interpretative frameworks consonant with the interests of the dominant classes, and media audiences, while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favour of oppositional definitions. (1996:257)

This assertion is elaborated by Hall (1983). The media represents the interests and values of a social mainstream dominated by a narrow social elite. The media does this by defining, disseminating, popularizing and protecting the beliefs and interests of the elite. This view derives from the Marxist's belief that the ruling class within a society legitimises its power by creating and propagating ideas that the masses use to make sense of reality (Ruddock, 2001).

4.3.2 Consensus

This concept of the hypodermic media appears to have received a broad consensus during the inter-war period, during which many researchers subscribed to the view that the mass media exercised a powerful and persuasive influence. Underlying this influence was the creation of mass media on a scale that was unprecedented through the application of new technology- the rotary press, film and radio, and the mass production of communications. Secondly, there was a fashionable though not unchallenged view that urbanisation and industrialization had created a society that was volatile, unstable, alienated and inherently susceptible to manipulation. This was linked to a view of urbanised man as being

relatively defenceless, an easy prey to mass communication since he was no longer anchored in the network of social relation and stable inherited values that characterized settled rural communities (Curran et al, 1982; McQuail, 1994). Bennet, (1982), also observes that mass society is atomised and centrally controlled and the media are seen as instruments which contribute to this control in large scale societies characterised by remoteness of institutions, isolation of individuals and lack of strong local or group cohesion.

4.3.3 Persuasive evidence

During World War I, there appeared to have been some seemingly persuasive and convincing evidence that the mass media had brainwashed people and engineered the fascism in Europe. This situation formulated a basic view of the media as all-powerful propaganda agencies brainwashing a susceptible and defenceless public. The media were said to propel word bullets that penetrated deep into its inert and passive victims (Curran et al, 1982). Until the 1940s, the dominant media model was presumed to yield potential power to manipulate the minds of audiences that were seen to be inert receivers of media messages. Thus the hypodermic media model postulated that the media had a direct and instant influence on its audiences. As Lenart observes:

Such a conceptualisation of the audience as a relatively defenceless target intoned sinister and altogether frightening possibilities. The evidence (although anecdotal) was readily available; among the popular citations were the role of the newspapers in arousing public opinion in favour of the Spanish American War, the machinations of World War I propaganda by all sides, the use of propaganda during the Bolshevik consolidation in Russia, and the apparent power of Goebbels's propaganda machinery in Nazi Germany. Further, the fear of Madison Avenue's influence on consumer and voting behavior, and even the example of Orson Welles's panic-inducing radio broadcast of a work of fiction (*The War of the Worlds*, 1939), fueled the vision of a manipulative media and a gullible public. (1994: 11)

From the 1900s to the 1930s this theory was widely accepted in Europe and North America where the media were seen to have possessed considerable influence in shaping opinion and belief, reinforcing or changing peoples' habits, shaping the behaviour of audiences and even enforcing political systems that were unpopular. However, such views were not scientifically tested but were based on empirical observation of the sudden extension of the audience to large majorities and on the great attraction of the popular press, cinema and radio. The assumption of this media power was also put into use by advertisers, government propagandists in the First World War, media owners and rulers of despotic regimes (Ruddock, 2001). However, from the 1930s onwards, some researchers started to challenge the validity of this theory (Fiske, 1990; 1992).

4.4 Strong audience, weak media: limited effects model

There was growing scepticism about the power of the media to determine social understanding as propounded by proponents of the strong effects theory. From the 1930s onwards, research has demonstrated that media audiences are more actively engaged in making their own meaning from media texts than was previously thought (Curran 1996; Schramm 1973; Fiske, 1992). How people respond to the media – not merely in terms of what they will accept, but what they understand or remember, is powerfully influenced by their lived experiences, and what they already think.

4.4.1 Re-assessment

The re-assessment of the hypodermic model gave rise to a new academic orthodoxy- that 'the mass media had only a very limited influence' (Curran et al 1982:58). This new theory was detailed by Klapper (1960) after research lasting more than a decade in which he concluded that the media is not the only factor in explaining a range of actions in the audience. Klapper carried out a series of empirical investigations using experimental laboratory and later social survey techniques. These revealed that the subjects of the research not only tended to expose themselves to messages that suit their predispositions, but also understood and remembered media messages selectively to suit what they already thought. It was further asserted that audiences manipulated the media, rather than the media manipulating them, and that group pressures protected the individual from

media influence. In this way, Klapper called into question the mass society theory in which man was seen to have been isolated and anomic. As noted by Curran:

The view of society as being composed of isolated and anomic individuals gave way to a view of society as honeycomb of small groups bound by a rich web of personal ties and dependences. Stable group pressures, it was concluded, helped to shield the individual from media influence. This stress on the salience of small groups as a buffer against media influence was often linked to diffusionist model of power. In particular it was stressed by a number of leading empirical researchers that the social mediation of media messages was not a hierarchical process (1982:58).

Latter theories of the media postulated that people sought to minimise the psychological discomfort of having incompatible values and beliefs, and deliberately avoided decoding of uncongenial media messages, and that audiences were more susceptible to useful and gratifying media content (Davison, 1982).

4.5 Uses and gratifications theory

The empirical demonstration of selective audience behaviour was further reinforced by a number of uses and gratifications studies in the 1940s. These argued that audience members are active rather than passive and bring to the media a variety of different needs and uses that influence their response to the media (Curran, 1982). According to this theory, (also known as the utility theory), people selectively expose themselves to the media. They only perceive and recall those messages that they consider to be in harmony to their needs or interests. Similarly, the theory claims that if people anticipate that they will find a message unpleasant or uninteresting, they will not expose themselves to it. If they do, they are likely to disregard or simply forget it (Schramm 1973; Fiske, 1992). This approach tries to question not what the media does to the individual, but rather what the individual does to the media. Davidson (1982) points out that when people read newspapers or watch television, they don't give equal attention to all the contents. Some items have no importance to them, so they disregard them or forget them; other items are useful to them in some way, and these are the ones that they recall.

4.5.1 Essential points

Karz et al (1994) explain that the essential points of the theory are as follows: a. individuals use the media to gratify and achieve their needs; b. the media has diverse motivations for its behaviour; and c. points a. and b. combine to impact on the behaviour of the media in general. The last objective links uses and gratifications to functional analysis by pinpointing the consequences of individual behaviour. Hence the units of analysis are individuals; the structures are the relationships between the individuals, the media, and the social system; the activities are the media and other communication behaviour, and the functions are the consequences of this pattern of behaviour (Byrant and Zillman, 1986).

The utility theory challenges the image of people as a natural prey to suggestion. It also accommodates other theories used to explain audience behaviour, in particular cognitive dissonance theory. This theory postulates that people seek to minimise the psychological discomfort of having incompatible values and beliefs, and deliberately avoid decoding of uncongenial media messages (Curran, 1982; Davidson, 1982).

4.6 Consistency theory

The concept of uses and gratification also ties in with so called consistency theories. These theories state that selective exposure, selective perception, selective interpretation and selective recall or retention all explain how people consciously or subconsciously choose from the flow of media messages those ideas that are compatible with their attitudes and values, and are in conformity with their existing beliefs about the world. Also, people ignore, dismiss, misunderstand, or forget those messages that are seen to be dissonant to their existing opinions. As observed by Davidson:

One mechanism by which people can maintain and strengthen their existing view of the world and avoid having it disturbed by incongruent or unbalancing information, according to consistency theories, is *selective exposure*. This behaviour involves exposing oneself to messages that are consistent to one's attitudes and beliefs and avoiding other messages. But

it is very difficult to avoid all dissonant communications, so what one can do is the next best thing: pay attention only to certain parts of the communication and disregard the rest. Social scientists usually refer to this as *selective perception*. Or if one pays attention to a potentially disturbing message, it may be possible to interpret it so that it will not conflict with existing ideas-one may conclude that it is untrue, unimportant, or does not really mean what it appears to mean. This might be called *selective interpretation*. Finally people may forget dissonant information or may remember it in distorted form, a behaviour known as *selective recall*. (1982:150)

Davidson gives us an example of what he means in the above quote. During the 1972 American presidential elections, researchers discovered that most Republican and Democrat voters did not read mail that contained negative opinion of their respective candidates (Davidson:1982). This trend has been investigated and validated by some scholars (Croutea & Hoynes, 2000) who argue that people usually expose themselves to communications that reflect their social and cultural predispositions. This concept has paved way to an ethnographic tradition of interpretation of media audiences known as cultural studies which further investigates the impact of culture and other social factors in the interpretation of media messages by audiences. (Linne et al, 1998).

4.7 Cultural studies

The researchers of the cultural studies tradition assert that media messages are polysemic and can be negotiated (Linne et al,1998). It is argued that the media are just one factor among many others that may influence peoples' opinions, and that people tend to gravitate towards the media that represent their social predispositions (Jensen and Rosengren , 1990; Curran et al, 1996; Linne et al, 1998; Morley, 1986). This thinking became popular among British and American researcher in the 1960s and 1970s. Its main point is that people are affected by both their perceived social realities and media output, (not merely one or the other in isolation), in negotiating and interpreting media messages (Ruddock, 2001; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990). Most of the work in this tradition has

been centred on exploring to what extent audiences resist constructions of reality presented by the media as a result of their social and cultural predispositions. As Jensen and Rosengren comment:

Much of the work in this tradition proposes to study mass communication process as an integrated aspect of other every day practices. Practices may be defined briefly as meaning social activities. For cultural studies, then, the center of mass communication research is located outside the media, which are embedded along with audiences in broad social and cultural practices (Jensen and Rosengren 1990: 212).

Within cultural studies, the ethnographic approach on audience studies has led to a growth of isolated studies “of the ways in which this or that audience group actively produces specific meanings and pleasures out of this or that text, genre or medium” (Ang, 1996:136). It is argued that depending on the socioeconomic situation and cultural inclinations that the media audiences already have, the interpretation the text aims to achieve may in some cases be negotiated or even dismissed outright. What finally determines meaning is a dialogic encounter between the message and the consumer. It is this continual conversation between texts and readers that qualitative audience research has embarked to explore (Linne et al, 1998; Jensen and Rosengren, 1990; Morley, 1986).

Tomlinson is one of the advocates of this ethnographic approach to audience studies. He notes that audiences are complex, critically alert in their readings, and are less deceived than proponents of media imperialism have thought.

What we make out of a television programme or a novel or a newspaper article is constantly influenced and shaped by whatever else is going on in our lives. But equally, our lives are lived as representations to ourselves in terms of the representations present in our culture: our biographies are partly intertextual (1991: 61)

4.7.1 Media text

Cultural studies theorists describe media text as a complex and structured arrangement of symbols, not simply an empty vessel for the dissemination of messages and opinion to audiences. Korzenny notes that 'individuals as cultures have unique experiences and perspectives and consequently decode text in diverse manners' (1992:3). Opponents of the hypodermic model further argue that by concentrating on the powerful effects of the media, the proponents of the hypodermic model remove the human agency of the audience. They assert that media consumers are active rather than passive because they are real people with lives, histories and social networks and hence their interpretations of media messages will to a large extent reflect their lived experiences (Croutea and Hoynes, 2000; Korzenny, 1992; McGregor, 1990). Cultural studies blends into reception analysis which is a holistic approach incorporating social-scientific and humanistic perspectives in understanding audience behaviour.

4.8 Reception analysis

Cultural studies and reception analysis are closely linked theories, as indicated in recent works compiled by some researchers such as Morley (1986), Ang (1985), and Radway (1984). It could be argued that the theory of reception analysis is more holistic than cultural studies. It is based on qualitative data gathered from media audiences, and combines sociological perspectives on the reception of media messages with theories from other fields such as psychoanalysis and symbolic interactionism (Jensen 1986). Reception analysis may be regarded as the most recent approach in the area of audience studies. It tries to redress the epistemological limitations in the methods of enquiry of both the humanities and the social sciences. In the first place, it questions the validity of interpretative content analyses carried out in humanities as a source of knowledge about the uses and effects of mass media content. Secondly, it questions the modes of empirical social scientific research on how audiences receive and negotiate media messages. Thus, Jensen and Rosengren observe:

Reception analysis develops what may be referred to as audience-cum-content analysis which is both qualitative and empirical in nature. While



building empirical data about the audience through in-depth interviewing and observation, studies normally apply qualitative methods in a comparative analysis of audience data as well as content data. The immediate aim, then, is to examine the very processes of reception, which further, have a bearing on the use and impact of media content. (1990: 214)

This approach, as pointed out by Ang (1985), has been described as a key breakthrough in mass communication research. She observes that reception analysis has increased interest in the manner that audiences are actively and creatively engaged in negotiating media messages and making their own culture, rather than passively assimilating imposed meanings. Ang notes that “reception analyses are an important step in the development of a more fully-fledged ethnographic understanding of media consumption” (1996: 136).

Despite the development of media theories and research traditions mentioned in this chapter which have tried to explain the relative autonomy of the audience in the interpretation of media messages, there have however, been developments recently by some researchers to revive the powerful effects theory with some modifications to the earlier structure.

4.9 Recent developments

Recently, some researchers have re-visited the empirical data of the early ‘effects’ studies and have since argued that they do not entirely agree with the negative conclusions about media influence that were derived from them (Gitlin, 1978; Berker, McCombs and McLeod, 1975). It has been argued that social changes like the decline of stable political allegiances and the development of a new mass medium in television require the conclusions derived from the classical empirical studies to be re-investigated.

Researchers from the classical tradition have thus initiated the ‘new look’ in mass communications research (Curran et al, 1982). It involves the reexamination of initial studies into media effects that were often filled with empty comments about grand scale media influence. As Curran et al say:

Although researchers like Karz, Lazarsfeld and Klapper reacted strongly against the conventional of the omnipotent media in sometimes extravagantly worded generalisations, they were careful to qualify what they said by allowing a number of cases when the media may be or has been persuasive: when audience attention is causal, when information rather than attitude or opinion is involved, when the media source is prestigious, trusted or liked, when the monopoly conditions are more complete, when the issue at stake is 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.

(1982: 59)

And commenting on the emergence of a new revisionist movement which has offered resistance to previously established models of media power within the Marxist approach, Morley (Curran et al, 1982) dismisses the growing attitude in audience research which stresses the polysemy of media texts and the cultural strength of the reader, especially in analyses that do not recognise the 'moment of reading' in its sociological perspective.

