

MASS MEDIA, WOMEN AND PUBLIC LIFE IN UGANDA: INTERROGATING  
REPRESENTATION, INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

By

Emilly Comfort Maractho

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## DECLARATION

I, Emilly Comfort Maratho (student number 214581311), hereby declare that this thesis is my own work. It has never been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. The sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS) in the School of Literary Studies, Media and Creative Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Signature.....Date: 20 July 2017

## **DEDICATION**

For Philomena Kwopacho. Vicky, Erick, Jude, Stella and I, got a special mother.

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## ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the strides Uganda has made towards the growth of the media and women's participation in public life. The puzzle is that this increased participation of women in public life is hardly captured in the media, particularly public affairs programmes on the broadcast media. This study, therefore, interrogates women's media participation through representation, interaction and engagement as components of conjunctural factors that are relevant to facilitating women's participation in public life. The research is informed by critical theory, and in particular feminist thought, cultural studies and public sphere theory. The marginalisation and oppression of women advanced by feminist theorists, the systems of representation through power and knowledge in cultural studies, and the open participation of discursive programmes that demystify gatekeeping practices in traditional programming in public sphere theory, were the frames used to guide this study. I use multi-method and multidisciplinary approaches that entail quantitative content analysis, qualitative case studies and grounded theory to interrogate the influence of the broadcast media on women's participation in public life. The thesis of my research is that women's media participation in public affairs programmes through representation conceptualised as voice and visibility, interaction as consultation and conversation and engagement as involvement and influence, would facilitate women's participation in public life. Limited representation, interaction and engagement, therefore, frustrate or at least do not advance, women's participation in public life, contrary to the perceived potential and transformative role of the media. I find that participation remains minimal. The problem is not just the media which has in most studies is found responsible for the negative portrayal of women, but a complex interrelationship between women and the state, society and the media. The state opens up space for women and, paradoxically, closes it, culture defines women's role in society, and the media reproduces cultural narratives that are injurious to women. Women push back, sometimes but often remain loyal to the state, respond to cultural expectations and ignore the media or disengage from it. This, thus thwarts meaningful opportunities for participation that could help change the perceptions about women's role in society as well as mobilise and motivate women to participate in public life. The implication for policy and current strategies for women's empowerment, in particular affirmative action pursued in Uganda and elsewhere, is huge. There is need to rethink the existing models of women's empowerment and the gender equality agenda, cognisant of the current paradigm of neoliberalism, in particular liberalism and globalism, that thrive on competition, communication and competence.

## **ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

FDC:	Forum for Democratic Change
NORHED:	The Norwegian Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development
NRM:	National Resistance Movement
ULS:	Uganda Law Society
UMWA:	Uganda Media Women's Association
UWOPA:	Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association
WEM:	women's engagement with media
WMI:	women-media interaction
WPMM:	women's participation in the mass media
WPPL:	women's participation in public life
WRM:	women's representation in the media

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## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. Chapter Introduction**

This study is designed to achieve both a description and an explanation in order to maximise the benefits of both. A critical examination of the interconnection between the mass media, women and public life has not been widely undertaken in many parts of Africa. No doubt studies on the media and women have been widely undertaken, focusing on the portrayal and coverage of female politicians and first ladies, but rarely focusing on public life or the interconnection. This study interrogates women's representation, interaction and engagement with the broadcast media, and their implications for women's participation in public life.

The study is motivated by the exponential growth of the broadcast media and increased women's participation in public life in Uganda from the 1990s, mainly as a result of liberalisation of the media in 1993<sup>1</sup> and affirmative action in 1995.<sup>2</sup> Both policies have contributed to the success story<sup>3</sup> of Uganda, beyond the media's proliferation and women's empowerment, since the early 1990s. More broadly, these achievements are a result of democratisation and the liberalisation of the economy, and later politics. Recent developments in information technology are also critical for changing the mass media landscape. This chapter examines these developments and presents the research questions. It is based on the Ugandan case context, which is limited in literature on television in particular, hence the adoption of grounded theory.

#### **1.2. Broadcast Media in Uganda: A Historical Overview**

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<sup>1</sup> In 1993, the government liberalised the media and ended government monopoly in broadcast media. The first private radio became operational in 1993 and the number has since grown tremendously.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 1995 Constitution (Article 33), affirmative action was instituted in order to increase women's representation in politics and girls' education in higher institutions of learning

<sup>3</sup> Uganda is considered a post-conflict success story in relation to its implementation of the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s (Reinikka & Collier 1992)

The Ugandan colonial government pioneered radio broadcasting with the formation of the Uganda Broadcasting Service (UBS) in 1954 and television broadcasting nearly a decade later, according to the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) (FHRI 2007). The print media, started by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), predates broadcasting by half a century, yet it remains in need of development and modernisation (Robbins 1997). Newspaper readership is still very low, even in comparison to other African countries (Tabaire 2007). The missionaries and colonialists played a key role in the development of Ugandan media (Gariyo 1992), although the socio-political history of the country points to a reversal of most of the gains made during the subsequent regimes of Idi Amin in the 1970s and Milton Obote's second presidency in the early 1980s. There was, however, a re-birth during the National Resistance Movement (NRM) years, after 1986 (Chibita 2010).

The current growth of broadcasting in Uganda is deemed phenomenal and attributed to changes on the continent in the 1990s. 'Liberalisation of the airwaves is a reference to a process that has led to the emergence of private broadcasters and to a much lesser extent and in a very few countries, "community" broadcasters' (Article 19, 2003 p. 2). Until the liberalisation of the airwaves in the 1990s, the history of broadcasting in Uganda had, in general, been one of subservience to the interests of the ruling parties and military juntas (Mwesige & Balikowa 2008). The result was slow growth, with only one radio and one TV station, both state-owned and operated, by 1993. This rapidly changed with liberalisation. The number of licensed privately-owned radio and television stations increased from one in 1992 to 292 operational FM stations, 12 non-operational FM stations, 28 operational TV stations (analogue), two non-operational TV stations (analogue), three operational TV stations (digital terrestrial stations) and two operational TV stations (digital satellite stations), according to official statistics (UCC 2010, UCC 2015, p. 11). This has been beneficial to the Ugandan listener.

Radio has over 90 per cent penetration across the country, and is the most widely accessible media platform, according to the latest Afro Barometer Media Report for Uganda (AMBU 2016). Radio is considered a tool for public debate, and its role in the democratisation of Uganda has been acknowledged (Mwesige 2004). Capital Radio was the first station to introduce a participatory political radio talk show, The Capital Gang, which had a host and four regular guests, called 'gangsters', into which listeners were free to call (Chibita 2010). The talk show had a regular female 'gangster', Winnie Byanyima. While there is no permanent female 'gangster' on the show today, there is usually at least one female participant, sometimes two. Nearly every FM radio station today has a talk show.

Radio introduced another form of talk show, the *ekimeeza* (loosely translated as ‘the round-table’) genre in 2000. It was:

[a] live talk show held in an open drinking space with a self-selected group of participants. The show had a moderator who, with the group, determined what topical issues to tackle each Saturday afternoon. For the first time in Uganda’s history ordinary Ugandans dared to challenge the policies and decisions of the reigning government on radio and in their own languages. The culture of *ekimeeza* spread rapidly to the rural areas, where the NRM’s strongest political base lay. (Chibita 2010, pp. 7-8)

The threat posed by the spread of *ekimeeza* is thus well captured by the quote above. The *ekimeeza* was subsequently banned, following complaints from the government about the nature of the discussions held. President Museveni denied knowledge of the *ekimeeza* ban on The Capital Gang, hosted by Oskar Ssemweya-Musoke at Capital Radio FM.<sup>4</sup> The fairly blanket ban did not affect other radio stations, that continued to operate the talk show. The host and producer of the *Tuteese* (loosely translated as ‘come let us dialogue’) programme on Mama FM, a subsidiary of Uganda Women’s Association (UMWA), admitted that, although they were aware of the ban, they had never received any formal complaint about the show, which he moderated, and therefore did not think that it targeted them. They circumvented the ban by respecting an aspect of the ban that required all talk shows to be conducted within the vicinity of the studio by moving their round-table discussion into a studio.<sup>5</sup>

The talk-show phenomenon, now common on television as well, is a vehicle through which citizens engage with public affairs and social issues through debate, thereby contributing to the democratisation of Uganda as is aptly captured:

[F]or all their limitations, talk shows have opened up new political spaces that were unimaginable only a decade ago. The Ugandan political talk show phenomenon may not be democracy in action, but it is an important rehearsal for democracy. The promise and future of political talk radio in Africa will depend on both commercial forces and the broad direction of democratisation, and democratisation may depend, at least in part, on talk radio. (Mwesige 2004, p. 231)

Peter Mwesige (2004) underscores the importance of political talk radio for the advancement of democracy in a country like Uganda without overlooking its limitations. This critical role of

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with The Capital Gang host, Mr Ssemweya-Musoke, in February 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Mr Lawrence Kalanzi is the host of two political talk shows on Mama FM. I interviewed him in February 2015. It should be noted that while Mama FM is specifically aimed to boost female competence and visibility, the political shows are hosted by a man. The justification offered was that whereas the radio is for women, men are partners, but it is not lost on anyone that women do the ‘soft’ shows, even at Mama FM.



talk shows, one might argue, is not limited to radio, but extends to television too. However, Mwesige does not examine how women as a social group are part of that form of political engagement. The study was undertaken within the context of the absence of conventional legal avenues for political expression, campaigning and mobilisation. Still, one might concur that talk shows have become the major forum through which opposition political parties and civil society groups publicly challenge the government. In some instances, talk shows have been used to advance specific agenda, as is the case with the Buganda Kingdom in what Florence Brisset-Foucault (2013) has termed a ‘royalist public sphere’ established by Central Broadcasting Service (CBS) programmes. Talk shows have enabled the public to inquire about information regarding public affairs – a major democratic function of talk radio.

When it comes to television, it remains the less developed media channel in Uganda. Accordingly, TV remains out of reach for those living in the countryside, although most TV services available in Uganda are new, established only since 2000. Free-to-air services exist at the state-funded UBC-TV based in Kampala that has a countrywide reach (ABMU 2012). Literature on television in Uganda remains limited, with radio offering a wide range of literature.

Television interactive talk shows cover a wide range of topics (Khamalwa 2006). Politics dominates the discussions, although a wide range of issues such as health, business and education also feature. Television has included audience-driven programmes in which the discussion is largely audience-centred while others are of a panel-discussion nature or interviews. Several interviews are embedded in the newscast. The electronic discursive programmes targeting current and public affairs are indicators of how citizens use the mass media as a platform for engagement with political institutions and actors.

Modern programming, which depends on information communication technologies (ICTs), is changing the way media discursive programmes function, with greater potential for women’s inclusion owing to a perceived limited role of gatekeeping (Mwesige 2004). It is envisaged that ICTs will transform the way the media does business. In their study of the British media, Neil Thurman and Ben Lupton found that there was a high degree of experimentation in traditional news publishers’ approaches to multimedia despite limited clarity on what would work or fail. In general, they found a willingness to invest in the technologies required to increase online presence (Thurman & Lupton 2008, p. 453).

Barbara Kaija (2013) points out that the media in Uganda is fragmented, with many stations competing for audiences in a small economy despite a mostly favourable media environment that is legally enabling and not actively regulated. Other studies find that the Ugandan media environment is precarious. There are concerns that media freedoms are shrinking, and more journalists report cases of abuse. Public statements, judicial sanctions and arbitrary police actions have been employed to intimidate media practitioners, according to several media reports. The government uses legal and policy frameworks to control the media using retrogressive laws (Chibita 2010), which have negatively impacted on media growth and development (Maractho 2014).

Although some challenges remain, the mass media in Uganda has played ‘an essential role in exposing undemocratic practices and the areas where the executive and military have overreached’ (Tripp 2010, p. 195). The media is not alone in playing this role, as Tripp notes; that political parties, civil society and social movements such as women’s movements and labour have also been instrumental in changing laws and norms. Exposing undemocratic tendencies implies that the mass media has caused social and political practices to be changed.

### **1.3. Women and Public Life in Uganda**

The campaign for increased women’s participation in public life<sup>6</sup> has been ongoing since the early 1990s. Women were heavily involved in securing a ‘women-friendly’ constitution during the Constituent Assembly (Tripp 2000). The 1995 Ugandan constitution has been considered, and rightly so, as a ‘women’s constitution’ (Lakwo 2006) owing to the many gains for women, including a ‘reserved seat policy’ known as affirmative action (GoU 1995) and a specific focus on women’s rights (Tamale 1999). Specific provisions are found in Box 1 below:

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<sup>6</sup> Public life is defined broadly as participation in politics and policy-making in the public and private sectors.

**Fig 1.1. Constitutional provision for women’s equality and equal participation**

**Article 21**

1. All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social, and cultural life and in every respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.
2. Without prejudice to clause (1) of this article, persons shall not be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion or social or economic standing, political opinion or disability.

**Article 33**

1. Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.
2. The state shall provide facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement.
3. The state shall protect women and their rights, taking into account their unique status and natural material functions in society.
4. Women shall have equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.
5. Without prejudice to article 32 of this constitution, women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of addressing the imbalances created by history, tradition, and custom.
6. Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status, are prohibited by this Constitution.

**Article 180**

- 1(b) One third of the membership of each local government shall be reserved for women.

Source: *The 1995 Constitution*

The quota system, which was adopted in 1989 and formerly entrenched in the 1995 constitution, has also contributed to the rising number of women in Parliament during general elections held in 1989 (16%), 1996 (17%), 2001 (24.7%), 2006 (31.4%) and 2011 (34.8%) (Wang 2013). By 2016, the composition is 32%, a drop from the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. The role of government policy in expanding women’s participation in public life is well captured by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in their gender gap report 2015, where they note:

Government policy is critical for shaping the type of ecosystem that facilitates women's economic participation, and many governments now institute policies that encourage women to work and make it easier for them to do so. Such policies can range from non-discrimination in hiring to maternity and paternity leave regimes to quotas encouraging women's participation in economic life. (WEF 2015, p. 42)

Uganda is no exception to the application of these policies. The 2016 report makes similar observations (WEF, 2016). A 2014 national study by the women's advocacy non-governmental organisation (NGO), Isis-WICCE, in collaboration with Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA), captures the spirit of women's participation in public life thus:

While representative democratic arenas have received the lion's share of attention, understanding women's political engagement requires that we pay closer attention to the other spaces – 'new' democratic spaces and more 'traditional' arenas outside the domain of formal politics – in which women participate as political and social actors, including their pathways into politics. Some of these critical spaces include the women's movement. As the study strongly argues, the nexus between the women political leaders and the women's movement can provide an epicentre of feminist consciousness and ultimately enable the women political leaders to make a difference in politics. (Isis-WICCE & UWOPA 2014, p. x)

The study makes two critical submissions that are relevant to this study. The first is that women in politics have been the main arena for action towards women's participation in public life without much attention being paid to arenas outside this domain. It has also been the main area of research in the Ugandan context, with most of the major works on women targeting the political sphere (Tamale 1999; Tripp 2000; Goetz 2003; Ahikire 2004, 2007). Yet the framers of the study still fall in the same trap, paying attention to women in politics almost exclusively, and how they can make a difference. It is for this reason that the current study focused on women in public life rather than politics.

The second submission, which stems from the focus on the women in politics-women's movement nexus, fails to recognise other avenues of feminist consciousness. Again, the participation of women's movement and women in politics are considered to be the panacea for gender equality. This approach has resulted in less attention being paid to other areas such as women and the media, which remains under-researched by scholars in Uganda. In the end, two scenarios tend to play out, i.e. (i) women's participation in politics; and (ii) the women's movement.

Despite increase in participation, there is concern that increased women's presence in Parliament and bureaucracy committed to women's cause has not translated into women's political effectiveness (Goetz 2003, 2002, 1998) and women still face enormous challenges participating in public life (Kadaga 2013). This contradicts the 'success story' of Uganda as one of the model countries regarding women's empowerment. The need to look beyond affirmative action (Maractho 2010) is evident. It is rare to find discussions that go beyond women's negative portrayal in the media, a gap that this study fills.

The current study goes beyond politics and the women's movement to include areas often evidently invisible in research, at least with regard to media studies in the region, and focuses on electronic media in relation to six areas of public life: (i) politics; (ii) the civil service; (iii) education and sports; (iv) medicine and public health; (v) business and economics; and (vi) law and advocacy. In the end, it was not possible to have equal representation of women in these categories owing to their unwillingness to participate and government policy that designates specific people to speak to the media, who may be male.

#### **1.4. Media and Women in Public Life**

The participation of women in the media remains limited despite more women graduating from journalism schools. Women in the media are also leaving the newsroom. Some of the reasons Kaija (2013) notes include the perception that journalism is a dead profession and yet associated with several problems including limited to low pay, long working hours, lack of opportunities for career advancement and greater difficulty in balancing family and career.

The portrayal of women in the Ugandan media is largely negative and minimal (Tamale 1999; Kabuchu 1992; Kawamara 1992; UMWA 2016). Gender activists are increasingly complaining about the insufficiency of women's voices and increased stereotyping in Uganda's media products. Women's voices, it is argued, are less heard on issues traditionally associated with men like politics, economics, energy and sports. Nonetheless, women are more visible in subjects considered more female such as gender equality, children issues, health, beauty and lifestyle (Kaija 2013). Women are portrayed as economically dependent on men (Litho et al. 2012) and, basing on cultural stereotypes, social problems and the women's movement are generally viewed negatively (Kabuchu 1992). These are not limited to Uganda and is well captured. For instance, the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) report notes that women are underrepresented as news subjects, taking up only 24%, while men take up 76 %

(GMMP 2015). This under-representation mirrors society, although the media could be guilty of omission and commission (Morna, 2002).

Few studies have attempted to provide answers as to why this trend persists, beyond male dominance of the media industry. The degree of freedom women have on air is related to institutional constraints and audience expectations that surround their space, which, in mixed stations, depends on how the women's space is valued in the station (Mitchell 1998). Jovia Musibika notes that the main reason for the negative portrayal of women is the nature and structure of media ownership and control (2008b, p. 127) while Audrey Gadzekpo (2009, p. 78) points to the absence of gender and media courses in a lot of African mass media schools and departments and in gender/women studies departments. Others contend that the media is influenced by patriarchy (Tamale 1999; Kabuchu 1992). But as Nassanga rightly points out, 'the presence of media does not imply that everybody utilises it, so it is important to examine the access and engagement in citizens' media' Nassanga 2009, p. 53). In many ways, it is this engagement I seek to interrogate among women.

The powerful effects discourse is prominent in the discussion of women and media representation, in which media is believed to affect women's role in society. The Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) highlights this effect:

It is increasingly recognised that media have a key role to play in women's participation throughout political life. It can help to instil among the public the idea that women's participation in political life is an essential part of democracy (and) can also take care to avoid giving negative or minimising images of women and their determination and capacity to participate in politics, stress the importance of women's role in economic and social life and in the development process in general. (UMWA 2016, p. 4)

This places a responsibility for women's empowerment on the media, too. Clearly, this optimism is limited in many ways. In her study of newspapers in Uganda, Hope Kabuchu contends that 'the media as an institution of power is an ideal model for the transmission of the kind of ideology which may suit the interests of the dominant groups' (1992, p. 19). Although the study focuses on newspapers in the wake of the liberalisation of the media in Uganda and before the 1995 constitution came into effect, it offers valuable lessons on the media and its role in ideology and discourse formation, in particular with regard to women. The value of this study lies in the establishment of ways by which women engaged with the media, to circumvent the negative portrayal. It offers a critical analysis of newspaper texts at the time.

Women and media studies have focused on representation and coverage, in particular of women in politics. Although there is little research on the interconnection between women, the media and public life in Uganda and Africa in general (with the notable exceptions of South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria), the subject has been a huge research interest in the United States (U.S.), Europe and the Middle East. In Africa, most studies are on women in/and politics and representation in parliaments or women's role in various aspects of development. These have left a huge gap in understanding the African media in relation to women in public life.

As radio and television become more accessible and important for democratisation, there is need to examine how women participate in their programmes. Interest in women's participation should not be limited to politics and decision-making but should also extend to other arenas of engagement. This is critical because the manner in which issues relevant to women are framed and the way in which those active in public life are represented may play crucial roles in the formation of public opinion in general and the mobilisation of women voters in particular (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross 1996). This could harm women and democracy itself (Ross 2004).

There have been attempts to improve women's representation in the media in terms of positions of women in media production through negotiations and involvement by the women's movement. This is motivated by the idea that the media give little attention to women's issues and that 'the little coverage given to women is negative and perpetuates gender imbalance' (Nassanga 1997). The mainstream media (print) are considered 'chief perpetrators of distortions and misrepresentations of women and women's issues' (Mukama 2002), particularly of women in politics (Tamale 1999). Literature focuses on coverage and the image of women in the media, especially in the print media, although the state broadcasters are also examined (Nassanga 1997). These works highlight the nature of representation from the perspective of image and portrayal.

Much as the transformative role of media has been lauded, the media, being patriarchal in nature, has thus negatively affected women's political participation. Sylvia Tamale notes:

The male-dominated media in Uganda represents one of the patriarchal pillars that serve as a conduit for perpetuating gender subordination and oppression. Operation of the old boy network within the male political elite is extended to include the fraternity of reporters, journalists, and editors who serve as gatekeepers to what makes news. By portraying women politicians as an aberration or as intruders in the serious male game of politics, they perpetuate the gendered public/private divide. The people, *wanainchi*, internalise these

ideologies, which create and/or fuel feelings of resentment toward the women who participate in formal politics. (Tamale 1999, p. 197)

Tamale recognises the influence of media through this claim of effects as a result of negative reporting. This narrative of negative effects on women has dominated their portrayal in the media debate. However, the interactive programmes of public affairs types, it is argued, enable members or participants to bypass traditional gatekeeping tendencies (Mwesige 2009) or challenge constructs by the media such as these that Tamale refers to. Yet, these are also the programmes in which women least participate. The current research suggests that the emancipatory role of interactive media may diminish with examination of women in public life.

With regard to women's coverage, more recent studies show an improvement in representation, although the results are mixed. The Afro Barometer Media Report for Uganda (2016) highlighted these changes. Contrary to the bleak picture painted a decade earlier, they report an improvement in coverage of both men's and women's issues, noting that several papers have supplements that engage women on various topical issues but point to problems:

At the rural level, several radio stations dedicate more time to discussing women's issues; and NTV now has a channel entirely for women. However, these platforms often take an entertainment-focused approach, covering topics such as fashion, relationships, and a range of 'softer topics'. As such, a number of issues remain about the representation of women and the inclusion of their voices in the media. The media "trivialises women and places them at a lower scale of society" and content targeted at women "is not very progressive". "The content is not very engaging and is very simple. There is a generalisation that women would only discuss those simple things. Why aren't they as engaging with women? They are not sourcing women to articulate key issues that are more engaging." (AMBU 2016, p. 41)

Although the report equates the establishment of a women's TV as positive, it pays little attention to the content on Spark TV. The mere existence of a television station for women about women does not address the issue of voice and visibility in all media. The same report notes that the media still push and reinforce gender stereotypes, women are not used as sources of stories as much as men, and the same women appearing all the time. The report further commends civil society for piling pressure on the media to mainstream gender issues in the media and to lobby for increased women's representation as well as balance on TV and radio. As such, they note that the mainstream media is now moving away from sexualising or



victimising women (ibid). Stories of invisibility of women on media remain significant (Gross, 2010).

There are limitations on both the growth of the broadcast media and the increase in the number of women in Parliament. The case is made that although the liberalisation policy of the early 1990s led to the exponential growth of the broadcast media (radio and television), there are concerns about the quality of programming (Kibazo & Kanaabi 2007). The affirmative action policy as stipulated by Article 32 of the Constitution and gender-sensitive legislation demonstrated by Article 33 as per Box 1 above contributed to improved women's political representation. Yet, even as the women's success story of increased representation in politics and participation in public life is being told, challenges remain.

The study is based on critical theory, in particular feminist thought, cultural studies and public sphere theory. Many studies on women and the media use normative theories in general and framing in particular. The current study examines arguments in the three theories to enable fresh understanding of why decades of research on women and the media has seen limited results in terms of change in the representation of women in the media.

Grounded theory is used as an analytical framework, providing the opportunity for data to speak in terms of conceptualisation. Several of the concepts used in the study were developed as a result of analysis of empirical data from interviews with men and women in the media engaged in public affairs programming. Using the steps taken in grounded theory to code, characterise and form concepts, I developed measures for the three conjectural factors in which representation was conceptualised as voice and visibility, interaction as consultation and conversation, and engagement as influence and involvement.

The study objectives are achieved through a multi-method approach involving content analysis, case studies and grounded theory. Data is collected using recording of programmes, participant observation and semi-structured and in-depth interviews tending towards life histories. It starts with semi-structured interviews with members of the media, followed by observation and content analysis of specific programmes, and ends with unstructured interviews with women in public life, covering their experiences with the media and participation in public life. A multiple case study design is adopted, as explained in the detailed chapter on methods.

## **1.5. The Problem Statement**

The Ugandan polity has witnessed an exponential growth of the broadcast media and increased women's participation in public life as a result of two specific policies, liberalisation of the media and affirmative action for women. However, despite women's impressive progress in various domains and increased participation in government and civil society, this has not been reflected in the broadcast media's public affairs programming, which remains largely male-dominated. The problem is that, on the one hand, the broadcast media and its role in democracy continue to attract scholarly attention. On the other, the campaign to increase women's participation in public life continues but mostly with a focus on the quota system, which is deemed to be limiting for women's political effectiveness. Yet, there is hardly enough research on the broadcast media and women in public life. The current study thus seeks to critically examine the interconnections between the media, women and public life in Uganda by interrogating representation, interaction and engagement, and their implications for women's participation in public life. The main question is: To what extent, and in what ways, does the broadcast media facilitate women's participation in public life in Uganda? The mass media is examined through the broadcast media's political and public affairs programming of a discursive nature such as talk shows and audience discussion programmes. The main objective of this study is to establish the broadcast media's contribution towards women's participation in public life. The study thus moves the conversation on women's participation in the public domain beyond women in politics, which dominates research as well as media portrayal. The study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge as well as policy-making concerned with women and the media in Uganda.

## **1.6. Research Questions**

The study sought to explore the broadcast media's influence on women's participation in public life in Uganda. The key question is: To what extent and in what ways does the broadcast media influence women's participation in public life in Uganda? This question is answered by interrogating three conjunctural factors of media participation: representation, interaction and engagement. The sub-questions for examination include:

- (i) What is the nature of women's representation, interaction and engagement on political and public affairs programming of the broadcast media in Uganda?
- (ii) What are the factors that determine women's participation in the media?
- (iii) Why do fewer women in public life participate in the media's public affairs programmes? and
- (iv) How do the media promote women's participation in public life?

These questions are imperative to the extent that they interrogate not just the media but also women in public life with reference to their participation in the broadcast media.

### **1.7. Rationale for the Study**

The rationale is that focus needs to go beyond women's presence in media that dominate women's studies. It is hypothesised that one factor is necessary but not sufficient to positively influence women's participation in public life, but together contribute to greater participation. Looking beyond political institutions and policy prescriptions that focus on politics in order to increase women's participation in the wider public life is critical and makes the media a significant institution of interest, as per the Beijing Declaration (1995).

The study focused on radio and television talk shows and audience discussion programmes on public affairs and women-specific programmes based on the focused observation that women are more critically under-represented in this type of programming. The study outcome makes an original contribution to the body of literature and is informative for policy-makers engaged in gender and media legislation, media development, civil society and academics in the media, politics and women in order to cultivate better representation, interaction and engagement.

### **1.8. Organisation of Report**

The report is organised in nine chapters. Chapter One focuses on the study context, research issues and research design. It offers a peek into the broadcast media and women in public life in Uganda. Chapter Two covers the literature review, providing a global perspective, and Chapter Three deals with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The main objectives of Chapter Three are to anchor the discussion in theory and to give meaning to the key concepts in the study such as representation, interaction and engagement as well as mapping out the interconnections. Chapter Four covers the methodology. A multi-method approach to research

is adopted owing to the multidisciplinary nature of the study and the lack of adequate literature in the context of Uganda. The findings are presented in three chapters. Chapter Five, which contains the beginning of the presentation and the discussion of findings, delves into the nature of the mass media and public affairs programming in Uganda, women's representation, interaction and engagement, and the determinants of public affairs programming. It is based on the first and second phases of the study focusing on the media. Chapter Six revolves around the constraints on women's participation in public affairs programming based on observation, interviews with the media and content analysis. It discusses three key obstacles that include the state, society and the public sphere, including the media, and how the media reproduces cultural narratives as a constraint in itself.

Chapter Seven presents media influence on women's participation in public life through women's life stories and experiential perspectives. It is based on the final phase of the study that targets women in public life, with the women themselves as a point of departure. Ten cases are discussed. Women respond to key concerns raised in earlier sections of the study. Chapter Eight is largely based on inferences, a discussion and interpretation of the findings. The chapter also discusses the practical reach of theory. It turns to the critical issues of the transformative role of the media and what it means for women. Chapter Nine is the conclusion. It revisits the main arguments. It also includes the implications for policy, women's empowerment and media development. Also noted is the relevance for future research.

## **1.9. Chapter Conclusion**

The mass media in Uganda has evolved over the period of 30 years since 1986 when the NRM took over power. The broadcast media in particular has multiplied enormously, and is a form of public sphere. Women's participation in public life has also greatly improved. The study questions whether and how the increased growth of the media has promoted women's participation in public life. This study focuses on the mass media and women in public life by interrogating representation, interaction and engagement. The chapter ends with the organisation of the report.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **FRAMING THE DABATE ON MEDIA, WOMEN AND PUBLIC LIFE**

#### **2.1. Chapter Introduction**

The current study is an examination of the role of the media in facilitating women's participation in public life, given the exponential growth of the media and increased women's participation in public life. It is approached first by analysing the nature of the media and public affairs programming, women's media participation by interrogating representation, interaction and engagement, and focusing on women's lived experiences with the media in order to establish constraints on participation in the media and the influence on participation in public life. To obtain a clear understanding of the issues, the media is examined in relation to its role in a democratic society, as a public sphere and in relation to women's participation in public life. In this chapter, the debate on mass media, women's participation in public life and the interconnections is framed for the purpose of creating understanding and setting the agenda for empirical outcomes.

#### **2.2. The Nature of the Media**

According to Barbie Zelizer (2004), media in the plural is associated with the ascent of broadcasting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and considered as agents of empowerment or disempowerment and of marginalisation of certain groups, and charged with upholding the status quo. The mass media carries messages to a large number of people. The mass media includes radio, television, magazines, newspapers, movies, sound recordings, cell phones and computer networks. The words 'media' and 'mass media' are used 'interchangeably to refer to the communication industries themselves' (Baran 2013, p. 7). In this study, the media is used to mean the mass media, with a specific focus on the broadcast media, radio and television.