The foregoing theoretical arguments on the effects of the media on society in general, have been used by researchers to explore the effects of the media particularly in influencing voter behaviour in the choice of electoral candidates. Many researchers continue to agree for and against the media's influence in shaping the voting patterns of its audiences (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948; Korzenny, 1992; Lenart, 1994; Curran et al, 1982).

4.10 Ambiguous media impact

The media's impact on voter behaviour remains in an ambiguous position to be ascertained. Some scholars have argued that the concepts of reinforcement, activation and conversion should be taken into account when explaining the complex relationships between media messages and predisposing socioeconomic factors (Lowery and DeFleur 1988; Blumer and McQuail, 1968; Blumler, 1977; Davidson et al, 1982). Others have however, argued that media influence is unquestionable in affecting voter behaviour

especially when the media source is trusted or liked, the monopoly conditions are complete, the receivers' experience is narrow on the issue reported, and social contacts are not opposed to the message (Curran, 1982; Lazarsfeld et al 1948).

In the 1940 American presidential elections, it was argued in the *Peoples' Choice* (Lowery and Defleur 1988) that the impact of the media on voters' preferences was weak and not long lasting. This suggested that media messages tended to reinforce existing beliefs of voters already shaped by their lived experiences (Dalhgren, 1998). In a survey on the outcome of the 1940 American Presidential election, Lowery and DeFleur observed that:

The legacy of fear had people believing that clever politicians could use newspapers, or even the new medium of radio, to sway and control the political behaviour of the masses at will. The specter that alarmed critics the most was that of clever manipulators controlling the mass society in such a way that democratic nations could be converted to fascism, or even worse, to communism. *The Peoples' Choice*, however, showed that conversion on this scale was extremely unlikely. The effects were not all-powerful, swaying helpless audiences uniformly and directly. There were limited effects linked to the demographic characteristics of the audiences in highly selective ways. Opinion leaders, a small category, were selectively influenced by the media. However, the majority of the people remained little touched by the propaganda from the media. As it turned out, interpersonal channels brought them more influence than the media. (1988:102)

Some researchers, though upholding the minimal effects theory of media influence on voters' behaviour, have examined the agenda setting role of the media. Cohen (1963) claims that although the media may not always succeed in shaping what people should think, it is amazingly successful in telling the audience what to think about. He argues that the agenda setting function of the media highlights the significant role played by media practitioners in selecting and shaping the news product during election time. Other

researchers analysed Cohens' claim by examining undecided votes in the 1968 American Presidential elections. They discovered potential similarities between the issues the media focused on, and the issues the undecided voters cited as the reason for their indecision. This study did establish a correlation between the media's agenda and that of voters (Mc Combs and Shaw, 1972).

While some researchers (Curran, 1996) have acknowledged that the media may set public agenda which may influence the choices of the electorate, the question of who sets the media's agenda is not so easy to solve. Is it the public, the State, corporate owners, the powerful actors who initiate news stories, or is it the journalists themselves as professional gatekeepers? There is no single answer, except to point out that there is a large body of literature that shows the significance of various influences on the shaping of the news product that might ultimately shape voters' behaviour – ranging from the Marxist approach to the liberal tradition (Croutea & Hoynes, 2000; Curran, 1996).

4.11 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the various theories on the impact and effects of media messages on audiences, and in particular media influence on voter behaviour.

I have shown that the argument on whether the media has powerful influence over voter behaviour remains inconclusive, as various researchers have given contradicting findings and views. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology and method that will be applied to this study, which seeks to investigate the interplay of media messages and the lived cultures of a selected sample of Evelyn Hone College students in shaping their voting behaviour in the December, 2001 elections in Zambia. I will also discuss the sampling and data collection processes.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the epistemology of research methodologies. I briefly outline the philosophies, qualities, and characteristics on which they are erected. I then look at the methods and techniques employed by the qualitative tradition of research thus identifying their advantages and limitations in this study. (Bryman, 1988).

I will also explain my choice of focus group interviews as an appropriate method for this study. (Hansen et al, 1998). Towards the end of the chapter, I provide a description of the sample and the data collection process. The limitations of this study are also discussed.

5.1 Research Methodologies

The epistemology of a particular research methodology arises from a collection of social and philosophical phenomena. The choice of an epistemological foundation for a research project can thus eventually lead to the research methods that are chosen (Bryman, 1988; Priest, 1996).

Some researchers, (e.g. Bryman,1988), explain that qualitative and quantitative methodologies are erected on different paradigms and assumptions regarding the proper study of social life. Thus, qualitative research grows from a different band of intellectual thinking from quantitative research. And because of the varying epistemological bases between these two traditions of research, the application of their principles on what is regarded as warrantable knowledge of the social world and how such knowledge should be generated is also different (Deacon et al, 1999; Bryman, 1988; Wimmer and Dominick, 1997).

5.2 Quantitative methodology

Quantitative methodology can be described as an approach to conducting social research which applies positivist techniques in determining a social phenomenon to explain and record the social phenomena. The term 'positivist' refers to an empiricist position to depict quantitative methodology. This approach sets rules and boundaries for how it should be used. For instance, it places emphasis on operational definitions, objective research, replicability of research findings and causality (Deacon et al, 1999; Priest, 1996; Bryman, 1988). A social survey is one example of a positivist or quantitative research method. It assumes that knowledge can be gained by asking questions in a certain way, and then tallying the number of similar responses. Bryman (1988) observes that quantitative methodology examines concepts within an operational framework. Objectivity is maintained by keeping a distance between the observer and the phenomenon being observed. Findings are supported by replication, which is done by employing the same research method in another context. The question of causality is also an important feature of quantitative research in that it tries to establish the relationship between the phenomena being investigated and the surrounding variables. Quantitative researchers argue that since these elements are absent in qualitative research, it is thus subjective, built on unwarrantable knowledge and of less value than quantitative research (Priest, 1996). Bryman observes:

Quantitative research is, then, a genre which uses a special language which appears to exhibit some similarity to the ways in which scientists talk about how they investigate the natural order – variables, control, measurement, experiment. This superficial imagery reflects the tendency for quantitative research to be under-pinned as by a natural science model, which means that the logic and procedures of the natural sciences are taken to provide an epistemological yardstick against which empirical research in the social sciences must be appraised before it can be treated as valid knowledge. (1988:12)

However, some opponents of the quantitative tradition argue that the epistemology of quantitative research is founded on an unnecessarily long list of preconditions for arriving at what could be passed as warrantable knowledge.(Deacon et al, 1999; Hansen et al, 1998; Bryman; 1988). They argue that the sheer accumulation of quantitative data by researchers within this tradition is not enough justification of warrantable knowledge. Qualitative researchers, while appreciating some potential benefits of quantitative research, disagree with ‘the package of practices and assumptions that are part-and-parcel of quantitative research, which derive from the application of a natural science approach to the study of society’ (Bryman, 1988:13).

5.3 Qualitative methodology

Qualitative researchers assert that the methods and practices of the positivist approach in the natural sciences are both inadequate and inappropriate to the application of the study of social sciences and in particular to the study of human phenomena. They observe that people, unlike objects, think, have feelings, hold different beliefs and personalities, and are able to communicate and attribute meaning from their surroundings (Bryman, 1988; Deacon et al, 1999). Deacon et al further note:

Research into the ‘effects’ of the mass media usually conjures up images of social surveys about, for example, people’s attitudes to violence on television or the political views of different newspapers. But many researchers argue that the very notion of ‘attitudes’ oversimplifies the contradictory, differentiated and variegated views of the world which lie beneath such seemingly simple questions. For that reason they seek to use other methods to uncover these views. In particular they have turned to qualitative methods, including observation. (1999:248)

Qualitative methodologists have argued that the study of the social world should be seen from the viewpoint of the actor. Since there is the ‘commitment to see through the eyes of one’s subject, close involvement is advocated’ (Bryman, 1984:78). Qualitative research demands a personal involvement in one’s research in order to understand how people express themselves and how they interact with one another. As observed by Bryman,

The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied. (1988:61)

According to Bryman (1984), the epistemological foundation of the practice of qualitative research is built on five philosophical currents: phenomenology symbolic interactionism, verstehen, naturalism, and ethogenics. All these five currents of thought exhibit a considerable overlap as they are all concerned in one way or another with the main characteristics of qualitative research: i.e. seeing through the eyes of the people being investigated, providing a detailed description of the social setting being investigated, contextualisation of all phenomena being investigated, engaging in a process of longitudinal study, the adoption of a research strategy that is flexible and unstructured, and the rejection of advance formulation of theories and concepts. Most of these characteristics work against positivism on which the epistemological structure of quantitative research is erected (Deacon et al, 1999; Hansen et al, 1997; Bryman, 1988; Wimmer and Dominick, 1997; Tan, 1985).

5.3.1 Qualitative Methods

The method of participant observation is one of the prominent techniques of data collection in qualitative research. This method demands that the researcher becomes part of the phenomenon being studied. (Hansen et al, 1998). However, this is by no means the only method of gathering data in this tradition of research. As Lindolf notes,

In qualitative research, one interviews people to understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events or scenes that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand a sensitive or intimate relationship, or to analyse certain kinds of discourse. More specialised forms of interviewing, such as the life history and focus groups interviews are used to fit with particular theoretical schemes and with the nature of participants selected for the study. (1995:5)

Both qualitative and quantitative research traditions have their advantages and disadvantages, depending on the research project that they are applied to. As Hansen et al comment:

Survey research is good at providing a snapshot of audience beliefs, attitudes and behaviour – the *what* of audience-media relationships – but is much less suited for telling us about the *why* or *how* of such relationships. For examining the dynamics of what experiential knowledge and frames of interpretation audiences bring to bear in their use of the media content, what role media use has in the everyday life of audiences, or how audiences use the media as resource in their everyday lives, it is necessary to turn to more qualitative methods, which allow us to observe in a more ‘natural’ setting than that of the survey or the laboratory experiment how audiences relate to media. (1998:257)

Silverman (1989) comments that the popularity of the survey, when used as a quantitative research method, started to wane among sociologists who felt awkward applying the same statistical inferences to social data as psychologists, economists and clinicians often do.

5.4 Towards the choice of a research method

The advent of reception and ethnographic audience research in the 1980s and 1990s called for the use of techniques that investigated the role of audiences in making meaning out of media messages. The choice of research methods in this context was governed by the desire to examine, through a more natural setting and frame than that of the survey or experiment, how media audiences relate to, make sense of, use, negotiate, and interpret media content (Hansen et al, 1998).

This study seeks to answer questions on the ‘interplay of mediation’ between the lived cultures of a cross section of students and media messages. I wanted to investigate the relationship between the selected sample of students and the media, with a view to

establishing how the media and the students' lived experiences impacted on them in the choice of their presidential candidates (Tomlinson 1991; Deacon, 1999; Hansen, 1998). I decided to use focus group interviewing as my sole source of data. I wanted to interview a large number of students, but was limited by time and financial constraints. The focus group interviews allowed me to interview a reasonable number of students and save on resources and time. I also had the opportunity to observe how the selected sample of students made sense of media messages through their conversation and interaction among themselves (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997; Hansen et al 1998). For, as Hansen et al observe, focus group interviews as compared to individual interviews,

Offer dynamics and ways – not available in individual interviews – of eliciting, stimulating, and elaborating audience interpretations. It is precisely the group dynamics and the interaction found where several people are brought together to discuss a subject, that is seen as the attraction of this mode of data-collection over individual interviews. (1998:262)

5.5 Sampling

The interviewees for this study were randomly drawn from a population of Evelyn Hone College students that voted in the December 2001 presidential elections in Zambia. Students at Evelyn Hone College come from different ethnic groupings, social classes, religions and regions. They are exposed to both the state and the privately owned media, which represent a range of political view points. The sample of students for this study is educated and well informed and does not therefore, represent the characteristics of the majority of the Zambian population as a whole. For this reason, the findings of this study will not necessarily be generalised to the Zambian population, but rather to the theoretical framework guiding this study (Bryman, 1988).

The sample consisted of 30 students purposely stratified in three groups of ten each. Each stratum represented the approximate ethnic equivalence of one of the three presidential candidates who contested the December 2001 elections. Deacon et al comment with regard to stratified random sampling,

Stratified random sampling involves separating the research population into distinct, non-overlapping groups (or strata), each containing subjects that share similar characteristics. Sample elements are randomly, and separately, selected from each stratum using systematic sampling techniques. (1999:47)

I started by writing a memorandum addressed to all Heads of Departments at the College in which I requested them to assist me to get lists of names of students that participated in the elections. I also asked them to indicate the ethnic background of each respondent. I made my reasons clear to them why I was looking for these names and their ethnic backgrounds. Out of a population of about 2,000 students at the College, I received a response of about 600 names from all the Departments. I then set out to purposely identify and stratify the names that corresponded to the three ethnic groupings with an approximate equivalence to the three presidential candidates: Mwanawasa, Mazoka and Tembo. I had at least 100 students from each group, and I picked the first 100 names from each group. The next step was to randomly select a sample of ten from each group. I did this by picking the names on every tenth count for all the lists until I got ten names from each group. Focus groups should be no larger than ten to twelve participants and that the ideal group size is between six and ten. Hansen et al observe,

It is important to note that, unlike surveys, the total number of participants in a focus group study is comparatively small; it is therefore essential that the sampling of groups takes careful note of any particular demographic, occupational or other dimensions, along which the researcher is expecting or hypothesising that differences will occur. (1998:265)

5.6 Preparation for data collection

My aim in this research was to establish whether the students living in cosmopolitan and metropolitan towns who were exposed to the media and were highly socialised, were less influenced by ethnic factors when choosing political candidates, unlike people in rural areas who tend to vote along ethnic lines, as recent voting trends having shown, possibly because of lack of exposure to the media and other socialising agents.

This being case, the focus groups were typically sampled with a view to exemplify the key features of the phenomenon being investigated (Lindolf 1995). A semi-structured interview schedule covering the list of relevant themes including: media exposure, media influence, message resistance, social influence and ethnic influence was designed for use in gathering information for group interviews (Deacon et al 1999, Hansen et al, 1998). (See appendix I) Actual newspaper and recorded television coverage of the elections were used as a catalyst for discussion. This trend is common in reception analysis (Bryman 1988; Hansen et al 1998).