I adopt the understanding of media as an institution and as technology but including information. In definitional terms, on the one hand, the media as an institution is recognised by the large-scale processes by which news is made rather than by considering the news itself and the people who make it. On the other hand, the media is differentiated from other terms by its explicit recognition of technology or the channels in which the news is made and presented,

thus indicating the technological apparatus rather than the information it conveys (Zelizer 2004, p. 26). As such, the institutional and technological definitions ignore the information and people who make it.

This study is based on the information and people involved in the media both as an institution and as technology. The large-scale processes, technology and information all play a key role in the understanding of women's media participation, particularly in public affairs programming. People are users and consumers of the media and are, therefore, at the centre.

Broadcasting, as many studies have shown, has grown in influence, as captured by Article 19, which states that 'broadcasting is very important in Africa because a majority of Africans get their information, education and entertainment from primarily radio and then television' (Article 19, p. 1). The report rightly notes that radio uses more African languages than television and is, therefore, more accessible, but the influence and role of television has grown among urban dwellers in Africa. The acknowledged importance of broadcasting in Africa makes its study crucial for a country where that media continues to expand rapidly with knowledge gaps about how this expansion affects women's participation in public life. Moreover, the media in Uganda is deemed as one of the most vibrant in Africa (Kaija 2013).

The changing nature of the media has thus significantly affected programming. There is growing literature that points to the importance of interactive programmes in the democratisation process of countries. Peter Mwesige illustrates this very well when he asserts that 'the media, particularly interactive forms such as talk shows, are more than just information vessels. They can be forums of participation in their own right' (Mwesige 2009, p. 223). Mwesige proposes that citizen involvement in public affairs talk shows be looked at as a form of political participation in its own right. The conceptual meaning of involvement in public affairs talk shows as political participation that is advanced by Mwesige, is an important area of stretching the role of media in democratic development. Citizens who participate in public affairs programming are largely men, this and other studies reveal. Talk shows must account for women's participation, too.

The consequence of changes in the nature of the media and programmes as well as the environment is a change in the expectation of its portrayal of women to reflect the progress and contribution made by them. The Global Media Monitoring Project reports highlight these changes (GMMP 1995, 2000, 2005, 2015). On the one hand, a particular achievement is reflected in the changes the media industry has experienced through content focused on

women, stronger public consciousness of feminism and more women entering the media profession (Byerly & Ross 2006). On the other hand, the media remains focused on a reformist agenda, given the expectations of the media in a liberal and democratic environment, as is well captured by Audrey Gadzekpo:

With media freedoms and pluralism, and the rebirth of civil society, there came the expectation that women would become more visible in the media as employees, as decision makers, as subjects of the news and as newsmakers. There was also the expectation that media content would be more sensitive and respectful of women and would foster more balanced, less stereotyped and less sexist gender images. It was hoped that the proliferation of media outlets would mean that more women would have access to the media and consequently would be able to participate more fully in public discourses and debates. (Gadzekpo 2009, p. 73)

This study is more concerned with the last expectation, i.e. access to media and participation in public discourses and debates. Despite these expectations, in Gadzekpo's assessment, after more than a decade of liberalisation and democratisation, there is reason for both optimism and pessimism as the media largely fails to reflect issues and perspectives that are important to women, who remain invisible in the news. This observation is well founded in light of the increasing sexualisation and stereotyping of women on media (Tamale 1999; Litho et al. 2012; Kaija 2013) despite women playing more critical roles in public life (Kadaga 2013).

Denis McQuail (1992) puts in perspective the limitations of the media in the liberal and democratic environment, arguing that 'despite the extension of free market principles, the media remain very "politicised" in the broad sense of the term' (McQuail 1992, p. 32). Yet, coverage can well be determined by a number of factors, such as 'audience interests, widely shared "news values", technology and organisation of news gathering, the differential power of certain news sources' (McQuail 1992, p. 167). This means that the expectations of the media cannot meaningfully change without a change in audience interests and other determinants. Given the changing nature of the media and developments in technology, it is worth critically looking at the role of the mass media in a democratic society.

### **2.3. The Role of the Mass Media in a Democratic Society**

In her study of the Czech Republic, Hana Havelkova (1999, p. 147) established that ‘the role of mass media as mediator, middleman, and initiator of the development of civic discourse and civic society’ is central to the political representation of women in mass media discourse. Havelkova’s contribution to the current study reinforces the justification for this research, given the perceived role of the mass media. I turn to the role of the media in a democratic society that is presumed to have participatory freedom and transformational power. It is important to frame the debate of this role within the context of media-state relations. The relationship between the media and the state in Uganda was well illustrated by Museveni when he asserted:

The media is also another corrupt, irresponsible and unprofessional group. Some of my supporters have been asking me for money to bribe characters that are called DJs so as to get favourable coverage in the media. I told my supporters that I would never give them that money. It is the duty of every media house (radio, TV or newspaper) to ensure that they give balanced and objective coverage of any story. It is an obligation on them and not a favour to the public. Any media house that does not do it will lose out. I will show you how if they continue. We do not have to bribe anybody. The power of licensing belongs to the state. The State of Uganda has got a historical mission: nationalism, pan-Africanism, socioeconomic transformation and democracy. It is the duty of every media house to further these aims. (Museveni 2012, p. 19)

Museveni unpacks the expected role of the media in the Ugandan polity. The quotation captures the media environment as defined by the state within its powers. More importantly, the confusion as to who is a journalist is brought to the fore. Museveni’s reference to DJs as journalists giving favourable coverage in the media is symptomatic of how the role of the media and its actors can be collapsed. Literature, too, has defined what the media should be and its functions. It, therefore, follows that the media should be discussed in line with the environment in which they operate and the context of the media system. Many critics have labelled the media in Uganda as unprofessional, as Museveni demonstrates.

The role of the media in democratisation is well articulated in reference to participation, and negotiating power (Saeed 2009). The proliferation of broadcast media that transmit in the indigenous languages improves people’s chances of participation in public debate through the media (Chibita 2009, p. 302). This begs the question: How do women share in this public sphere? Joe Oloka-Onyango and John-Jean Barya (1997) contend that the public sphere actively includes civil society that may use the media; or the media itself may be part of civil



society. With respect to either definition, little attention is paid to women and the public sphere in Uganda. The role of the mass media is segmented into political and social dimensions.

The mass media plays a crucial role in the modern political process besides participation (Livingstone & Lunt 1994), making it an institution to watch. Political institutions and actors in public life recognise this role and research has revealed the power of both radio and television in political development. Radio constitutes a public sphere (Mwesige 2009) and ‘has been ideal for enabling the majority rural population in Africa to participate in public debate on matters relating to their governance’ (Chibita 2010). In his study of political talk radio in Uganda, Peter Mwesige (2009, p. 221) found that, while the talk shows present an imperfect public sphere, it is still ‘a sort of public sphere<sup>7</sup> nonetheless’. It is James Curran (1991) who expands the democratic role of the media by recognising the right and responsibility of the media to be representative of society’s interests:

A basic requirement of a democratic media system should be that it represents all significant interests in society. It should facilitate their participation in the public domain, enable them to contribute to public debate and have an input in the framing of public policy. The media should also represent the functioning of representative organisations and expose their internal processes to public scrutiny and the play of public opinion. (Curran 1991, p. 23)

The role of the media in facilitating participation in the public domain is what I am concerned with. In addition to the political role of the media as advanced by Mwesige (2004, 2009) and Curran (1991), Margaret Gallaghers recognises that ‘the media are potentially powerful agents of socialisation and social change – presenting models, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviours, encouraging stereotypes’ (Gallaghers 1979, p. 3). Furthermore, the media carries significant notions of cultural norms and values in society, which gives it a powerful role in constructing and reinforcing gendered images of women and men as well as how notions of power are distributed in society through the news (Mannila 2017, p. 9).

In specific terms, radio is the most accessible medium in Uganda (Mwesige & Balikowa 2008) and the most enduring (Kamaruko 2011) compared to new media. Radio is termed as ‘the modern media for Africa’ (Obonyo & Nyamboga 2011) and has been very innovative in

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<sup>7</sup> The term ‘public sphere’ is attributed to Jurgen Habermas by which he refers to a realm of social life where something approaching public opinion can be formed, and access is guaranteed to all citizens. Newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere (Habermas 1974, 1991).

programming that allows for rural people to obtain information and also participate in political debates, even in indigenous languages (Chibita 2009). The accessibility and affordability of radio and its capacity to be shared endear it to the people, ensuring that it has greater reach, and can even achieve transformation. The influence of radio is well captured by Brisset-Foucault:

Generally speaking, important presenters and panellists from CBS (Nambooze, Medad Ssegona, Moses Kasibante, Ssemujju Nganda) were all instrumental in the creation of Suubi. For them, the station was a central venue to demonstrate loyalty to the King, set priorities, such as the mobilisation against the land bill which was drafted by the government, and gain access to citizens. These talk show presenters/politicians, who were all elected as MPs in 2011, incarnate the idea of committed intellectuals and voices of the Kingdom's cause. (Brisset-Foucault 2013, p. 75)

Brisset-Foucault (2013, p. 76) is able to show in her study of CBS that some individuals accessed what Fraser (1990) called 'strong publics' in which deliberation has decision-making powers as a result of engagement with the radio's interactive programmes. She demonstrates that interactive talk shows are not only an open celebration of popular democracy but also a space where 'the Movement ideology of participatory democracy and non-partisan debate can be revived' (ibid). In her analysis, the space is also one 'where these values can be claimed by the Kingdom to enhance its legitimacy, without referring to Museveni's heritage, where a specific form of royalist "democracy" can be invented and debated' (ibid). She thus concludes:

Radio was instrumental in not only reviving the Kingdom and its links with its subjects, helping it establish itself in the political arena by giving visibility to its claims, but also in re-actualising and reinventing a political culture. This re-actualisation drew both on celebrating subjection to the King and appropriating the movementist heritage of popular democracy. The Kingdom has invented its own ways of staging its part in Ugandan political life, not only in order to comply with hegemonic injunctions but also in accordance with specific cultural representations regarding good polity and the preservation of its integrity. (Brisset-Foucault 2013, p. 85)

This study concretises claims on the power of radio for political development and democratisation. It epitomises how a group can advance their agenda through interactive programming on radio, as was the case with the Kingdom and CBS. It is not as if there were no limitations, as she notes, regarding 'the association of the station to the Kingdom influences the way CBS talk shows are organised, the rules that are followed, the kind of speech deployed' (Brisset-Foucault 2013, p. 75) and a clear targeting of the interactive talk shows by the state.

The place of television as a transformative platform is marked. Studies demonstrate that television is a powerful medium influencing policy and policy makers, demonstrated by the debate on the ‘CNN Effect’ (Gilboa 2005), the rise of Al-Jazeera (Seib, 2005) and television influence on world politics (Robbinson 2001). It is further acknowledged that the ‘public spheres of discursive interaction, such as television, play a large role in bridging or mediating the gap between our unrealised potential ideals and our lived social relationships’ (Mann 1990, p. 87). Since interactivity now permeates the radio talk show genre and television audience discussion programmes, it is prudent to study radio along with television.

In light of the perceived importance of the mass media in the modern political process (Livingstone & Lunt 1994), the role of the media in democracy (Ferlinger 1991; Curran 1991; Mwesige 2009), the transformative role of the media (Obonyo & Peel 2013) and power and ideology in media discourse (Kabuchu 1992), the study of the media and how it relates to women in facilitating participation in public life is imperative.

William Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld (1993, p. 114), in looking at movements and the media as interacting systems, examine ways in which social movements interact with the news media and the outcomes for both parties. The current study, while not looking at women as a social movement, addresses them as a social group in the public domain. They focus on the power and dependency aspects of the relationship and the consequences of the asymmetries. The cultural part focuses attention on the subtle contest over meaning.

However, while women are a significant interest in society, contrary to the social responsibility theory and democratic participant theory, the media, through public affairs programming, falls short of fair representation, and may hardly qualify as a democratic system. This matters because ‘public engagement need not be a satisfactorily significant exercise or nationwide democratic process to be valid’ (Datta 2012, p. 11). The question of the evaluative performance of the media thus depends on its democratic nature. In a broader sense, the performance of the media must be based on ‘issues of women’s employment, position, status, representation, portrayal, access to and participation in the media, and these remain evaluative indicators of progress or the lack thereof in contemporary African media’ (Gadzekpo, 2009:72). This is relevant to the extent that there is consensus that the media influences democratic processes.

Despite this rich literature documenting the relationship between the media and democracy, it is not clear what the nature of representation, interaction and engagement is, and to what extent the media facilitates women’s participation in public life. According to Karen Ross (2004, p.

62), 'the ways in which women are represented on and in broadcast media send important messages to the public about women's place, women's role, and women's lives'. Newsroom culture may thus be part of the reason for the endurance of gender stereotypes in news discourse (ibid). Ross further notes that women's relationship with media could harm democracy itself if negative:

Part of the answer to the question 'why is it a problem for democracy?' is that many women (and men) who could make an important contribution to the democratic project are put off pursuing a career in politics because of the way they think the political process works, and this perception is largely grounded in the media's coverage of politics and politicians. Women parliamentarians are particularly poorly treated by the news media and this harms democracy itself. (Ross 2004, p. 68)

Whereas Ross writes from an international perspective, her research provides a critical area of debate on the media influence on women. Tamale has argued, to the contrary, that the 'media in underdeveloped countries such as Uganda have limited influence because the majority of the population has only limited access to them' (Tamale 1999, p. 183). Despite this position, Tamale acknowledges that negative portrayal of women in politics has affected their participation in politics. As such, even for developing countries, one ought to be cautious when examining the role of the media. This is particularly so with regard to broadcast media and public affairs programming, whose relevance for democratisation has been confirmed by research.

Although the role of FM radio was considered largely to be confined to entertainment, FM stations have contributed to the public affairs debate in the recent past. As Peter Mwesige (2009, p. 241) notes, 'interactive programming has not only facilitated political discussion, it has also widened [the] spectrum of debate by opening it up to citizens'. According to Gamson and Wolsfeld (1993, p. 118), '[t]he movement-media transaction is characterised by a struggle over framing' and media output may reflect frames of the most powerful actors where there is little contribution from independent journalists. Furthermore, political talk show, both phone-ins and talk backs 'lead to publics whose members see themselves as part of a large and socially committed group' (Dori-Hacohen, 2012).

It is important to note that, in light of the debate on the role of the media in a democratic society, the liberalisation of the media in Uganda brought substantial impact, although it is largely quantitative (Kanabi & Kibazo 2008). The growth motivated legislation to regulate the rapid

growth (Chibita 2010). Broadcast programming is affected by the media ownership regimes, the content, the regulatory model and the institutional framework that have inhibited media development in general and broadcasting in particular (Maractho 2015) within the context of Uganda. Broadcasting governance and gaps created a media system characterised by cooptation, cooperation, competition and consolidation, types that are neither diverse nor independent.

Although the literature on the role of the media in a democratic society is mixed, noting both negative and positive roles, it is largely acknowledged that the media stands to facilitate democratic development. However, for democratic development to happen, the media must meet the basic requirements of a democratic media. The media cannot be ignored in the quest to facilitate the participation of any group in society, be it in politics or elsewhere. A gap still remains, however, in understanding of media facilitates women's participation in democratic processes and public life in general.

#### **2.4. Women's Participation in Public Life: Beyond Politics**

That women's participation in politics has greatly increased in Uganda is beyond doubt. Many reasons have been advanced for this trend. Three specific reasons dominate discussion: the role of the NRM government policy and initiatives; the women's movement and demands on the state; the international women's agenda and global politics. These factors have had varying degrees of success.

##### **The role of government policy and initiatives**

In many studies, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) is credited with the achievements women have made in terms of participation in public life. The fortunes of women appear to have changed with the capture of power by the NRM. Sometimes, individual politicians in the government are credited. For instance, Dan Ottemoeller (1999, p. 87) contends that women's increased role in formal politics in Uganda was brought about by power-seeking politicians who are sympathetic to feminist issues. This, he argues, is because the electoral strategies are severely limited by liberal political and economic values and politicians can secure support from women with relatively low-cost symbolic political initiatives. As such, women's engagement with the political processes and high-level appointments of women would lead to the possibility of women voting as a bloc, breaking down antipathy to multiparty politics, and

enabling women to gain better access to clientelist networks, given the presence of strong evidence that gender issues form part of the calculations of state power.

In some cases, it is simply argued that ‘women’s participation in politics has been high on the agenda of governments and this has spurred up their leadership abilities on the social, political and economic platforms of social change’ (Kadaga 2014, p. viii). It is difficult to explore women’s participation in public life in Uganda without looking at policy initiatives, in particular affirmative action. Rebecca Kadaga, the Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, is one of the women who epitomise women’s participation in politics. She suggests that there have been positive outcomes, including campaigning and lobbying for needs that are relevant for women, women gaining status and the recognition of women leaders.

It may be recalled that the key mechanism for women’s inclusion in politics and policy-making has been affirmative action, embedded in the 1995 constitution, and deemed as very progressive in relation to women’s rights (Tamale 1999). This has already been discussed in Chapter One in all its forms. As such, the real benefits of this inclusion have tended to be the greater number of women in Parliament and perhaps more girls joining university. The approach to increasing women’s voice in decision-making has largely consisted in increasing representation in political and decision-making institutions using affirmative action and executive appointments.

### **Women’s movement and demands on the NRM**

The gains made cannot be entirely attributed to the NRM, although there is the risk of associating benefits with the political fortunes of the NRM (Goetz 1995). Accordingly, ‘the rise of gender-sensitive politics can be inferred from the effects of a feminist social movement as well as economic and historical factors’ (Ottemoeller 1999, p. 93).

A strong women’s movement was credited with most of the achievements in adoption of affirmative action (Tripp 2000). Women’s organisations played a key role in obtaining space for participation in politics (Byanyima 1992; Ottomoeller 1999; Tripp 2000; Tamale 1999). Uganda has one of the strongest women’s movements in Africa, which successfully made demands on the NRM (Tripp 2000, p. 25).

Women and politics have dominated research in Uganda (Ahikire 2004; Cornwall & Goetz 2005; Goetz 2003; Tamale 1999; Tripp 2000). These studies of women and politics have rarely paid attention to women and the media, except for Sylvia Tamale’s look at the portrayal of

women politicians in mediated platforms. Women continue to contribute positively on the political front, once they occupy these spaces:

Women political leaders have campaigned and lobbied on key social needs and concerns like health, education, security and poverty. In Uganda, women have espoused their newly acquired status and recognition especially through affirmative action to affirm their visibility on the frontline of political participation and engagement to push for gender sensitive policies. (Kadaga 2014, p. viii)

Kadaga captures how women have used their new-found political power. This contribution has also led to pro-women legislation (Wang 2013). It has been argued that the NRM found already eager women waiting to participate. More importantly, there were grass-roots demands for gender-sensitive politics. Also important are the NRM's symbolic gender initiatives and institutional innovations (Ottemoeller 1999). Moreover, women's participation in the guerrilla war had been significant (Byanyima 1992) and is believed to have contributed to bringing the NRM to power, the women having served as regular soldiers, and having gathered and disseminated military intelligence as well as providing logistical support, such as food, for the guerilla army (Ottemoeller 1999). Women's organisations such as Action for Development (ACFODE) and Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) actively promoted women's participation in politics and the sharing of women's concerns in policy circles (Pankhurst 2002). It, therefore, follows that women's gains were fought for by women in Uganda.

### **International women's agenda: From Beijing to Nairobi Forward looking strategies**

Critical international agendas were instrumental in pushing the women's agenda. These included the first United Nations World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, which led to a discussion of key concerns relating to the status of women, mapped out largely through other global conversations facilitated by international bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the Canada-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and other organisations such as the Commission for Africa (Gadzekpo 2009, pp. 71-2). The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), the Women's Conference in Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), culminating in the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), respectively, are some of the contributions on the international scene.

The active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making were necessary for the goals of equality, development and peace to be achieved, as recognised by the BPfA. In her case study of Uganda, Pankhurst argued:

International influences were gradually brought to bear on gender issues as they became more acute in different parts of the world; international organisations became more eager to support women's organisations during the 1980s and indeed began to pressure governments to take gender issues seriously....Government responses to these pressures varied, but in many contexts women were successful in pushing forward some reform in the law relating to marriage, property and personal security, even if they were not able to have much impact on the structural inequalities between men and women. (Pankhurst 2002, p. 123)

While some arguments have been made in support of crediting the NRM regime, the international agenda was at the time in favour of women, as is noted in the quotation. Would the NRM have had different approaches had the international climate not been in favour of women? What if women had not lobbied and fought for space? The results might have been different.

The move towards democracy is also a crucial factor in explaining women's participation in politics. The roots of gender inequality, traced from colonial engagement in Africa (Tamale 1999), appears to be addressed by democratic progress, where women can make demands on the state and be heard. Women also actively participated in the constitution-making process (Matembe 2002). All of these discussions attempt to highlight the drivers of progress in women's participation in politics specifically and in public life in general. The limitation of the literature is that it allots a disproportionate share of the focus to women in politics, neglecting major areas where women have actively participated, with notable exceptions.

### **Challenges to participation for women**

Several challenges remain for women's participation in public life (Kadaga 2013). In spite of the many achievements related to the numbers, studies increasingly point to the limitations of affirmative action as a policy and the challenges of its implementation, not just in Uganda but wherever a quota system has been adopted. Women's effectiveness in politics and public life has been scrutinised (Goetz 2003). I turn to focus on some of the challenges.

An analysis of the women's movement is significant. 'The main problem facing the women's movement is the government's lack of responsiveness and inability and unwillingness to



address their key demands,' argues Tripp (2000, p. 102). However, Tamale (2013 cited in Isis-WICCE & UWOPA 2014, p. 53) asserts that the challenge could well be that the women's movement and women politicians have overlapping interests and goals, while most women members of Parliament do not set out to address gender issues in the women's agenda. In her view, 'a women's agenda is a feminist agenda with a focus on eliminating marginalisation of women and this takes gender awareness to realise. We should not assume that because these are women, they are gender-sensitive' (Tamale July 2013 cited in Isis-WICCE & UWOPA 2014, p.53). Critics point to affirmative action as the problem, singling out the symbolic nature of the initiative (Ottemoeller 1999). Alfred Lakwo similarly opines:

Bringing women on board by the quota system was only a symbolic response to the fact that women's exclusion from the decision-making structures revealed how men dominated policy-making processes. The inclusion did little, if anything, to enhance women's capacity to influence rules, norms, and practices that marginalise them. One then wonders whether the women within the political space effectively represent the interests of majority women. A few urbanised women called by Social Watch as 'affirmative political queens' only use such space not to represent their constituency but their self-seeking interest. (Lakwo 2006, p. 11)

A major criticism of the affirmative action policy has been that it benefits only a few elite women, as demonstrated in most of the literature by Lakwo (2006). Interestingly, Tamale (1999) makes similar observations. Her point of departure is that the quota system leaves intact the systems and structures of oppression, ignored in most scholarship that examines the policy.

Quotas cannot deliver a democratic, non-sexist political economy without the effective dismantlement of the hierarchical institutions that exist in the patriarchal status quo. Placing women in positions of leadership and authority without simultaneously attempting to remove the practical and structural obstacles that hinder their effective involvement in this arena is not very helpful. Simply adding women to existing social and political structures and stirring can do little to eradicate the discrimination and inequities from which they perennially suffer. Indeed, quotas may prove much more of a burden than a blessing to women. (Tamale 2004, pp. 41-2)

The limitation of both the quota system and its implementation serve as critical impediments to women's participation in public life, in particular politics. According to Tripp (2000, p. 25), 'affirmative action policies, giving women top leadership positions and creating government sponsored Women's Councils, can invigorate women's participation but they can also be used as mechanisms of silencing, co-optation and creating new dependences and

patronage'. While the adoption of the quota system contributed to an increase in the number of women in politics and a change in political culture, acceptance by the bulk of the population, of women as public figures remained limited. It is pointed out that 'many women parliamentarians, however, owe their positions to President Yoweri Museveni and the existing system of patronage' (Tripp 2004, p. 76), which means that many of the elected women officials refrain from supporting women's issues. The negative and positive aspects of the affirmative action policy dominate discussions of the women's agenda beyond Uganda.

Beyond the creation of patronage networks (Goetz 2003; Tripp 2000) benefiting a few elite women (Lakwo 2006) and creating class between women (Tamale 2004), the policy has become a burden to women (Maractho 2015), who are belittled for occupying space that they do not deserve. Anne Marie Goetz expands the nature of challenge to include institutions of the state and its interaction with other actors. For the gender equity interest in policy-making and policy implementation to succeed will be dependent "upon [the] interaction of three major factors: the strength of the gender equity lobby in civil society, the credibility of politicians and policies in political competitions, and the capacity of the state to enforce commitments to gender equity' (Goetz 2003, p. 30). The complexity of policy-making and policy implementation beyond just affirmative action is what Goetz alludes to, which is crucial because affirmative action, per se, cannot be the real problem. It is because of this implementation challenge that there is an increase in the number of critical voices calling for a review of the policy and also its manner of implementation and interpretation. But also getting institutions right for women is crucial (Goetz, 1997).

The solution, Tamale argues, lies in having a critical distance between women and the state in order to avoid having beneficiaries beholden to the state. The NRM is thus accused of exploiting women and it is argued that 'it is possible that the NRM's pro-women policies reflect a passing political trend or, more ominously, a set of increasingly subtle methods used to maintain a patriarchal political society' (Ottomoeller 1999, p. 101). This augments Donna Pankhurst's view on the matter. Pankhurst underscores the role of patronage in the NRM government which incorporates the affirmative action programme within its political system to ensure that women have a part of it, too (2002, p. 128). Pankhurst points out that most female appointees have little experience with the effects of gender discrimination and the efforts of NGOs and civil society in general.

The challenge of women's participation, however, could also lie with society. Christine Obbo (1980, p. 5) observes that 'the need to control women has always been an important part of male success in most African societies.' According to Jean O'Barr and Kathryn Firmin-Sellers (1995), two interrelated factors explain the political under-representation of African women: 'first, politics is viewed by most men and women as the quintessential male sphere of action, one in which women are both unwelcome and ineffective....Second, most politically active women are members of the African elite' (1995, pp. 202-3). These trends have not changed much, despite more women being present in these male spheres of action.

There are key resources for women and politics. The book, *Women and politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar (1996), analyses the specific forms of resistance, organisation and negotiation by women in Third World states and offers a peek into the diversities of women's political participation. *Women and politics in Uganda* analyses the women's movement (Tripp 2000). An equally interesting examination of women and politics is *Women and power in Zimbabwe: promises of feminism* by Carolyn Martin Shaw (2015), which intricately discusses fulfilled and unfulfilled promises. Sue Thornham (2007) addresses the feminist question in the media, which is important for the current study.

While literature clearly traces the origin of women's participation in politics as well as the reasons for the increase in and the challenges of effective participation, the need remains to move beyond politics and to holistically study women in public life. The approach to empowerment largely focuses on women's inclusion in politics at the local and national levels, enforced by affirmative action, the creation of bureaucratic institutions and the appointment of select women leaders to key positions of decision-making. The conversation needs to change. The current study fills this gap by examining several areas of public life in a single study, effectively moving beyond politics.

## **2.5. Mass Media and Women in Public Life: Beyond Portrayal**

Why study the mass media and women in public life? It matters so much that Sreberny and van Zoonen argue that 'all these processes – the participation of women in parliamentary politics, the feminist struggle over the political, the general changes in political culture – cannot be understood without examining the media's role' (Sreberny & van Zoonen 2000, p. 3). Scholarship in the area of women and the media largely attempts to 'see whether the media

frame gender politics “with a different eye”, which hinders women’s participation in public life’ (ed. Norris 1997, p. 11), empower or disempower women (Sark 2004).

Elisabeth Houle (2000, p. 108) argues that mediated images are important and ‘constitute a crucial element in reproducing the dominant social order. Access to the media in the production of these images, as well as to the representation of one’s social group, can be imperative in establishing its social legitimacy’. Other studies have moved beyond portrayal to internalise media workers’ response to gender issues and the dominance of politics. For instance, Hana Havalkova suggests:

[M]edia workers are weak in their response to public opinion and [the] use of experts, and are principally aligned with attitudes directly derived from the sphere of politics. In relation to the issue of political representation of women, the media has affected public discourse by both opening it and, paradoxically, blocking it. (Havalkova 1999, p. 145)

Havalkova points to the possibility of media institutions failing women, of the institutions closing up space for women. The current study focuses on representation, which is addressed from two angles: (i) access and presence (visibility) in broadcast media; and (ii) the representation of women and gender issues on the media (voice). What are the determinants for women’s access to the media and which women are visible? The view that women in and on the media are marginalised comes through in *Women, media and politics* (ed. Norris 1997), in which the authors question whether media coverage of women in America reinforces rather than challenges the dominant culture. This edited work attempts to ‘see whether the media frame gender politics “with a different eye”, which hinders women’s participation in public life’ (ed. Norris 1997 p. 11) and thereby contributing towards an understanding of women’s marginalisation in public life, making it very useful. However, the focus on framing alone serves as a limitation on an otherwise wide collection of essays in the edited volume, which only answers questions around how stories about women are framed, the factors taken into account and the consequences. Like most media studies on women and media, it places the responsibility on the media to frame issues about women using gender lens. Karen Ross (2004) better illustrates this narrative thus:

The ways in which the news media regularly cover stories about political women damage not only these women, but also us as citizens and democracy more generally. This is not to argue that women parliamentarians deserve special or different treatment at the hands of the media – quite the contrary, in

fact, as I want to see women and men treated as politicians first and foremost.  
(Ross 2004, p. 76)

Ross makes substantial claims on media influence, as damaging not just women in politics and outside it, but also the institution of democracy itself. The relationship between the media and women appears to be one of sustained dissatisfaction in most of literature. I find that Carolyne Byerly (2004) correctly identifies the areas that have been of concern in the media and women studies, which largely focus on the three main areas of (i) the women's absence from most serious news content (invisibility); (ii) representation or portrayal – when women are included, the mass media misrepresent and distort them by focusing on sexual attributes (women as less capable and less intelligent than men); and (iii) access to the news-making apparatus – women's employment and advancement in the media. In the larger scheme, the question of image and portrayal dominates the arena. The role of profits in media decisions and the promotion of patriarchy is articulated. For the most part, the media is seen to circulate highly gendered, male-ordered paradigms of social and economic control (Ross 2004) due to the commercial pressure.