The first step was the creation of an interview schedule. This is the instrument that directed the data collection process of this study as it contained questions that probed answers to the main themes of this study. As Hansen et al observes:

The focus group interview guide is principally a 'menu' of the topics, issues and areas of discussion to be covered, but, in addition to simply listing these, it should also give directions as to: the sequence of topics/issues to be covered; the nature and extent of prompting and probing; the nature and use of visual aids, and the points during the course of group discussion where these should be introduced. (1998:274)

The interview schedule aimed at investigating the 'interplay of mediation' between the lived cultures of the students and media messages, and attempted to establish how these impacted on them in their choice of presidential candidates (Tomlinson, 1991). The interviews provided data to determine the relative importance of how the media shaped the respondents' voting behaviour in the elections.

The interview schedule followed a 'funnel approach' moving from the general to the more specific (Hansen et al, 1998). It was followed consistently in all the groups in order to maintain reliability, and to be able to make comparisons across the different focus groups (Priest, 1996; Hansen et al 1998). After the interview schedule had been formulated, the next step was to conduct a pilot test of the interview schedule on a few

students in order to see that it worked as intended (Hansen et al, 1998:247). A few adjustments were made where some students indicated not to have fully understood a question.

Once the pilot test had been successfully completed and the necessary adjustments made, I introduced myself and gave the students an overview of the research project, and confirmed my confidentiality agreement that I had established with them (Hansen et al, 1998). After the participants had been identified and briefed about the study, a neutral venue was set in an isolated classroom where we could not be disturbed.

5.7 Data collection

The focus groups were interviewed separately on different dates. I took up the role of moderator and introduced the topic and stimulated the discussion by probing and prompting the groups. I did not interrupt the discussions unnecessarily, but made attempts to see that the discussions did not go off the topic completely. However, I did allow the participants to discuss some issues which were not outlined in the interview schedule so long as they were related in a way to themes being probed (Priest, 1996). The recording of the proceedings were done on audio cassette tape, and a research assistant made brief notes as the discussions proceeded (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997; Hansen et al, 1998).

At the end of each group interview, the participants viewed a recorded videotape showing a clip of politicians campaigning during the run-up to the elections. The film showed a rally at which Mwanawasa, the MMD candidate was being introduced to a crowd as MMD presidential candidate by the former Republican President, Chiluba. Some people who claimed to be members of opposition parties were also shown surrendering opposition membership cards to join the ruling MMD party. There was another clip on opposition presidential candidates addressing a joint rally at which they accused the ruling party of planning to rig the elections. The participants were also exposed to some selected newspaper cuttings depicting the coverage of the election campaign. The cuttings mainly showed the polarised coverage of the print media in representing the ruling party and the opposition. The public print media appeared tilted towards the MMD

while the private newspapers supported the opposition. Press (1991) notes that although the procedure observed in audience analysis is usually that of exposing the participants to selected media material before conducting the group, it is however, not always the case especially in research that aims to establish how different groups talk and think about certain issues before introducing media material for discussion. The participants were later asked to comment on the material, and in particular, if it had any influence in their choice of presidential candidates (Bryman, 1988; Deacon, 1999; Hansen et al, 1998).

5.8 Research limitations

Like many studies of this kind, I encountered some obstacles in the process of data collection. Some group members failed to attend the interviews with the rest of the group. In some cases, I had to interview them separately from the rest after promising them some remuneration. With hindsight, triangulation of both the survey and focus groups would have provided a richer platform to uncover the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the selected sample, and also to establish their relationships with the media (Deacon et al 1999). This was however not possible due to constraints of finance and time.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the philosophical epistemologies of research methodologies by describing their values and characteristics. I have also attempted to show why I believe that the qualitative approach was best suited to my research questions. Furthermore, I have attempted to justify the choice of focus group interviews as an appropriate qualitative method for this study. The sampling, data collection process and its limitations have also been explained. In the next chapter, I will outline the findings of this study which aims at investigating the 'interplay of mediation' between the lived cultures of the students and media messages, and attempt to establish how these impacted on them in their choice of presidential candidates.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study. The findings are based on three focus group interviews which were conducted with an aim of investigating the relative importance of the media in influencing the voting behaviour of Evelyn Hone College students in Lusaka during the December 2001 Presidential elections in Zambia. The chapter is arranged thematically: media exposure, media influence, message resistance and interpretation, social influence and ethnic influence. Below a particular theme, the findings for each group are outlined.

The findings of this study will show to what extent the media impacted on the selected sample of students in the choice of their presidential elections in the December 2001 elections in Zambia. The findings will also portray to what extent other factors such as the social predispositions of the students and their ethnic inclinations influenced them in their choice of the candidates.

6.1 Media exposure

Members of all the groups were exposed to various branches of the media during the period leading up to the elections. Some participants were exposed to the public media and others to the private media. Certain members were exposed to both public and private media, in all cases both print and electronic. It was also established that most of the participants were more interested in political and economic information than other information reported in the media.

6.1.1 Focus group I

This group comprised ten members who originate from the Southern and Western provinces of Zambia, mainly the Tonga and the Lozi-speaking tribes who share a common tribal linkage and refer to themselves as tribal cousins.

Apart from the late Harry Nkumbula, A Tonga nationalist who led the militant African National Congress (ANC) in Zambia in the 1950s to wage the struggle against colonialism but later fall out of favour and was replaced by Kaunda, the Tonga's have not come any closer to produce a leader that would rule Zambia, until the emergence of Anderson Mazoka, their presidential candidate in the 2001 elections. This appeared to have signalled a chance for them to change the political status quo of being dominated by other tribes. Mazoka of the UPND came a close second to the winner, Mwanawasa of MMD. Their tribal cousins, the Lozis have on a number of times since Zambia's independence in 1964 tried to secede from Zambia to reclaim their Barotseland which was a recognised British protectorate in the 1800s where the first white settlers settled to explore minerals in the then Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. However, after independence the status of Barotseland and its powerful Kingdom started to wane. Since then, it would appear that most Lozis have not taken kindly to being subjugated to what they consider as less prominent ethnic groupings than theirs, and have sought political avenues of reclaiming their powerful historical position in the Zambian society.

On average, most members of this group came from middle class families who reside in the urban areas, and during the run-up to the election when the College was in recess, they were with their families. All members of this group indicated that they were exposed to the media in one way or another. Six of them were exposed to both private and public media. Of these, three said they received their media exposure predominantly via print, and the other three via broadcast media, especially radio which they said was relatively easy to access compared to television. Most of the members of this group indicated that they made informed decisions after analysing reports from both the public and private media, and did not depend on one type alone. Four participants said they were

nonetheless more inclined to the private media. One of the members explained that she listened to the ZNBC, especially channel 4 Radio, because it provided a comprehensive radio service that covered almost all aspects of life such as politics, business, and entertainment. Those members of the group that were inclined to the private broadcast media like Radio Phoenix thought that it was a more objective and informative station than the national broadcaster ZNBC, whose news content they said was influenced by the government. Mutelo explained:

The private electronic media, especially Radio Phoenix, was objective in their coverage of political issues and events because it was neither against the ruling party or the opposition parties. Radio Phoenix had challenged the ruling party and its government when they went out of hand, and at the same time it had not spared the opposition when their agenda went against public interest.

Another participant, Fred, explained that he read few private newspapers as they were more expensive than government owned ones. He also remarked that most of these publications had not stood the test of time as they lacked the financial capacity to survive the effects of the harsh Zambian economy:

The private newspapers were almost twice as expensive as the state owned publications. As a student, I couldn't afford to buy these publications on a regular basis, so I bought the cheaper government owned publications. Sometimes I could chance to read a copy of another reader, but it was not always the case as most people preferred to buy a loaf of bread for the same price of a newspaper because of the harsh economy. In addition, apart from the *Post* newspaper most private publications had folded up soon or later after being launched. As a result of this inconsistency, the private publications had lost their readership to the consistent government owned media which were cheap to buy and access during election period.

Most members of this group indicated that their prime area of interest in the media was political and economic news, since these areas had an impact on their livelihood. Olive

remarked: “I am interested in the politics and economy of this country – they will determine Zambia’s future. So, the election period supplied a lot of political and economic news which I enjoyed a great deal.” He was supported by Victor:

Yes, that is very true: I understand that one of the main reasons of Zambia’s poor economy today is as a result of past political ideologies and policies made by politicians. For example, the ideology of socialism where the government in a one-party state owned the means of production created inefficiency in the productive sector. Maybe with the re-introduction of privatization influenced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank, the productive sector may once again come to life if properly managed by private investors, with minimum internal interference from government and without ulterior motives by the IMF and World Bank.

Some of the members of this group argued that the private media was more objective than the public media during the election period. Others said that they only made informed decisions about the events and issues reported when they analysed reports from both media. They observed that Zambia’s media was polarised and represented different interests - the public media for the ruling party and its government, and the private media for the opposition. The members of this group shared a common view that political and economic information was an essential component in the electoral process.

6.1.2 Focus group II

This group had its ethnic origins from the Northern and Luapula provinces of Zambia. Both provinces are the homelands of the Bemba speaking people who have one of the largest population concentrations in Zambia, and are one of the most dominant tribes. Chiluba, the former president, originates from Luapula province. The current president, Mwanawasa, recorded a landslide victory in these areas not because people voted for him as an individual, but because of Chiluba’s influence. The latter had endorsed Mwanawasa as his successor after his bid for a ‘third term’ of office failed. In short, it would appear that the people of these areas voted along tribal lines with a view to support and

perpetuate Chiluba's interests and thus their own, despite the fact they chose a candidate who was not from their home areas.

Most members of this group were in the urban areas when the elections were drawing near. A few of them had gone back to their rural homelands where they cast their votes after the College went in recess. Many of the participants in this group said that they were more exposed to radio than any other medium. The main reason given for this was the relatively low cost of the apparatus when compared with television. They indicated that the practice of buying newspapers everyday was too expensive for them. Some said that they were only exposed to newspaper and television coverage whilst at College, but both these media were out of reach when they went home for their holidays in the rural areas. Those students who originated from cities and towns continued to be exposed to radio, television and the newspapers even during school holidays and the period towards the election, but still remained more exposed to radio than any other medium.

Augustine observed that despite the absence of community radio stations, the public broadcasting services of the ZNBC were accessible in one way or another to most people in the Luapula and Northern Provinces: "Most people own radio sets, and a few own television sets in Luapula and Northern provinces, but newspaper coverage is almost non-existent". Vincent explained that it is easier to get access to radio than television: "On average, most hostel rooms at the College have radio sets and most students listen to radio". Lombe explained how the private media, including radio, had been influential in informing his own political viewpoints.

Prior to coming to Lusaka, I was only subjected to listening to the government owned ZNBC media. My stay in Lusaka has made me appreciate the private media, particularly *The Post* newspaper and Radio Phoenix. I am now able to make an informed and balanced opinion of political issues and events, unlike being exposed only to government propaganda, which does not represent the views of the people. I sometimes think that this could be a ploy by government to deliberately deny the rural population information so that it takes an advantage of them

by feeding them with propaganda to suit its political intentions. During the election period, I found *The Post* newspaper and Radio Phoenix very constructive

In the end, Lombe's choice appears to some extent, to have been influenced by the media as he did not vote along ethnic lines during the election.

Jakie explained that since she came from a conservative family, she had been only exposed for a long time to the public owned media and only accessed the private media occasionally: "My father has been a strong supporter of the ruling party and only tolerated the public media. It was worse during the run-up to the last election."

Other students were of the opinion that an independent and balanced view can only be arrived at if one is exposed to both the public and the private media and are thus in the position to make an independent analysis. They emphasized that they did not always believe what was reported in the public media until they are aware of how the same issue or event was reported in the private media.

Some members observed that there seems to be a belief that the private media is meant for 'young radicals' and that the elder generation, being more conservative in their outlook, stick to the public media. It was also said that the older members of society sometimes view the private media with suspicion.

There was a consensus among this group's members that political and economic information was the most interesting and relevant news to them. As explained by Matandiko: "Political decisions and policy pronouncements are important because they determine the course of economic activities that affect our social lives."

In general, all members indicated that they were exposed to the media, public or private. Most members felt that private publications were expensive to access especially for those students who came from poor families in the rural areas. The members of this group were

also of the view that exposure to both the public and private media gave them an opportunity to examine how political and other related issues were reported by both media.

6.1.3 Focus group III

There were ten members in this group who come from the Eastern province. This area belongs to the Ngoni speaking people and other related tribes, one of whom is the Tumbuka. The Ngoni speaking tribe is one of the most influential tribes on the Zambian political scene. The Ngoni and the Bemba speaking people have dominated Zambian politics for a long time. Other tribes have been attempting to change this political dominance over the course of the last few years.

All the group members agreed that they had been exposed to media of some kind during the run-up to the elections. Many were exposed to both the print and electronic media, public and private. Catherine, who comes from a rural family, said she was exposed only to electronic media because she paid nothing for them. Some members said that they gravitated towards the private media. Effy, who grew up in a village, said she was mostly exposed to ZNBC television in the students' common room as she could not afford a radio in her room or to buy newspapers.

Most members of this group indicated that they preferred the private media because it was more objective than the public media. Mercy, who comes from a middle class family, said she preferred the private media to the public media:

I prefer reading *The Post* newspaper because it is an objective publication than the government owned *Times of Zambia* and *Zambia Daily Mail* which are mere government propaganda mouthpieces.

Damiano, who is a sponsored student, said he preferred listening to the privately owned Radio Phoenix:

It is indeed a peoples' medium of communication, it allows diverse views to be aired unlike ZNBC which is not a true national broadcaster as it

represents the views of the ruling politicians almost all the time, like was the case during election time.

John indicated that he was more exposed to the private media than the state owned *Times of Zambia*, *Zambia Daily Mail* and ZNBC. He felt that the news content of these publications was unattractive because they did not reflect the peoples' views most of the time.

Apart from one member, the group was unanimous in saying that they were interested in political messages because they affected every aspect of their lives. However, one member of the group, Effy, said that she was more interested in educational programmes than political content:

I have come to discover since I came to college two years ago that all politicians are liars, it is a waste of time listening to propagandists all the time, instead of listening to more constructive issues on education. I often listen to educational programmes like *Health Matters* on ZNBC television and I also read the educational column for schools in the privately owned *Post* newspaper when I can afford to.