If it has become merely a commonplace to argue that broadcast media (especially, but other media too) regularly and routinely perform an important affirmative function in reinforcing dominant norms and values to “the public” and confirming the cherished and comfortable beliefs of most of their consumers, it still bears repeating. (Ross 2004, p. 62)

The importance of this assertion is the role of the broadcast media and the economic drivers. The Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), emphasising negative portrayal in Uganda, reinforces the claims made by Ross above. They argued earlier in 2002 thus:

Women are perpetually stereotyped as domesticated, given to leisure, fashion and beauty interests. They are also invariably portrayed as brainless, dependent, indecisive, subservient and sport for men's pleasure. Women are persistently objectified as men's possessions. Educated working women activists are portrayed as audacious insubordinate agitators, and immoral beings who slept their way to the top. Those who hold high political or administrative positions are branded as incompetent and inefficient. They are ultimately demonised and isolated as natural snobs. (UMWA & Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 1998 cited in Mukama 2002 p. 147)

The two texts, just a few in the stream of literature on women and media, have one thing in common: a critical focus on how the media represents women in terms of image, reinforcing

patriarchy. The portrayal narrative does place women as victims of the media, which is too powerful for women to engage with, so much so that there has been little progress made in changing the situation for women. The mainstream media, it is argued, are the ‘chief perpetrators of distortions and misrepresentations of women and women’s issues’ (Mukama 2002, p. 147). The studies focus on coverage and the image of women in the media, especially in the print media, although Nassanga examines the state broadcasters Radio Uganda and Uganda Television. These works highlight the nature of representation.

Gaye Tuchman (1979, p. 533) goes further to explain that ‘the very under-representation of women, including their stereotypical portrayal, may symbolically capture the position of women in American society – their real lack of power. It bespeaks their “symbolic annihilation” by the media.’ The concept of symbolic annihilation, first used by George Gerbner (1972) to depict the absence of representation or under-representation is further categorised by Tuchman (ibid) as omission, trivialisation and condemnation. In essence, the media aggravates the societal inequality (Tuchman 1979; Morna 2002).

The other dominating scenario is one of evaluating women’s contribution in news production. The frustration extends to women in the newsroom in which women in the media account for little in changing the situation for women or even perpetuate them. Tamale explains why:

Negative portrayals of women politicians by women journalists can be attributed to the resentment that arises out of normative operations of patriarchy. It also results partly from the traditional training that female reporters receive. And it comes as no big surprise in view of the fact that almost all the leaders in public and private media charged with the power of selecting what, at the end of the day, deserves column or air space are men. Women in the media, therefore count for very little in regard to enhancing the image of female politicians. (Tamale 1999, p. 191)

However, Carolyn Byerly puts this view in perspective when she explains that it is a far more complicated situation than it is often presented. She contends that one could read any academic study of women and news and conclude that ‘women must not work in the newsrooms that spew out the daily fare of stories that still focus mainly on the deeds and ideas of men’ (2004, p. 109). She also notes that another view might be that women who work there do little to confront the negative portrayal, despite decades of feminism, as Tamale indicates above. Neither scenario is true, she opines:

The explanations surrounding women journalists’ relationship to their newsrooms present a different, more complex picture than either of these scenarios suggests, and it is a picture set against a backdrop of all women’s

broader relationship to all communications media, as well as to the larger society in which they live. (Byerly 2004, p. 109)

This is a realist observation. The expectation is that increasing the number of women in the newsroom and, in particular, in decision-making positions could turn things around with regard to the media coverage of women. The presence of women in media production should serve to enhance the image of women. But as McQuail points out, ‘the relative invisibility of women in news and their tendency to appear in a limited set of contexts (sport, entertainment, welfare, family etc.) may also be due to relative exclusion from power roles in society’ (McQuail 1992, p. 166). In this version, the media is only a mirror of society. Yet, as power roles shift in society between men and women, as is well documented in the book, *The normal chaos of love* by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck Gernsheim (1995), and as more women are making a difference in Ugandan society (Isis-WICCE & UWOPA 2014), this is hardly reflected in the media, particularly on public affairs programming.

There have been attempts to improve women’s portrayal in the media in terms of positions of women in media production through negotiations and involvement by the women’s movement. This is driven by the scanty attention the media pays to women’s issues, and by the fact that ‘the little coverage given to women is negative and perpetuates gender imbalance’ (Nassanga 1997, p. 471). After 1985 when the NRM took over power, ‘women’s institutions started engaging the media concerning the negative and distorted portrayal of women and the under-coverage of their issues’ (Mukama 2002, p. 148). As such, there is improved representation of women and women’s issues in the media, in comparison to the past. Mukama does not go beyond the women’s movement’s engagement with the media and the nature and challenges of engagement as well as the implication for women’s participation in public life.

Limor Peer (2000, p. 318) in his study of women and talk radio in the USA concludes that ‘given women’s scant attention to, and unimpressive participation in talk radio, it can be concluded that women do not utilise talk radio in ways that advance their subsphere’. The study recognises that talk radio is male-dominated, but the finding is important in that it turns the table on women, rather than the media. Peer argues that this is indicative of new media’s limitation in creating a better democracy and underlies the difficulties with Habermas’ normative model of the public sphere, which Nancy Fraser (1990) challenges as limiting in itself, given the possibility of multiple subspheres. The existence of subspheres is critical for an understanding of women within the context of multiple loyalties for women in public life.

While women and gender studies in general have focused on women in politics, media studies have largely focused on media freedom, or women's portrayal and coverage, particularly in print. Women's participation in public affairs programming remains a grey area. The major reason for the current study stems from the strong position that 'if the mass media form part of the apparatus through which particular gender roles and attributes are defined and assigned, it follows that the media will also be a site for negotiating changes in those definitions' (Sakr 2004, p. 4). Sakr shows the possibility to recast the focus from increasing the number of women in politics to using the media as a platform for negotiating changes and for challenging dominant misconceptions about women's role in society.

In the context of Uganda, one of the major gaps in literature is that media studies appear to give less attention to the extent to which culture affects news frames and women's participation in the media and public life in general. The current study presents evidence to the effect that culture is the power behind meaning-making in conversations. Several studies that take issue with the media (Tamale 1999; Nassanga 1997; Mukama 2002) do so by objecting to how women's issues are framed, in particular women in politics and development. The specific issues revolve around the focus on social policy issues like health and education. One must wonder if this is necessarily a bad thing, since these issues are also the ones that are important to women leaders, and that occupy their lobbying and campaign efforts (Kadaga 2014).

Although various aspects of media content are often studied, there is an over-dependence on the image of women and the portrayal of gender, as well as news content. There is hardly any work on women in public affairs programming, in particular talk shows (Gill 2007) that address women's participation, which remains minimal in public debate, from an African media's perspective. Negotiating over meaning is an important aspect of the media-movement transaction. William Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld (1993, p. 114), in looking at movements and the media as interacting systems, examine ways in which social movements interact with the news media and the outcomes for both parties. They focus on the power and dependency aspects of the relationship and the consequences of the asymmetries. The cultural part focuses attention on the subtle contest over meaning.

On the other hand, the current study, which does not focus on women as a social movement or feminism, addresses them as a social group in the public domain. The categorisation of women is based on their role in public life rather than their sexual orientation, religion and class. More importantly, the recognition of media systems as complex interacting systems makes important



contributions to the current study. Like Gamson and Wolfsfeld, I agree that the relationship between the media and any social movement is one of a complicated system of actors with complex internal relationships.

Naomi Sark (2004, p. 12) opined that, to the extent that the media is influential for women, 'media studies have rich potential for illuminating ways in which women are empowered or disempowered'. Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny (2004, p. 15) demonstrate that despite challenges, Iranian women used the press to question gender constructions and gender relations and to call for radical rethinking of law, policy and the constitution. Criticism of the media's coverage of women, it is argued, is not to require a different kind of reporting, but, instead, fair reporting. While these issues are important and should continue to be addressed, there is need to expand the scope of conversation to include women's interaction and engagement with the media, in addition to representation.

Despite efforts to document negative portrayal, the frustration is that 'so little has changed' (Ross 2004, p. 62). Indeed, more recent studies still show that accessibility to the media 'creates a big challenge for female politicians who are given only limited coverage by the media, thereby limiting their visibility in the public domain'. (Agunbiade & Akiode 2017, p. 159)

Some questions remain unanswered in the literature. The current research focuses on the ways in which women engage with the media, both historically and currently, but also looks beyond the women's movement, politics and portrayal in media. There is enough documentation on negative portrayal, misrepresentation and under-representation. My study moves beyond these conceptual meanings of representation and looks beyond representation itself, to include interaction and engagement. It is assumed that in this era of digitisation and interactive programming, it is more important to focus on women's media participation and to locate why it remains minimal. I interrogate how once women are visible on media, they use it to question 'gender constructions and gender relations', to bring in women's viewpoints and contribute to public dialogue and debate. Women's demand on the media is relevant for change in coverage in the same way that women participated in making demands for their inclusion in politics and policy-making (Tripp 2000). It is, however, more than demand; it is participation.

## 2.6. Digital Transformation, Women and Discursive Programmes

Few people today doubt that new media is just a potential, even in the developing world. As Ruth Teer-Tomaselli rightly points out, ‘the boundaries between broadcasting, telecommunication, and data sharing have become, if not obliterated, at least so blurred that it no longer makes sense to attempt to legislate for one without reference to the others’ (Teer-Tomaselli 2011, p. 424). Whereas this observation is made in the context of legislation for broadcasting and telecommunications, one could stretch it to include broadcasting and new media in general, particularly in the public affairs programming of the discursive type and audience participation (Livingstone & Lunt 1994). Indeed, countries have taken measures towards convergence, as demonstrated by the Uganda Communications Act 2013 (GoU 2013) which led to the merger of telecommunications and electronic media regulation, placing them under one legislative and institutional framework, an attempt at convergence (Maractho 2015).

The power of ICTs is not limited to media programming. In relation to this, Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2006, p. 20) documents ‘the continuing dominance of US corporate power, of US-based transnational corporations (TNCs), and, among them, of ICT industries, within the global economy’ in the context of media imperialism theories. Studies of the information society in Africa by Gert Nulens and Leo Van Audenhove (1999) illustrate the benefits of ICTs and the support of international organisations but warn that success will depend on how it is handled.

Aida Opoku-Mensah (2004, p. 253) submits that the advent of ICTs ‘brought dramatic improvement and opened up opportunities for many African countries’ despite their having one of the weakest communications infrastructures in the world. In her earlier work, Opoku-Mensah (2001) stresses that the information revolution had created opportunities for women’s groups to create new spaces to promote diverse voices and networking through the use of ICTs. She also suggested that alternative media in some instances countered the culture of exclusion concerning women’s access to and ownership of mainstream media.

Other scholars are more cautious in praising the ICTs. On the one hand, Liesbet van Zoonen (2002) recommends that Feminist Theory must continue to ask about new (and old) forms of exclusion or discrimination, as well as about alternative or sub-cultural readings, in the new media environment. On the other hand, Sonia Livingstone (2006, p. 245) suggests an approach driven by cultural studies. She notes:

In asking how people engage with new media, and how new media position and influence them, important questions can be drawn out of a cultural studies perspective about the institutional and cultural processes of encoding and decoding. However, equally valuable questions, from a critical communication perspective, will concern the power relations between producers, distributors, and consumers. (Livingstone 2006, p. 245)

Sonia Livingstone (2006) also rightly notes that people's engagement with the media, whether old and new, is part of their activities as publics, as citizens, for better or for worse, and so is not to be hived off as just a matter of the domestic or private sphere (Livingstone 2006, p. 245).

The transformative role of new media is documented in the volume *New media and politics* edited by Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins (2001) with extensive coverage of the transformation of politics, democracy, the public sphere, citizenship, the political audience, governance, political leadership, political parties and political modernity. Each author in the volume tackles this subject in the context of transformation by new media. Sandra Moog and Jeffre Sluyter-Beltrao (2001) discuss the transformation of political communication within the context of commercialised broadcasting, noting that in most advanced and emerging democracies, citizens are increasingly dependent on television for their news and to get information about the world around them. They capture the changing nature of media:

Television programming, is in fact, changing significantly in this new era of widespread commercialisation. Private commercial stations as well as public service stations are adopting new formats of news presentation developing a more fast-paced, aestheticised style. Not only are they spicing up their broadcasts with new logos, graphics and music, but they are cultivating anchor-celebrities who appeal to the public by presenting increasingly mediated news coverage. (Moog & Sluyter-Beltrao 2001, p. 49)

The changes highlighted herein are not limited to news, but also extend to political talk radio and discursive television programmes. It is also rightly noted that 'not all interactivity is associated with positive outcomes' (Ross 2004, p. 47), contrary to the widespread optimism about it. In the context of women in public life, and the current changes in television programming in general and new media potentials, how can representation of women remain

unchanged? What, therefore, explains the under-representation of women in these programmes in the face of interactions?

While digital technologies and ICTs have increased the potentials for access, are women taking advantage of these potentials? Moreover, women's participation through mediated platforms can be adversely affected by emotions, as Denisse Bellini Morales (2014) found regarding the experience of Bolivian women:

My analysis dealt with four specific emotions: fear, guilt, satisfaction and hope. These were the most relevant emotions that the women (not always purposely and explicitly) discussed at one point or another in relation to the internet. This 'emotional' reading of the topic, although individually generated and specific to some cases, has a universal value for all our everyday activities which are permeated with emotions. (Morales 2014, p. 279)

Morales' work illustrates the limitation of the internet in relation to women's participation, otherwise seen as the antidote to traditional gatekeeping practices of mainstream media that tended to exclude women. This concern is also echoed by Adefemi Sonaike (2004, p. 41) who notes that 'current advances in cyber-technology present technologically challenged countries in Africa with a major dilemma', including technology dependence and the digital divide. Treating these potentials with caution is important (Gadzekpo 2009).

Understanding women's experiences with media such as the internet and blogging for social change (Morales 2014; Somolu 2007), the print media (Kawamara 1992; Kabuchu 1992; Kalyango & Winfield 2009) and broadcasting (Musibika 2008a; Nattabi 2009) as well as in the current study, is crucial. My research underscores the importance of media participation for women, not as an end in itself but a means to participation in public life and society, highlighting the determinants of participation, the constraints and the implications of the current participation practices. I now turn to how women are pushing back against the media in order to boost women's participation in public life.

## **2.7 Women Push Back on Media Injustice**

Women's attempt to improve the representation of women include monitoring the portrayal of women, lobbying for a more realistic presentation of women, pressurising traditional media to employ more women, training media on gender reporting and the creation of alternative media

such as newspapers and magazines, the production of radio and television programmes as well as blogging (Gadzekpo 2009; Carta 2004; Nassanga 2009; Musibika 2008a; Mitchell 2008). There are indications that women have been engaging with the media to change negative portrayal, as earlier discussed. This section reviews the ways in which women have tackled various injustices. Women have pushed back in three specific ways: through setting up alternative media, starting women-specific programming within the mainstream media and through women's organisations engaging with the media. Literature has specific cases that highlight the degree of success for each model experimented with in various places, which are relevant for the current study on participation.

### **Setting up media structures by women for women**

Community media is considered a viable mechanism of expanding access to the media for women in rural areas in Uganda and East Africa (Musibika 2008; Nassanga 2009) and countering the negative portrayal of women as well as representing the range of women's interests (Gadzekpo 2009; Mitchell 1998; McLaughlin 1993). It is opined that:

Media pluralism and the liberalization of the airwaves has provided more opportunities for more women to publish their own newspapers and magazines and to produce their own radio and television programmes, sometimes in alliance with women's NGOs. In some African countries, women have successfully helped to set up community radio stations and are also managing these, for example Meridian FM in Ghana and Mama FM in Uganda. (Gadzekpo 2009, p.73)

The setting up of alternative media is one of the major ways by which women have pushed back. Jovia Musibika (2008b) demonstrates how professional media women, through UMWA, established Mama FM to increase women's visibility in the media. She analyses the opportunities of community media and the challenges of accessibility, participation and sustainability. Her research critically looks at Mama FM but does not focus on women in public life participating in political programmes. Her assumptions rest entirely on community media being relevant for rural women and development.

Susan Carta (2004) moves beyond community media and addresses women's participation on the air and the degree of success for each of the three models adopted. Her study of the United States categorises the participation of women into three: where women replaced men in already established broadcast positions as liberal feminists tending towards the sameness of men and women; where media outlets were non-traditional in organisation and radical in content –

reflecting changes in technology and politics, with dedicated small portions of broadcast time for women who produced their own programmes for and about women, independent of direct station supervision of content; and where the entire radio was dedicated to women's programming that combined traditional organisation of a mainstream organisation with women-centred programming.

Carta notes that the third model failed, because it became too feminist. Carta summarises this resistance when she asserts that 'more female voices are heard on the radio today than were heard a quarter of a century ago. However, although the voice can be female, the message cannot be gendered feminist if the voice is to remain viable' (2004, p. 180). This is a realist observation that continues to enmesh women's entry into the media (Van Zoonen 1992). These arguments echo those of Caroline Mitchell (1998), in which she elevates community radio as a feminist public sphere and yet emphasises that the relationship between the media and the feminist movement is complex and problematic. Mitchell (1998, p. 82) identifies just two models – a women's radio station organising separately and women's radio as part of a mixed station.

In light of these developments, the most relevant questions remain: Are women best served through separate spaces or mainstreaming in the African media? (Gadzekpo 2009, p. 77). Are there significant ways in which gendered content can have a broad reach? (Carta 2004, p. 181). Both questions underpin the resistance to gender and feminism on mediated platforms. To mainstream or mix mainstream appears to be preferred but, as Carta warns, success depends on whether the message is gender-neutral or feminist gendered. In short, 'women could speak if they kept the content "gender neutral"' (2004, p. 181). This implies that failure is eminent where the message is 'too feminist'. This knowledge is critical for gender planning. This setting up of alternative media structures still does not address the question of women in public life engaging the media as a public sphere.

### **Developmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs): The case of ACFODE**

Women's NGOs have engaged with the media in various ways. Hope Kabuchu looks at some of the strategies a feminist development women's organisation, Action for Development (ACFODE), employed in 'order to make women more visible in Uganda by advocating for support from the media institutions so that women's contribution to the development of the country is commensurate with the way they are portrayed by the media' (Kabuchu 1992, p. 52). Based on her personal observations and experiences, she identifies a number of ways:

running a 'Women's Vision' supplement in the *New Vision* newspaper and a 'Dear Counsellor' supplement in the then *Weekly* topic, the establishment of *Arise*, a women's magazine, as well as a writing skills project. Despite the limitations of these projects, they opened up space for women's stories. ACFODE also engaged in training. The organisation established the Gender Sensitive Communication (GSC) programme 'as a strategy to deal specifically with the media content. The problem with the content was identified as gender bias against women, anti-women stories and media exclusion of important subjects about women' (Kabuchu 1992, p. 60). The programme, therefore, involved media practitioners in re-discussing their own stories and editorials; it also involved journalists from newspapers, magazines and development organisations with publications and was open to men. This represents an engagement with the media by women.

The case of ACFODE also highlights how this form of engagement with the print media became criticised, as is reflected in this direct response to critical media messages:

Such publications like 'Arise' have been criticised for being elitist and giving expression to a few over-publicised women. We look at this criticism as an attempt to undermine women's efforts to express their achievements through models. These women are playing an important role in society and can be used as vehicles to pass on the message to many uninformed men and women. They serve as lighthouses especially to the youth, inviting them to rise from ignorance and enslaving traditional practices and embrace the future with courage. In their own right, these women occupy positions of influence in society and therefore should be given their rightful place. (*Arise* 1991 editorial cited in Kabuchu 1992, pp. 59-60)

In the face of sustained distortions, women have had to respond using alternative media, defending their actions. This is a case in point. Individual women have also written in the mainstream media to challenge negative portrayal and misrepresentation. Nonetheless, the concern over elite women hijacking the women's cause in the form of elite capture remains a sticky issue, and this is raised in literature (Lakwo 2006; Tamale 1999). How women have responded, either by defending their roles or rethinking their strategies, remains an issue for debate.

### **The internet and other forms of social media**

While women were able to access the public sphere through writing novels as a political phenomenon, women's writing was historically understood as apolitical (Andrande 2002, p. 46). She notes that until recently it was 'impossible in African literary studies to pose political

questions about women's writing with a frame of feminist inquiry because of a largely hostile critical and scholarly environment, one which dismissed feminism itself as a European import' (2002, p. 47). With the advent of new technologies, women are breaking down barriers. The other means that have been suggested include the internet and various other options. Susan Carta suggests that 'Internet radio offers possibilities for women's access and for reaching more women, especially in lesser-developed countries' (2004, p. 181).

In addition to internet radio, blogging by women has taken on the form of alternative media. Oreoluwa Somolu starts out on a positive note regarding the promise of the internet when he asserts that 'the Internet, and other information and communication technologies (ICTs), have the potential to support the economic, political, and social empowerment of women, and the promotion of gender equality' (2007, p. 477). The blogs, it is argued, provide arenas for discussion, dissent and debate capable of translating into knowledge and empowerment, which are critical for social transformation. Its relevance for African women is well captured by Somolu:

The power of blogs for empowering women does not lie in alerting a western audience to gender-based injustices happening in Africa, and telling our stories to the West. Its true potency lies in its ability to give a voice to the previously unheard, and provide them with the tools to connect with others who share the same concerns, while reaching out to people who might have been unaware of these issues, and providing them with a platform on which they can map a strategy for raising the quality of women's lives in Africa. In real terms, this means African women connecting with each other as they tell their stories, support each other, and identify strategies for improving the quality of their lives. (Somolu 2007, p. 487)

The power of blogs in providing voice for women is highly regarded in this article, especially for African women who suffer various forms of gender injustice. Despite its optimism, the article refrains from highlighting the many ways in which the internet can also become a site for bullying women and shutting them up. In the African context, this potential of ICTs is limited by poverty, illiteracy, lack of computer literacy, and language barriers – obstacles that are felt more keenly by women (Radloff, Primo & Munyua 2004 cited in Somolu 2007) and the digital divide problem (Norris, 2001; Opoku-Mensah 2004; Sonaike 2004). This study addresses this potential within the context of interactive broadcast programming.



## **Gender and media monitoring**

Media monitoring is another way by which women have highlighted their media status. The largest of the monitoring projects is the Global Media Monitoring Project launched in 1995, which measures women and men in the news. The project started at the Women Empowering Communication conference held in Bangkok in 1994 and it is coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The GMMP report of 2015 clearly identifies gender disparities in the newsroom in Uganda. It found that 28% of news subjects in the Ugandan media were women, which is relevant for the current study. My study found a much lower figure in public affairs programming.

Documenting status has become a critical tool for advocacy. At the time of writing (July 2017), the GMMP had launched a campaign on ending sexism in the media dubbed ‘This is not OK’, a letter-writing campaign aimed at calling out sexist reporting in newspapers, television and radio newscasts, and online news in order to break the cycle of unquestioned acceptance and/or non-response to journalism that is prejudicial, stereotyped and discriminatory against women ([www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)). In the United States, the annual report on the status of women in the media plays a similar role. Although there are cultural differences, studies on media monitoring appear to reflect little difference, which says a lot about media structures. For instance, in their study of the coverage of two first ladies, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Janet Kataha Museveni, Yusuf Kalyango, Jr and Betty Winfield (2009) found that there was little difference in the way in which the first ladies were framed across cultures. Although they found the Ugandan press to be more patriarchal, they conclude:

Although Uganda is still democratically unstable and the United States enjoys democratic consolidation, the four newspapers framed both First Lady candidates as breakers of the conventional feminine spousal roles. They both faced disparagement for crossing their established norms. The disparaging rhetorical frames were not as prominent in the two U.S. newspapers as they were in the two Ugandan newspapers. (Kalyango & Winfield 2009, p. 25)

Literature demonstrates the ways by which feminism is fought and resisted in media, and how women push back in the face of gender injustice. Scholars and media practitioners warn that ‘[w]ithout gender mainstreaming, political communication in Africa will remain incomplete and unbalanced’ (Agunbiade & Akiode 2017, p. 159). ‘There cannot be sizeable audience growth if media products are produced by one gender’ (Kaija 2013, p. 137). Other monitoring initiatives relevant for women’s participation is the broader analysis of gender gaps. The Global

Gender Gap Index, developed in 2006 partially to address the need for a consistent and comprehensive measure for gender equality, also tracks a country's progress over time.

The International Women's Media Foundation (IWWMF) has studied women in the news media at international level, with a firm belief that full freedom of the press can only exist in a situation where women have an equal voice in the news gathering and news dissemination processes (Byerly 2011). The 2011 report notes that there is abundant evidence of under-representation of women as subjects of coverage that had not previously been captured on a large scale. The report also emphasise that 'understanding the nature and impact of gender-related policies in news companies requires interpreting them in relation to a number of factors' (Byerly 2011, p. 38). These factors include national laws, gender roles and women's status in the larger environment within the context of cultural norms, values and traditions. Media-specific audits like that of the African Media Barometer also supplement these initiatives in documenting media practices as sections on the representation of men and women appear in them. The monitoring of media presents us with the kind of data that enables us to make a case for better representation of women in the media.

## **2.8. Chapter Conclusion**

This study was guided by the grounded theory approach. Therefore the literature review was deferred to after data collection and analysis in order to allow the data to speak for itself. This study has also been done in the multidisciplinary fashion, which means that literature from the area of women in politics was particularly useful. Several issues are raised in the literature. The media is powerful and plays certain roles in a democratic society. A democratic media must, therefore, meet certain benchmarks. Several conclusions can be drawn from the literature.

First, that the media plays both a positive and a negative role. It can promote democracy if it acts as a public sphere in which citizens participate. However, the public sphere does not necessarily include women, which is in line with studies indicating that men form the major part of the public sphere. However, the exploration of women's participation in this study has been extremely limited.

Second, studies of women in public life have largely focused on women in politics and the mechanisms by which women join politics and policy-making. A number of studies identify the role of women in this sphere through the participation of some women in high political offices. However, their participation, due to entry using affirmative action, has proved

problematic. The gap in this section is that women studies narrowly tend to focus on women in politics, thus excluding many of the women participating in various areas. The other weakness is that the study of women in politics also disproportionately focuses on affirmative action or the quota system. Constraints on women's participation in politics are, therefore, tied to state institutions and civil society or politics. The women's movement is also another area of interest. Rarely do the studies on women and politics focus on media in Uganda.

Third, that studies focusing on media and women in Uganda are few but there is much to be learnt from Europe and America, with notable exceptions in Africa being South Africa. When these studies are done, they are largely focused on the image of women in the media using the framing theory. The problem with this is that the media assumes the position of a powerful tool that women have no mechanism for engaging with and that places women at the mercy of those who work in these media institutions. The presence of women working in these spaces is deemed to be of little consequence as it does little to improve the way in which women are covered. Although in some cases it is argued that women only need fair coverage as opposed to some form of affirmative action, in the same breadth demands for positive coverage of women are imminent. The challenge with a dedicated focus on portrayal through framing is that the participatory nature of the media and the right of women to participate remain unknown. Other studies have focused on community media and radio in general, while most of them have focused on print.

As such, I agree with Sreberny-Mohammadi and Karen Ross (1996), who note that there has been a notable lacuna in the analysis of representation in terms of the manner in which the mediated presentation of politics is gendered, and its implications for representative democracy at large and, specifically, for the strategies to increase women's political participation. This study has provided insights into this lacuna. Researchers have in general not explored women's media participation and ways in which women can exploit opportunities from the media to change narratives about their role in society and perceptions about their leadership. Moreover, no study has looked beyond representation in the sense of portrayal and misrepresentation.

What is very relevant for this study, and different from most studies, is that the authors place the responsibility for better interaction or even the relationship between women and media on the media. By looking beyond representation (and beyond image in representation) and examining interaction and engagement to provide understanding of women's media participation, and the implications for women's participation in public life, the current study

contributes significantly to the gaps in literature. This study thus contributes to the body of literature on media, gender and public life in Uganda, with relevance to other media contexts.

**CHAPTER THREE:**  
**THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**  
**CRITICAL THEORY: FEMINIST THOUGHT, CULTURAL STUDIES AND**  
**PUBLIC SPHERE THEORY**

**3.1. Chapter Introduction**

The interconnection between the mass media, women and public life is the core subject of this study. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks unpack the nature of the relationship between concepts. From a theoretical perspective, the study is based on critical theory, in particular feminist thought, cultural studies and public sphere theory. This ensemble is crucial, given the interdisciplinary nature of the study. A number of the concepts in this study are commonly used in other disciplines and, therefore, need to be conceptualised. The formation of concepts is a useful analytical tool. These concepts include women's participation in the mass media; women's participation in public life; women's representation in the media; women-media interaction; and women's engagement with the media. The final conceptual framework maps out the relationship between the variables and possible outcomes. The chapter begins with an overview of critical theory, then discusses the specific theories chosen and the general contributions and critique of critical theory, then moves on to delve into concepts.

**3.2. Critical Theory: Context**

Katherine Miller (2005) writes extensively on communication theories, arguing that 'theories help us understand or explain phenomena we observe in the social world. They are the "nets with which we catch the world" or the ways in which we make sense of social life' (Miller 2005, p. 22). The focus on theory in this chapter is to achieve that objective, to help me understand the world I am studying. The study is theoretically situated within critical theory, in particular: (i) feminist thought; (ii) cultural studies; and (iii) public sphere theory. The choice of these three theoretical rubrics within critical theory is premised on their interconnections. For instance, Susan Okin (1999) recognises the unavoidable conflict between the ideals of

gender equality and cultural recognition while Monica Mookherjee (2005) identifies the need for equal consideration in the public sphere and for cultural practices to remain consistent with equal consideration. Mookherjee succinctly puts it thus:

In order to address the feminist and post-colonial concerns together, we need an account of recognition that integrates two ethical commitments. Firstly, irrespective of one's conclusions about the justice of specific practices, the value-systems from which these practices derive require equal consideration in the public sphere, in order to transform persistently unequal relations between groups. Second, the criticism of cultural practices should remain consistent with such equal consideration. (Mookherjee 2005, p. 34)

This submission integrates gender, culture and the public sphere within critical theory and, therefore, is sufficient to guide this study. It should be noted that this study is conducted in the tradition of grounded theory, with much emphasis on data and theoretical modelling which, in turn, is helped by current theoretical arguments. In grounded theory tradition, interaction with theory is delayed. This chapter was written before the fieldwork, and then revised in light of the fieldwork findings. This reiterative approach is typical of grounded theory. The current theoretical mapping is a guide to analysis but does not form the concepts for analysis, which are derived from the data.

Theories in the critical tradition not only represent the social world but also work as active agents of reform and radical change (Miller 2005, p. 65). This is in line with case study and grounded theory approaches to inquiry. The current study recognises that there are interconnections of disciplines in the study of the media, women and public life from the fields of communication and media studies, gender and women's studies, cultural studies and political science that can best be explained within broad theoretical frameworks; hence the choice of critical theory. The choice is also driven by the need to interrogate why years of scholarship and activism have achieved so little in the area of women and media participation.