On average, the members of this group were more inclined to the private media, (both broadcast and print), which they thought was more objective and reliable than the state owned public media whose political content they described as serving the ruling politicians. This could imply that these participants were against the ruling party which they viewed as being Bemba dominated. It was also discovered that some of the members were financially restricted from access to all the media and could therefore only have access to the media that offered a free service.

6.1.4 Summary of media exposure

The findings obtained from the three focus groups show that all the members of the groups were in one way or another exposed to the media during the period leading up to the elections. Most of the members of all three groups preferred the private media

because they thought it was more credible than the public media, whose content they said was in favour of the ruling politicians. Some participants, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, were only exposed to media that they could access free of charge, whether private or public. Some of the participants were exposed to both types of media, as they thought that it was the only way to make a reasonable analysis of the issues and events reported by the polarised media. In addition, most members from all the groups acknowledged that access to a range of political and economic information was a necessity to them.

6.2 Media influence

Despite being exposed to the media, most of the students from all the groups indicated that the media had little or no impact on the choice of their presidential candidates. The findings indicated that other factors apart from the media had a greater impact. It was also observed that the media tended at most times to reinforce the existing predispositions of the students' voting preferences rather than to change them. However, there were cases when the media had direct impact on the voting behavior of some students.

6.2.1 Group I

Some members of this group who originated from the Southern and Western provinces indicated that the media supplied useful information on which they based their choices, while the majority disagreed. Those who agreed were of the view that the media played a critical role in influencing their voting choices. They indicated that the public media supported the ruling party in the coverage of political issues and events such as campaign rallies. On the other hand, they noted that the private media showed sympathy to the opposition political parties. This polarised coverage gave some of them the opportunity to analyse the situation from both sides in order to make informed decisions in their choice of their candidates. They commented that the information supplied by the media was useful, citing in particular information about the personalities and backgrounds of the political candidates from the ruling and opposition parties.

Some of the revelations made in the media against some political candidates influenced them to change their opinions and vote for politicians that they considered to be of higher morality. MacDonald, a third year journalism student, commented that he changed his mind and voted for another candidate after learning from media reports that his earlier choice had been implicated a scandal:

Yes, the *Post* newspaper supplied credible and useful information which I found useful in shaping my preference of a presidential candidate. For instance, the media exposed a number of scandals, among them the diversion of funds from donors meant for poverty alleviation. I was convinced that every MMD leader was not to be trusted with public funds. I changed my mind not to vote for the MMD presidential candidate and voted for someone I considered more credible.

Mutukwa felt that the media produced good programmes that ‘sold’ the candidates to the electorate. He cited the television interviews on ZNBC which tested prospective leaders’ knowledge not only on political issues but also how they understood and interpreted current social issues: “This gave me an opportunity to gauge the knowledge of the leaders and subsequently affected the choice of my presidential candidate.”

Another member, Reginald, supported his sentiments. She thought that the analysis of political manifestos of the different parties by the media gave her an insight into the calibre of politicians: “It was obvious that some of the promises contained in their plans were far fetched. I had to settle for the party and presidential candidate with a realistic and rational manifesto.” Other members disagreed, saying that the media did not play an effective role in influencing their voting behaviour because their choices were based on a personal understanding of issues, and that some of them had already made up their minds. Others indicated that the information in the media was too confusing for one to make a reasonable analysis which could have led to an informed choice. Namoonga remarked:

I was not influenced by the media in any way because my decision was personal. I already had a choice of who to vote for and nothing could

change my mind. My choice had to do with a candidate I have admired and believed in for a long time as an intelligent man of high morals.

Roberta grew up and spends school holidays in his rural homeland, said the media did not affect his choice because his mind was already made up to vote for a candidate from his homeland:

The choice of my candidate was to a large extent influenced by my tribal inclinations and not the media because I was convinced that other tribes were voting for people from their homelands. It was only sensible then that I should also vote for my 'own man' who would look into the interests of our ethnic grouping. After all, every one knows that the previous government of Chiluba comprised not less than 70 percent of his own people. We also want to be in government.

Four participants of this group could not recall whether the media had an effect on their choice of a candidate, either because they were preoccupied with other things which were more important to them like academic work, or were not simply interested. This group recorded three members who were influenced by the media and another three by other factors besides the media. The rest could not account for whether the media had an influence in their choices.

6.2.2 Group II

This group which originated from the ruling ethnic grouping expressed similar views to those of the first group, with many of them resisting media messages which were against their predispositions. Some of those who agreed that they had been influenced by the media in their choices indicated that they did not exactly know who to vote for until the time that they were exposed to media material. Others admitted that they had switched to other candidates after being exposed to media messages which either reported convincingly against their initial preferences, or extolled the qualities of other candidates.

Nicholas, whose parents live in Lusaka but originates from the Northern Province, pointed out:

I did not know who to vote for until I got exposed to media material which described the various candidates in the presidential race. I then settled for the candidate I thought was the most appropriate based on the information from the media.

Wallen indicated that he changed his mind and voted for another candidate after it had been reliably reported in the media that the candidate at one time belonged to a cult of devil worshippers. Teddy felt that the integrity of the candidate was important: 'The media has to some extent assisted me to identify a candidate of high morals and integrity.' He was supported by Lombe, who observed that the media had unveiled many scandals against some politicians especially from the ruling party, and that this had made her change her mind to vote against the MMD candidate.

However, many students in this group indicated that the media did not supply information that influenced them in the choice of their presidential candidates, but that they were influenced by other factors including family pressure, as Jackie indicated:

The choice of my presidential candidate was a thing that was already made on my mind, and no amount of media messages would have changed my mind. The candidate that I voted for has been close to my family for years and it would not have been the right thing to vote against him.

Vincent explained that he feared that the choice of a leader from an ethnic grouping other than that to which he belonged, would result in the interests of his own ethnic grouping being sidelined in favour of another one. To this effect, he felt that the media could therefore not have changed his political stance.

Augustine, whose father is a staunch MMD supporter, indicated that the media could not affect his decision because his vote was influenced by his father. He explained that his father had convinced him that political change was a very expensive process and retarded

development in that the new leaders would reject the existing development plans and start afresh, and that he did not want a new political party.

Three members of the group explained that the media did not necessarily influence them to change their choices, but rather reinforced their opinions of choice. Karen remarked: “I had a choice in mind and all that the media did was to confirm that my choice was the right one. I resisted those media messages which were against my choice.”

In all, there were four participants who said that they had been influenced by the media in their choice of presidential candidate. Three members of the group were detached from media influence and were influenced by other factors, among them family pressure, personal convictions, and other social factors. The remaining three said the media reinforced their choice, but had not necessarily influenced them.

6.2.3 Group III

In this group, it was generally agreed that the media supplied useful and interesting political information during the run-up to the elections. However, while some participants acknowledged that some of the information could have impacted on the choice of their presidential candidates, others indicated that it was a combination of both media messages and other factors that shaped their decisions. They felt that the messages from the public and private media were at times confusing and contradictory. However, most of the participants felt that the media had no impact whatsoever in the choice of their candidates. Those who accepted that the media had influenced their decisions had keenly followed debates among opposing politicians.

Benjamin, who supported the ruling party’s presidential candidate, revealed how he was swayed to vote for an opposition candidate at the last moment:

I was one morning listening to a phone-in interview from Radio Phoenix in which Anderson Mazoka, candidate for the UPND, was being interviewed by Frank Mutubila, one of Zambia’s best broadcast journalist two days or so before the polls. I had never before heard a politician ably answer all questions in an articulate and convincing manner like he did.

Most politicians who had been interviewed by the likes of Frank Mutubila found it difficult to go through the interview without stumbling and showing their inadequacies. But this man was different from the others. Every caller who asked him a question found his answers palatable, plausible and convincing. The following day, *The Post*, a pro-opposition private publication carried an analysis of the interview in which he was commended and extolled as the ‘man of the moment’. I could not escape voting for this man.

Mercy explained that *The Monitor’s* (another private newspaper) column on politicians’ profiles had an impact in the choice of her candidate:

I was closely following this column when I came to learn that some of these politicians hadn’t gone far in school better than me. I also discovered that others were well schooled and had a rich background and understanding of political issues and other related subjects. I could not doubt the source of the information, and I could not choose a candidate of low quality. I ditched my initial preference and settled for someone learned and knowledgeable.

Two members of this group indicated that the media had to some extent contributed to the choice of their candidates, but this was after hearing some people whom they held in high esteem acknowledge what had been reported in the media. One of them Damiano who is a member of a Rotary Club in Lusaka remarked:

When I heard the president of the Rotary Club discussing with one of my lecturers, acknowledging that media reports, that the UPND candidate had a strong character which they also admired, there was no reason left to dismiss the media reports anymore. I shifted my allegiance from my earlier preference.

Three members of this group explained that the media had not affected them in their choice of their candidates because the information from the public and private media

were contradictory and they did not know what to believe. Audrey came to the conclusion that both the private and public media were not being honest by issuing contradictory reports and this made him lose confidence in their reporting. “I lost confidence in both media because of the conflicting reports. I had to make a choice which was not based on media reports.” There were some members in this group who indicated that their choices were not influenced by the media but personal inclinations to their candidates. These inclinations could be construed as tribal affiliations.

This group exhibited a high level of diversity. Four members were in one way or another affected by media messages in the choice of their candidates. Some members were sceptical of media messages because of conflicting stories from the private and public media. Others had personal inclinations to their candidates which could not be altered by media messages.

6.2.4 Summary of media influence.

Although most of the members of the three groups agreed that the media supplied useful and interesting information during the election period, the findings however, revealed that the influence of the media on the choice of presidential candidates by members of all the groups was minimal in most cases. This could have been as a result of other factors that could have been more influential than the media.

The following table shows the numerical levels of media influence in each group in the choice of a presidential candidate.

6.2.5 Table 1

Group	Influenced	Percentage
I	3	30
II	4	40
III	4	40
Total	11	37

Group I recorded three responses representing 30 percent of the group. Groups II and III recorded four cases each representing 40 percent for each group. There were a total of eleven responses representing 37 percent for all the groups.

6.3 Message resistance and interpretation

Most members of all groups either resisted media messages, made their own interpretations of existing messages, or both. It was observed that most participants in all the groups either rejected or interpreted differently those messages which were not consonant with their thinking or came from sources they considered unreliable.

6.3.1 Group I

Most members of this group who originated from Southern and Western provinces and appeared to be against the ruling party, indicated that they resisted media messages that came from sources which were against their political interests and also those messages that were not consonant with their interests. Messages that were seen to be coming from sources that supported their political stance and were in line with the thinking of each individual were allowed to filter through. Members also indicated that some messages which reinforced their predispositions were readily accepted. Olive remarked:

I was selective in the acceptance of information from the media. I accepted what I deemed suitable for my consumption and I disagreed with those messages which I perceived to be against my thinking or interests.

Namakau: I resisted media messages which were in conflict with my thinking. For instance, I did not accept the calls by the public media to give Chiluba another term of office.

Mutelo: I could not believe in most cases what the public media reported against some members of the opposition. For, example, I dismissed media reports that some presidential candidates were foreigners. This was just a

malicious campaign by the ruling party to malign the opposition in the eyes of the public.

Victor: I was sceptical of political reports from both the public and private media because they represented different agendas.

Fred: I was not convinced by media reports that suggested that some members of the opposition had been funded by some foreign countries and international organisations in order to represent their interests once elected to power. I thought that it was a malicious campaign by the ruling party to use the media to discredit the opposition.

Namoonga: It was unthinkable that the media could become so partisan and report on political lines to further the interests of different political parties. I could therefore not take seriously most political reports during this time.

Generally, the members of this group indicated that they resisted messages that they suspected had hidden agendas or were not consonant with their thinking, and made independent interpretations of such messages away from the context in which they had been reported.

Roberta: I remember the government owned *Times of Zambia* and ZNBC reported that a huge crowd had gathered to welcome the introduction of the ruling party's presidential candidate. By implication the reports meant that the candidate had been popularly accepted. However, I had contrary views in that most of the people who had attended the rally were curious onlookers including children who wanted to have a glimpse of the man that Chiluba had appointed to succeed him after his 'third term' bid backfired.

Seven members of this group showed that they could not easily be swayed by misleading media reports that served hidden political agendas. Three members however, indicated that they accepted messages that they considered objective and could not be doubted, regardless of whether the messages supported their political interests or not.

These findings indicate that most members of this group were conversant with what had been taking place in political circles. They got their information from various sources such as peers, opinion leaders and other authoritative personalities who acted as counterweights to unreliable media reports, or were simply in disagreement because of their stance on particular issues. Thus, they were in a position to reject stories they found suspicious and gave them their own interpretation.

6.3.2 Group II

In this group with origins from the ruling party, the members expressed diverse views, some of them indicating that they resisted political messages from the public media, but were susceptible to messages from the private media, while others said they resisted those of the private media and were persuaded by messages from the public media. Their acceptance of the messages or otherwise depended on their existing predispositions. Those messages which were in line with the thinking of individuals were easily assimilated to reinforce their positions. Those which were in conflict were rejected. Generally, most members of this group resisted media messages which were against their political inclinations. A few others said they could not say whether they had resisted or rejected the messages because either way, they had no effect on their preference of candidates.

Jackie remarked: "I resisted media messages from the private media especially *The Post* newspaper because it was against my interests as its reporting was against the party and candidate I supported." Nicholas on the other hand, resisted messages from the public media because they were often against his party and preferred candidate. "I could not stand political messages which were against my party of interest. So, I dismissed most of those things which were reported by the public media against my party."

Vincent said he resisted most of the messages from the public media, but was more susceptible to messages from the private media which came from reliable sources and were consistent with his thinking:

The exposure of Mwanawasa's stammering speech by the private media was enough evidence to show that he had suffered memory lapses following a car accident he had been involved in in 1992. I supported the report that the man was mentally unsound and therefore unsuitable to rule the country.

Vincent also referred to reports in the public media in which the ruling party was said to be unmoved by plans of the opposition parties to form an alliance with a view to removing the ruling party through the ballot box. A few days later, stories circulated in the public media indicating that the ruling party and its government had information to the effect that some politicians within the planned merger were trying to topple the government illegally and that the government would incarcerate members of such a political merger which would destabilize the nation. Vincent explained:

In fact, there were no such plans to oust the government illegally through the reported merger, but the fact was that government was merely scared of a genuine opposition merger as it foresaw that it would lose the elections if that happened. Thus the government used the public media to scare the opposition through connotative messages in the media to stop them from forming an alliance which would remove it from power legally through the ballot box.

Augustine said he dismissed media reports from *The Post* that the former president had plundered national resources, but accepted those in the public media which defended him:

The more *The Post* called the former president Chiluba a thief, the more I became irritated and distanced my self from the private media. I however, concurred with the reports in the public media which defended him and

demanded for concrete evidence from *The Post* newspaper to substantiate its allegations.

On average, many members of this group resisted messages from the public media as they took them to be mere political propaganda from the government that they said wanted to perpetuate its stay in power despite its poor performance. Karen and Cynthia made similar views that it was unbelievable that the public media were advocating Chiluba's continuation on the pretext that he had performed well during his two terms in office, when the truth was that he had failed lamentably. Another member of this group, Martha supported their sentiments:

It was immoral for the public media to try and mislead the public that Chiluba performed well and deserved a third term of office. It was inconceivable that some people responded to this propaganda when the majority of Zambians had been turned into perpetual beggars. I personally rejected those calls in the public media and stood with those who objected to Chiluba's stubbornness until he was defeated.

This group also had some participants who were not sure whether they had resisted or assimilated media messages which could have affected their choices, either because they had simply forgotten or were not interested in such messages because their minds were already tuned to candidates of their choices.

Thus this group recorded six cases that resisted messages from either the public media or private media. These findings show that most members of this group resisted messages that were inconsistent with their thinking and accepted those that were consonant. In this way, their predispositions to certain candidates could only be reinforced by media exposure, not altered.

6.3.3 Group III

Most members of this group with origins from the Eastern province said that they resisted media messages which were seen to originate from suspicious sources with hidden

agenda to serve, and accepted those from sources they considered trustworthy. Elias narrated how he ignored a political advertisement on the state owned ZNBC from the ruling party that once re-elected it would introduce free primary education:

It was not possible at all. There is no free education anywhere in the world as pupils are at least made to contribute something in one way or another even if government supplemented their education. But with this economy it is even unthinkable to think that any government in power would provide free education of any kind.

John rebuffed a campaign message on Radio Phoenix that the UPND would consider the privatisation of the public media once elected to power:

It was unthinkable that any future government in Zambia would ever privatise the state media because as soon as the politicians were in power they realised that the media became an indispensable tool in achieving their political ends.

Maureen disclosed that she did not tolerate any message that did not make any sense to her. He said at one time he switched off the television when he heard MMD's presidential hopeful Levy Mwanawasa saying that Chiluba's government had laid a platform for economic growth and that if elected to power he would turn around Zambia's economy within his first two years in office.

Members of this group were agreed that they sometimes interpreted media messages in a way that was opposed to the intended message. Moffat gave an example on media reports that alleged that General Tembo, the FDD candidate was not a Zambian but a Malawian, as mere political persecution:

The real intention of the message was make Tembo lose support from his followers and also to find ways to disqualify him as the Zambian constitution does not allow non Zambians to contest the presidency. It was immoral for the public media to demand that Tembo's roots should be investigated when the man had even held the position of republican vice

president before he formed his own party after being dismissed from MMD for being against Chiluba's 'third term bid'. Why was he not labelled a foreigner when he was still in the ruling party?

Catherine, a sympathiser of the ruling party dismissed reports in the private media that Mazoka, the UPND presidential candidate was capable of re-introducing farming subsidies once elected to power:

I didn't think *The Post* and Mazoka himself were serious. The international financiers to this country, the IMF and the World Bank in particular made it clear that their funding to this country will not go to government subsidies any more. The private media were just extolling Mazoka in the hope that he won the elections when they knew that subsidies was a thing of the past in this country.

A similar observation was made by Effy who rejected a television advertisement in which Tilyenji Kaunda, presidential candidate for UNIP claimed that his party would abolish user fees in health institutions in order to give the majority of Zambians free access to medical facilities.

Tilyenji should have known that the days when his father Dr. Kaunda, the first republican president of Zambia offered free medical services were long gone. No social services would ever be free in this kind of economy.

Some members of this group acknowledged that some information from some journalists in the public and private media was objective and reasonable, and could therefore sometimes be accepted at face value. Benjamin said that while he had resisted and reinterpreted messages that ran contrary to his thinking, he disclosed that he had accommodated those messages that were in public interest and not partisan in nature:

I remember a day before the elections when both the private and public media circulated messages reminding all Zambians of the need to remain calm, united and to vote in a peaceful manner. I think most Zambians like me realised that this was an important message for all Zambians regardless

of their political affiliations. This message was well received by many peace-loving Zambians. Even if the opposition contested the election result, this was still done in an orderly manner for the sake of maintaining national unity and security. I believe that the media message contributed positively in aspect.

This group recorded six members who had resisted media messages and at times interpreted them away from their context. However, as in the other two groups, some members failed to comment on whether they had resisted or interpreted media messages differently from the context in which they were reported.

At the end of the interviews, this group and the others were different times exposed to the same video recorded material on political campaigns during the run-up to the elections.

6.3.4 Exposure to video material and interpretation

The participants of each group were separately shown two clips of video recording of political rallies. The first one depicted an address by the MMD presidential candidate, Mwanawasa after he was introduced to the crowd as the party presidential candidate by his predecessor, Chiluba. The film showed people who purported to have been members of opposition parties defecting and throwing away their opposition membership cards to join the ruling party. The other clip showed a combined rally of opposition parties in which the opposition presidential candidates accused the ruling party and government of planning to rig the elections by showing the crowd some irregularities on the provisional voters' register. In all the groups, most of those who were opposed to the ruling party remarked that the ruling party was using its own supporters to act as defectors so that the audience could be deceived into thinking that they were enjoying majority support. They observed that it was a ploy designed to lure other people to think of joining the "popular party." Those who supported the ruling party remarked that the film was a true projection of the event.

On the other hand, most of those who supported the ruling party dismissed the allegations by the opposition candidates that the ruling party was planning to rig the elections. They commented that the opposition was just scared of losing the elections and as such they were finding ways to protest if they lost the elections. They also indicated that the opposition was trying to alarm the public and make the people lose confidence in the government and the ruling party with a view to gain their support. They indicated that there was nothing to worry about a provisional register with errors because these were rectified before the date of the election. The participants who sided with the opposition agreed that the ruling party had plans to rig the election.

6.3.5 Summary of resistance and interpretation

The findings on the three groups show that the majority of the participants were not passive recipients of media messages during the campaign period, but resisted and applied their own interpretations to make their own judgements to given situations after analysing comments from discursive interactions with other informed people. The participants also accepted some messages without further interpretation, either because of the credibility of the news or the reliability of the source of the news. The responses and explanations from the members of the three groups show that most of them were active in the way that they negotiated media messages by resisting and making their own interpretations.

The following table gives a numerical breakdown of the groups' responses of resistance to media messages.

6.3.6 Table 2

Group	Resisted	Percentage
I	7	70
II	6	60
III	6	60
Total	19	63

In group I there were seven responses representing 70 percent of the group, six each in groups II and III representing 60 percent of each group. There were a total of 19 cases among all groups representing 63 percent of all the groups.

6.4 Social influence

In this section, I describe the influence on voting behaviour in the three focus groups that occurred as a result of social interaction, i.e. not as a direct result of interaction with the media. The findings of this section generally show that social influence had a greater impact than the media in shaping the electoral choices of many participants in the three groups.

6.4.1 Group I

Most of the participants of this group who represented the Tonga and Lozi speaking people whose candidate was Mazoka of the opposition UNPD, indicated that they had at one time or another generally discussed political activities with other people in their social environment, and had also analysed media reports with others during the period leading up to the elections. They discussed a range of issues: among them, the misuse of public funds by the ruling party and its government during its tenure of office, the 'third term' debate in which Chiluba sought to contest the elections for a third term of office, misuse of government property during campaign time contrary to the regulations of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ). Other issues discussed included the tactful delay by the then republican president, Chiluba, in announcing the date of the elections in order to take the opposition by surprise, manifestos of different parties, the credibility of the opposition and also the arbitrary use of the police service by the government to deny opposition parties holding political rallies by using the Preservation of Public Security Act (PPSA) which was selectively applied as it did not affect rallies held by the ruling party.

Some of the participants, amongst them Mutukwa, disclosed that the discussions had had an impact in the choice of their candidates:

The discussions critically influenced the choice of my candidate. For instance, I was aligned to the ruling party before the third term debate. After the nationwide debate, many political parties emerged which were against Chiluba running for three consecutive terms of office. This made me to re-examine my stance and I changed my mind to join one of the newly formed parties whose candidate I voted for. In actual fact, I think both the media and social interaction with others in a way influenced my choice of my candidate.

Mac Donald: The discussions revealed a lot of hidden things about some politicians. I was able to make up my mind after digesting other peoples' opinions on issues that I earlier did not properly understand. For example, I came to realise that the ruling party was employing state machinery to undermine the campaign efforts of opposition parties. I did not like this. I started to sympathise with the opposition and got interested in one of their candidates who I voted for in the end.

Reginald: I changed my opinion and voted for another candidate after being convinced by other people that the man of my earlier choice was a political opportunist with the aim of becoming republican president to serve his selfish interests and not that of the people.

Olive: After discussing with well informed people, I had no doubt that Chiluba was a political 'engineer' who wanted to perpetuate his power and influence by appointing a surrogate candidate whom he hoped to manipulate. The discussions reinforced my mind to vote against the ruling party.

Those members of the group who indicated that the discursive interactions yielded no influence over their voting behaviour, appeared to have made up their minds either on tribal grounds or on the basis of personal conviction.

Namakau: The discussions had no effect at all because my mind was already set to vote for the credible candidate that had inspired me for a long time as a mature and honest politician.

Victor: Nothing could convince me to vote for a candidate who did not belong to my tribe. So, I dismissed any discussions which were against my choice and only accepted those views which were in favour of my choice.

Mutelo: I was sure that my choice was the right one, and no person could have convinced me to think otherwise, my mind was made and no one could change my stance.

Fred indicated that his stance remained unchanged because no one could have changed his thinking. On the contrary, he set out to change the thinking of others to think along his line.

This group reflected diverse views on whether the discussions they had with other people changed their opinions on certain political issues and affected the choice of their candidates. It was clear that some of them were influenced by a combination of factors. For instance, in some cases media influence combined with social influence to impact on some of them in the choice of their candidates. In all, four members of this group admitted that the discussions they had with other people had an effect in influencing their choice of presidential candidates. Another four said the discussions produced no effect to change their stance, while two others said that they could not remember if they ever held any discussions that could have affected their choices.

6.4.2 Group II

Most of the members of this group who originated from the Northern and Luapula provinces and whose candidate was from the ruling party, disclosed that they discussed with their peers, siblings, and other social acquaintances political events and information

in the media during the run-up to the presidential elections. Some of the members of the group indicated that there was a change of opinion that could have affected their choices after they had discussed with others. Teddy said:

I initially believed in the strong rumours circulating in some social circles in Lusaka that Mwanawasa, the candidate for the ruling party, became mentally retarded in 1992 after the road traffic accident he was involved in, and that he was incapable of becoming president of Zambia on medical grounds. I did not realise that this was not true until I discussed it with friends who convinced me that Mwanawasa was still of sound mind after the accident, and that as a lawyer he was still practicing and this was ample proof that he was still sane. This made me realise that the opposition was spreading malicious rumours using the private media to discredit Mwanawasa. I thereafter got interested in him and also learnt that the man had a rich legal professional background having been one of the first black Zambian lawyers to hold the position of Solicitor General after independence from colonial rule. I became attracted to him and he became my ultimate presidential choice.

Nicholas also explained that he thought that the report in the *Times of Zambia* that Anderson Mazoka, candidate for the United Party for National Development (UPND) had stolen cattle from a goods train was true, but later realised that it was not after discussing with other people: "I later came to learn through discussions with others that Mazoka was in fact a farmer who owned hundreds of herds of cattle, and that at no point did he steal the cattle."

Wallen recalled how he took the opposite line to rumours and media reports that some opposition politicians were planning to illegally overthrow the government:

After I had discussed with well informed sources, I came to the understanding that the information was baseless in that government was in fact trying to find ways of arresting some potential members of the opposition by declaring a state of emergency and calling off the elections

because it was scared of losing the elections. This revelation made me lose confidence in the government, and I subsequently shifted my allegiance from the ruling party to settle for one of the opposition parties whose presidential candidate I eventually voted for.

Lombe, a staunch Christian, explained how he shifted from one opposition party to another after being convinced that the candidate belonged to a devil worshipping cult:

I had heard some rumours that Mazoka, the UPND candidate belonged to a devil worshipping cult. I did not believe it until one day when we were discussing with my colleagues that I became convinced that Mazoka belonged to a Satanist cult. One of my friends whose father was a close friend to Mazoka and had worked under him when he was the chief executive of the Anglo American Corporation in Zambia revealed that his father had been fired by Mazoka for discouraging him from belonging to the Satanist movement. As a Christian I could not continue supporting such a candidate. I dropped him and joined the National Citizens Coalition (NCC) whose candidate Nevers Mumba, a pastor, I voted for.

Karen disclosed that she lost confidence in the ruling party after discussing reports in the media that government had failed to release a report on the air crash which claimed the lives of the entire Zambia National Football Team off the coast of Gabon in 1993 enroute to Senegal for a World Cup fixture:

I could no longer doubt that government was to blame for the crash when I learnt from the discussion that I had with some members of the Football Association of Zambia that the government was dilly dallying to release the report because it was responsible for the accident. It allowed the national team to use an old military plane which was mechanically unsound. That was one of the best teams on the continent, and as a soccer fan, I felt so aggrieved by the government's insensitivity. I came to the conclusion that it was an irresponsible and careless government. I shifted

my allegiance to another party I thought could constitute a responsible government once elected to power.

Some members of this group indicated that though they had discussed political events and media reports with other people, this did not affect their choices of preference as their minds were already made and focused on their candidates. Martha explained: “The discussions did not affect my choice because I was sure my choice was the right one.” Jackie and Vincent indicated that they were only agreeable to those opinions and views which supported theirs and not anything to the contrary. There were two members who could not remember whether they had discussed political events and media reports with others.