Critical theory is an ensemble of theories, meaning that there are many theories, not just one. Within critical theory, feminist theories, cultural studies and public sphere theory provide analytical frames. According to Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren (2002, p. 89), the critical tradition is always changing and evolving in line with the current state. More importantly, critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity since there is room for disagreement among critical theorists, which makes it suitable for this study. Critical theory is closely associated with the Frankfurt School in Germany where the Institute of Social Research had

been established and grew out of a Marxist ideology in its emphasis on critique (Miller 2005; Kellner 1989). Power, hegemony and ideology are important parts of critical theory.

The critical tradition ‘conceptualises communication as *discursive reflection* – that is, discourse that freely reflects on the assumptions that may be unexamined habits, ideological beliefs, and relations of power’ (Craig & Muller 2007, p. 425). It is based on the idea that authentic communication occurs only in a process of discursive reflection that moves towards a transcendence that can never really be fully and finally achieved – but the reflective process itself is progressively emancipatory (Craig 1999, p. 147). The connection between critical theory and the intersection of culture and communication is clearly drawn by Kellner (1989) when he asserts:

Critical theory conceptualises culture and communications as part of society, and focuses on how socio-economic imperatives helped constitute the nature, function, and effects of mass communications and culture. By conceptualising these important social forces as part of socio-economic processes, Critical Theory integrates study of culture and communications with study of the economy and society. And by adopting a critical approach to the study of all social phenomena, Critical Theory is able to conceptualise how the culture industries function as instruments of social control, and therefore serve the interest of social domination. (Kellner 1989, pp. 140-41)

Like Mookherjee’s interpretation of the intersection between cultural studies, feminism and the public sphere (2005, p. 34), Kellner brings to the fore the critical issue of cultural industries functioning as instruments of social control. Who is being controlled and by whom? Who has power and how do they use to it to prevent meaningful feminist engagement? No doubt, critical theory espouses the key issues under investigation in this study such as women’s representation, interaction and engagement with the media and the implications for their participation in public life. The different theories considered are discussed in line with their key arguments. However, the general contributions and criticism of critical theory is then discussed.

### **3.2.1. Feminist thought**

That feminism is resisted is well captured by Stuart Hall when he writes that they ‘were opening the door to feminist studies, being good, transformed men. And yet, when it broke in through the window, every single unsuspected resistance rose to the surface’ (Hall 1992, p. 282).

Despite this resistance, feminist thought (Ashcraft & Mumbi 2004; Bobo 2001; Donovan 2000; Kramarae 1989) is an important influence in several traditions of communication theory. It is noted that ‘feminism’s critical posture towards gender ideologies and its social change commitments place it primarily in the critical tradition’ (Craig & Muller 2007, p. 497) and carries liberal roots.

The choice of feminist thought stems from the location of women in public life, which feminists have engaged with in both scholarship and activism. The feminist theory of communication focuses on talk, connectedness and relationships while highlighting women’s experiences (Kramarae 1989). According to Aida Opoku-Mensah (2001, p. 25), ‘feminism as a political commitment to the advancement of women is by nature a multidisciplinary activity’. Despite its multiple interpretations, feminism or feminist theory in this study is addressed from the critical theory stance.

In this section on feminist thought, I deal with mainly two questions: (i) What is feminism? and (ii) Why is feminism resisted? To answer these questions, one must examine the various forms of feminism. In the book *Feminist thought: a comprehensive introduction* Rose-Marie Tong (1989) outlines the divisions that include: (i) liberal feminism; (ii) Marxist feminism; (iii) radical feminism; (iv) psychoanalytic feminism; (v) socialist feminism; (vi) existentialist feminism; and (vii) postmodern feminism. Other scholars have advanced the notion of African feminism(s) (Nnaemeka 1998) and black feminism (Ogundipe 1993). However, Michelle Friedman, Jo Metelerkamp and Ros Posel (1987) identify five types of feminism: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and feminism in the Third World. They suggest that feminism was initiated in the West and influenced by socialist thought and practice as well as anti-imperialist and nationalist struggles in the Third World. The central issues for each strand is well articulated by Friedman et al. (1987), which I briefly present, then deal with African feminism in detail. I also consider feminist theories which include standpoint theory and muted group theory.

Liberal feminists argue that ‘the liberation of women consists of their freedom to choose their lives, to be able to compete with men on equal terms in the professional and political worlds, and in the labour market’ (Friedman et al. 1987, p. 6). Thus, women and men are endowed with reason and their capacity, therefore, to choose has the same worth as that of men. Liberal feminists, therefore, see the problem being ‘constraints in society which discriminate against



women solely on the basis of their sex, and so prevent the exercise of that free choice' (ibid, p. 6). Solutions to gender inequality would comprise equal opportunities for men and women.

Radical feminism, for its part, focuses on women's reproductive freedom, seeking to first uncover the root cause of women's oppression and argue that the oppression of women is the root of all other forms of oppression and domination (Friedman et al. 1987, p. 8). Their central concern is that the oppression of women and patriarchy constitute the social system which functions in a hierarchical and dominating way to subordinate individual women to men.

Marxist feminists reject the radical feminist position that women's enemy is male domination or patriarchy rather than capitalism. The solution thus lay in socialism rather than a struggle against men, which would divert energy away from the class struggle. The question on the agenda was the women question rather than feminism (Friedman et al. 1987). The solution would be addressing inequalities in the workplace and the exploitative nature of capitalism.

Socialist feminism rejects any biologically determined sexual division of labour. Socialist feminists do not believe that women's oppression can end without a transformation of society; they have to confront the contradictions of being what they are in a capitalist society characterised by male domination. The slogan 'the personal is the political' is taken very seriously, leading some women to live alone or communally, or with partners outside of the institution of marriage (Friedman et al. 1987, p. 19).

Feminism and the Third World refers to the emergence of feminism in many developing countries. The position of feminism in the Third World lies within the assumption that 'the woman question will be solved with the transition to socialism, women's greater involvement in production and their more extensive involvement in the public sphere' (Friedman et al. 1987, p. 20). It rejects the idea that feminism is imposed on the Third World by the West, explaining its emergence through historical circumstances. For instance:

By insisting that women need to be drawn into productive labour, women's workload is often increased to intolerable levels as they have to continue with their tasks in the subsistence or domestic sector as well as take on so called productive labour in factories, on state farms or in cooperatives. A reluctance to confront gender relations around questions of housework and childcare often means this is a triple burden. Because of their double or triple burden in terms of work, women are more handicapped than men in their participation in the decision making process, in the amount of leisure time available to become

familiar with political issues and debates and their ability to put the question of gender oppression on the political agenda at all. (Friedman et al. 1987, p. 23)

This strand of feminism is relevant for a study on the media and women in public life since it focuses on decision-making and the burden on women in public life. Questions of women's effectiveness in public life do not engage with these dynamics of the availability of time for women to familiarise themselves with political issues and debates. Feminism within the context of the Third World is an important issue to raise. In the African context, it is difficult to identify a dominant strand of feminism owing to dependence on external funding of the feminist agenda embedded in various women's organisations. Many women's organisations end up exhibiting the characteristics of one or two forms, without a clear-cut identity.

Despite scholarship on the division within feminism as discussed, Gwendolyn Mikell (1995) contends that various ideological currents within feminism is primarily a western, not an African, concern, although she is quick to add that there were relatively few African women who used the term 'feminism' prior to the 1990s. However, there is hardly any doubt that there are many strands of feminism. Even within Africa, these divisions are eminent, with specific feminist scholars clustered around radical or liberal ideals. The idea of African feminism appeals to me owing to its potential for contextualisation and rethinking possibilities.

### *African feminism and what it means*

African feminism emerged in the 1990s with writings by African women. What African feminism means is well captured by Carole Boyce Davies. In the introduction to *Ngambika* (1986) she writes:

African feminism recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation within different from the generalised oppression of all African peoples...[it] recognises that certain inequalities and limitations existed/exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them, introduced others. It acknowledges its affinities with international feminism, but delineates a specific African feminism with certain specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies...[it] examines African societies for institutions which are of value to women and rejects those which work to their detriment and does not simply import western women's agendas. Thus, it respects African women's status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons...it respects African women's self-reliance and the penchant

to cooperative work and social organization...[it] understands the interconnectedness of race, class and sex oppression. (Davies 1986, pp. 8-10)

Carol Boyce Davis captures in its entirety the gist of African feminism and a response to the key criticism of western feminism in Africa and the Third World. Key in her definition is the demand for recognition of African women's lived realities. African feminism is a call for the contextualisation of feminism in Africa. I locate my study within the notion of African feminism owing to the many aspects identified in the definition that relates to the gender binaries in developing countries like Uganda, located in sub-Saharan Africa. African feminism allows one to escape the general criticism that feminism is a western idea.

African feminism has been progressing, as Mikell (1995) rightly notes, stating that the pragmatics of the women's political representation in the 1990s did shape the emerging African women's movement (1995, p. 407). At the centre of African feminism is the quest for empowerment derived from participation. Mayre Ivone da Silva (2004) notes that the politics of empowerment for African women that is proposed by the African feminist is 'a movement which searches for the full participation of African women in African societies' issues because they defend that there will be no liberation for Africa without women's liberation' (Silva 2004, p. 137). This effectively expands the quest for women's empowerment to include the liberation of the whole. Putting the liberation of African women at the centre of liberation for the continent makes empowerment through participation crucial.

Feminism continues to be resisted in Africa, sometimes very strongly, even among women. Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta's refusal to be called a feminist captures this resistance when she claims that she has never called herself a feminist. 'Now if you choose to call me a feminist, that is your business; but I don't subscribe to the feminist idea that all men are brutal and repressive and we must reject them' (Emecheta 1994 cited in Mikell 1995, p. 406). This is the dilemma of the African feminist in crafting an identity. Buchi Emecheta's denial of the label reflects the reaction of women to an often imposed label, categorising women as feminists because of the work they do or their perceived relationships with the concept. It is clear that Emecheta's rejection stems from the acknowledgement that some of the men feminism expects her to reject are her brothers and fathers and sons. This rejection, it should be noted, permeates most of the Third World and is sometimes imposed from the outside rather than coming from women, as in the case of Emecheta.

However, Imafedia Okhamafe puts the resistance by African women in context and notes that women who decline to be called feminists or shrug off the label do so ‘in contexts which define or frame feminism univocally, uniculturally, unirationally, and Europeanly. Women’s liberation makes creative sense universally, but strategies for waging its battles make creative sense only locally’ (Okhafame 1987, p. 74). She rightly adds that women’s liberation is in essence a global war with local battles where outside strategies and outside cures should come only when expressly invited by the inside feminists themselves (ibid). African feminism thus becomes a measured response to this blanket standardisation of feminism.

It is not just some African women who refuse to be called feminists, but many accusations are also levelled at feminists in the Third World in general. Tejaswini Niranjana aptly describes the Asian case where it is claimed that feminism is disconnected/alienated from Indian culture, a charge that is seldom made of other political frameworks, which are far from indigenous. ‘The implicit accusation seems to be that feminist demands are modern demands, and that modernisation means the erasure or giving up of Indian (for example) culture and the adoption of Western values and ways of life’ (Niranjana 2007, p. 211). The disconnection from culture is considered a major problem with feminism. Niranjana goes on to ask some very important questions: ‘Why should this be a problem only for women? What is the special connection of women with the culture question?’ (ibid). These questions suggest that some demands are made on feminism that pass on other frameworks. Feminism is also placed firmly within political discourse.

Not all African women, however, rejected this identity despite the high price to be paid. Some of the women claim it, as is the case with Nnaemeka:

When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believed that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us this is the crucial element in our feminism. (Nnaemeka 1998, p. 47 cited in Sheftal 2003, p. 31)

This amounts to stretching feminism to include the liberation of the continent and the quest for African development. Nnaemeka’s call for everyone to be a feminist also includes men, contrary to the belief that feminism is only for women.

Further criticism is levelled against women activists, who are accused of bringing western ideals that are in conflict with the traditional values of women and the roles of women even in Africa. The feminist theory is useful in giving meaning to text and understanding feminists' criticism of the media in their representation of women. Why this resistance? For the most part we understand that feminism is resisted. Why this is the case in Africa has been well captured by Mikell:

For me, the recognition of a new African feminism represents a gargantuan change, because previously I was unwilling, for several reasons, to apply the feminist label to the African women's movement. First, there was the recurrent issue of hegemony. To a large extent I responded to the anger many African women have felt toward what they perceived as attempts by western academics and activists to coopt them into a movement defined by extreme individualism, by militant opposition to patriarchy, and, ultimately, by a hostility to males. [...] Second, I was exercising caution born out of my knowledge that what we called African women's "movement" actually consisted of a broad continuum. Third, I was resisting the projection of a dichotomy on to this continuum, with educated and elite women seen as ideologically far more advanced (and therefore feminist) and rural/ordinary African women seen as parochial and prefeminist. (Mikell 1995, p. 406)

What Mikell achieves is to locate the resistance, underscore the dilemma and acknowledge the progress made. It cannot be said, for sure, that despite the emergence of African feminism, the women's movement is necessarily a feminist movement or that there is less anger among African women against their western counterparts today. Also, whether the divide between rural and urban women is much less now is not clear. It is further unclear that one can recognise the specific brand of feminism in a country when many women's organisations have various interests and are funded by many strands of feminist agenda in the West. Despite its criticism as a western imposition, it remains relevant in the examination of issues related to women's participation in public life, within critical theory. It is my standpoint in the analysis of the current study.

### **Theories of co-cultural groups: Standpoint theory and muted group theory**

In addition to these interesting divisions within feminist thought, explanations can also be sought within standpoint theory and muted group theories also known as theories of co-cultural groups (Miller 2005). Although classified as theories of culture and communication, they are also feminist theories.

Standpoint theory, attributed to Nancy Hartstock (Miller 2005), ‘was conceived to provide an alternative and feminist understanding of power and the relationship of lived experiences to knowledge and power’ (Miller 2005, p. 304). Although premised on the western world, the theory suggests that men and women have different views of the world due to the sexual division of labour that privileges men who do productive work and women who do nurturing work. The relevance is in the critical assessment of social structures and experiences that shape both ontology and epistemology. Standpoint theory is also closely associated with giving voice to those who are typically silent (Miller 2005, p. 304). In the context of the broadcast media, women are typically silent on some subjects and programmes.

Muted group theory emerged from a critique by cultural anthropologists Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener, who noted that researchers spoke to men and wrote their ethnographies of a culture as a whole, leaving unrepresented portions of society such as children and women, whose cultural stories remained unwritten (Miller 2005, p. 306). The consequence is that women were seen as inarticulate by researchers; as such, women were muted. The theory is further developed by Cheris Kramarae (1978, 1981 cited in Miller 2005) and primarily articulated as a feminist theory which places women as the muted group, but is applicable to other marginalised cultural groups (ibid). Its primary relevance for the current study lies in its premise that women’s other ways of talking have no place in a man’s world because:

Through processes including ridicule, ritual, gatekeeping, and harassment, women will be rendered silent or inarticulate in public discourse forums. Specifically, women will often feel uncomfortable speaking in the mainstream of society, will have to translate ideas into the parlance of public communication, will simply not speak, or will use ‘underground’ forms of interaction such as diaries, journals, coffee klatches, or women only chat rooms. (Houston & Kramarae 1991 cited in Miller 2005, pp. 308-09)

The notion of a man’s world and women’s world thus runs through both standpoint theory and muted group theory. Besides African feminism and its stand on women’s participation in society, standpoint theory and muted group theory provide great analytical tools for a study that focuses on women’s representation, interaction and engagement with the media within a public life and public sphere context. While standpoint theory focuses on the different viewpoints of men and women, muted theory points to how women’s voices are muted in public discourse. This is useful in enabling a deeper understanding of this study.

Feminism has been criticised as a western ideal, with scholars defining and explaining African feminism(s) (Nnaemeka, 1998), theorising black feminism (Ogundipe, 1993) and

criticising the communication critical theorists for not engaging directly with the feminist critique of patriarchal language, structures of thought or discursive practices (Jansen, 2002).

### **3.2.2. Cultural studies**

According to Katherine Miller, ‘a culture can be seen as a group of people bonded by national or ethnic background, as a set of common experiences and behaviours, or as values and norms that guide behaviours’ (Miller 2005, p. 290). Other ideas about culture focus primarily on how culture is made by people. John Fiske (1989, pp. 23-24) presents culture as a living, active process that can be developed only from within and never imposed from without or above. As such, popular culture is made by the people and not produced by the culture industry per se.

However, the cultural studies approach (Hall 1997, 1982) focuses on representation. Representation within the cultural studies context is more than just reflection (Hall 1982). ‘Representation connects meaning and language to culture’ (Hall 2013, p. 1). Of particular interest is the constructionist approach to meaning-making advanced by Michel Foucault (1980) and the circulation of power in which all are caught up as oppressors and oppressed.

Cultural studies, although focused on representation as image, also examine meaning-making of presence and absence, as well as signification using the three theoretical approaches: the reflective (already exists), intentional (presenter’s meaning) and constructionist (constructed in and through language) (Hall 2013). The issue of power as advanced by Foucault (1980) is critical in the process of participation, especially in the public sphere. Critical theory’s analyses of the functions of culture, ideology and the mass media in contemporary societies are considered among its most valuable legacies. According to Kellner (1989), critical theorists were great critics of both the ‘high culture’ and the ‘mass culture’, producing important texts in these areas. ‘Their work is distinguished by the close connection between social theory and cultural critique and by their ability to contextualise culture within social development’ (Kellner 1989, p. 121). The context of social development is relevant for cultural studies because of differences in the positions of members of a society, as Giddens highlights:

Those in subordinate positions in a society, particularly in large-scale societies, may frequently be much less closely caught within the embrace of consensual ‘ideologies’ than many writers – who certainly include Marxists, among others – assume. The importance of this point is very considerable, and connects closely to the theme of the dialectic of control. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the ‘distancing’ of commitment to a legitimate order is not necessarily confined to the lower echelons in a society. (Giddens 1981, p. 67)

This is critical since women occupy the subordinate positions in society. The discursive approach in cultural studies offers the ability to go beyond the text for discourse as a system of representation, knowledge/power as well as the question of subject. Foucault's work is appreciated as a theory of the media (Thompson 1995) rather than discourse analysis. The critical point in Foucault's analysis is the question of knowledge, power and subject, which are relevant for the current study. Still, Thomson has made important arguments on the nature of interaction and the ideological character of messages. He points out that 'if the nature of media and mediated quasi-interactions define broad parameters within which messages acquire an ideological character, it is essential to relate these messages to the particular contexts within which they are received' (Thompson 1990, p. 270). Whether a message will sustain power or not depends on the context. Yet, the media can also be a site for the interplay of power. For instance:

The media world has its internal transactions between journalists and camera crews in the field and editors and producers in the home office, they operate in systems with quite different political economies in different countries, and the norms and practices vary, both nationally and internationally. Journalists have their own distinctive culture, and the individual media organisations often have distinctive subcultures. (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993, p. 115)

Gamson and Wolfsfeld capture the nature of culture in the media and the multiple levels on which they operate that can, in turn, affect participation. The acknowledgement of a culture in the entertainment industry emerged from the early thoughts in critical theory.

Susan Andrade (2002) identifies how women's entry into the public sphere was largely ignored during colonialism. While the 'cultural production and political agitation of African men were easily assimilated to a nationalist paradigm, women's culture and politics were often understood as unrelated to nationalism, and, therefore, as not engaged in the larger political process' (2002, p. 45). As such, nationalism appeared to occlude women's political involvement at the time of decolonisation. This can be explained within both ideologies and power discourses. On the one hand, Anthony Giddens posits that those in subordinate positions in a society may not be within the embrace of consensual ideologies, as such 'the "distancing" of commitment to a legitimate order is not necessarily confined to the lower echelons in a society' (Giddens 1981, p. 67). On the other hand, 'if power and legitimisation of power are too closely linked to normative consensus, it is considered too much from the point of view of the "dominating" (or, in our case: media organisations)' (Verstraeten 2007, p. 81). The consequence of this linkage would thus be losing sight of 'those few elements of power the



“dominated” (or: the reader/viewer) have at their disposal’ (ibid). This begs the question: Do women as the dominated in society have power in the context of media?

Despite the shortcomings of cultural studies in explaining the absence of women on media in particular, it offers critical insight for the analysis of knowledge and power, and of women as subjects. Women are still invisible in public affairs programmes even when the public sphere is presented as open to all groups interested in participating. According to Joe L. Kincheocloe and Peter McLaren (2002):

Cultural studies, of course, occupies an ever expanding role in this context, as it studies not only popular culture but the tacit rules that guide cultural production. Arguing that the development of mass media has changed the way that culture operates, cultural studies researchers maintain that cultural epistemologies at the beginning of the new millennium are different than they were only a few decades ago. In this new epistemological era new forms of culture and cultural domination are produced as the distinction between the real and simulated is blurred. (2002, p. 95)

From the cultural studies critique of culture or the entertainment industry in general, it can be seen that the public sphere is weakly connected. What is for sure is that cultural epistemologies have clearly changed. I adopt the notion of cultural production and mass media culture to understand each media and programme case.

Douglas Kellner (1989) argues that ‘the critique of culture industries was one of the most influential aspects of Critical Theory, and its impact on social theory and on theories and critiques of mass communications and culture accounts in part for the continuing interest in Critical Theory today’ (Kellner 1989). With these critical linkages between culture and communication within critical theory, Kellner still decries the fact that later critical approaches to media and culture tended to separate communications research from the study of mass culture, ‘thus failing to provide a unified account of cultural production, distribution and reception’. The other critique is that the institute’s critique of mass culture had less consideration of the oppositional and emancipatory use of the media and cultural practices, to which he proposes that:

New Critical Theories of culture and communications must therefore be able to develop more complex methods of cultural interpretation and criticism which pay attention to and conceptualise the contradictions, the articulation of social conflicts, the oppositional moments, the subversive tendencies and the projection of utopian images and scenes of happiness and freedom that appear within mainstream commercial culture. (Kellner 1989, p. 141)

It is the proposition to develop more complex methods of cultural interpretation and criticism that appeals to this study because, indeed, there are contradictions that need to be explained more in cultural terms than the often over-emphasised framing of women's issues. Using grounded theory, the link between empiricism and theory is carefully calculated to respond to some of these criticisms. The cultural studies approach provides the lens through which to analyse women as a cultural group and media culture as an institution.

### **3.2.3. Public sphere theory**

Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere and communicative action (Habermas 1974, 1984, 1987) is useful in exploring the social issues inherent in women's representation, interaction and engagement with the media. Its themes are likely to guide the critical research of discursive programmes. The public sphere is thus defined as follows:

By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business nor professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. (Habermas 1974, p. 49)

The interaction herein lies between the state and society. In definitional terms, Habermas suggests a system of participation that is all-inclusive, producing a single public. Guaranteed access to all citizens is crucial. This all-inclusive access should be treated in the context of interest and the burden of participation. According to Frederick Golooba-Mutebi (2004), participation places demands on ordinary people's lives, already over-burdened by the demands of their own lives. Women, socialist feminists argue, are already over-burdened by their triple or double burden (Friedman et al. 1987). Their participation should, therefore, go beyond interest.

The other practical import of using the public sphere is that it presumes that the media is a tool of the public sphere and inherent influence. Some scholars have traced the moment when the media became a vital component of the public sphere to the industrial society (Thompson 2000). In the original conception of the public sphere, the media is identified as key:

Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion –

that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest. In a large public body this bid of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines, radio and TV are the media of the public sphere. We speak of the political public sphere in contrast, for instance, to the literary one, when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state. (Habermas 1974, p. 49)

The assumptions herein, of guaranteed freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions, is to be taken within the context of specific media environments. Moreover, it has been rightly pointed out that developments in the media strongly influence the public sphere, and noted that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century public sphere was more dependent on the press. Hans Verstraeten argues that ‘the rise of telecommunication (telegraph, telephone and more important, in the twentieth century, radio and television) has profoundly affected the structure of the public sphere, not as much by the communicated contents as by the way of communicating’ (Verstraeten 2007). Thus, the digital era expands the notion of media to include mass media, internet and wireless communication networks. These technologies of the networked society extend previous communication media and are qualitatively different in terms of structure, speed and scope (Crack 2007).

In an era of discursive programmes and the media playing crucial roles in the democratic process, the notion of presidential debates in countries like Uganda, and the use of media by candidates in various elections, all serve to legitimise the role of the media in the mobilisation of voters and sending candidates’ key messages to the electorate. Women’s increased participation in public life has to a large extent been attributed to government policy, in particular affirmative action. This study steps up the boundary to examine if the media plays any role at all, and how. The public sphere is the best place to start this interrogation owing to the perceived benefits of the media as a tool. This is relevant in the context of changes in the media and, consequently, the public life, as is noted below:

We shall not arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the nature of public life in the modern world if we remain wedded to a conception of publicness which is essentially dialogical in character and which obliges us to interpret the ever growing role of mediated communication as an historical fall from grace.... [The modern media] have created a new kind of publicness which cannot be accommodated within the traditional model. (Thompson 1995, p. 258)

The nature of the public sphere in the era of media convergence is a valid one, and requires greater attention. Studies in Uganda already provide some evidence of the nature of the public sphere. It is acknowledged that, while the proliferation of broadcast media that transmit in the indigenous languages may improve people's chances of participation in public debate through the media, it also 'reduces the chances of the broadcast media enhancing a shared public sphere' (Chibita 2009, p. 302). Nonetheless, although the talk shows present an imperfect public sphere, it is, still, 'a sort of public sphere' (Mwesige 2009, p. 221). Joe Oloka-Onyango and John-Jean Barya (2008) contend that the public sphere actively includes civil society, who may use the media, or the media itself may be part of civil society. In terms of either definition, little attention is paid to women and the public sphere in Uganda.

The main criticism of the public sphere from the critical tradition comes from Nancy Fraser (1990, p. 77) in which she demonstrates that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere is not adequate for the critique of existing democracy in late capitalist societies because the conception of the public sphere requires the elimination of social inequality. Fraser dismisses the bourgeois conception as a normative ideal and suggests that there are multiple publics. It is Fraser's attempt to explain how the public sphere can silence the voices of less dominant groups, including women that contributes to the current study's understanding. She contends that in stratified societies, it is the arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics that better promote ideals of participatory publics than single comprehensive and overarching ones. She writes:

It is not possible to insulate special discursive arenas from the effects of societal inequality; and that where societal inequality persists, deliberative processes in public spheres will tend to operate to the advantage of dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates. Now I want to add that these effects will be exacerbated where there is only a single, comprehensive public sphere. In that case, members of subordinated groups would have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies. They would have no venues in which to undertake communicative processes that were not, as it were, under the supervision of dominant groups. (1990, p. 66)

In Fraser's conception, women and other marginalised groups form part of the subordinate groups. She goes on to suggest that the less dominant groups would 'fail to find the right voice or words to express their thoughts', rendering them unable to articulate and defend their interests in a comprehensive public (ibid). However, Fraser admits that there are elements of the public sphere theory worth modifying. Partly, this is due to her assertion that the 'public spheres themselves are not spaces of zero degree culture, equally hospitable to any possible

form of cultural expression. Rather, they consist in culturally specific institutions – including, for example, various journals and various social geographies of urban space’ (1990, p. 69).

The call for modification is evidently taken up in the later work of Habermas (1991). Fraser (2007, pp. 9-10) also holds that in its original formulation, Habermas associates the public sphere with a territorial state, a bounded political community, a shared language and culture, a national economy, the media and public discussion. Fraser’s critique is largely based on the conception of the public sphere and does not usefully articulate the significance of women’s participation in the public sphere. However, Elizabeth Houle ably demonstrates this:

Participation in public debate which challenges the expectations of women’s and men’s roles in society therefore offers an alternative route by which women can participate in redefining their social status. Because of the scope of mass media, women’s ability to influence government and members of society can hinge directly upon their access to the media. Without equal access to the public sphere, however, women are restricted in the extent of input they will have in restructuring society, in a manner which would better accommodate their needs. (Houle 2000, p. 149)

If the media is the institution of the public sphere, the observation that women’s influence directly rests on their access to the media is a fair argument. The point is made that the public sphere attributes include equal access, when several studies indicate that women do not have this access and are, therefore, less of citizens and more of subjects. Also crucial is the changing nature of the media, its expansion and the enlargement of the public sphere, that appear to be contributing ‘to further fragmentation rather than unification of society, and that the emergent public sphere(s) has not produced an equivalent growth in political activism’ (Sassi 2001, p. 106). The limitation of the public sphere is thus tied to changes in the media that are more rapid than those in the public sphere. How should the public sphere respond to changes in the media?

Other criticisms of the public sphere rest in the application of the concept in Africa, deemed historically and contextually to be different from its place of origin. Suleiman (2017) contends that while the concept of public sphere is useful for Africa, it nonetheless throws up some conceptual difficulties and, as such, cannot be extrapolated without critical reflection owing to its historical and cultural specificity. The trouble is the universal application of the concept of public that derives from the concrete historical experiences of other people. For instance:

The historical trajectories of the public sphere and civil society of Europe and Africa have followed very different paths. While in its original home of Western Europe, a public sphere of civil society developed out of internal conditions to

advance democracy, in Africa it was borne out of the colonial experience and undermines democracy after. (Sulaiman 2017, p. 88)

While it cannot be doubted that the two concepts originated from Western Europe and must be adapted critically, this criticism assumes that no conceptual stretching happens in the context of application. This Sulaiman agrees with, when he concludes that the argument of originality does not ‘by itself, render it completely invalid for African countries. It only requires careful interrogation and analysis and even more careful appropriation and adaptation to fit in with local features’. The more useful criticism of the public sphere is its nature and structure within a media already structured to exclude some groups, such as women. The theory remains relevant because discursive programmes of interactive types do not vary significantly across cultures.