This group recorded five responses from members who explained that at one point or another they had changed their stance on certain political issues after discussing them with others and this had contributed to or altered their choices. The opinions of three members remained unchanged after the discussions they had had. The other two either did not discuss the political issues with others, or could simply not recall having discussed any political events and issues reported in the media during the period leading to the elections. In general, discursive interaction was fairly significant in this group’s choice of candidates.

6.4.3 Group III

All the members of this group who originated from the Eastern province and were represented by General Tembo as their most promising candidate, explained that they had at one time or another discussed the political reports in the media with other people - peers, friends, and social acquaintances. Prominent among these issues were: scandals among politicians, the ‘third term’ debate in which the former president Chiluba tried to change the constitution so that he could run for election for the third term in office, the poor state of the economy, and mysterious deaths of politicians.

Many members of the group were influenced by the discussions they had with others in the choice of their candidates, while others remained unaffected. Benjamin recalled how the reports of the death of politician Paul Tembo, whose killing was allegedly sponsored by the ruling party, affected the choice of his candidate:

After discussing media reports on the killing of Paul Tembo with my colleagues, I was left with the impression that the MMD had engineered his death the night before he could testify at a tribunal which was investigating the misuse of public funds by the ruling party. It became very evident that Tembo, who had defected from the ruling MMD where he held a senior party position to join the FFD, had been shot dead in suspicious circumstances at his home by unknown people a night before he was to testify at a tribunal investigating the misuse of public funds by the MMD. I became convinced that the MMD were playing dirty politics and this made me change my mind not to vote for their candidate and instead I switched over to the FDD presidential candidate.

Alias narrated how he lost confidence in the MMD after discussions at a pub with fellow students and a renowned economist that the government had squandered funds from the privatisation of parastatal companies when many ordinary Zambians were poverty stricken:

I was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that this was a government of thieves who had to be removed before they could auction the whole country to turn Zambians into destitutes. This made me change my mind to vote for another presidential candidate from the opposition.

Another member of the group expressed similar views. Damiano explained that he 'ditched' the ruling party to join the FDD after being convinced during a discussion he held with friends relating to a media report that Chiluba had dismissed all the top politicians in his cabinet who were against his bid for a third term of office:

After the discussions I came to the understanding that this man was a tyrant who would do anything to cling to power to serve his own interests.

I lost confidence in the ruling party, and things did not change for me when Chiluba appointed Mwanawasa to stand for the ruling party after Chiluba's third term bid flopped. I was still convinced that who ever takes over from Chiluba in the MMD would still be his puppet and Chiluba would remain the main dictating force to run the affairs of the country. I didn't take kindly to dictatorial rule. So, I made up my mind and joined another party whose candidate I voted for.

Mercy explained how she became disinterested in UNIP's Candidate, Tilyenji Kaunda, when some UNIP defectors explained to her that they had left the party because Tilyenji's father, former republican president Dr. Kaunda, was grooming his son so that Dr. Kaunda himself would come back to take charge of the nation after his son won the elections. 'I didn't like the idea of seeing that old man come back on the political scene again. I thought his time was over. I changed my mind and voted for another candidate.'

Maureen and Catherine indicated that they changed their opinions and voted against NCC candidate pastor Nevers Mumba when some members of his church said that the pastor had strayed from the path of his commitment to the church to join politics. They were of the view that politics was a 'dirty game' that a genuine Christian couldn't 'play'. They indicated that as devoted Christians they were made to believe that it was unChristian for a pastor to be actively involved in politics.

The rest of the members explained that the discussions that they had did not in any way impact on them in the choice of their candidates, either because their minds had been made up to settle for their preferred candidates, or had been influenced by other factors besides discussion with others.

All the members of this group indicated that they had discussed media reports relating to political activities during election period. Six of the participants disclosed that the discussions they had had with other people had an influence in the choice of their candidates.

6.4.4 Summary of social influence

In conclusion, social influence had a relatively large impact on the electoral behaviour of the members of all the groups, especially groups III and II which recorded six and five responses respectively. Group I recorded four responses. In certain instances, the media influence combined with social influence to impact on the behaviour of some members in the choice of their candidates.

The following table shows the numerical responses of the participants from the three groups who were influenced by social factors in one way or another.

6.4.5 Table 3

Group	Influenced	Percentage
I	4	40
II	5	50
III	6	60
Total	15	50

Group I recorded four responses representing 40 percent of the group. Group II had five responses representing 50 percent of the group. Group III recorded six cases representing 60 percent of the group. There were a total of 15 responses for all the groups representing 50 percent of all the groups.

6.5 Ethnic influence

Zambia is divided into nine provinces: Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Western, North Western, Southern, Northern, and Luapula provinces. Although there are about 72 tribes which can be loosely identified, however, most of these have common ethnic links. For instance, Eastern province has about 10 tribes which are closely connected to one another, but the Ngoni speaking people are the most dominant. Thus a Ngoni presidential candidate is likely to receive support from other tribes of the Eastern province. The

situation is similar in other provinces. Some provinces have tribal alliances, for instance, the Tonga speaking people of Southern province and the Lozi speaking people of Western province share some common cultural values and have historically called themselves tribal cousins. These people have been observed to support each other when choosing political candidates. On the other hand, the peoples of Luapula and Northern provinces share common ethnic roots which can be identified with the Bemba speaking tribe.

Since independence in 1964, Zambian politics appear to have been dominated either by politicians from Northern / Luapula provinces or from the Eastern province. Zambia's First President, Dr. Kaunda had his ethnic roots from the Eastern province, his father coming from Malawi where some ethnic groups are similar to that of Eastern Zambia. Historically, many people of Malawi and Eastern Zambia shared a common descent and lived together until the artificial partitioning of Africa by the colonialists in the 1800s (Mwanakatwe, 1994). However, Kaunda also owed allegiance to the Bembas as he was brought up in the Chinsali District of Northern province where his father had been sent from Malawi to become the first pioneer missionary of the Church of Scotland (Mwanakatwe, 1994). Kaunda's wife Betty, originated from this area.

Chiluba, who took over power from Kaunda in 1991 was a Bemba from Luapula province. In 2001, Chiluba imposed Mwanawasa, from the minority Soli people of Lusaka province to win elections for the ruling party. This move was seen by many Zambians as Chiluba's strategy to continue ruling behind the scenes in order to protect his own interests and those of his ethnic grouping at large after his bid for a third term of office failed. The people of Northern and Luapula provinces voted for Mwanawasa overwhelmingly, not as an individual, "but so that he could remain under the control of Chiluba and owe allegiance to the Bembas at large." (*The Post*, 1 December, 2001).

The Ngonis from Eastern province and the Tonga and Lozi speaking people of Southern and Western provinces respectively appear to have a strong ethnic identity which threatens the political leadership of the Bembas from the Northern and Luapula

provinces. The other ethnic groupings from the rest of the provinces appear to have a relatively weak ethnic identity on the political scene mainly because of their minority disposition.

Ethnic influence (in this case defined not as part of social influence, but tribal inclinations) impacted to some extent on the voting behaviour of participants in groups I and II, with group I showing the highest response. Group III however, recorded a percentage just below the number of participants in the group. The affected participants in all the groups disclosed various reasons for voting on ethnic lines. These included: influence from their families; to maintain their ethnic superiority by dominating other ethnic groupings; to benefit from their candidate if elected to power in terms of occupying top and influential positions in the public and private sectors; and also to influence development in their homelands. Most of those who were not affected by ethnic influence argued that it was not the tribe of the candidate that mattered most, but the quality of the candidate regardless of his ethnic roots.

6.5.1 Group I

In this group which originated from the Western and Southern provinces, many of those who were influenced by the ethnic factor argued that they had to support their UPND presidential candidate, Anderson Mazoka, because they felt that Zambian politics had been dominated for long time by a few ethnic groups especially those from the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. They explained that their tribes had not received a fair representation in the allocation of senior posts in the government and other key sectors of the Zambian economy, and that their areas of origin remained relatively underdeveloped compared to other areas of Zambia.

On the other hand, those who were not influenced by their tribal inclinations indicated that they did not necessarily think that voting along ethnic lines would solve the problem of underdevelopment in their areas or address Zambia's economic woes in general. They observed that what was important to them was to identify a candidate who would be sensitive to the needs of all Zambians and represent the interests of people from different

tribes, classes, race and gender. However, they were strongly opposed to those who based their voting firmly along ethnic lines, saying that by doing this they were merely supporting ethnic groups that were responsible for the hegemony over other ones. Olive explained that he couldn't think of voting for another candidate apart from a man from his home land:

There was no way I was going to vote for a candidate who was not close to my roots. Other tribes have shown us that they pay more attention to the developing areas from where they originate and neglect other areas. I would also want to see development take place in my area and this can only be done by my people. We have been subjugated to other tribes for such a long time. It is time things changed.

He was supported by Victor, who thought that his tribe had to a great extent been marginalized by some tribes who considered themselves superior to others:

I thought that there was a need to change the ethnic status quo of this country by changing the political set up, so that those who had dominated others can feel how it is like to be dominated.

Mutelo added:

It so happened that the person that I thought was suitable in all aspects to be president of this country was a man who belonged to my ethnic grouping. It could have been a coincidence, but maybe a good coincidence for that matter. So I voted for someone with a similar ethnic background who had the qualities that I was looking for.

Namakau indicated that she couldn't vote for a surrogate president who had been imposed by Chiluba on the people of Zambia so that Chiluba's agenda of dominating Zambians could be perpetuated:

I could not vote for a 'puppet' which had been imposed on the people by his predecessor, Chiluba. So I had no better option than to vote for a

person closer to my ethnic background, as other candidates were also being supported by people from their homelands.

Two other members, Roberta and Fred, indicated that their choices were shaped by family pressure to choose a candidate from their homeland.

The other members of this group, who claimed that they voted independent of ethnic influence, indicated that there were many issues at stake which they had to take into account apart from the ethnic factor. Reginald argued that it was important to elect a leader who was intelligent, morally upright and who was sensitive to the needs all citizens regardless of tribal affiliations:

What the Zambians need is a knowledgeable leader of high integrity who is selfless and has the interest of all Zambians at heart. Hence, I voted for a credible leader not necessarily from my tribe.

His views were supported by McDonald: "My experiences and knowledge of the things I saw and heard around us gave me an understanding of what made a good leader, and not necessarily a tribesman." Mutukwa, remarked: "A leader is one who understands national issues of importance and not one who only understands the concerns of his tribe."

This group recorded six responses from those that had been influenced by ethnic inclinations in the choice of their candidate, while four said they were unaffected.

From the above, it can be seen that ethnic influence played an active role in shaping the presidential choices of the majority of this group, regardless of their exposure to other factors such as the media and social interaction.

6.5.2 Group II

The members of this group with origins from the dominant Northern and Luapula provinces of the Bemba speaking people, expressed different responses on whether they had been influenced by ethnic inclination in the choice of their presidential candidates. Some of those who disclosed that they had been influenced indicated that they no choice

apart from making sure that Mwanawasa, the man that the former republican president, Chiluba had chosen to succeed him, won the election. They observed that for them, this was important in that it would be a direct way of supporting Chiluba, a man who represented their tribes, who would to continue exerting his influence on Zambian politics, and as such domination of the Bemba people on the Zambian political scene would continue. They further revealed that they had to rally behind Chiluba and Mwanawasa because they could not afford to give a chance to a person that would not represent their interests like the development of their areas and appointing Bembas to key positions once voted into power. Those who were not influenced by ethnic factors argued that their main focus was to identify and vote for a suitable person who would deliver goods to all Zambians regardless of tribal affiliations.

However, participants who were ethically influenced argued that there would have been no such person who would have had the interests of all Zambians at heart. Jackie remarked:

It is unthinkable that this country would have produced a president that would have looked after the interests of all Zambians. It is only Dr. Kaunda who managed to some extent do that. But even so, you could still tell that Kaunda was more inclined to tribes from the East and North where his father and mother originated respectively. So, what was wrong to vote for a candidate who would support my interests? I had to vote for someone I thought would look into the interests of my people, and Mwanawasa was the right person because he had been chosen by Chiluba, and we thought he would not let Chiluba down despite the fact he didn't strictly originate from our homeland. We thought Chiluba would continue to rule behind the scenes. But what a mistake Chiluba made! The man is now persecuting him, saying that he plundered the economy and wants Chiluba's immunity removed to face trial. We Bemba's are quite annoyed with what is taking place now. How can Mwanawasa persecute the man who brought him to power? (Emotional)

Augustine: I agree that it was unlikely that there would have been a presidential candidate who was willing to represent the interests of all Zambians squarely. I voted for Mwanawasa because I thought he would work with Chiluba to represent our ethnic interests.

Vincent: I was not sure that Mazoka was going to accommodate the interests of the Bembas. So I had to make sure he didn't come to power.

Martha: I had heard most people from Southern and Western provinces saying that they were voting for their man to take over power. Naturally, I had to resist this and voted for the one I thought would embrace my tribe.

Cynthia: I thought everyone wanted to protect his or her interests, so I had to protect mine by voting for someone whom I thought would protect my interests.

Those who were not influenced by ethnic inclinations indicated that they were influenced by other factors beyond ethnicity.

Lombe: This country will never develop if we continue to vote along ethnic lines. It would be okay to vote on ethnic lines if the candidate has the qualities and integrity. But I did not see any of them in Mwanawasa, so I voted for someone I thought met my qualifications of a president.

Nicholas: See now, the man that you thought would protect you together with your Chiluba is now out there persecuting the same Chiluba. That's why I didn't vote on tribal lines because I had to choose a man of quality and reason. I guess what Mwanawasa is doing to Chiluba shows that he is a man of quality and reason! (laughs)

The other three members who were not influenced by ethnic factors were of the same view that it was the person whom they voted for, and not the tribe. There were five cases of ethnic influence in this group, while the other five were influenced by other factors.

6.5.3 Group III

This group which originated from the Eastern province of the Ngoni people also recorded mixed responses on whether the participants had voted along ethnic lines. However, fewer participants indicated that their decisions had in one way or another, been influenced by tribal inclinations in the choice of their candidate, than those who were not affected. Those who voted along ethnic lines indicated that it was imperative for them to vote along tribal lines because they had an obligation to their ethnic group. Others disclosed that they wanted to maintain and promote the superiority of their tribe. In the case of the Ngoni tribe, this meant being duty bound to remove Chiluba and his 'surrogate' presidential candidate and replace him by a man of their own choice who could be no other than someone with a similar ethnic background. On the other hand, those who ignored tribal influence said that it was not a matter of choosing a man from their homeland, but rather that of choosing a suitable man of high morals and integrity regardless of tribe.

Audrey was one of the members who voted along ethnic lines. He said that his parents lived in a village next to that of General Tembo, the FFD presidential candidate. He disclosed that there was a strong bond between his family and that of General Tembo. He therefore could not see any reason why he would have voted for another candidate when he knew very well that his family would directly benefit if General Tembo was elected to power.

Another participant, Moffat, said that he was influenced to vote for his tribesman because he wanted to uphold the superiority of his tribe over others.

When we the Ngonis broke away from Shaka Zulu's Kingdom in the 1800s and trekked from the south to come to this part of Africa, we conquered all tribes that we found along the way and confiscated their

women and cattle. In this country, we were feared and respected as the great conquerors. Our tribe still remains one of most organised and has some of the best brains in this country. I wanted us to maintain our superiority by voting General Tembo to rule the country

Other members of the group agreed with Moffat that there was need to elect a person from their ethnic background to uphold their superiority.

Effy: That's correct. My father has always reminded me to get married to a fellow Ngoni so that our tribe continues to strengthen itself by bearing pure Ngoni children. He has been against intertribal marriages. I have therefore been cultured to believe that everything that has to do with the Ngoni tribe is the best. So, even my vote was based on this.

John: I didn't like Chiluba's arrogance and insensitivity to the interests of other tribes, and I thought that even his successor Mwanawasa would be the same. I thought that someone had to move in and shake up the system. I was of the view that General Tembo with his military background was the right man, and the fact that he originated from my area earned him more points. I had to vote for him.

Contrary to this, most of the members disclosed that they voted for candidates meritoriously and that their decision had nothing to do with tribal voting:

Mercy: My candidate was chosen after analysing campaign manifestos of all political parties, hearing political debates from all candidates, and analysing media reports. I then decided my right candidate. I do not agree that Ngoni women should only marry Ngoni men. After all, there are so many Ngoni women who are happily married to men from other tribes and have decent offspring.

Damiano: That's true. Only people who are backward and uncivilized can think like that. I voted for a credible candidate and not because of the

village he came from. Can a village make a candidate credible and knowledgeable? (Mockingly)

The rest of the participants indicated similar views in that they were influenced by the quality of their candidates after analysing various issues reported in the media and also discussions that they held with other people.

This group had four members who were influenced by ethnic inclinations in the choice of their candidate. The majority, six of them, were influenced by other factors.

In summary, ethnic inclinations had a relative influence on the voting preferences of the participants in all three groups. This was more pronounced in groups I and II respectively and to some degree in group III.

6.5.4 Summary of ethnic influence

These findings demonstrated that ethnic influence played a relative significant role in influencing the choices of participants from the various groups. Group one had the highest cases followed by group two, while group three recorded the lowest figure. The findings show that ethnic inclination had a comparative influence over media messages.

The following table gives a figurative summary on the findings of ethnic influence on the voting behaviour of the three groups.

6.5.5 Table 4

Group	Influenced	Percentage
I	6	60
II	5	50
III	4	40
Total	15	50

Group I had six cases of ethnic influence with a group percentage of 60. Group II had five cases representing 50 percent of the group. Group III recorded four cases representing 40 percent of the group. There were 15 cases in total for all the groups representing 50 percent of all the groups.

6.5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the findings of this study by showing some of the comments and responses of the participants. I have also shown the similarities and variances among the three groups in relation to the themes that guided this study. In the next chapter, I will be discussing the relevance and significance of the findings by interpreting them and relating them to the conceptual and theoretical framework contained in Chapter four of this study.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss and analyse the findings of this study that have been outlined in the previous chapter. I will start by giving a brief overview of the findings, before moving on to explain, analyse, and interpret the findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in chapter four of this study. I will comment on, interpret, and show the significance of the findings according to the themes which guided this study: media exposure; media influence; message resistance; social influence; and ethnic influence.

7.1 Overview

The findings of this study generally indicate that despite exposure, the media had little influence on the election choices of most participants in the research. Many members of the three groups either resisted or reinterpreted media messages, (or did both), when those messages were not consonant with their political interests, social predispositions and their ethnic inclinations. Social and ethnic factors appear to have played a larger role than the media in election choices.

The table on the next page gives a numerical summary of the findings.

7.1.1 Table 5

Theme	Group I	Group II	Group III	Total	Percentage
No. of participants reporting media influence	3	4	4	11	37
No. of participants reporting message resistance	7	6	6	19	63
No. of participants reporting Social influence	4	5	6	15	50
No. of participants reporting Ethnic influence	6	5	4	15	50

Thirty seven percent of the participants from all the groups reported media influence with the highest being groups II and III recording four cases each. Group I had three cases. Sixty three percent reported message resistance. Group I had seven cases while groups II and III recorded six each. Fifty percent was recorded among all the groups for social influence with group III recording the highest figure of six, while groups I and II recorded four and five cases respectively. Ethnic influence also represented a total of fifty percent among all the groups with group I leading with six cases, and groups II and III with five and four cases respectively.

Although the media has been known to act as a tool of modernity in modernising the cultures and lived experiences of its audiences, these findings however, to some extent, portray the media's limitations in acting as an agent of modernity in urban areas in cultivating and re-shaping the voting behaviour of the selected sample of students along a rational and informative stance void of ethnic inclinations and other social factors. Furthermore, it can be argued that media theories which postulate broad claims for or against the impact of media messages on voter behaviour ignore the specific context in which the audiences are placed as they receive the messages. For, instance, these findings appear to indicate that the context of ethnic disposition overrides mediated information because of the importance of ethnicity in Zambian politics as related to political power.

Historically, and to a great extent, the power relations within the Zambian political arena have been explained and determined by the question of ethnicity, and any media research into the voting behaviour of Zambians which fails to examine this context may not be conclusive. As observed by Korzenny,

The search for mass media effects upon society is an ill-defined problem if the study of effects is not placed in the cultural / historical context of the society where the effects are investigated. (1992:3)

7.2 Media Exposure

Although all members of the groups were exposed to the media, it was noticed that most of them tended to gravitate towards the media that best represented their political interests. For instance, those who supported the ruling party were more inclined to the government owned media as its political content was in favour of the ruling party and often reported negatively on the opposition. Those that supported opposition parties were generally tilted towards the private media, which reported the opposition favourably and was usually against the ruling party. This position appears to support Davison's (1982) observation on the uses and gratification theory of the media. In other words, people tend to expose themselves to congenial messages which are not in conflict with their existing thinking. This theory claims that if people anticipate messages that will be in conflict with their thinking or predispositions, they will not expose themselves to such messages (Fiske, 1992; Schramm, 1982).

An example of this selective exposure is Damiano's comment in focus group three. He said that the ZNBC 'represented the views of ruling politicians during election time'. He did not support the ruling party, and thus preferred the privately owned Radio Phoenix, whose messages he felt were more consonant with his interests. (Radio Phoenix reported in favour of his political party and presidential candidate.) Similarly, another member of this group, Effie, indicated that she preferred reading *The Post* because it was a more 'objective publication than the government owned *Times of Zambia* and *Zambia Daily Mail* which were mere government propaganda mouthpieces'. Effie's concept of

'objectivity' is actually one of bias, as she would deliberately only select those aspects of the print media that fitted her own existing ideas.

The situation appeared the same with some members of the other groups. For instance, Mutelo in group one felt that the private broadcast media, in particular Radio Phoenix, was 'objective' in their coverage of political issues and events. He said this was because it was neither against the ruling party nor for the opposition parties. Nonetheless, Mutelo may have been confusing objectivity with bias: the private media, including Radio Phoenix, generally reported against the ruling party regardless of merit, but this, in Mutelo's view was 'objective.' These observations appear to indicate that the participants of all the groups tended to selectively expose themselves to media messages that were consistent with their attitudes and beliefs, and avoided conflicting messages. This seems to support Davison's (1982) argument in consistency theory that people tend to selectively expose themselves to messages that are in conformity with their existing beliefs about their environment.

7.3. Media Influence

Most participants were inclined to the media outlet that best represented their political interests and beliefs. Likewise, those participants who gravitated towards certain media were susceptible to its messages because they were consistent with their predispositions. In this way, the messages just reinforced their positions and did not necessarily influence their choices. As Lenart comments on Lazarsfeld's findings:

Lazarsfeld and his colleagues found that campaign appeals were not likely to convert voters; rather if the media have any impact at all, it is in the way of activating, crystallizing, or reinforcing choices already made on the basis of socio-economic factors. (1994:13)

Influence could only have taken place if the individuals concerned accepted messages that conflicted with their existing ones. Seeing as the participants in this study did not do so, the media had minimal impact on the electoral choices of most participants. However,

a few members who were undecided in the choice of their candidates were to some extent influenced by media messages that they thought were credible and reliable. This observation appears to support the assertion of some researchers who admit that the media could influence opinion or attitude 'when the media source is prestigious, trusted or liked' (Curran, 1982: 59).

One example of this could be MacDonald's comment in group one. He changed his mind to vote for another candidate because he trusted the source of information that influenced him: '*The Post* supplied credible and useful information which shaped my preference of a presidential candidate'. Wallen's remarks in group two support the notion that if the media or its sources are perceived to be reliable by the recipient, then the message can be accepted with no doubt at all. Wallen said that he changed his mind and voted for another candidate after it had been reliably reported, (according to Wallen), that his initial choice had at one time belonged to a cult of devil worshippers. Blumler observes that 'the media provide the informational building blocks to structure views of the world from which may stem a range of actions' (1977:24). Blumler's assertion appears to be supported by Mercy's comment in group three:

I was closely following this column when I came to learn that some of those politicians hadn't gone far in school better than me. I also discovered that others were well schooled and had a rich background and understanding of political issues and other related subjects. I could not choose a candidate of low quality. I could not dispute the source of the information. I ditched my initial preference and settled for someone learned and knowledgeable.

However, to a large extent, the findings demonstrated that the media had little impact on the choices of most participants. This state of affairs could be seen to be supportive of the arguments raised by some researchers (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988; Negrine, 1994; Davidson et al, 1982) that the media tends at most times to reinforce the existing attitudes and beliefs of audiences rather than change their opinions. For example, Karen's remarks in group two that "all what the media did was to confirm that my choice was the

right one”, appears to be in line with the assertion that in many instances the media reinforces the beliefs and attitudes of its audiences. Otherwise, most of the participants remained little affected by media messages. Jackie in group two for instance, indicated that the choice of her presidential candidate was a thing that was already on her mind. “No amount of media messages would have changed my mind. The candidate that I voted for has been close to my family for years and it would not have been the right thing to vote against him”. Jackie’s revelations show that her beliefs were the crucial determining factor in the choice of her candidate, and though exposed to the media it had little or no impact all. Similar views were expressed by many participants in all the groups. Namonga’s sentiments in group one, that she was also not influenced by the media in anyway because her decision was personal, points to the understanding that there were other factors at play other than the media.

The findings of this study appear to correlate with those of some researchers (Klapper , 1960; Levy and Windahl, 1985) who have argued against the notion that the media has omnipotent influence on voter behaviour. The media’s impact on voter behaviour is superficial because ‘there is a considerable amount of interaction between predisposing social characters of voters, what they select and use from the political propaganda presented by the media, and their ultimate voting choice’ (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988:93).

7.4 Message Resistance

Maybe as a result of the superficial influence of the media reported in the three groups, a high level of message resistance was also reported. Other factors contributed to the negotiation of media messages by the participants, among them social factors, ethnic factors and personal convictions. In many cases, the mediated messages were either simply ignored or reinterpreted to suit the meanings and understanding of each individual. This situation appeared to support the claims of some media theorists that media messages are polysemic, and that audiences are active rather ^{than} passive in the manner in which they interpret information (Jensen and Rosengren 1990; Curran 1998; Crouteu and Hoynes 2000; Linne and Wartella 1998; Morley and Walkerdine 1996).

Fred from group two remarked that he was not convinced by media reports that suggested that some members of the opposition parties had been funded by foreign countries and international organisations in order to represent their interests once elected to power. He became sceptical and could not agree with what was reported. 'I thought that it was a malicious campaign by the ruling party to use the media to discredit the opposition.' Another example that demonstrates how some participants resisted and reinterpreted media messages were the sentiments made by Roberta when she commented on reports in the government owned *Times of Zambia* and ZNBC that a huge crowd had gathered to welcome the introduction of the ruling party's presidential candidate. She noted that by implication the reports meant that the candidate had been popularly accepted. However, she felt that 'most of the people who had attended the rally were curious onlookers including children who wanted to have a glimpse of the man that Chiluba had appointed to succeed him after his 'third term' bid backfired'. This shows that Roberta was capable of discarding the intended meaning of the message and applied her own meaning to make sense of the message. As Curran comments:

Where as radical functionalists tended to offer unambiguous 'readings', revisionists tended, by contrast, to detect complexity and ambiguity. Their recurrent refrain was that media 'texts' have contradictions or tensions, and offer up discursive spaces that encourage divergent or subversive interpretations. (1996:135)

In group two, the comments of Augustine that "the more *The Post* called the former president Chiluba a thief, the more he became irritated and distanced himself from the private media", indicated that Augustine resisted media messages which were in conflict with his beliefs and interests. On the other hand, he assimilated those that were consonant with his thinking. 'I concurred with reports in the public media which defended Chiluba and demanded concrete evidence from *The Post* to substantiate its allegations.'

The pattern of resisting media messages that were uncongenial to the recipients was generally noticed among all the groups. In group three, John rebuffed a campaign message on Radio Phoenix that the UPND would consider the privatisation of the public media once elected to power. He indicated that it was unthinkable that any future government in Zambia would ever privatise the state media, 'because as soon as the politicians were in power they realised that the media became an indispensable tool in achieving their political ends'. This is an indication that John did not take for granted information that was presented to him by private media outlets, and therefore dismissed the message. This observation fits with Karz's argument against the so called 'uses approach'.