### **3.3. Critical Theory: Contributions**

The importance of this ensemble of theories under the critical tradition lies in what Craig (1999) has called critical theory’s ability to appeal to the commonplace values of freedom, equality and reason, and that it challenges many of our commonplace assumptions about what is reasonable, and its location of the communication problem within the ideological forces. For instance:

The basic “problem of communication” in society arises from material and ideological forces that preclude or distort discursive reflection. Communication conceived in this way explains how social injustice is perpetuated by ideological distortions and how justice can potentially be restored through communicative practices that enable critical reflection or consciousness-raising in order to unmask those distortions and thereby enable political action to liberate the participants from them. (Craig 1999, p. 147)

The contribution of this text is its focus on ideological distortions and how they can be restored by communicative practices. A literature review of women and media studies reveals a problematic presentation of women that damages their dignity, and the media as being a site through which such broken dignity may be restored. By investigating women’s participation in the more serious programmes that discuss issues of national development and presume an open public sphere, I obtain critical reflections on women’s relationship with the media and public life. Further relevance is well advanced:

One of the most important aspects of critical theory-informed qualitative research involves the often neglected domain of interpretation of information.... While there are many moments within the process of researching where the

critical dynamic of critical theory-informed research, there is none more important than the moments of interpretation. (Kincheloe & McLaren 2002, p. 96)

Also relevant is the contribution of critical theory to multidisciplinary studies as identified by Douglas Kellner (1989):

Critical theory is informed by multidisciplinary research, combined with the attempt to construct a systematic, comprehensive social theory that can confront the key social and political problems of the day. The work of the critical theorists provides alternatives to traditional, or mainstream, social theory, philosophy and science, together with a critique of a full range of ideologies from mass culture to religion. At least some versions of Critical Theory are motivated by an interest in relating theory to politics and an interest in the emancipation of those who are oppressed and dominated. Critical Theory is thus informed by a critique of domination and a theory of liberation. (1989, p. 1)

The main appeal is that critical theory provides alternatives to traditional social theory and a critique of ideologies from a wide range of issues. This multidisciplinary study is conducted in the tradition of grounded theory (Charmaz 2011), which therefore lends itself well to the interpretivist nature of critical theory and theory development using case studies. Miller (2005, p. 32) contends that ‘the development of theory within the communication discipline can best be viewed as a pluralistic process in which a variety of viewpoints make valued contributions.’ This is particularly true for this study. I now turn to the specific elements of the chosen theories, in order to highlight the key tenets.

The usefulness of critical theory for this study is to provide an analytical frame with which to analyse representation, interaction and engagement between women and media. The public sphere nature of public affairs programming, the feminist arguments on women’s participation, and the driving factors of participation from the cultural studies perspective, offer great insight into the research questions. Critical engagement with the content of media programmes and participants are understood within the critical theory frame. The theory is used in theorising women’s participation in the media and its influence on public life engagement.

Because the study is conducted in the grounded theory tradition, I only introduce these theories as theoretical sampling in order to undertake theoretical modelling based on empirical data. The constructivist grounded theory approach gives priority to data and concept formation while recognising that the theory base will be useful in refining the study phenomena. The critical tradition, owing to its amenability to modification and its potential for creating a hybrid critical

theory, thus theoretical modification, fits well with the grounded theory approach adopted in this study. The practical reach of critical theory for this study is picked up in Chapter Eight. The contributions to this study consisted in, as Miller (2005) says, providing a lens for understanding my research world. The questions of this study were not based on theories, and conceptualisation was based on empirical data. The theories provided me with analytical tools for understanding and interpreting data.

### **3.4. Critical Theory: Critique**

A more general charge against critical theory is that it imposes an interpretive frame, and fails to appreciate local meanings, while also imposing dogmatic ideology (Craig 1999). Despite this critique, the most useful contribution of critical theory, besides its obvious relevance to the discourse of social injustice and change, is to cultivate a deeper appreciation of discursive reflection intrinsic to all communication, and it confirms that reflective discourse has an important role in our understanding of communication. More relevant for this study is Fraser's take on critical theory and the notions of private and public. She proposes:

In general, critical theory needs to take a harder, more critical look at the terms "private" and "public." These terms, after all, are not simply straightforward designations of societal spheres; they are cultural classifications and rhetorical labels. In political discourse, they are powerful terms that are frequently deployed to delegitimize some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others. This shows once again that the lifting of formal restrictions on public sphere participation does not suffice to ensure inclusion in practice. On the contrary, even after women and workers have been formally licensed to participate, their participation may be hedged by conceptions of economic privacy and domestic privacy that delimit the scope of debate. These notions, therefore, are vehicles through which gender and class disadvantages may continue to operate subtextually and informally, even after explicit, formal restrictions have been rescinded. (Fraser 1990, pp. 73-4)

I agree that the terms are not simply straightforward designations of societal spheres. How they are used and by whom is important for understanding women's participation in the public sphere. In patriarchal societies, where matters of the private sphere influence participation in the public sphere in the form of culture, this is very crucial. In theory, the public sphere remains without open restrictions to access, perhaps more than any other form of media practice where gatekeeping practices may be practised. The very assumption in discursive programmes is open entry. Yet, studies continue to show that few women participate in the public sphere.



One of the major criticisms of critical theory is that it has been better at making connections than in demonstrating contradictions and openings for political struggle and transformation as well as some real deficiencies (Kellner 1989). While critical theory has been deficient in empirical and historical research, failing to provide clear historical presentations of its theoretical positions, ‘future Critical Theory should therefore put more effort into empirical and historical research, and to more successfully integrating theoretical and empirical work than it has done in the past’ (ibid, p. 232). Furthermore, critical theory today needs to step up analysis and ‘should take mass culture as seriously as Adorno and his colleagues previously took high culture’ (ibid, p. 145).

Despite these criticisms, there is no better theory to undertake this study than critical theory. The ensemble of feminist thought, cultural studies and public sphere provides great depth for a multi-level analysis of the current problem. It also provides for an opportunity to critically question existing assumptions of these theories and explain why there has been such limited progress in women’s access to media participation given the decades of research, monitoring and the inclusion of women in media production in the context of a changing media environment and the nature of the public sphere itself. The theories provide a base for understanding.

### **3.5. Concept Formation and Conceptual Framework**

#### **3.5.1. Participation, public, public sphere and public life**

Participation, a ‘buzzword’ according to Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock (2005), is politically ambivalent and definitionally vague, yet, they contend, ‘giving up on participation and empowerment as irrevocably contaminated by their mainstreaming would be to lose concepts that have been critical for decades in animating struggles for equality, rights and social justice’ (pp. 1056-7). Participation can also be about ‘invited’<sup>8</sup> and ‘claimed’ spaces (Cornwall 2002). For Nancy Fraser, ‘participation means being able to speak “in one’s own voice,” thereby simultaneously constructing and expressing one’s cultural identity through idiom and style’ (Fraser 1990, p. 69). Key terms like ‘participation’ are given a range of meanings. Key in this study is women’s participation in media and public life. Participation is the manifestation

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<sup>8</sup> Andrea Cornwall distinguishes between invited and claimed spaces where the former means a more formal event where development agents create events for stakeholders to contribute and the latter involves the poor taking control of political processes, without being invited in. The concept of invited became useful for understanding women’s participation in public affairs programmes.

of voice and the visibility of women on media (representation), the inclusion of women in public life through consultation and conversation on media (interaction) and women's quest for equal rights and political agency through the involvement and influence of state and society using the media (engagement).

### **3.5.2. Women's participation in mass media**

Women participate in the media industry by playing a variety of roles. Owing to the debate surrounding the powerful effects and the transformative nature of the mass media, the question of its influence on women's participation in public life are relevant. Women's participation in the mass media is concerned with the ways in which women access and use the mass media. There are mainly two areas of participation: through working in the media, and through contributing on media – based on the roles they play. On the one hand, there are women in the media who are professionals and contribute to media production and presentation in various ways as journalists, researchers, managers, owners and other technical personnel. On the other hand, there are women on media who are not media professionals or employed by the media but contribute to setting the agenda on media through their work in public life and engaging in public debates on the media. By addressing both women in the media and on media through their representation, interaction and engagement, we widen the scope for understanding participation in the mass media for women. Below is a graphical presentation.

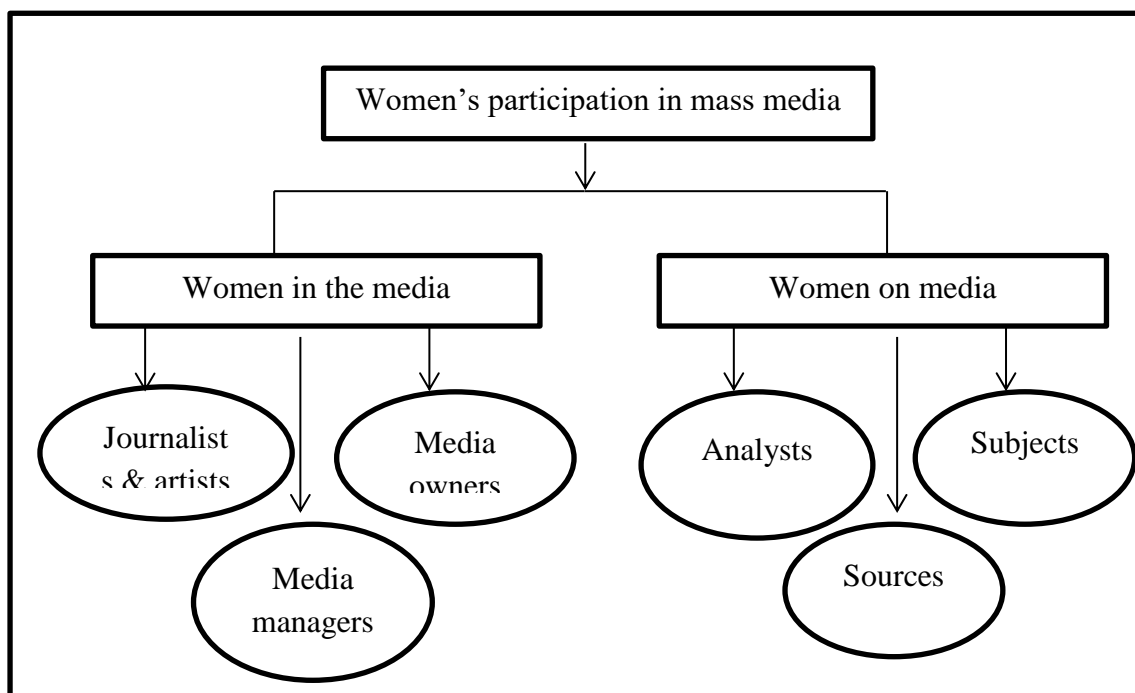


Fig. 3.1: *Women's participation in the mass media*  
Source: Author

For the purposes of this study women in the media consist of three categories: (i) journalists and artists whose roles include hosting guests, reporting, presenting, anchoring and producing current and public affairs programmes; (ii) media managers, which include editors and programme managers; and (iii) media owners who may not be journalists but own media. Women on media are neither employed by media nor are they necessarily media professionals but are analysts (commentators) consulted by the media to provide their expert views or opinions on matters of public affairs; featured as subjects (or are part of a story in which their voice does not come out or a women's issue featured in a story); and sources (eyewitnesses, and those in possession of information relevant for a story, including the audience). Both women in the media and on media are important indicators of representation. This approach allows for representation to go beyond image or the portrayal of women. Therefore, women's representation in the mass media is access of women to and their presence in the mass media, contributing to the production and consumption of the mass media. This definition highlights the proportion of women engaged and roles they play.

### 3.5.3. Women's participation in public life

Women's participation in public life is a broad term that refers to women who are engaged in politics and policy-making in the public and private sectors. According to Nancy Fraser, 'the

concept of a public presupposes a plurality of perspectives among those who participate within it, thereby allowing for internal differences and antagonisms, and likewise discouraging reified blocs' (1990, p. 70).

The campaign for women's participation in public life has seen a number of strategies rolled out in Uganda and elsewhere to increase the number of women in those domains such as affirmative action in education and politics, as well as mainstreaming gender in all sectors. Although that is the case, it is not clear how this integration of women in different sectors is reflected in the media. Figure 3.2 below represents women's participation in mass public life.

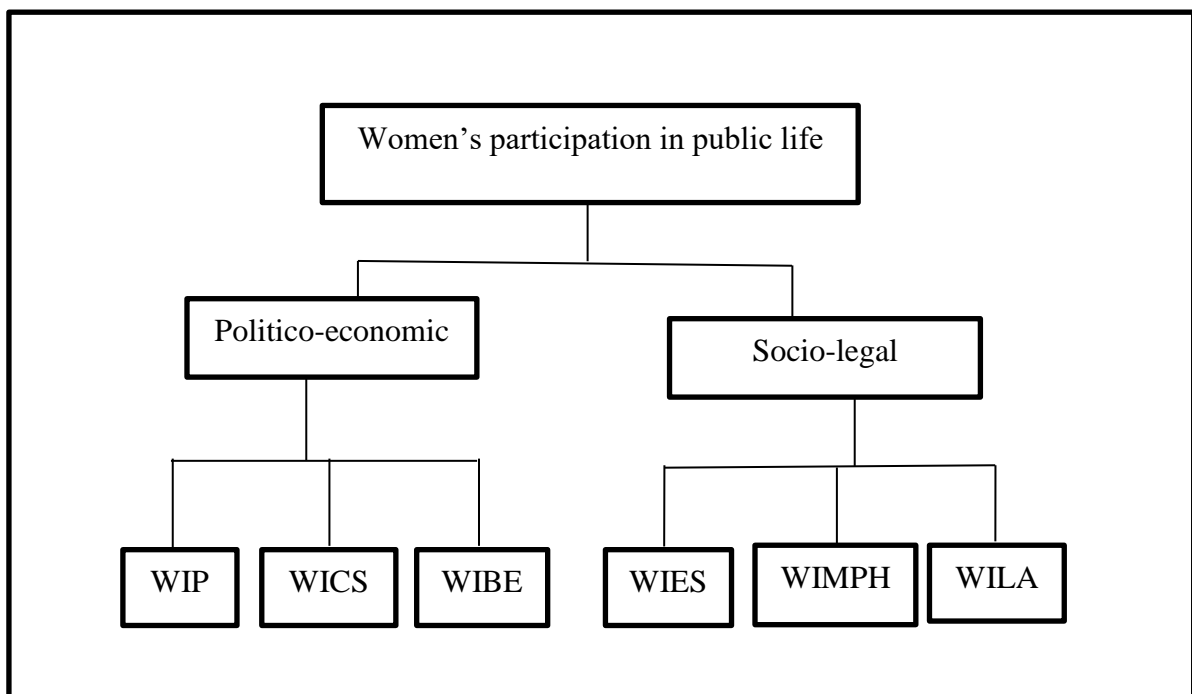


Fig. 3.2: *Women's participation in public life*

Source: Author

Through the media, I examine women's participation in public life, although this is a limited indicator. The assumption is that women's participation in public life will be reflected in the mass media through the coverage of women's issues in public life and the involvement of those women in the media as analysts and sources of current and public affairs. The lack of such reflection may be an indicator of constraints on the part of both the mass media and women in public life, given the increased participation of women in public life in Uganda.

In order to interrogate the nature and extent of participation, six areas are examined, namely: women in politics, at both national and local governance levels; women in the civil service; women in education and sports; women in business and economics; women in medicine and public health; and women in law and advocacy. These are not the only areas of public life but they are indicative of a wider realm beyond politics, which has tended to dominate research on African women in general and Uganda in particular. It is an analytical tool that disaggregates the women on media, but is also critical to answering the question: Which women are in and on media?

#### **3.5.4. Representation: Women's representation in media**

Representation<sup>9</sup> has long been the subject of concept formation. The study seeks to examine who the women are on broadcast media (radio and television) who are speaking for women and as women from the perspective of women in the media and women on media. Representation explores the gender gap in the media and why it matters. In the current study, representation is addressed from two angles: (i) access to and presence of women in broadcast media (visibility); and (ii) the availability of women, gender and women's issues on media (voice).

The determinants of women's access to media, presence and which women are visible are crucial. The areas of interest are: Of those invited as guests, how many are women – and of the women, what range of public life areas do they represent? And of the ordinary citizens who

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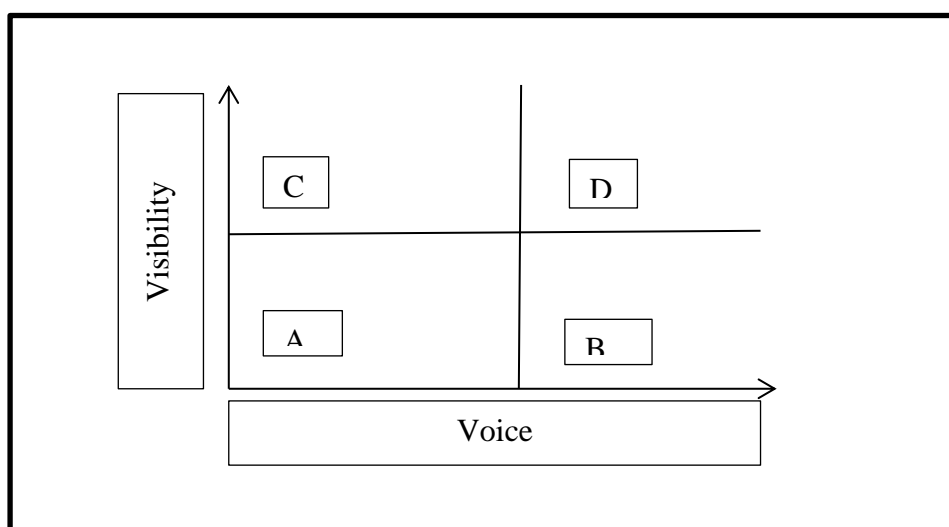
<sup>9</sup> The concept of representation is defined in the seminal work of Hannah Pitkin (1967) with various forms of representation within the context of political representation while in cultural studies representation is discourse (Foucault 1980) and process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture.

call in to contribute to the talk shows, how many are women? Of the women, what areas of public life do they represent? Of the issues concerning women, what specific issues dominate?

The view that women in and on the media are marginalised comes through in *Women, media and politics* (ed. Norris 1997), in which the authors question whether media coverage of women in America reinforces rather than challenges the dominant culture, thereby contributing towards women's marginalisation in public life. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Karen Ross (1996) note that there has been a significant lacuna in the analysis of the representation in terms of the manner in which the mediated presentation of politics is gendered, and its implications for representative democracy at large and, specifically, for the strategies to increase women's political participation. The current study fills this gap with reference to women's participation in public life, inclusive of but not limited to democracy and political participation.

Most studies of women and media have focused on the media's portrayal of women. This study addresses women's representation in the media in terms of their visibility and voice. Rather than focus only on mass media, the study also critically looks at women and how they negotiate for space 'in' and 'on' media. Studies of women and media in the Middle East provide rich examples of how women reconstructed feminism and gender issues through the media, even causing constitutional change (Sark 2004). The Ugandan women have used politics as opposed to the media to advance their causes. Still, the expectation is that such negotiations in public politics would be reflected in the media. There appears to be a disconnect between women participating in public life and media participation.

Representation is understood as formalistic representation (authorization and accountability), symbolic representation, descriptive representation and substantive representation (Pitkin, 1967). This study does not focus on any single form of representation above but attempts to address the question of voice and visibility in analytical terms, fusing some of the forms above. Figure 3 below is a construction of the conceptual measurement of representation.



*Fig. 3.3: Typology of women's representation on media*  
Source: Author

Women's representation on media (WRM) is the proportion of women to men in and on media, particularly in current and public affairs programmes as identified by their physical presence or through their voice. Representation is demonstrated by the level of visibility and voice of women in the said programmes. Visibility is the extent to which women are present, either physically or by the range of issues covered in the media that are of specific interest to women in particular or gender in general. These include women's rights and the marginalisation of women in society. Voice is the range of voices of women in and on the media, directly or indirectly, to demand accountability from decision-makers and/or to amplify issues relevant to the advancement of women in society.

The relationship between visibility and voice is what constitutes the type of representation. Women's representation in the media is understood by the various levels of relationship. The possibilities are that there may be both low visibility and voice (A); low visibility and high voice (B); low voice and high visibility (C); and high visibility and high voice (D), which is the desirable type of representation. Policy action would then be geared towards moving those in A, B and C to D using strategies that take into account the nature of each group.

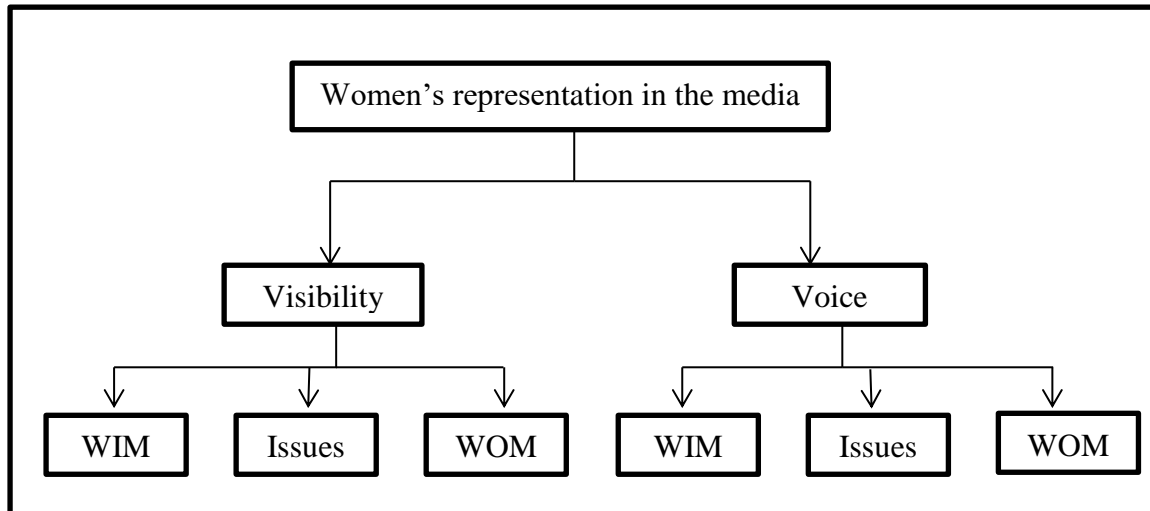


Fig 3.4: *Women's representation in the media*  
Source: Author

If women in the media use their presence to amplify and promote women's issues, then they have voice. If not, there is no voice. The same for women on media. The presence of a woman on a programme does not automatically give voice to women, except when it is about women. For instance, two women may be hosted on a show to discuss questions centred on the civil service and not 'women's issues'<sup>10</sup> or specifically to advance the discussions on gender and women in particular. The former is a question of visibility, and the latter of voice.

It should be noted that women are not the only ones responsible for visibility; stories about women done by men also increases visibility. Similarly, men who 'speak for' women are giving voice to women, too. Although I focus more on women in the media and on media, it does not mean women are exclusively responsible for women's visibility and voice. It is rightly noted that all issues are gendered and training matters for women in the media (Dralega et al. 2016). The question is if participants on these programmes recognise and/or highlight the gendered issues.

<sup>10</sup> Women's issues is not clearly defined, but refers to issues that affect or are important to women. Often the issues coined as women's issues from the media perspective are 'soft' issues of social services such as health.



### 3.5.5. Interaction: Women-media interaction

Visibility and voice are critical in understanding interaction. There are three types of interaction between people and media, namely: (i) face-to-face interaction which occurs in a context of co-presence; (ii) mediated interaction which uses a technical medium such as writing letters and telephone conversations; and (iii) mediated quasi-interaction that is peculiar to mass communication (Thompson 1995). ‘One reason for interrogating the interaction between women and media is to explore how dominant meanings about gender are created and how audiences interpret what they see and hear’ (Sakr 2004, p. 4). This study goes beyond meaning-making and examines whose voices are heard in the media and the range of views they represent. The key issue is: Which women are interacting with the mass media and in what ways (forms)?

Geoffrey Craig (2004) provides insight into how politicians and the news media interact and the nature of the power of the media. Although Craig does not focus explicitly on women, the text is a valuable site for understanding participation in public life and the role of the media in it. Interaction adds value to representation through consultation and conversation, depicting who initiates contact. Figure 3.5 below is a typology of women-media interaction.

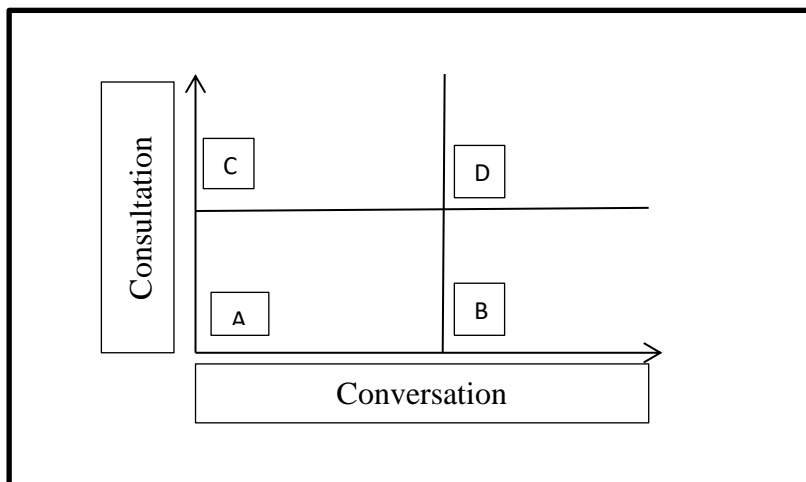


Fig 3.5: *Typology of women-media interaction*  
Source: Author

In the presentation above, women-media interaction plays out as conversation and consultation with low levels of conversation and consultation in box (A); low consultation and high conversation in box (B); high consultation and low conversation in box (C); and high consultation and conversation in box (D). Communication is interaction. In the realm of media,

interactivity is a feature of the media in question. As digital technology becomes more accessible to the masses, interest in interactivity is increasing and becoming a cultural trend. This study focuses on broadcasting, but proceeds from the assumptions that the nature of programmes studied are interactive and that they use new media in line with media convergence.<sup>11</sup> Figure 3.6 below illustrates the relationship.

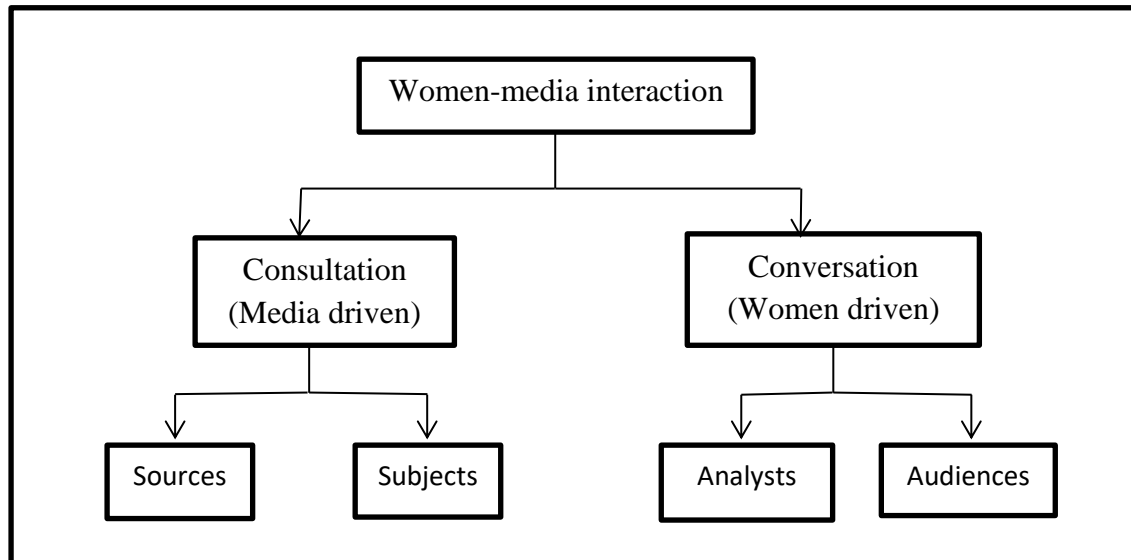


Fig 3.6: *Women-media interaction*  
Source: Author

Women’s interaction with media underscores the three forms of interaction that JB Thomas (1995) named ‘face to face, mediated and quasi-mediated’. Interaction is important in order to capture the ‘political interactivity or mediated real-time feedback between political actors and citizens’ (Bucy & Gregson 2001, p. 365) converged as consultation and conversation. Davis and Owen (1998, p. 7) argue that “what distinguishes these communication forms from more traditional ones, such as newspapers and nightly television news, is the degree to which they offer political discussion opportunities that attract public officials, candidates, citizens, and even members of the mainstream press corps”. Thus, new media enhances the public ability to become actors, rather than merely spectators, in the realm of media politics.

Women-media interaction is a function of both consultation, which is media-driven, and conversation, which is largely women-driven. Women-media interaction addresses the question of who initiates interaction. In the case of consultation, the media in various ways include women in the media by giving them a platform or covering women’s issues. It is

<sup>11</sup> Media convergence assumes the possibility of a diversity of platforms due to new media technologies.

measured by the consultation of women by the media and the range of women's issues covered by the media, irrespective of who covers them. Conversation is how and when women gain access to the media as citizens (analysts) and participants in public life (audiences); and they use it to increase their visibility on media and amplify their voices. It is women-driven, dependent on women taking action either to call or do things that are newsworthy and compel the media to consult them.

Women-media interaction is about women on media largely as sources, subjects, analysts and audiences. The consultation of women is dependent on the media, which goes out to get sources who are women and writes about issues that make women the subjects of stories. Women do not have much choice in the matter. Conversation is about women being involved in dialogue in or outside the media that determines the spaces they enjoy within the media. This takes the form of women being actively involved in the discussion of politics and policy. This approach allows for deeper analysis that locates the problem.

As analysts, women are involved in things outside the media that bring them to the media. Women may either pay for their own space to discuss issues or get involved in the discussion through other forms, such as calling in during talk shows, using social media and sending short text messages (SMS). The level of media-driven and women-driven interaction determines the extent and nature of interaction. Thus, conversation is the ability of women to use the media to shape gender and women's issues and place demands on both state and society in order to enjoy equal rights with men.

### **3.5.6. Engagement: Women's engagement with the media**

When women have gained access to the media and are, therefore, both represented and interact, how they use such representation and interaction for the benefit of women is a matter of engagement. Naomi Sakr (2004, p. 12) opines that 'media studies have rich potential for illuminating ways in which women are empowered or disempowered'. Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny (2004, p. 15) demonstrate that despite challenges, the Iranian women used the press to question gender constructions and gender relations and to call for radical rethinking of law, policy and the constitution. Similar trends of women's struggle for engagement with the press are seen throughout the Middle East. Little is known of women's engagement with Africa's media, which remains male-dominated.

After 1986, when the NRM took over power, ‘women’s institutions started engaging the media concerning the negative and distorted portrayal of women and the under-coverage of their issues’ (Mukama 2002, p. 148). The result was improved representation of women and women’s issues in the media. Ruth Mukama does not go beyond the women’s movement engagement with the media and challenges of engagement. Some questions remain unanswered in the literature. Engagement is involvement and interest in shaping public debate through a critique of state and societal structures that marginalise women through the media, in a way that influences policy towards the attainment of women’s rights and freedoms. It interrogates how once women are in the media and on media, they use it to question negative ‘gender constructions and gender relations.’ Figure 3.7 below illustrates the nature of engagement.

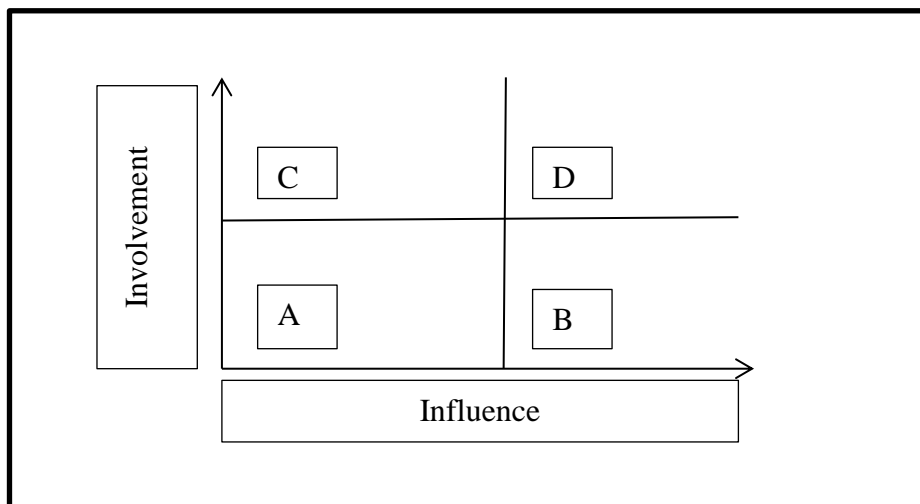


Fig 3.7: *Typology of women’s engagement with media*  
Source: Author

Women’s engagement with the media is the ability of women to use the media through the current and public affairs programmes to influence policy and initiate change in the way that the state and society respond to women’s demands. Four scenarios play out: low involvement and influence (A); low involvement and high influence (B); low influence and high involvement (C); and high involvement and influence.

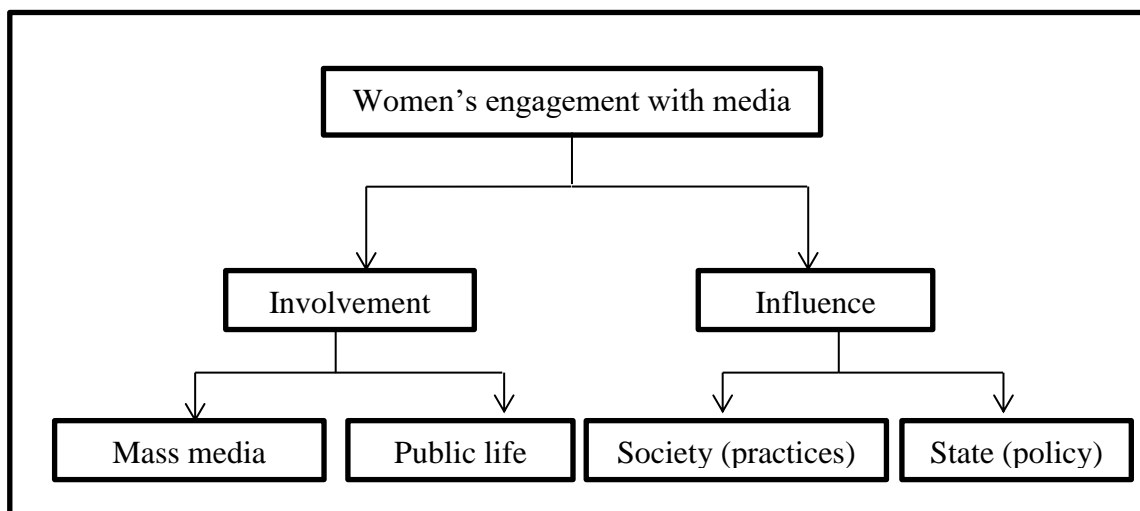


Fig 3.8: *Women's engagement with the media*  
Source: Author

Involvement and influence are characterised by whether women's representation and interaction with media are media-driven or women-driven. Involvement is possible without creating direct change while influence is taking a step further to create change. What is critical is that engagement is a product of representation (visibility and voice) and interaction (consultation and conversation). There are two points of involvement, i.e. in mass media and public life. At the same time, there are two areas of influence, i.e. the society through its practices, and the state through policy. An examination of these two factors demonstrates the nature of engagement with the media and how successful women are engaged.

### 3.6. Media, Women and Public Life: A Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.9 below illustrates women's participation in the mass media as an independent variable that, in turn, impacts on the dependent variable, women's participation in public life. The nature and extent of representation, interaction and engagement is what impacts on women's participation in public life. The external issues influencing women's participation in the mass media and also public life are the policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks for both the mass media and public life. Representation, interaction and engagement are necessary but not independently sufficient conditions for influencing women's participation in public life.

It is hypothesised that with effective representation, interaction and engagement, the mass media will facilitate women's participation in public life. The three dimensions of participation are conjunctural factors. The unique thing is that they represent levels of effectiveness in participation, starting with representation, interaction and engagement as the final stage relevant to influencing policy and change for women. The degree of influence of participation in public life depends on the quality of representation, interaction and engagement. In the end, women's participation in the mass media increases women's participation in public life, as represented in Figure 3.9 below.

Mass media, women and public life: Representation, interaction and engagement

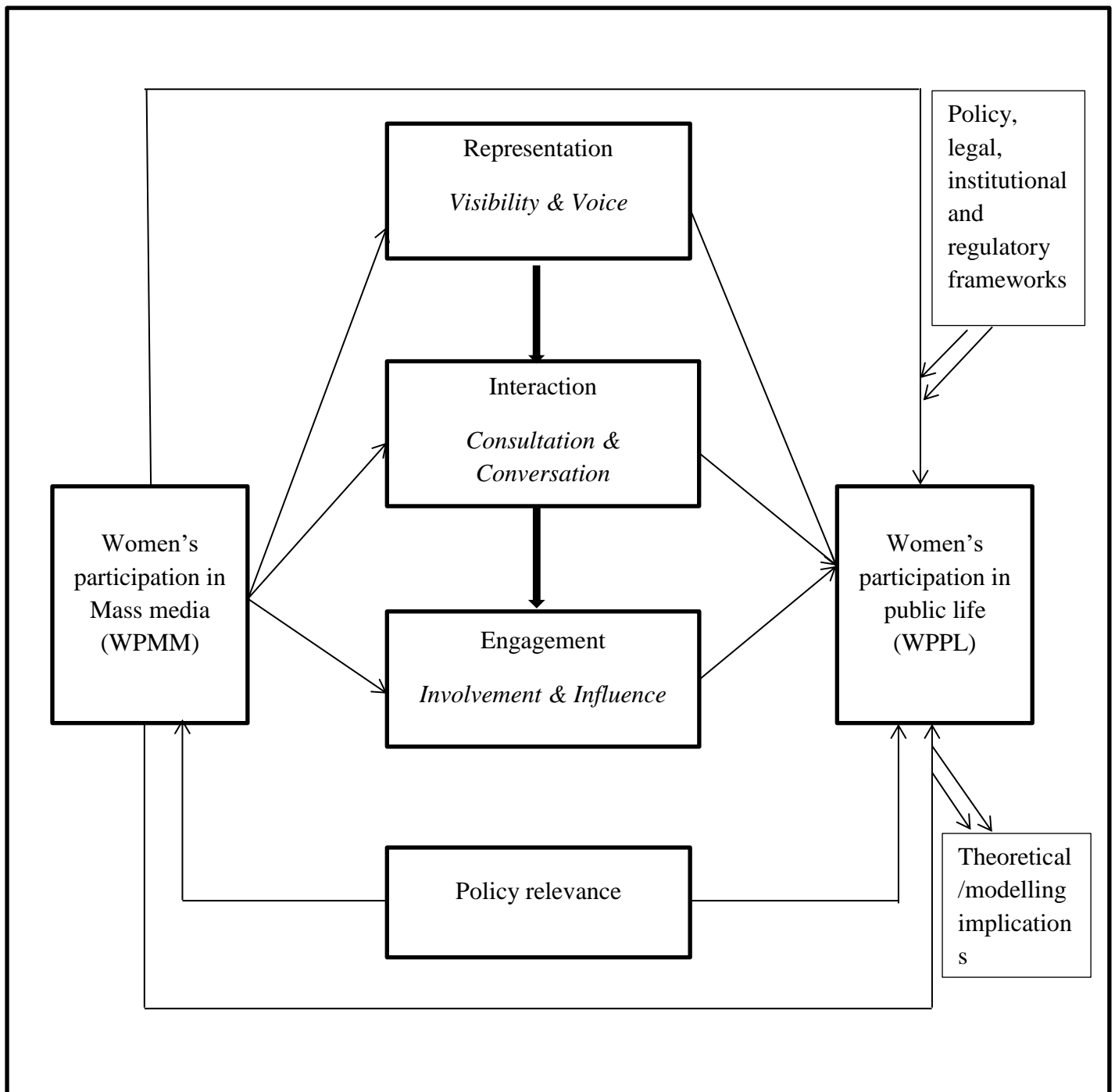


Fig. 3.9: Conceptual framework

Source: Author

### **3.5. Chapter Conclusion**

Critical theory questions the role of the media in line with culture, feminist thought and as a public sphere. The frames of these theories are important for the analysis of findings in this research. In addition to the conceptualisation in this section is a step towards creating the analytical tool. Giving meaning to the many concepts used in this research is of paramount importance. The chapter started with the theoretical underpinning of this study and unpacked several concepts, giving the dimensions and also the indicators of the concepts as derived from data and refined by literature. A diagrammatical presentation of the conceptual framework that can be used for the analysis of studies of women and the mass media in relation to representation, interaction and engagement is rolled out. The relationships are clearly marked out with arrows. The key assumption at this point is that the mass media influences women's participation in public life but that this depends on the nature of representation, interaction and engagement.



**CHAPTER FOUR:**  
**RESEARCH METHODS**  
**CASE STUDY, CONTENT ANALYSIS AND GROUNDED THEORY**

**4.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology for this study. While research questions are a critical part of any study, without an appropriate research design it might be difficult to answer the questions. This study, which is multidisciplinary in nature, adopted a multi-method approach. This has taken the form of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study mixes case study, content analysis and grounded theory designs. According to King, Keohane and Verba (1994), ‘some scholars set out to describe the world; others to explain. Each is essential. We cannot construct meaningful causal relationships without good description; description, in turn, loses most of its interest unless linked to some causal relationships’. (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994: 34). My methodological choices, were driven by the aim to achieve both description and explanation.

The multi-method approach encompassed an interpretative qualitative research, in particular the case study (cases selected from the media, programmes and women in public life) guided by the constructivist grounded theory research (Charmaz 2001, 2006, 2008); and positivist research guided by content analysis design. Similarly, a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis involved content analysis, interviews and participant observations.

The study was carried out in three phases:

- (i) The qualitative research (semi-structured interviews with radio and television staff who run public affairs programmes) and participant observation of audience discussion programmes. Here an audience is part of a public affairs show and can ask questions to a selected panel using various interactive mechanisms. This part is continuous through most of the data collection process;
- (ii) Quantitative research (content analysis of selected programmes over a period of three months of fieldwork, after interviews with the media houses but before interviews with women in public life); and

- (iii) Qualitative (in-depth interviews with women in public life guided by the findings from semi-structured interviews and content analysis that is life history-centred). The choice of multi-method approach is influenced by its perceived benefits, because ‘combining methods provide opportunities for the development and testing of theories that no single method can match’ (Bennett & Braumoeller 2006, p. 2).

## 4.2. Case Study

Case studies are sometimes believed to be limited in terms of the generalisations they afford. These limitations will be addressed by multi-method research. John Gerring (2007) argues that case study research may incorporate several cases, i.e. multiple case studies. This will follow the logic of typological theorising.<sup>12</sup> While the unit of analysis is media and women, there are multiple case studies embedded. More importantly, case studies support theory development and the formation of new concepts (George & Bennet 2005).

Case study analyses focus on a small number of cases that are expected to provide insight into relationships across a larger population of cases but present the researcher with a problem of case selection (Gerring 2007, p. 86). In choosing the case studies for radio and television programmes, as well as women in public life, the study uses the diverse case selection strategy (diverse case study method) relevant for both hypothesis testing and generation, relying on the method of difference to achieve diversity.

All radio and television stations covered the different ownership dynamics (community, commercial and public for radio and public and private for television) but were similar in terms of the nature of public affairs programmes they ran (must have a talk show programme, news programmes, a public/current affairs programme, and a specific women feature programme as an added advantage). The programmes chosen as cases were different in nature; the intention was to cover the variety of programmes such as a daily programme (Monday-Friday), a weekend programme (Saturday and Sunday) and a weekly programme (once a week) and the women were drawn from diverse areas of public life. In case multiple variables are under

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<sup>12</sup> Typologies are great starting points for theory construction, using either inductive or deductive means. For more on typological theory read George and Bennet, 2005 (Chapter 11, Integrating comparative and within-case analysis: Typological theory).

consideration, the logic of diverse-case analysis rests upon the logic of typological theorising (Gerring 2007, pp. 98-99) that will be useful in determining the relationship between variables.

Cases studies have real limitations in terms of case selection and generalisation, as has been noted before. However, they allowed me to look more deeply into the specific cases in order to establish determinants of participation in particular, while specific women's cases were very illuminating in terms of understanding their experiences with the media and how they relate to their participation in public life, whether in an enabling or disabling way.

I thought that the selection of Kampala as a study area was a good methodological decision considering that many of the women I was interested in consulting as respondents would be available in Kampala. The city is also the seat of the national government and the centre of business where all the categories of women in public life would be readily available. Also important is that media types covering all media dynamics would necessarily be available in Kampala. Many of the media houses have a reach beyond Kampala capital. All of these assumptions were held true.

However, as a methodological limitation, Kampala city is different from other districts of Uganda and, therefore, not representational, although it represents the best-case scenario as far as women's participation in the media is concerned. The choice of media houses such as Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), Central Broadcasting Corporation (CBS) and Mama FM mitigate these limitations to some extent. The specific cases of media houses, programmes and women in public life are justified within the case selection strategy.

Nevertheless, the advantage that these specific cases brought to this research was a much richer experience in data collection, an opportunity for reflection and a reasonable amount of data collected from carefully selected cases with wider ramifications for the study. For instance, the multiplicity of cases in the end acted as verification in themselves, thereby contributing to validity. The participants were much more willing to share not only their own experiences but also anecdotes from elsewhere that became relevant for creating understanding. The patterns created through these cases were instrumental in the development of the conceptual framework that was directly derived from data rather than literature. This was supportive of the grounded theory approach in a complementary way and enabled theoretical modelling to take place.

The major challenge of execution was obtaining permission from the multiplicity of sources in order to achieve diversity for the purpose of ethical clearance. It was the most frustrating part

of the study but which, however, was ultimately overcome. The findings suggest that some of the cases, particularly programmes, had very limited comparative differences to suggest that generalisation is not possible, since specific programme types tended to run exactly in the same way, with a similar tone, style and subject. It must be noted that generalisation was not the main object of this study, although lessons can be drawn widely. The specific cases are treated under section 4.6 (selected cases) categorised as three forms – place, media houses and programmes as well as women in public life.

### **4.3. Content Analysis**

Content analysis was first used in newspaper analysis but later extended by researchers, first to radio (Albig 1938 cited in Kippredoff 2004) and later to movies and television. ‘Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use’ (Kippredoff 2004, p.24). More importantly, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Studies of the media and women have been conducted especially in the United States and Europe, yet, given the peculiar nature of African media and the African context, there is need for new insights into the relationship between the media and women in public life.

The strength of content analysis is that it is a scientific tool with big promise for replicability and, therefore, reliability. Interpretivism and qualitative approaches are interpretive and characterised by close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter and involve interpretation, and analysts work within hermeneutic circles in which their own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate (Kippredoff 2004).

The practical difficulty of content analysis in electronic media such as the broadcast media is worth discussing. There is the vastness of data from television programmes and radio that requires an enormous amount of time for transcription but also the difficulty of recording programmes, storage and analysis. Whereas content analysis has been used in the analysis of newspapers conveniently owing to the availability of text, in my research the radio and television programmes turned out to be an hour long with various interactions and a number of guests engaged in dialogue.

Content analysis had advantages that would complement my case study approach. The purpose of content analysis in this study was twofold: to do a general quick quantitative analysis of participation in order to establish the extent of participation by women and me; and also to identify themes in the content of interviews in a more qualitative sense, to make meaning of the key issues raised by the participants. The assumption is that the content of programmes can tell us something about the nature of the programmes and the character of the participants, and what these mean for public affairs programmes and women's participation.

The method of content analysis enabled me to identify themes and the players in the text, particularly interviews in the first phases of the research, which was instrumental for the development of concepts. These themes and concepts were in turn important analytic tools for the categorisation of data. Given the vast nature of data from the interviews, content analysis was useful in sifting through the data and reducing it to specific elements around which analysis was possible. I used it to establish the extent of participation in each programme.

The weakness of content analysis for specific cases is that it is neither purely quantitative nor qualitative. The programmes studied were first and foremost carefully selected to meet certain requirements of ownership dynamics, diversity of programmes and areas of public life covered. As such, it is already inherently qualitative. The quantitative aspect is thus based on an already existing qualitative process.

The other weakness is that it seems simplistic to just study, say, lists of participants, the number of times female sources were covered etc., but this provided deeper understanding of what type of programmes are likely to attract female participants and the interviews provided the answer as to why that might be the case. Most importantly, while content analysis does not provide the tools for sense-making in a robust way, this provided much needed data on the extent of participation. Where the interview was conclusive on this, it was not necessary to do content analysis, hence the programmes were excluded from being analysed that way. This was the case with radio programmes, which also had fairly robust literature.

#### **4.4. Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory methods, Kathy Charmaz (1996: 27) posits, 'provide a set of strategies for conducting rigorous qualitative research'. The term refers to both the research product and the analytical method of producing it. According to Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skoldberg (2009), grounded theory is a much used method in international social science research. The method

begins with inductive strategies for collecting and analysing qualitative data for the purpose of developing middle-range theories. Key tenets of the theory are:

- (1) minimising preconceived ideas about the research problem and the data, (2) using simultaneous data collection and analysis to inform each other, (3) remaining open to varied explanations and/ or understandings of the data, and (4) focusing data analysis to construct middle-range theories. (Charmaz 2008)

Grounded theory methods were developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their work, *The discovery of grounded theory* (1967). They are credited with challenging the division of theory and research as well as the idea that qualitative research was not legitimate on its own, and had to precede quantitative research, among other things (Charmaz 2008).

Grounded theory has been used in a variety of disciplines, including mass communication, where its unique ability to unearth media discourse is recognised (Altheide 1996). Grounded theory allows researchers to ask broad questions without making inherent assumptions based on literature. Given the dominance of the narrative that presents women as negatively portrayed by the media, looking beyond representation literature offers an opportunity to answer not only the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions but also the ‘why’ questions. In addition, other methods, such as quantitative content analysis and case studies, are used to fill in any gaps. This was the real strength of grounded theory.

The method has evolved from the Glaserian grounded theory that advocates the emergence of theory by constant comparison and entering the research field theory free; the Strauss and Corbin version that is deemed too prescriptive and advocates the development of categories – and is more structured; and the constructionist version of Kathy Charmaz that places the researcher at the centre. I use the constructionist grounded theory approach advanced by Kathy Charmaz (2000, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014), which makes the assumptions that:

- (1) Reality is multiple, processual, and constructed – but constructed under particular conditions; (2) the research process emerges from interaction; (3) it takes into account the researcher’s positionality, as well as that of the research participants; (4) the researcher and researched construct the data – data are a *product* of the research process, not simply observed objects of it. Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives, and interactions affect it (Charmaz 2000, 2006; Clarke 2005, 2006). In this approach, research always reflects value positions. Thus the problem becomes identifying these positions and weighing their effect on research practice, not

denying their existence....constructionists advocate recognising prior knowledge and theoretical preconceptions and subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny. (Charmaz 2008, p. 155)

These assumptions, she argues, redirects the method from its objectivist, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century past and aligns it with 21<sup>st</sup>-century epistemologies (Charmaz 2006). As in grounded theory tradition, I see the participants' views and voices as being integral to the analysis and presentation. Most studies of women have tended to project women as victims of the media without necessarily interrogating the media. I excluded some of the programmes that portrayed women in favour of those that involved participants, are interactive and assumed to be open to all citizens to engage in discussing issues of policy and national interest. This is in acknowledgement that grounded theory is a flexible method and allows for reflexivity of the researcher. Reflective research is defined by two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection.

Interpretation comes to the forefront of the research work. This calls for the utmost awareness of the theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding, all of which constitute major determinants of the interpretation. [...] Reflection turns attention 'inwards' towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature, of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context. Systematic reflection on different levels can endow the interpretation with a quality that makes empirical research of value. (Alvensson & Skoldberg 2009, p. 9)

Both interpretation and reflection add enormous value to the understanding of the issues at hand. This twin process acts as a measure of verification. Although doubts are cast on reliability owing to the researcher's closeness to data interpretation depending on the researcher's skill, this is overcome by coding that is based on the participants' insights and experiences. I used direct codes from interviews to further develop those codes into categories and concepts rather than what already existed in literature. Whereas the variables such as participation, representation, interaction and engagement have been extensively used in both development and political science literature, grounded theory enabled an application that is anchored in data and observation as well as reflection of the research process.

Critics of grounded theory argue that there is no such thing as theory-neutral observation, and that theoretical sampling takes time. Even though one may not enter the field theory-free, how such theories are used makes the difference. I chose to conduct my study in the grounded theory

tradition to enable me to question existing assumptions about both the nature of interactive and discursive programmes but also women's participation in general, both in the media and public life. Certainly, I agree that theoretical sampling takes a lot of time. The creation of codes, categories, concepts and modelling is not only labour-intensive, but also hardly transferable to someone else. It is the researcher's cross to carry. The amount of time translates into huge financial costs of conducting such research.

Despite the burden of sole researcher dependence, it completely deepens a researcher's understanding of the subject in a way that other methods of analysis based on computer-assisted techniques cannot come close to making possible. It definitely took too much time, but it was worth it, as I have grown in my understanding not just of the subject but also of the research process. I chose grounded theory because my understanding of the literature that hardly questioned women's participation in the media had been very limited and I needed to critically analyse that. This objective was achieved.

#### **4.5. Research Site and Study Population**

The field research was conducted in Kampala, Uganda's capital city. Kampala is the first case study. Kampala provides a diversity of radio and television stations, an advantage that does not exist in other regions of Uganda, hence its choice as a case study. Being the capital city, Kampala is also the seat of political and public affairs in Uganda and would necessarily house the majority of women in public life. Kampala also has the highest number of radio stations (45/241), most of which are the same stations (repeater stations<sup>13</sup>) found in the other regions (UCC 2010, 2015).

The limitation, though, is that one cannot claim complete representation in terms of geography, but the real issue was selection of programmes and media types based on ownership dynamics. This limitation was also overcome by allowing participants who often had vast experience, including from upcountry, to make reference. In my observation, these programmes ran in very similar ways regardless of geography although slight differences based on the amount of freedom enjoyed and nature of participants could be detected. As has been noted elsewhere, Kampala not only has the entire range of variables I was interested in from one location, but

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<sup>13</sup> Repeater stations are licensed radio stations operating in different geographical locations as licences are restricted to distance. So the same radio station may be licensed in another town but with programming similar to that of the Kampala-based radio or slightly modified to suit the region.



also the participants in these programmes went beyond the city, depending on outreach of the stations. Data was initially collected for six months, between January and June 2015, in Kampala, then observation of the programmes continued for a year and interviews of women in public life took over a year owing to difficulties in fixing appointments with them.

#### **4.6. Selected Cases**

This section discusses the nature of specific cases selected as earlier addressed. The diverse case selection strategy was employed in this study in order to allow for wide interpretation. The considerations for which diversity was important were ownership dynamics and programming types. In Uganda broadcast media ownership falls under three categories for radio (community, commercial/private and public) and two for television (public and private/commercial). Ownership is deemed to be influential in determining media programmes (Doyle 2002). Programmes were taken into account to ensure that cases covered all the possible dynamics as cross cases rather than comparative cases. There were four types of cases.

##### ***4.6.1. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA)***

In terms of geographical scope, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) was chosen as a single case study in Uganda. KCCA is a legal entity established by the Ugandan Parliament through the Kampala Capital City Authority Act (2011). The executive director of KCCA, Jennifer Musisi, was appointed by the president. While limited in representing Uganda geographically, Kampala is the most likely case for representation in terms of programme dynamics and the availability of all categories of women in public life, and therefore superior to any other area. The second types of cases included media houses selected based on media platforms: radio and television stations, in addition to an online news agency.

##### ***4.6.2. Radio (4) and television (4) stations, and (1) news agency***

Four radio stations were purposively selected to cover the ownership dynamics. The consideration of ownership is in line with the perceived impact on media content (Doyle 2002; Tomaselli 2007). These included (i) Mama FM – a community women’s radio (101.7 FM); (ii) Capital Radio FM (91.3 FM); (iii) X FM (94.1 FM); and (iv) Central Broadcasting Station (CBS) FM (Buganda Kingdom cultural institution radio – although a community radio, it is classified as commercial). Initially Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio (the public

broadcaster) was included to complete the loop in ownership dynamics but was dropped owing to consideration of UBC Television. This was specifically the case when at the beginning of fieldwork it was established that the key players in both radio and television at the public broadcast stations were similar, and bound by similar policies. The respondents were, therefore, drawn strategically to include those who had been engaged in both. Although the frequency reach of these stations was not established, at the time of interviews it was revealed that each of them served a number of districts (local government administrative units) outside Kampala.

Each radio case study was selected purposively after meeting my category specifications. They are diverse in terms of ownership dynamics and they all run public affairs programme types that I am interested in, in addition to having an added advantage. Mama FM is a pioneer women's radio, a community radio station owned by Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) with a part mandate to amplify women's voices; Capital FM pioneered political talk shows and runs one of the most popular talk shows, The Capital Gang; X-FM is unique in its ownership dynamic and is symptomatic of converged media, formerly known as the Vision Voice (the Vision Group is government/public-run in commercial fashion, differently from the public broadcaster); and CBS FM (CBS One is on 89.2 FM and Two is on 88.8 FM and are both housed in the same building, are under the same management and have slightly different audience segments) is run by a cultural institution, the Buganda government at its Mengo headquarters. Each of these radio stations have significant public affairs programmes that target fairly different segments of audience ranging from women, the political and middle class, to the community and youth. There was no need to conduct a quantitative content analysis of a radio programme as the interviews were decisive in establishing that women's participation in those programmes was minimal. However, I observed one programme on Mama FM as a special case owing to its women's focus. Key players in these stations were interviewed, inclusive of both men and women.

Four television stations were chosen using the same methods: (i) Wava Broadcasting Station (WBS); (ii) Nation Television Station (NTV); (iii) Nkabi Television Station (NBS); and (iv) UBC Television (UTV). The decision to select these media houses was based on their unique programming and also their market share. It can be argued that these also meet the pioneering roles – wide reach, innovative programming and public service. Key actors in these stations were also interviewed, and included both men and women.

A radio news agency, Uganda Radio Network (URN), was later included. During preliminary fieldwork and observation, it was revealed that information and communication technologies (ICTs) played a key role in both radio and television. The radio agency, which is an online platform, was selected because it fed several radio stations across the country with news. But of particular interest was the discovery, after initial conversations with the executive director, Sam Guma, that the agency classified all their news based on the gender analysis of reporters and sources. It became important to establish the extent of inclusion, considering that they were deliberate about increasing female voices in news and were making a real effort towards achieving this.

Each is a unique case study. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The producer and/or station manager or programme manager were interviewed in all these nine cases. In the end, 23 interviews were conducted with various programme hosts, presenters and producers, including media managers. These included 11 males and 12 females – all respondents from WBS, CBS and URN, only female respondents from X-FM, UBC TV and NTV, and mixed respondents from Capital FM, Mama FM and NBS TV. A key part played in the programme of interest dictated these choices. Again, selection covered all programme types.

#### ***4.6.3. Radio and television programmes***

For the purpose of this study, I look beyond political talk shows, to audience discussion programmes which include genres other than political talk shows, such as open access programming, current programmes and consumer affairs programmes (Livingstone & Lunt 2004, p. 2) for both radio and television. Using purposive sampling and based on data from interviews in the first phase, one programme for radio was selected for participant observation and eight programmes for television for content analysis and focused observation. In total, nine public affairs programmes, covering a diverse range, were chosen. Owing to decisive findings from radio after interviews with producers and presenters, it became less relevant to conduct content analysis for radio programmes. However, key players in specific programmes were interviewed. Instead, more television programmes were included to allow for comparison between similar programmes.

These programmes included People's Parliament, On the Spot, Fourth Estate and news at 9:00 (NTV); Issues at Hand and Face Off (WBS TV); Business Today (UBC TV); Morning Breeze (NBS) and Mama FM's *ekimeeza* held on Saturdays between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.

#### ***4.6.4. Women in public life***

Fifteen women were selected purposively to form independent cases from the two broad areas, the politico-economic (politics, civil service and business) and the socio-legal (social services – education, health; and civil society – law and advocacy), i.e. (i) politics and decision-making (4); (ii) civil service (2); (iii) business and economics (3); (iv) health (1); (v) education (2); and (vi) law and advocacy (3). Each woman is treated as a unique case. Whereas initially 30 women were deemed appropriate for the study, focusing on six areas of public life, the first and second phases established some overlap in terms of areas. The data analysed also indicated that few women in the civil service would be willing to speak owing to the government policy that requires only spokespersons to speak for the government. Also the in-depth nature of the interviews, tending to life histories, made it very difficult to conduct more interviews in the face of difficulty in finding the women who had appeared on the programmes to participate.

Data collection was by in-depth face-to-face unstructured interviews, leaning towards life stories. These are indicative of the scope of consultation, and the gatekeeper permission is obtained from professional bodies or government departments, as is applicable. No attention was paid to balancing the number of respondents between the areas of public life.

#### **4.7. Data Management: Collection, Analysis and Report Writing**

Data collection was achieved through semi-structured interviews, in-depth face-to-face unstructured interviews, participant observation and focused observation of programmes. The fieldwork and analysis were informed by the constructivist grounded theory approach and content analysis. The data at every stage was used to make decisions on the next level and interpretation took place throughout the empirical data collection process. Three distinct phases marked the collection and analysis of data. Each phase was analysed and used to inform decisions in the next phase, rendering it a multi-method study of sequential design.

#### ***4.7.1. Pre-fieldwork phase and observation***

Pre-fieldwork entailed the observation of programmes from the different media houses selected in order to make decisions on which programmes were most likely suitable for content analysis but also to decide on the respondents for the first phase. Once the media houses were selected, the next thing was to come up with an initial selection of programmes of interest and then cast a wide net in search of the respondents responsible for the specific programmes. This pre-fieldwork phase was in between September and December 2014 and then it was finalised in January 2015. I continued with observation throughout the research phases listening and watching programmes and in one Mama FM programme as a non-participant observer. I jotted down the studio dynamics and the number of participants, having discussions with the women in the studio after programmes.