Less attention should be paid to what the media do people and more to what the people do to the media. Such an approach assumes that even the most potent of mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no use for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives. The uses approach assumes that peoples' values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent and that people selectively fashion what they see and hear to these interests.
(cited in Ruddock, 2001:69)

This observation is supported by Korzenny who describes individuals as cultures in themselves who have 'unique experiences and perspectives and consequently decode text in diverse manners' (1992: 3).

In so far as media resistance and interpretation of media messages is concerned, the findings of this research indicate that there was a similar pattern across all the groups to resist media messages which either contradicted the beliefs and interests of the participants, or were seen to be unreliable. The media's impact therefore remained minimal because of other factors of influence. In many instances, the recipients of the messages reinterpreted them to suit their own opinions. These findings appear to support the notion of many media theorists that media audiences are active in their interaction

with the media, they resist messages they do not agree with, and make their own meaning from media messages (Klapper, 1960; Linne and Wartella 1998; Lowery and DeFleur).

7.5 Social Influence

The findings of the study show that social influence had a greater impact than the media on the participants from all the groups, with group three recording the highest cases followed by group two and one respectively. In a number of cases, social influence combined with media influence to impact on the choices of some participants. In many cases, the members of the three groups explained that their association with other people from various social circles and their lived experiences had an effect in the choice of their candidates. The findings appear to support the notion that discursive interaction has a greater influence in shaping peoples' opinions than media messages (Lowery and De Fleur, 1988).

Teddy, (group one), said that he initially believed the rumours that Mwanawasa, the candidate for the ruling party, had become mentally retarded in 1992 after a road traffic accident, and that he was incapable of becoming president of Zambia on medical grounds. He later discussed the issue with friends who convinced him that Mwanawasa was still mentally fit and that he was still a practicing lawyer.

This was ample proof that he was still sane. This made me realise that the opposition was spreading malicious rumours through the media to discredit Mwanawasa. I thereafter got interested in him and also learnt that the man had a rich legal professional background having been one of the first black Zambian lawyers to hold the position of Solicitor General after independence from colonial rule. I became attracted to him and he became my ultimate presidential choice.

Teddy's comments point to the fact he was convinced by his friends to dismiss rumours which were circulated in some social circles and reported in the media about Mwanawasa's insanity following a road traffic accident. The fact that he became convinced shows that discursive interaction ultimately played a greater role than the

rumours reported in the media in the choice his presidential candidate. As Tomlinson notes:

We may think of the media as the dominant representational aspect of modern culture, but the lived experiences of culture may also include the discursive interaction of families and friends – existential experience of routine – eating, working, being well or unwell, sexuality, the sense of passage of time and so on. (1991:61)

Tomlinson's observations appear to have been supported by other members of the participating groups. In group one, MacDonald's revelations that 'a lot of hidden things about some politicians were uncovered in the discussions,' led him to change his mind about his earlier choice. In other words, discursive interactions with others shaped his choice of candidate. 'I was able to make up my mind after digesting other peoples' opinions on issues that I earlier did not properly understand.'

Similarly, the sentiments expressed in group three by Maureen and Catherine show that they changed their opinions to vote for NCC candidate pastor Nevers Mumba because of conversations they had with some church members. They became convinced that the pastor had gone out of his way to join politics which was a 'dirty game', and that it was not a game that a genuine Christian should play. These findings support the theories of writers who have emphasized the influence of peers and other associates in shaping voter behaviour apart from media messages. Curran (1996) notes that 'how audiences are active is influenced by their backgrounds, experiences and outlooks as audience members, and the wider distribution of meanings in society.'

The social interactions and the lived backgrounds of the participants appear to have neutralised the impact of media messages in influencing the sample of this study in their choice of presidential candidates. In other words, for the majority of participants, the media's influence was overridden by social factors.

7.6 Ethnic influence

Although ethnic influence could be said to be associated with the cultural and social predispositions of the participants, it deserves special treatment in this study. A fundamental feature of this study was to establish the influence of ethnic inclinations in the choice of presidential candidates, aside from the influence of social interactions in general.

This study has established that ethnic influence had a more significant impact than the media in shaping the electoral choices of the participating students. Despite the fact that all the participants were exposed to the media, they appear to have played a marginal role in changing the voting choices of those participants who voted along ethnic lines. This is an indication that ethnic factors were more influential than media messages in many cases. This observation seems to disagree with the notion that media exposure can effect electoral change in cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities despite the electorate already being predisposed to vote along ethnic lines. Mbozi in *The Post* observes:

Whether [we] agree or not, tribalism is beginning to come out more significantly in politics than ever before. Never before in Zambian politics have the voters shown such tribal preferences than in these elections. Never before have the Zambian voters rejected a candidate purely because he does not belong, or backed by their tribe.

Mbozi's views support those of Sichone (1996) who further argues that ethnic politics in Zambia are due to what is perceived as uneven distribution of national resources and the development of some parts of the county at the expense of others. He also claims that tribal politics may continue so long as the appointments of government ministers and other key positions in the public and private sectors do not represent a wider spectrum of ethnic groups. Many of the research participants supported this view. Olive's remarks are a clear testimony to the fact that he sees other ethnic groups as obstacles to the progress of his tribe.

There was no way I was going to vote for a candidate who was not close to my roots. Other tribes have shown us that they pay more attention to developing the areas from which they originate and neglect others. I would also want to see development take place in my area and this can only be done by my people. We have been subjugated to other tribes for such a long time. It is time things changed.

These sentiments appear similar to those expressed by John in group three, who revealed that he didn't like 'Chiluba's arrogance and insensitivity to the interests of other tribes', and thought that voting for his tribesman would change things to his tribe's advantage. In group two, the same views of tribal dominance were also stated as the main reason for voting along ethnic lines.

The findings therefore indicate that the media had little impact to change the entrenched ethnic beliefs of those who voted along ethnic lines. These individuals were convinced that the only way to change what they perceived as a 'negative' situation was to vote for candidates who were close to their positions. Davidson notes that 'voters are likely to judge the position of a candidate they favour as being fairly close to their own position regardless of how the stand of the candidate is seen by the total population' (1982:158).

7.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed and interpreted the significance of the findings which are contained in chapter six of this study. I have shown that the media played a superficial role in affecting the electoral choices of the participants in this study. Conversely, I have demonstrated that other factors such as social predispositions and ethnic inclinations dominated the media in shaping the voting preferences of the participants. In the next chapter, I will be summarising the outcomes of this study and will make some observations on the future role of the media in Zambia and its limitations in the electoral process.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will summarise the outcome of this study by referring to its objective. I will end by commenting on the perceived future role of the Zambian media in the electoral process in Zambia and its limitations.

8.1 Objective and outcome

This study's objective was to investigate the relative importance of the media in influencing the voting behaviour of students at the Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka during the December 2001 elections. The study sought to investigate the interplay of mediation between the lived cultures of the students and media messages, and establish how these impacted on them in the choice of their presidential candidates. The study also set out to determine whether modernised students shunned voting along ethnic lines because of their exposure to the media and other socializing agents, (e.g. schools), or whether they voted along ethnic lines like people in rural areas.

The outcome of this study has revealed that the media had a superficial role in influencing the voting behaviour of the selected sample of students. It has been established that despite being exposed to the media, there was a general pattern among all the groups that suggested that the media did not to a large extent change the voting preferences of most of the participants in all the groups.

On the other hand, the findings show that other factors apart from the media had a greater impact. The media tended at most times to reinforce the existing predispositions of the students' voting preferences rather than to change them. However, there were a few cases when the media had direct impact on the voting behaviour of some students especially

those who were undecided until they were exposed to media material which influenced the choice of their presidential candidates.

Media messages did not succeed in converting most of the participants. This implied that there were other intervening factors at play which diffused the impact of mediated information. Nonetheless, media messages were useful in a number of cases when they combined with other factors such as social influence to impact on the choices of some participants. In other words, the media was unable to affect voting behaviour in isolation. The study has also demonstrated that most participants either resisted media messages, made their own interpretations or both, especially to messages which were uncongenial to their thinking. Even if media messages did influence the participants, they often did not do so in the way they were intended to. They were either interpreted differently or rejected outright except in a few instances when the media or the source of information was considered reliable, prestigious or liked.

Social influence had a greater impact in influencing the electoral choices of most participants in comparison with media influence. Nonetheless, it was often the media that set the agenda and platform for discursive interactions that influenced the political opinions of some participants.

The study has also shown that most participants were sceptical of media messages and relied more on other sources of information to get a clear picture of what had been reported in the media. Most participants of this study felt that they could not rely entirely on media messages. The fact that some participants said that there was change of opinion from their earlier positions on certain political issues following discursive interactions suggests that social sources were seen as more dependable and influential than media reports.

Furthermore, this study has also demonstrated that ethnic inclinations wielded more pressure than the media in shaping the voting preferences of the participants. Again, this appears to reveal the limitations of the media in influencing the voting choices of many

participants. The outcome of this study suggests that the media had little significance in changing the minds of the students who voted on ethnic lines or those influenced by other social factors.

8.2 Observation

Although the findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalised to the whole Zambian voting population, these findings are however, in opposition to the notion that the media in Zambia may have played a significant role in influencing the voting behaviour of cosmopolitan Zambians to vote neutrally other than on ethnic lines, like people in the rural areas who are less exposed to the media and have been assumed to vote on ethnic lines for lack of media exposure and socialization agents like schools. On the contrary, the findings of this study appear to suggest that social and ethnic factors could be among the leading factors that influence the choice of political candidates in cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities and towns.

The findings of this study are in disagreement with theories of the media that postulate the powerful effects of the media in shaping the opinion of its audiences, in particular voters, without accounting for their social predispositions and lived experiences.

8.3 The future role of the Zambian media in the electoral process

The media in Zambia will remain an integral part of the electoral process. It will continue to play a vital role, not only by providing information about candidates, but also by supplying political content that will stimulate the electorate and create political awareness through debate. The media will also continue to some extent to provide information on which the electorate may base their decisions to make informed choices of their political candidates. However, the Zambian media will have to re-examine itself if they are to genuinely make steps towards objective, fair, and unbiased reporting. The Zambian media should strive towards a liberal approach, discussed in chapter three, to represent the public good other than reflecting the interests of the owners. The question of the Zambian media's credibility in times of elections remains unanswered. The polarised media in Zambia has created doubts about how far voters can depend on them, because

they represent such opposed interests – that of the government in power by the public media, and that of the opposition by the private media.

The onus will lie to a great extent on the owners of the media institutions to unshackle the fetters they have clipped on the media, both public and private. Furthermore, the concept of media professionalism is also at stake. This has remained a wishful fantasy for many media practitioners who face threats of dismissals from owners of media institutions for not being ‘upright’. In the face of a staggering economy that offers no alternative opportunities, journalists will be forced to remain tied to their present employers for some time to come. However, following recent pressure mounted on government by civic organisations and some donor communities, it is relieving to note that the Zambian government has put some steps in place to address media reforms. The question still remains how far these reforms can go: will any government that comes to power be willing to strip itself off the protection it will enjoy from the public media and become ‘vulnerable’ to private media forces and the public at large? Only time can tell.

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APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Which media were you regularly exposed to and which media were you least exposed to during the run-up to the elections and can you comment why?
2. What sort of information were you attracted to in the media during the run up to the elections, and why?
3. Can you comment on whether the media supplied useful information during the period leading to the elections?
4. Did any of this information influence you in the choice of your presidential candidate, if so, how? (probe)
5. Did you ever discuss the political information in the media with your peers, family, siblings and any other acquaintances in your social circles? If so, what kind of prominent political issues did you discuss? (probe)
6. What sort of influence did the discussions have? And did you at anytime change your opinion on a given political issue after discussing with other people?
7. If so, did the change of opinion have an effect on the choice of your presidential candidate? (probe)
8. Did you trust the political sources (politicians) of information in the public media and the private media? Which ones were reliable and less reliable?

9. Some people say that the coverage of opposition politicians by the public media was biased, and so was the coverage of politicians from the ruling party by the private media. Do you agree? (prompt)

10. My thinking is that some dominant politicians and people from prominent social circles shaped the political thinking of other people through the media during the run-up to the elections. What do you think and where you affected? (prompt)

11. Do you think the media set agenda and framed stories which were in the public interest during the period leading to the elections?

12. Did you resist political messages which were not consonant to your interests, or did you interpret them differently? If so, why and how? (probe)

13. Some people say that they were influenced by their ethnic backgrounds in the choice of their presidential candidates. What do you think about this, and were you influenced in this manner yourself? And if so, why and how? (prompt and probe)

14. What is your opinion of the video tape and the newspaper cuttings that have been shown in relation to how the politicians and the media impacted on you in the choice of your presidential candidate?

APPENDIX II

COMPOSITION OF FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Group I Southern and Western Provinces

This group comprised ten members who originate from the Southern and Western provinces of Zambia, mainly the Tonga and the Lozi-speaking tribes who share a common tribal linkage and refer to themselves as tribal cousins.

Apart from the late Harry Nkumbula, A Tonga nationalist who led the militant African National Congress (ANC) in Zambia in the 1950s to wage the struggle against colonialism but later fall out of favour and was replaced by Kaunda, the Tonga's have not come any closer to produce a leader that would rule Zambia, until the emergence of Anderson Mazoka, their presidential candidate in the 2001 elections. This appeared to have signalled a chance for them to change the political status quo of being dominated by other tribes. Mazoka of the UPND came a close second to the winner, Mwanawasa of MMD.

Focus group II Northern and Luapula Provinces

This group also consisting of ten participants had its ethnic origins from the Northern and Luapula provinces of Zambia. Both provinces are the homelands of the Bemba speaking people who have one of the largest population concentrations in Zambia, and are one of the most dominant tribes. Chiluba, the former president, originates from Luapula province. Political observers have remarked that the current president, Mwanawasa, recorded a landslide victory in these areas not because people voted for him as an individual, but because of Chiluba's influence. The latter had endorsed Mwanawasa as his successor after his bid for a 'third term' of office failed.

Focus group III Eastern Province

There were ten members in this group who come from the Eastern province. This area belongs to the Ngoni speaking people and other related tribes. The Ngoni speaking tribe is one of the most influential tribes on the Zambian political scene. The Ngoni and the

Bemba speaking people have dominated Zambian politics for a long time. Other tribes, notably the Tongas and Lozis, have been attempting to change this political dominance. Zambia's first republican president, Kenneth Kaunda had his ethnic roots from Malawi whose people share similar ethnic roots to those of Eastern Zambia.