#### ***4.7.1. Phase one: Interviewing producers, presenters, hosts and managers from media***

I kick-started fieldwork in January 2015, conducting interviews with men and women in the media. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that focused on the nature of the programmes, the role of the respondents, the determinants of participation, the constraints on participation for women and the implications for women's participation in public life. While all the media houses had provided me with a letter of acceptance to conduct my research, it became a huge task finding the respondents. Some were willing and others needed convincing, especially men who thought the study was meant for women, given its title. This process was completed in two months, although some media respondents were interviewed later owing to change in their human resource management. However, this did not affect the outcome.

Qualitative content analysis based on the identification of themes was used to create the categories and concepts necessary for focused observation and subsequent content analysis. The *in vivo* (etic) and analytical (emic) coding (Emerson, Frets & Shaw 2011) were used, in addition to memo writing as used in the grounded theory approach where analytical categories are derived directly from the data and not preconceived concepts or hypotheses (Charmaz 2001, p. 336-7).

Four stages of data coding and analysis were used: (i) open; (ii) focused coding and analysing; (iii) analysing and organising data; and (iv) theory building through a process of

linking codes to concepts to categories to theory (typological theorising that involved creating possible types of interactions between variable dimensions).

Two specific computer-assisted techniques (CATS) are used in data entry and analysis. The NVivo programme is used for analyses of interviews, which was useful in isolating the most frequently talked about issues and the creation of categories. NVivo helped me to think deeply about my data and theorise concepts, which is one of the features presented by Pat Bazeley and Kristi Jackson (2013). Given the magnitude of data collected from the few categories of respondents, touching on a variety of issues, running NVivo directed analysis to the very key areas. NVivo was only used in phase one of the study, a purely qualitative approach, which was instrumental in the creation of themes. Although various interviews indicated that there was minimal participation of women, through representation, interaction and engagement, it was unclear to what extent this happened. The limitation of the NVivo programme was that it required me to know what I was looking for, which ultimately rendered the 'old school' more relevant for the third phase, and also applicable in phase one. Most of its limitations also derived from my less than perfect mastery of the programme.

#### ***4.7.2. Phase two: Quantitative analysis of participation in public affairs programmes***

This was a quantitatively conducted phase. Based on the findings from phase one, phase two was narrowed down to focus only on the statistical representation of categories identified during concept formation. After the analysis of phase one, the result was used to select the specific programmes for quantitative content analysis and observation (non-participant observation and focused observation of programmes as they were aired or viewed). My position was of an observer and I also watched programmes at home.

Moving on to the second phase, which focused on the numbers and levels of participation, is what brought in the extent and the variations between programmes. This would have been impossible within the framework of the purely *qualitative approach*. This is covered in the findings that present the determinants of participation in particular. Data entry and analysis for levels of representation, interaction and engagement with specific programmes is achieved by Excel and SPSS. Although initially NVivo was envisaged to be sufficient, it turned out to be one of three techniques available to analyse a variety of data types. This was crucial for data management and also understanding. This phase largely validated the findings in phase one that women's participation was minimal, but which had not indicated the exact extent to which

that was limited, which was only possible through the second phase. The second phase also made comparison of programmes possible, complementing the findings significantly.

#### ***4.7.3. Phase three: Women's lived experiences with media and public life***

The third and final phase of this study was purely a qualitative approach. The decision on the women to interview was derived from the two previous phases. In phase one various anecdotes were told of women who were thought to have been made by the media and those broken by the media, and how specific women relate to the media. Phase two presented the most dominant themes on the media through an examination of visibility and voice, which then aided the choice of respondents for this phase.

The women selected were interviewed in an unstructured way since no specific order was followed except to start with the life of the respondents, from which other questions followed. These, therefore, varied from one respondent to another. But the questions surrounding the women's lived experiences were closely tied to their relationship with the media and their participation in public life. Women openly talked about their anxieties about the media, where the media falls short and some of the constraints which have little to do with the media but which affect their participation in the media, such as politics and culture.

The purpose of this, especially coming last, was to allow women to provide insight and perspective, which needed to flow through their stories, but which describe the depth of their participation, the determinants of participation and the constraints as well. Whereas women did not significantly differ in their analysis of the real issues affecting participation both in the media and in public life, they underscored the limitations of society and the media.

The same process of analysis as in phase one was followed, only manually done this time. Although CATs were useful in the first phase, I largely used conversation and thematic analysis, giving thick descriptions based on the narratives of respondents. In Chapter Six, I present some of the stories that encapsulate a complete cycle of issues under investigation, ranging from what influenced their participation in public life to their relationship with the media.

I often started with a recording of verbal interactions in natural settings. The interviews were largely cordial, with women freely sharing. I analysed transcripts based on six categories: profile; determinants of participation; constraints on participation; the role of the media in

women's participation in public life; the implications for the participation of women in public life; and how to improve media participation among women. This is useful in the analysis of various interviews. Ethnographic data 'encourages content analysis accounts to emerge from readings of text. This approach works as well as with narrative descriptions but focuses on situations in settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances presumed to be recognisable by the human actors/speakers involved' (Kippendoff 2004, p. 23). Grounded theory and the power of interpretation and reflection aided data analysis and presentation.

#### **4.8. Reliability and Validity**

The validity of this study is taken into account through the full range of variation on variables in case selection as calculated by the categorical value of ownership and programming. The method of difference means that all types of cases are taken into account, thus representing the full variation of the population. The method may not mirror the population distribution but because these cases represent the full population attributes, they are reliable and valid. The units of analysis include media, programmes and women in public life. Data, methodological and theory triangulations contribute to the rigour as well as validity and reliability. Validity requires that the researcher's processes of sampling, reading and analysing messages ultimately satisfy external criteria. Replicability is measurable and validity is testable but objectivity is neither measurable nor testable (Kippendoff 2004, p. 25). The whole point of multiple methods of study was to allow for cross-referencing of findings or claims and the integration and complementing of findings, as well as to build a case based on a multiplicity of data sources, data types and triangulation of all these. Researcher interpretations and reflections are clearly presented and distinguished from those of the respondents. The selection of cases also followed criteria that minimised researcher bias.

#### **4.9. Methodological Reflection: Limitations and Delimitations**

##### ***4.9.1. The research process***

It is generally acknowledged that '[t]he hardest methodological choices arise in the actual research' (George & Bennett 2005, p. 15). Like most research projects, there were a number of limitations that had to be overcome. These were largely practical issues of application that ranged from obtaining the gatekeeper's permission to the enormous amount of time required



for data collection, transcription and interpretation of data. These are highlighted below, in a reflective manner.

*Getting the gatekeepers' permission was a real hurdle.* The entire research process turned out to be one big validation. Certain assumptions had been made during the proposal writing that were contradicted by later experience. I had assumed that the study, being about the media and women, would meet no resistance from women, who would be willing to participate in it. My first test of this assumption was through the process of ethical clearance. There were several institutions from which I needed clearance so that I could speak to women. To my dismay, it was from the female gatekeepers in these institutions, through whom I needed these letters, that I received negative responses outright; they declined permission, or remained non-committal until some male gatekeeper acted on my request. Networks became useful at this stage.

*Women decline to engage with the media.* One of the key findings in the first phase of the study was that female accounting officers who were required to participate in these programmes for the purpose of accountability either refused or they made themselves completely unavailable for the media. Names were mentioned of those who completely feared the media or simply refused to respond to the media when they needed to provide accountability. Women hated to be held accountable and took it personally, and only appeared on the media to promote their own agenda or call press conferences, and maybe write in newspapers. Many women declined my request for interviews as well.

*Women are busy and unavailable.* For all intents and purposes, I believed that some of these remarks were perhaps simply based on perceptions or exaggerated by the media. However, when I tried to engage with these specific women in public life, they were resistant. Several calls went unanswered and were not returned, even after the individuals had given me an appointment and requested me to call them. Their phones would be switched off, or they would claim that they were in no position to talk about research. The list of excuses was long. The media was, to some extent, justified in claiming that most women did not want to talk to them; they certainly did not wish to talk to me. I was often surprised by the layers of bureaucracy surrounding some of the women I tried to seek audience with. It was impossible to see them through official channels. And because I wanted all my respondents to participate willingly, I let go of them and pursued others. All the women that I interviewed willingly agreed and gave of their time. Incidentally, they were also among some of those who had been considered

available for the media, unafraid of politicians and open-minded. Some appointments I chased for close to a year, with promises that never materialised.

*The study was extremely time-consuming.* The major limitation of the data collection process was the multiplicity of data sources and types organised in phases that turned out to be time-consuming and very expensive. These limitations were in themselves of critical importance as they allowed for continuous interaction with data and new sources of information and insights. The research process – collection, analysis and presentation – was one big iterative process that, even after I had officially completed collecting data, enabled me to gain insight through continuing to watch the programmes, attending workshops in which women's agenda was discussed and interacting with women informally during those meetings. As a result, I gained more from these organised dialogues to complement the interviews, although I do include it as a method of data collection.

*The limitation of scope and representation is acknowledged.* The scope of the study was already broad, so when I realised that a documentary analysis of media policies would have added value, I had very limited time to go back to it. Fortunately, issues surrounding policy came out in the interviews. Even though I consider Kampala to be unique and the number of women also too few to allow generalisation, I believe that these have been sufficient in raising critical issues for research.

*The study was deemed a feminist or women's study.* Most respondents failed to appreciate that the study was not about the government position but their own experiences with the media, and therefore chose to decline to participate. Men thought it was about women and, therefore, there was no need for them to participate. But these difficulties were overcome by framing the study as a media study first, then basing it on the content of women in public life within the framework of public affairs programmes.

Finally, the research process offered me invaluable opportunities to engage with issues of participation by women in the media and politics, and to theorise on their relationship. Being a reiterative research process really helped with a continuous flow of ideas and the gaining of insights, as well as rethinking theoretical argumentation. I also had to opportunity to go back to literature after all that I had established, to think through the themes and how they relate to each other in line with the specific variables, to work through the concepts right from categories and try to make sense of them as analytical tools, all of which, I believe, make significant contributions to research on women and the media. It was also a process of constant decision-

making based on variations in plans and in line with findings that are relevant for the next level. It allowed me to think, to be innovative and creative, and to completely own my research. Sometimes I spent weeks making sense of a particular set of data in relation to other sets, and how they intersect and contribute to better understanding. To my surprise, I ended up enjoying the research and writing process more than I had anticipated, despite the obviously many hiccups herein highlighted. My interpretation and reflection are all based on the data collected and analysed. My standpoint as a researcher is of an outsider (non-media practitioner) but also an insider (woman in public life). I assumed a critical and reflective stance rather than a feminist and activist one that allowed me distance.

#### **4.10. Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter is a presentation of the various steps taken in answering the study questions and the justification for making decisions. While certain steps had been considered important in the beginning, some were dropped as they became unnecessary in light of evidence from the first-level study. The relevance of a multi-method study in this kind of research cannot be overstated. Without the multiplicity of sources and tools of collection and analysis, it might have been difficult to arrive at the conclusions in this study. The findings unfold in various ways at different levels, providing understandings that builds into a larger picture. The methodological choice does not contradict the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS ONE**

### **THE NATURE AND DETERMINANTS OF MEDIA PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

#### **5.1. Chapter Introduction**

The mass media, among other things, provides a platform to discuss public affairs. This chapter is a detailed description of broadcast media's public affairs programming and the determinants of participation in Uganda. The two key questions answered in this chapter are: (i) What is the nature of women's representation, interaction and engagement in political and public affairs programming of the broadcast media in Uganda? (ii) What are the factors that determine women's participation in the media? The objective is to examine the nature of public affairs programming and establish the key determinants of participation. This chapter is crucial for setting up the context in which the media operates and the nature of public affairs programming, and understanding women's media participation. The findings herein presented are based on phase one of the study that focused on interviews with key media players in public affairs programming and phase two of the study involving content analysis and observation of programmes over a period of six months, from January 2015 to June 2015.

#### **5.2. The Nature of Media and Public Affairs Programming**

Public affairs programmes include current affairs and political programmes. Peter Mwesige studied political talk shows, which he limited to 'radio programmes that involve audiences expressing their opinions during live studio or open air discussions "of politicians, elections and public policy issues"' (Mwesige 2004, p. 223 citing Barker & Knight 2000, p. 151). In definitional terms, this works for political talk shows but becomes too narrow a view of public affairs programmes. Talk shows of an interactive nature involving audiences expressing their opinions now transcend politics, although they are still largely dominated by politics and politicians, hence the focus on public life. I refer to the kinds of programmes considered 'participatory public affairs programmes', in that they involve the participation of non-media professionals either as audiences or analysts, and are common in radio and television.

Owing to convergence, it makes sense to study both talk radio and television. Quick observation reveals that the hosts and producers of such programming now move between these platforms. Based on observation of the media and follow-up interviews, four types of public affairs programming became evident as current affairs, talk radio and talk television. These include: (i) current affairs – news; (ii) audience discussion programmes; (iii) talk shows; and (iv) interviews. Each of these is instrumental in disseminating information of a public affairs nature or simply current affairs. These types emerged after focused observation of selected media and a study of their programmes.

### ***5.2.1. Current affairs news: Issues in public affairs as they unfold***

All media houses produce news. These programmes are based on real-time events happening and reported as they happen. The journalists present reports, stories and commentaries to the public on what is happening. The nature of news is such that it is dependent on framing; what is important comes first, and then come some feature stories, that is detailed reports of what is happening. The news on radio is brief, mostly about five minutes, while television prime news lasts an hour for most media houses. This is an important aspect of public affairs programming and often provides topics for discussion on the other forms of programmes. The participants on news include media professionals such as reporters, producers, editors and managers while the public form part of the sources, subjects and analysts.

For television content analysis I considered Nation Television (NTV) coverage of daily prime time news at 09.00 pm. The news from Monday to Friday has different segments for feature focusing on women and power, health, agriculture (on the farm) and the arts. A close examination of NTV news was aimed at establishing the news-making culture, which, although it may not be generalisable owing to ownership dynamics, offers a glimpse into this type of programming and its relationship with women and women's issues. The NTV news programme was chosen because of its in-depth coverage of news that includes various features in health, agriculture and the arts where women dominate, and specific features on women and power. The method of study was the recording of news items in a form which was then quantitatively analysed on SPSS in line with subjects related to the areas of public life and gender.

Data from Uganda Radio Network (URN) online, a radio news agency, was closely studied to make sense of news on radio. URN was chosen because its news is featured on radio across the country but also in order to include an element of online news. More importantly, I observed

that URN disaggregated their sources by gender for every story. The method of study was an analysis of online news sources as they appeared on the website and analysed quantitatively.

### ***5.2.2. Audience discussion programmes: Citizens' viewpoints***

This type of programming is audience-focused. A team of media professionals engages the public in the discussion of topics the public decides on or that is of interest to them. Although it appears that the topic is decided there and then, there are indications that they are known beforehand. There are usually invitations to the persons who might make an appearance and contribute to the discussion, say from organisations concerned with that topic. For radio, the round-table discussions, commonly known as *ekimeeza* (open-air discussions which became studio-based after the ban), operate in a similar fashion. The invitation is open to whoever is interested, i.e. to all citizens without exclusion. Announcements are made about the topics for discussion, or done on camera for television. A host or moderator then steers the discussion, with the conversation moving between different participants who take turns to speak. Two programmes were studied – the Mama FM Saturday *ekimeeza* that runs from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm (three hours) and People's Parliament on NTV, a recorded programme aired on Saturday at 8.00 pm for an hour.

The Mama FM programme was chosen because the radio is women-owned, and the programme is in an indigenous language (*Luganda*). I sat in the studio as the programme was aired. I observed that the *ekimeeza* programme rarely attracts women across radio stations. Mama FM has a focused policy on women's inclusion on programmes. It was assumed to be the best case study. The method of study was quantitative content analysis of attendance lists, participant observation, and brief informal interviews with participants in the programme. It is orderly. Participants arrive and register in a book that is on the producer's desk. They join members in the studio. The seating arrangement is informal. There are few chairs. The majority of the participants sit on the floor. There is one desk, a chair and microphones set overlooking the host, who doubles as the producer, through a large glass window.

The host calls on a speaker based on the list he has. No time limit is fixed for participants as each speaks only once. The participants speak until they have exhausted their points, with occasional interjections from the host, asking questions or seeking clarifications. Other participants may laugh or disagree but are expected to wait their turn in order to make their

point. Unless a participant takes too long, they are not requested to leave the microphone. On some occasions, more than 30 minutes is spent with one participant speaking.

The programme largely focuses on politics, and sometimes the economy. It is rarely about social issues unless those relate to particular political events. The style is mainly combative, the tone militaristic, angry and accusatory, the content highly opinionated, and the participants are mostly male. The host and producer of this programme are also male. In the period observed, there was no single topic about women or gender issues. Only five women participated, out of the 22 participants in the period of observation. The programme airs every Saturday.

People's Parliament on NTV was studied for quantitative content analysis. Its observation as aired and content recorded were primary methods of study. The programme is pre-recorded and aired for one hour, including adverts. It is modelled on the national parliament. The host of the programme, Agnes Nandutu, is known as the speaker of the house, sits at the centre of the room, and is assisted by a clerk (Mary Natukunda), seated below the speaker. The participants sit facing the speaker. Venues vary depending on which district is hosting, from hotels to district halls. The speaker calls the house to order, and the clerk suggests a topic. The speaker asks the participants in favour and those who are not in favour, and a topic is adopted. The speaker then steers the discussion, giving the participants interested in speaking a chance to do so. Figure 5.1 below is a screenshot of People's Parliament.



Fig. 5.1: *The Hon. Reagan Okumu addresses the People's Parliament in Gulu on land*

The programme is often set off by invited speakers giving an overview of the issue as experts, sponsors or political leaders to set the context. The topics range from the political to the socio-economic, with an accountability tone. The show style is competitive; members put up their hand and try to agree or disagree with the other members when given a chance. They can raise points of information or order. It is like a debate, an open discussion. There are house rules that the speaker spells out at the onset. Unlike talk shows that are studio-based, this programme is recorded in various locations and audience-focused, with speakers invited or not coming from among the audience in a face-to-face exchange. Two podiums are set up and the participants seek to speak by raising their hand. Equal chances are given to those who wish to speak. The speaker on many occasions urges women to speak up. The tone is discursive, the content fairly neutral – and no personal attacks are allowed. Speakers are largely male although many women attend. No external interaction takes place on this programme, given its recorded nature.

Most of the media team are female: the speaker, the clerk and the producer. In comparison to other programmes, more women were part of the conversation. The guests are a mixture of the political class and citizens from all walks of life. The topics are mainly on service delivery and governance. It is not clear how inclusive it is but district headquarters or central locations in districts are used for the debate, although the participants appear to come from various parts of the districts. Representation of participants in terms of rural and urban locations is not clear, but rotates across the country. The programme is aired in English.

### ***5.2.3. Talk shows: Panel discussion, host-guest(s) dialogue and interviews***

The most interactive of the public affairs programmes, talk shows may be in the form of studio interviews such as host-guest(s) dialogue or panel discussion programmes based on a variety of topics discussed and the nature of the guests invited. It is dominated by the politics of the day and current affairs as they unfold. In the case of studio interviews, the hosts do not change although the same guests may return from time to time, depending on the issues. The strength of the show is its ability to draw listeners into the conversation as it happens or a large number of studio-based participants in the form of a panel that enhances interaction between participants. Figure 5.2 below is a pictorial representation of some of the programmes.





Fig. 5.2: Screenshot of *Morning Breeze* (NBS), *On the Spot* (NTV) and *Face Off* (WBS)

According to Mwesige (2004), the democratic functions of talk shows are: (i) to facilitate citizens to acquire information about public affairs; (ii) to provide civic space in which public dialogue and debate of public affairs occur; (iii) mediation – to facilitate citizen feedback to the government and the political elite; and (iv) venting – to allow people to engage in ineffective but important self-expression. All these functions were manifested in varying degrees, depending on the programme and the media. The role of the programme may lend it to one or more functions.

The nature of the show varies. It ranges from cordial to combative, sometimes displaying both in different shows with the same host. Sometimes it is just competitive, with the best discussant holding the floor more. The audience participates through making phone calls, sending short text messages (SMS), and social media texts via twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook, among others. Two daily programmes running from Monday to Friday and four weekly programmes were studied. These are: *Issues at Hand* (WBS TV aired on Tuesdays at 10.00 pm); *Face Off* (WBS at 10.00pm); *Morning Breeze* (NBS TV aired Monday to Friday at 08.00 to 09.00am);

On the Spot (NTV aired on Thursday at 10.30pm); Fourth Estate (NTV at 10.30PM) and Business Today (UBC TV aired on Monday to Friday at 9.00 am to 10.00 am). The nature of the shows varies significantly from style to tone.

The Issues at Hand programme is a commentary on current issues. The host and producer are both male. It is hosted by Peter Kibazo and produced by Moses Walusimbi. The guests are largely male, and the number on any given show ranges from one to three. Callers are invited to participate although their number is limited and they are largely males. Social media texts are read out by the host. Topics typically relate to public affairs. The Morning Breeze show is hosted alternately by Simon Kagwa Njala, Dalton Kawesa and Doreen Komuhangi. It is produced by Baker Zeena. The guest is sandwiched between the two hosts who both ask questions. Occasionally there are two guests hosted by Simon Kagwa Njala and the guests sit on either side of the host, taking questions. It is mainly politics and topical issues that are discussed. During the period of observation, there was one occasion when both guests were female, as Figure 5.3 demonstrates.



Fig. 5.3: *Cissy Kagaba (right) and Jane Okuo Kajuga (left) hosted by Simon Kagwa*

Both Cissy Kagaba and Jane Okuo Kajuga are lawyers by profession, the former an anti-corruption crusader and the latter a spokesperson of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions. Their invitation was clearly based on their profession and occupation and the case in question. It is a rare occurrence that both guests on a talk show are ladies. The guests are mainly male.

The media team is balanced in terms of gender. This was one of the most engaging talk shows and well-articulated, with both ladies being knowledgeable of the facts.

Face Off is an almost all-male panel. In the period of study, only two female panellists appeared. Hosted by Peter Kibazo and produced by Moses Walusimbi, it differs from Issues at Hand in that it hosts a regular panel of experts, sometimes including a guest, in an analytical debate on public affairs. On the Spot, hosted by Patrick Kamaara and produced by Emmanuel Mataizibwa, is more like the Issues at Hand show, and Fourth Estate, hosted by Charles Mwanghya Mpagi and produced by Emmanuel Mataizibwa, is more like Face Off.

The Fourth Estate hardly features women. Only three women participated throughout the study period, perhaps a result of the timing. The difference lies in their panel compositions. Although I did not do a content analysis of The Capital Gang, I listened to the programme every Saturday and interviewed the host, Oskar Ssemweya-Musoke. Business Today is hosted by Harriet Atyang and produced by Doreen Ndeezi. Though a big number of its guests are male, it is fair in terms of representation (at 38 per cent females) in comparison to the others. All the media team, including field reporters, are female except one.

Panel discussion programmes are popular on television. They present a regular host, some regular panels and, in some cases, invited guests. The number ranges from three to six participants on any given appearance. It is set in the studio, with seating arrangements varying, depending on studios or media houses. The seating is fairly casual, to allow for comfort and free interaction between the participants in the discussion. The host is either at the centre or anywhere else in the room.

The participants do not have meaningful powers to decide what topic to be discussed, but are informed beforehand about what the discussion will revolve around. The host chooses the person to answer a particular question next or directs the conversation towards specific persons. There is less interaction by direct phone calls although social media streaming can be ongoing, read by the host or relayed on screen. It is an analytical programme. The participants are presumed to be experts in providing such analysis.

For most television houses, it is a late night programme, aired after evening prime news, live in the studio. It has to be noted that the shows sometimes do not start at the scheduled time or take exactly one hour per se. Time varies considerably depending on the nature of the discussion, the subject and the guests. In order to establish if ownership matters, more

programmes on NTV were included owing to its presentation of a variety of shows, which had been a key issue in the choice of media.

#### **5.2.4. Profiles of prominent people**

Interview programmes are not studio-based per se. In some cases, a guest is brought into the studio for an interview. The only participants are the host of the programme and the guest(s). For the most part, interviews are done at the convenience of the guest at locations outside the studio and recorded. The issues discussed vary and tend to follow the trend of the profile, where the guest talks about themselves and their work, and expresses opinions on public issues, to mention but a few. It is the most cordial of public affairs programmes. The participants are often at ease, jovial and willing to talk. There is no external interaction as the programme is aired, although once uploaded to the internet, comments can be posted. The interview is presented in a narrative by the host. One programme was considered, the Women and Power feature on NTV, aired during news on Monday. It is a specialised programme focusing on women, which is why it was chosen. The interviews, done by Josephine Karungi, is largely cordial, interspersed with jokes and laughter.

#### **5.2.5. The nature of public affairs programming**

Radio was dropped from content analysis, with only Mama FM being considered, because the interviews were decisive about the nature of participation in terms of representation, interaction and engagement. The findings were rather clear-minimal participation. The choice of Mama FM's *ekimeeza* programme was based on its gender-focused policy that qualified it as the best case study for women's media participation. Several radio programmes on Capital FM (Big Breakfast Show, Capital Gang), CBS (*Kiriza Obagana*), X-FM (the Daily Breakfast Show and Saturday morning show) and Mama FM (*Tuteese*) were listened to throughout the fieldwork period. This participation as a listener was instrumental in complementing views from the interviews and establishing the nature of programmes. The producers, host and/or female presenters on show, if any, were interviewed for insights on the determinants of participation. The findings for radio reiterated most of what Mwesige (2004) found in his study of political talks shows. Findings from television was more nuanced in interviews, hence content analysis and inclusion of more programmes.

A careful analysis of the various types of public affairs programmes revealed that they fall in a continuum that oscillates between (i) cordial and (ii) combative. The nature of the show is judged by style, tone of discussion, content, type of participants and audience attitudes based on their interaction. In the case of the cordial type, there is more objectivity, the guests are courteous and considerate to one another, voices are rarely raised, and the discussants are largely pleasant. A show is combative when it is largely argumentative, the guests antagonise each other, they shout as they speak, and the subject is contentious, aggressive and militaristic. Plain display of hostility and anger may become evident, and end up being unpleasant. The majority of the shows fell within the ambit of the combative type. There are those that fall in between, which I call competitive – the best discussant holds the flow.

In concrete terms, the discursive public affairs programmes are male-dominated. The hosts and guests are largely men, are personality-driven rather than issues-driven, increasingly focus on public interests/public affairs, are news/current affairs-led, are combative and militant depending on the topics, and the programmes happen late at night, after prime news. The study revealed that public affairs programming is a big part of any radio and television station in contrast to the normally held view that mass media are entertainment-focused. Private radio and television stations take on the public sphere role, engaging in discussions of public affairs regularly and in different forms, both in indigenous languages and in English. High-profile people are engaged. The president and top government officers such as the prime minister have been hosted on some of the programmes.

Monica Chibita (2009) and Peter Mwesige (2009) recognise the public sphere roles of the media, in particular radio. Critics maintain that the press trivialises women, and in the process perpetuate women's subordination, and belittles women politicians with a tendency to purvey the 'sensational' and 'prurient' (Tamale 1999). My findings, based on public affairs programming on the broadcast media, do not support in general this view, and affirm that, although sections of the media are sensational, the broadcast media does have some important public affairs programmes that are not sexist and sensational, offering platforms for citizen political participation. The questions are: To what extent are women involved? And why are only a few interested?

### 5.3. The Extent of Representation, Interaction and Engagement

Representation on talk radio is limited to women as representatives of dominant institutions and certain groups still dominate the electronic public sphere (Mwesige 2004). The question is: To what extent do women form part of this dominant group? My research revealed that women are grossly under-represented on public affairs programmes, as indicated below for television.

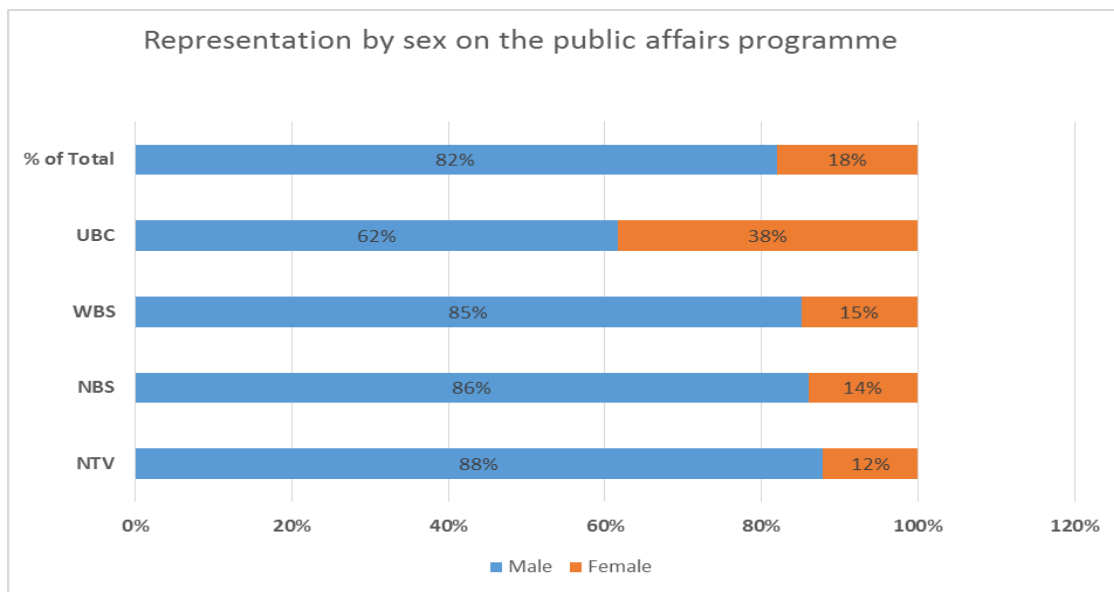


Fig 5.4: Representation by gender

Source: Author

Out of the 543 participants in the public affairs programmes in four media houses as guests, analysts and sources in various television programmes, 445 participants were men and only 98 were women, accounting for 82 and 18 per cent respectively. These figures were based on visibility and voice, and therefore did not include cameramen, although the producers were independently interviewed, which is a limitation. The focus was on those that ‘appear’ or speak regardless of roles (in or on media). For NTV, the two weekly programmes of Fourth Estate and On the Spot attracted a total of 99 participants, 87 (88%) of whom were men and only 12 (12%) were women. The same explanations could be derived for NBS, WBS and UBC. The findings for UBC skewed the average with three possible explanations: (i) the programme

considered was a business one; (ii) the host and producer are female; and (iii) the network is a public broadcaster with a mandate to attain diversity.

Interaction with these programmes via call-in is weak. No woman called in throughout the period of observation. I tried to call in several times on the various programmes, but never got through. All producers admitted that the call function tends to be problematic. The strange thing is that it is the same people who tend to get through. It is not clear to what extent these calls remain uncensored. I implored two friends to call in, but neither of them ever got through across the programmes. This was put in perspective thus:

There is a group of women especially for the native languages talk shows that have made it a business to call into the talk shows and they have mastered the art and the rest of the people will withdraw. Other people call in because of the relationship they have with the hosts and these request for the free lines before the shows to enable them [to] make their contributions, so the call in are not a perfect measure. (MR. Paul 2015)

Although it had been generally acknowledged that women did not call in, it seemed different for indigenous language programming where some women were already inviting themselves. There are a number of reasons for people to call in, but the lines can also be captured by a more dominating group who have learnt the art, which explains why the same people may call- in.

In the case of online news for radio across the country, the aggregation of news sources by gender indicates an even wider gap, as shown below. It is worth mentioning that Uganda Radio Network (URN) is specifically gender-sensitive and requires all their field reporters to log their sources per story based on gender. In spite of that, the gap remains huge, but appears to be narrowing consistently over a period of one year.

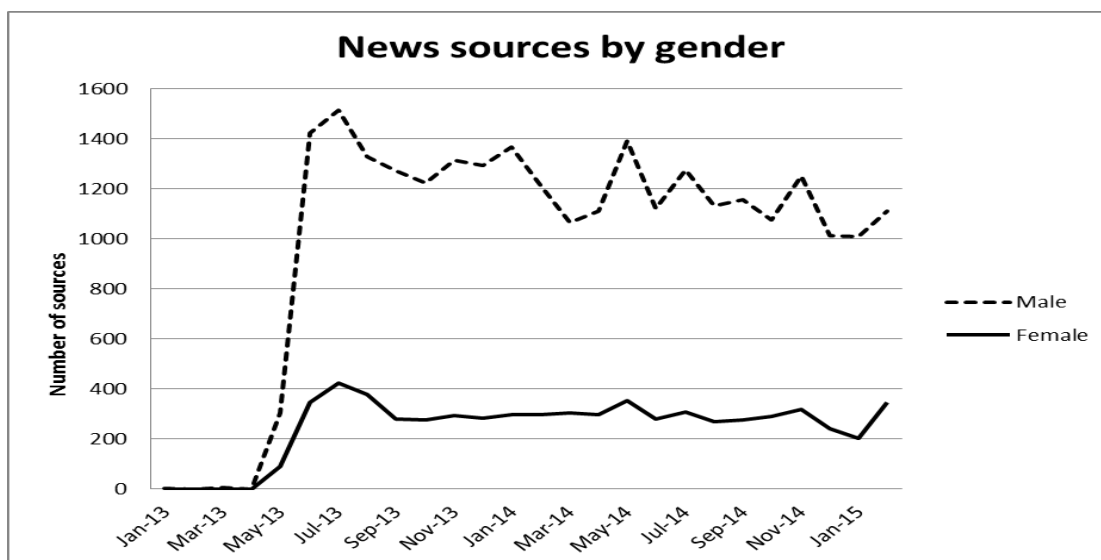


Fig 5. 5: Sources of news by gender adapted from Uganda Radio Network (URN)

Source: Author based on URN data

The findings further revealed that almost all shows did not attract any female callers or comments on short text message (SMS) during live shows. A few women take to social media to comment on discussions but this activity is still negligible as I observed and as has been indicated by the hosts and producers during interviews. All the producers and hosts interviewed indicated that women hardly interact with their programmes in any way. In addition, on many occasions women turn down opportunities to participate when consulted/invited by the media (a key finding). This was particularly so for women in politics and public administration. It was argued that women in public life prefer press conferences and do not entertain meaningful dialogue on issues with the media, except through their public relations officers or deputies. The already minimum representation translates into a much thinner level of interaction and engagement. Several reasons were advanced in the form of constraints on participation.

Now I turn to the determinants of participation, and how these may encourage or discourage women’s participation.

#### 5.4. Determinants of Media Participation

Examination of the nature of public affairs programming in Uganda showed that a key character of the programmes is that they are male-dominated. The literature suggests that this is patriarchy at work, and that it is therefore naturalised in a sense. The larger problem is that



women, gender and women's issues are absent when it comes to the less 'sensational' and 'prurient', suggesting exclusion. This is problematic in light of women's high participation in public life in Uganda. The questions then become: How do women participate in these public affairs programmes? Why do women in public life form a thin base of participation in programmes of this type? What are the key determinants for participation? Are these determinants gender-neutral?

This section delves into a discussion of the key considerations for the media when inviting guests to a programme; what participants take into account when consulted about participation in a programme; and the dynamics that are at play during the show that form part of the key determinants of continued participation. These are important issues to the extent that they shed light on women's representation on shows, which on the surface appear to be irrelevant, but are crucial for understanding the nuanced issues at play when studying participation. This analysis is based on a synthesis of interviews from hosts and producers of all the programmes studied (even those not included in content analysis like *The Capital Gang*) and all media houses (the first phase of the study focused on the media). These do not include the determinants of audience participation, since members of the audience were not interviewed. Audience in this study was limited to those who interacted with various programmes using various platforms to contribute to debate.

Basing on an analysis of semi-structured interviews with producers and presenters of all the chosen programmes in all the media houses selected and on observation, eight determinants of participation were identified. Gender was not one of them. In this view, the media is a clear 'mirror of society' and does not deliberately exclude women. However, this gender neutrality is a façade. The determinants were coded and categorised based on semi-structured interviews, observation and in-depth interviews with women. The determinants include the problem at hand, the programmes' envisaged role, the politics of the day, the performance of the guest; the presenter and producer's role, profession, the personality of the guests and policy (media or government policy) as shown in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: Determinants of participation and dimensions**

*Problem:* The topic of discussion, issue at hand or current events. Programmes that discussed more politics had much fewer women than the business and public affairs ones.

*Programme:* The role of the programme – dialogue on critical issues, accountability, public debate, the nature of the programme, its ratings and relevance for the station. Timing of the programme, the composition of the guests, the level of interaction and the panel affected women’s decisions to participate.

*Politics:* The extent to which the issue is controversial, the politics surrounding a problem and the nature of freedom and tolerance of opposition which was considered minimal and affects more women than men.

*Performance:* The performance within public life and also when invited to speak. If deemed eloquent or good debaters, they will always be sought after.

*Presenter/producer role:* The gender of the presenter/producer, the skill and network of the presenter/producer and how they handle questions.

*Profession:* The training of the guests (most guests were trained lawyers or practising advocates in civil society) and politicians. Medical doctors, educators and women hardly featured.

*Personality:* If the guest is deemed to be vibrant, available, amiable and credible, with clout.

*Policy:* The existence of media house policy and government policy on women’s participation in public life. International policy and support to gender is equally important, such as the Beijing Platform of Action (1995) and other conventions.

Table. 5.1: *Determinants of participation and dimensions.*

Source: *Primary data*

**5.4.1. Problem: Topics, issues and current events or public concerns**

The problem revolves around the topical issue of the day, what is trending and who is in the line of fire in terms of accountability. Sometimes the issues are picked from the print media stories or even broadcast news. For all the respondents, this was the most important

consideration. The topic dictates who is involved in the discussion as analysts, sources or subjects. Those invited must have a good understanding of the topic based on their expertise, the topic should fall within their line of work and they should be able to provide an interesting viewpoint on the subject. One programme manager said:

...it is pretty a simple formula, following journalistic principles because public affairs shows are going to be based on current affairs. For example, teachers today are protesting. ... if I am hosting a show today, I will be looking at who are the leaders of this organisation. Now for me it doesn't matter whether the chairperson of the Uganda National Teachers Union is a male or a female. So that is the *modus operandi* we usually follow. If there is an issue, we are looking for the people who are involved in it and are the fellows we are going to pick. (MR. Shem<sup>14</sup> February 2015)

This submission gives the impression that the choice of guest is gender-neutral, an issue that came up in all the interviews with both male and female respondents. Close reading of the text reveals that gender neutrality in these decisions is not a given, and that there are issues for which women are invited and that there are those for which men are preferred. For instance, a programme host argued:

There is a lot of stereotype here but it happens a lot. Most women who come for the paid up shows for different civil society organisations like FIDA or Society of Women Lawyers, Society of Architects, Human Rights Commission, it's very likely that you will get at least a woman participate in this shows. In most cases the issues range from children's health, maternal health, name it, they will bring a lady. With health, even if it's not a civil society paying up for the show, it's usually very emotional with society and so we ensure that they are there. It's very unlikely that if I am going to talk about the Police in general, I would get a lady unless it's their spokesperson...other than if they have abused a woman like in the case of Ingrid Turinawe – FDC Women's League chairperson. (MR. Paul February 2015)

The submission underscores women's engagement with public affairs programming, with women paying for shows in order to have conversations around things that matter to them. Some female respondents complained that after they have paid for these shows, the hosts and audience try to divert them, asking questions outside the topic for whose discussion they have paid. The submission further suggests that there are issues women are good at, and that there are those that they are presumed to be unable to engage in. The invitation of women, therefore, depends on whether such topics are under discussion or not. The real issue, then, is: If society

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<sup>14</sup> The names of respondents are anonymised since some preferred to remain anonymous but the acronyms MR and FR are used to identify respondents as Male Respondent and Female Respondent respectively in order to have an understanding of the implications of gender. I would have loved to include the media house instead, but this would give away the respondents, given public knowledge of who hosts and produces what.

is very emotional about an issue, where do fairness, balance and professional journalism practice fit in? This submission reinforces the stereotype that women are emotional, and cannot discuss the ‘hard’ subjects.

By defining the problem based on the issues, topics and events of the day, the findings revealed, in line with what Mwesige (2004, p. 227) discussed, that ‘issues that generate controversy and drama are more likely to be debated on talk shows’ because they are presumed to capture the audience’s interest. Women are seen as unlikely participants in discussions of these issues of controversy and drama. Yet, women may be excluded even where they rightfully should have their voice, as illustrated in the picture below.



Figure 5.6: *Post-2015 International Women's Day discussion on the Fourth Estate*

As it is, the choices are made based on the problem at hand and on who is qualified to respond to the issues. Reading between the lines, one concludes that this is gendered since some issues are deemed as good for women to discuss, and others are not (clearly a preserve for male participants) as the submission above indicates.

#### ***5.4.2. Programme: Its role, time and character***

The envisaged role of the programme is a key determinant. A critical examination revealed that programmes are largely rolled out for political accountability. A radio show host argued:

Sometimes I get politicians who wish to be invited... Then I am saying maybe that is not a topic that would fit in [...] We would like to have political accountability, we would like to question government policy, we would like to question government decisions, we would like government to articulate choices they have made. And that's what I see as the role of [programme]. (MR. David February 2015)

The submission implies that some people do invite themselves to the programmes, and as the producers said, these are usually men. Whereas many events may be happening that are of public interest, it is not just any topic that qualifies for discussion. The chosen topic must fit the vision of that programme. A talk show host gave a clear vision of two shows on WBS and their role:

Issues at Hand is a pure current affairs commentary, you have news. It is a news commentary, current affairs is happening. You have a commentary on what it is and what lies behind the news and what are the public affairs around the current affairs. That is what the Issues at Hand is built around, it's built around really its name – the issues of the day – what are the issues? What is the public affairs in it? What would be the public interest in it? ... Because Issues at Hand is a commentary on what is happening. Face Off gives you the opportunity to do an analysis of things even if they are not directly in the media. (MR. Paul February 2015)

The nature of the tone and the subject of the dialogue thus varies based on the role. In this case, the two programmes are hosted and produced by the same team, yet they differ. The problem for discussion goes hand in hand with the role of the programme or what it is modelled on. Observation revealed that the choice of guests and the topic reflect the perceived role of the programme. Timing is also a key element of the programme. The respondents suggested that timing was an issue because some guests, although they are qualified to discuss the topic and fit the programmes' role, may turn down an opportunity to participate. The implication of programme time for women's participation in public affairs programmes was clear. One respondent recounted:

I was a parliamentary reporter. Approaching five [5.00 pm], you see a big chunk of female MPs moving out one by one because that is the time they are picking kids from school.... I want to say that male MPs in nature are not taken up by family matters that much ... It is not a serious business to them. If the wife can't

then they will look for someone to do it. Yet, mothers naturally they would want to pick their kids from school. (MR. Shem February 2015)

This view, held by many producers and hosts, suggest that the timing of the programmes could have a huge impact on women's participation. So while women may be some of those who qualify to engage in the conversations, they are unable to do so owing to the timing of the programme. This appeared to be a problem for the women. On the whole, the general perception was that even when women took up public office, they are heavily affected by their domestic responsibilities, as if there is no boundary between the domestic and the public spheres. Men cope differently from women with the demands of public office.

The development of each programme has an agenda, even within the same television or radio station, with different target audience segments, hosted and produced by the same people. This implies that the decision regarding who gets invited still falls largely within the domain of the media and its players rather than that of the participants. The media players may demur when contacted if the issue is not of interest to them or does not advance the role of the programme. There is a strong suggestion that the media is also challenged sometimes, as their preferred guests may not wish to participate, citing the time factor, among others. This is mostly in reference to female guests. The programme's role and time are critical determinants of media participation. It was suggested that indigenous language programmes attracted better participation. Also, one of the key constraints on participation was considered to be language; women feared to express themselves in English, while men cared little about that.

#### **5.4.3. Politics: The subject of discussion, and its centrality to politics**

It was revealed that a lot of political considerations are factored in regarding the subjects of discussion. In addition, media owners, programme managers and even the guests and hosts all form part of a complex dynamic to be negotiated when choosing guests. Politics forms part of the considerations, which is perhaps better encapsulated by this programme manager and talk show host:

...on a day-to-day basis, if there has been a hot debate, I am going to look for those vibrant fellows because I also want a good show. You have a market to serve, you have a competition. If there is a list of 10 people who participated in that debate, every radio station is struggling for them. But every person is struggling for the best. And I can assure you as a matter of fact, you are going to realise that men are going to come on top of the list, because largely they are going to be much more eloquent than their colleagues, because you see, most of

the women that you have in the house, are those that arrived there on affirmative action. (MR. Shem February 2015)

Three things emerge from the conversations that present an interesting dilemma concerning affirmative action, competence and participation in a competitive media environment. These, it appears, influence women's voice and visibility, not just on media but also in national politics and policy-making. First, although on the surface the determinants are gender-neutral, the politics surrounding the choices that a producer and a presenter make are laced with many nuanced political considerations. Second, affirmative action as referenced here depicts how national politics plays out and affects women's performance. The respondents suggested that because national politics appears to stifle opposition, women are afraid of finding themselves on the wrong side, and prefer to stay away from any meaningful discussion of policy choices that they have participated in making. They end up avoiding the media altogether. Third, there is also the politics of competition, finding the best debaters first, which is symptomatic of commercialised media. A problem then arises when women are generalised, and considered not eloquent or good debaters as indicated above, because it means no effort will be made to find more women.

#### **5.4.4. Performance: Participation in the media and in public life**

The attitude of presenters, producers and even the public tended towards the performance of guests in public life. Although there was general agreement about the currency of issues at hand and the role of the programme being critical, the performance of various office holders appears to matter a great deal. If the intended guest is presumed to be without substance and many viewpoints, it does not matter if the guest is the head of an organisation; someone else will be invited. The guests' participation in the media and public life must be perceived to be good, by both the public and media professionals. More importantly, their performance on the show must be considered very good for them to be invited again.

The majority of women were not considered to be good performers; just a few exceptions were. Some women have been dismissed as unreliable and others treated with scorn despite their powerful positions. Women are also categorised into those who are capable of debating an issue, are eloquent, approachable and available, and those who prefer press conferences and issuing statements because they would buckle under the pressure of a debate. Take these views, for instance:

The ladies that are able to articulate their positions are perhaps affluent and therefore unaffected by political baggage, and that is how I see the Minister of Finance [then Maria Kiwanuka], totally unafraid of politicians. But because perhaps she is affluent in her own right, so the choices she makes are not going to be affected negatively by what she has said. (MR. David February 2015)

Some women in public life were deemed as eloquent and good performers. When there is any issue to be discussed, they are the first choice for most talk show hosts. The same women thus tend to oscillate between various platforms.



Fig. 5.7: LCV chairperson, Kamuli district addressing People's Parliament in Kamuli, 2015

Among the women singled out as good performers in every interview is the former parliamentarian and Kamuli District Local Government V chairperson, Proscovia Salamu Musumba. She was considered one of the most articulate, with her performance while in Parliament matching that in the media. This was sometimes attributed to the fact that she is an opposition legislator (Forum for Democratic Change) and to her being unafraid of speaking her mind, having gone to Parliament on a constituency ticket rather than through affirmative action. Although she has lost many elections, she has always contested in direct elections. As such, there is the idea that there are exceptional women who are fit to be hosted:



In terms of discussing public affairs, three-quarters of the women we have there are going to be disasters on your show, and I'm not saying that men are better than them. Largely three-quarters of the fellows in that house won't make a good show and that is why they will always complain that some of us are always left out...But I can tell you amongst the women, you will have three-quarters of them you can't just host them. (MR. Shem February 2015)

To suggest that three-quarters of the women in Parliament cannot be hosted is a serious issue that requires better understanding of the determinants of participation and the nature of the media or programmes. According to several accounts both male and female respondents, women are poor performers; and this is discussed under constraints in Chapter Six. Many examples of women turning down opportunities to participate and being totally unavailable to media were common, contrary to the view that the media always excludes women. Although this explains the gender gap, the reasons for turning down these opportunities need to be interrogated further. There are too many value judgments based on the past and present performance of women. In the age of competition, the most important thing is being able to swing media viewership or listenership in a favourable direction.

#### **5.4.5. Producer and presenter: Power and decision-making**

Deciding who to be invited as a guest and choosing the topic fall within the purview of the producer and the presenter. Sometimes these two work together as a team. Still, the producers and presenters hold much power in determining the nature of the programme in terms of style, tone, subject and content. The skills of the producer and the presenter are more important in getting the public a 'good show' than they realise. In almost all the interviews, the presenters and producers saw a good show as being dependent on the guest. My observation and occasional comments from guests on the show indicate that the presenter's skill, in particular, is key. Specific show hosts were criticised by women for their style that did not permit an objective discussion of an issue. Many of the woman interviewed said that some of the shows were rather 'stale and boring'.

The networks of producers and presenters also play a huge part in deciding who gets invited to participate in the specific programmes. Presenters and producers may carry their own experiences and exposure into their decisions. To what extent are the producers' upbringing, gender and cultural beliefs likely to cloud their judgment regarding who is a suitable guest? What does it mean for a producer to hold the belief that public affairs is not for women? There is a whole culture among producers and presenters underpinning the attributes to seek in a

suitable guest, analyst, source or subject across the board, whether it is radio or television. This culture attaches great importance to inviting the powerful. In this scheme of things, the programme producers and presenters are the jury and the judge. The public affairs culture is that of power and dominance. This issue is further discussed in the section on cultural narratives in the next chapter.

Content analysis suggests that the gender of these key players matters. The shows with the highest participation by female guests were hosted by female presenters, and were also female-biased in terms of the entire media team. People's Parliament (NTV) hosted by Agnes Nandutu and Business Today (UBC) hosted by Harriet Atyang had good female appearances. In an interview with the hosts of Morning Breeze, they indicated that a particular woman refused to appear on their show to give insight into an issue that was making headlines within her jurisdiction. That very week, the same woman appeared on People's Parliament as an invited guest, to speak to the same issue. I must add, though, that it is likely that the gender of the host is not the only issue at play, but rather the objectives of the programme and the nature of the specific show in question, whether it is combative or cordial, as clearly Morning Breeze and People's Parliament vary significantly in style and tone, thus limiting comparison based on the host. Three of the female respondents also suggested that men prefer inviting men.

In lieu of the various determinants simultaneously interacting, it is difficult to say with conviction that the gender of the presenter is extremely important (clearly it is important) since the personality of the presenters and the show they have created, the issue for discussion or the topic (here discussed as a problem) and the politics of the day all matter significantly. It should, therefore, be noted that both People's Parliament and Business Today, in addition to having female hosts, are not too 'political' and the programme tone/style fairly cordial and discursive. Why gender matters, though, is that the rest of the programmes hosted and produced by men had dismal female participation, and largely by the same women.

#### **5.4.6. Profession: Training, occupation and position of guest in organisation**

The training, occupation and position in public office matters, although this did not come out explicitly in the interviews. As one programme host succinctly put it:

Participation also depends a lot on the players in the issues and so if we are going to discuss infrastructure like roads, e.g. the Katosi road scam, most of the players are men and so it's likely that we shall host only men who are either anti or pro. (MR. Paul February 2015)

If the topic revolves around male-dominated fields, it follows that the participants are going to be male. This theme of training, occupation and position of guest was prominent in all interviews. Moreover, government institutions also have specific people who can speak for them. Matters relating to ministries are handled through their spokespersons.

Content analysis of news and other public affairs programmes did indicate the dominant participants. The majority of those who participated were trained lawyers or were activists. Politicians were the majority participants because politics tended to dominate the discussion. Female participants were involved largely in discussing health, education and domestic violence. Gender as a subject, or women in general, minimally featured in discussions except when relating to affirmative action for women in politics or health care provision. To what extent are these genuine manifestations of the realities of everyday life? This calls for more interpretation in line with the education system and women's entry into public life.

#### **5.4.7. Personality: Pleasant, vibrant and charismatic**

This came out as a key determinant from observation and interviews. Several hosts admitted that they wanted a good show. The politics of the good show is embedded in the media-and-audience relationship. The questions they grapple with are: Does the public love/admire the guest? Does the guest have clout? Is the guest good at pulling crowds? Does the guest sound intelligent and is knowledgeable, charismatic, pleasant, endearing to the public, brave enough to speak their mind, and available? The respondents had their take on this issue very prominently:

If I am throwing a guest on to the seat, I don't want my audience to reach for the remote, I want them there because I am selling to them a product which they are going to enjoy. And so usually if I am choosing a guest for the current affairs show, it's two things, i.e. personality: do you have a personality that somebody in their sitting room is going to say – eh, that is so and so, what is she or he saying? Two, it's the issue. So if I can get a personality that can combine both issue and presence, that's good and then how do they present? The issue may be very hot but you are unable to put it across to the audience, however good you are, then we may just get a clip – I will send a camera team or a voice team if I am on radio, they will come to you, record a clip of two or three minutes, I edit it and use that in the show. (MR. Paul February 2015)

The power of the presenter and the producer is hereby manifested, and came through several interviews. The public are the invisible determinant of the personalities to watch, while the presenter and the producer act on their cue about intended guests. It is clear that there are many

women holding positions that should determine their participation, yet they are not visible on air. In 2015 it was suggested that more women hold portfolios with more money than men, as the newspaper article below suggests.



Fig. 5.8: A June 13th 2015 article suggesting women are more powerful in government

Again, the names of several people were mentioned, including heads of government institutions and ministers who were impossible to engage on television or radio over accountability because of their personalities, despite their knowledge of their subjects or because they did not want to be questioned. Most of these are based on assumptions of what media people think the audience wants, but also driven by viewership and listenership ratings by the Uganda Communications Commission, which do not indicate gender though. What also came out prominently is that when women are accounting officers, they may be questioned rigorously.

This character and personality standard that is presented as extremely important for the show appears to be rigorously observed for women and less so for men. One could argue that there were many male guests who did not meet this personality standard but who nevertheless returned often to the screens or on air. I arrive at this analysis based on the various anecdotes about the women my respondents suggested did not pass the personality test and those who did, vis-à-vis the males who were not too different from these women, but somehow returned to the shows. The most important dilemma is why few women participate when the

determinants of participation appear to be gender-neutral on the surface. Given women's high participation in Ugandan public life, it is illogical that very few women should participate. The answer may lie in some of the nuances picked up in this presentation, and women's experiences with the media.

#### ***5.4.8. Policy: Media house editorial policies and government policy***

What came out prominently in both the media and women's interviews was the issue of policy, albeit from different perspectives. The media addressed government policies such as affirmative action as a hindrance to participation for most women, while the women considered media house policies and editorial policies, their lack or absence as major hindrances, too. The women also considered policies like affirmative action to have opened up space for women to participate in public life, hence their representation on media, broadening the problematic representation of affirmative action to include the problem of politics.

I would talk about would be the government policies (among) which led to the establishment of the gender studies and department in Makerere and I was among the first people who did this course and by the time I did it, it was referred to as women studies and they were not thinking about it from a gender perspective. So government policy is something for me to think about. I think also the government policy has ensured that as women, we can talk about this issue of recognising that women can be able to play a role. We have actually ended up being a promoter of this government policy and specifically on gender issues. They started it with a 1.5 points at Makerere and by the time they brought it of course I had finished but in essence, it led to the establishment of the women studies and the department where I ended up studying...I left to do my doctorate, which led me to this university. (FR. Marilyn May 2015)

Affirmative action has thus opened up space and, paradoxically, also closed it in many instances. Media house policy is a significant determinant of women's participation, as the case of Mama FM shows. Faced with similar challenges of participation in public affairs programmes by women, UMWA promptly developed a policy that dictates that there must be a female voice on every programme, if not secured through it coming to the studio, then through the media going out to seek out the voice. It means that there has been no trickle down in terms of a robust participation of women in other areas.

In practice, little, if any, gender neutrality characterises participation in the shows. Once the various determinants, often working together, are taken holistically, they create a complex web of cultures that are essentially difficult for women to penetrate. The problem is that most media players seem unaware of their own gendered lenses, hence the implicit biases against women

as participants. In the end, close reading of the text reveals stereotypes and biases that inform the decisions of the media players. The subtext is woven around a clear reproduction of cultural narratives that justify women's media participation marked by under-representation, limited interaction and disengagement from the media. These are demonstrated by conversational narratives in interviews, addressed under constraints on women's media participation.

### **5.5. Application of Theory**

The theoretical implication is that the media has its own culture. Any form of gender requirement is a diversion. The nature of the public sphere itself imposes limitations on citizen participation, especially women. I hope I have succeeded slightly in raising the threshold for the conversation on women's empowerment and hindrances to women's participation in the media. I wish to widen the scope of debate on women and the media in Uganda and beyond, from representation to how women interact and engage with the media. As long as the focus remains on the media's portrayal of women, the puzzle will remain unresolved. The claims of normative theory, in particular the social responsibility theory and the democratic participant theory, fall flat in the attempt to understand public affairs. The public sphere is no space for equal participation. As far as understanding meaning and power structures within these programmes are concerned, critical theory does support some of the narratives here relayed, but remain inadequate.

### **5.6. Chapter Conclusion: Power and Dominance in Public Affairs**

The chapter is a presentation of findings, discussion and interpretation laced together. It is apparent that women will participate in some types of shows and not others. There are many determinants of participation. Overall, the nature of public affairs programming is key. Where programmes are defined as moving on a continuum from cordial to combative, women are attracted to programmes that are cordial, and are indifferent to those that fall between cordial and combative, and are repulsed by combative programmes. The nature of the programme production is important. This is not to say that special programmes for women should be devised, but that there is need for balance in programme tone, style of host, content subjectivity or objectivity, and type of participants. Shows that appear to be male-dominated attract fewer women, who end up exhibiting male characteristics themselves.

The interviews, content analysis and observations while watching and listening to these programmes were indicative of what the determinants of participation are, but say little as to why few women fit the bill in participatory public affairs programming, given their numbers. Is it possible that few women have the desired determinants, which is why these programmes are dominated by men? These important descriptive findings do not tell us concretely why few women in public life participate in public affairs programming concretely but paint a broad picture. The interpretation of the specific determinants does give a sense of what accounts for minimum women's participation. But the determinants do raise a number of important questions from a feminist thought perspective and understanding of the public sphere theory: Who has power? How do they use it to mobilise against feminism and gender activism?

In the next chapter, more attention is paid to the 'why' question, tackling constraints on participation. Combining programming that is largely combative and determinants that are gender-blind has implications for women's participation. The lesson is that nothing is as it seems. I discuss the underlying factors in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **FINDINGS TWO**

#### **‘INVITED TO THE KING’S TABLE’: CONSTRAINTS ON WOMEN’S MEDIA PARTICIPATION IN UGANDA**

##### **6.1. Chapter Introduction**

The chapter attempts to answer the question: Why do fewer women in public life participate in the mass media’s political and public affairs programmes? Through the lens of the media as a mirror of society, real progress for women is seen to be very limited. The media manifests limited visibility and voice of women in public affairs programming. While discussing the determinants, the media appeared gender-neutral and, therefore, could not explain the gap in representation, interaction and engagement. There are three main factors which explain this minimal representation that fall within three institutional categories: the state; society; and the media. The findings in this chapter are derived from interviews with men and women in the media, as well as women in public life, covering the first phase (interviews with men and women in the media) and the third phase (interviews with women in public life) of the study. Analysis is based on themes and narratives derived from the interviews. In both phases, the issues were strikingly the same. Again, gender of respondent is differentiated by MR for male respondent and FR for female respondent. The names are anonymised.

##### **6.2. The State: Empowerment or Disempowerment of Women?**

Policies that pursued women’s empowerment and gender equality were seen as an impediment to women’s participation in the media’s public affairs programming. Affirmative action was seen as hindering women’s progress, politics as an impediment to their independence and public administration as a vehicle for manipulation. The state is considered as opening up avenues for women’s empowerment, and ironically disempowering them. The culture of the state and sub-cultures can empower or disempower women in public life. Three themes emerge in the discussion of the state and its contribution to women’s participation in public life, in particular how the state silences women’s voice and renders them invisible in the media.



### 6.2.1. Policy and progress: Affirmative action gone wrong?

The major point of entry for women into the public arena, in particular politics, is the affirmative action policy. Uganda is considered one of the most successful countries in implementing this quota system (Mukama 2002). A surprising finding of this study was the revelation that affirmative action did not meaningfully advance women's participation in public affairs programming owing to the loopholes of the 'policy' framework for addressing issues of 'competence' when it comes to media civic engagement. There was a reference to 'affirmative action gone wrong'. The question of affirmative action and its effectiveness continues to be asked, as the commentary below, written in 2015, at the time of the study, suggests.



Fig. 6.1: Another 13 June 2015 article questioning the relevance of women MPs

Many respondents suggested that women largely perform very poorly in comparison to men and are, therefore, left out of conversations because, for the most part, they soar on the wings of affirmative action. It was argued that:

The majority of women are not coming [to talk shows] perhaps because they are protected. Majority of women want to go for the special seat [affirmative action]. Some are not directly competing with the men, because the ones that are competing with the men access the media airwaves more. (MR. David February 2015)

The key issue was that, when invited to talk shows, women largely performed poorly. Performance, as noted earlier, is a key determinant of participation. The respondents suggested that there was a disconnect between the notion of affirmative action and how it had been practised, favouring powerful elite women. The shortcomings of affirmative action appear to perpetuate gender inequality and disempower women in public life even more. Many respondents suggested a time frame for allowing women to benefit from affirmative action or even disbanding the policy altogether. The challenge of affirmative action in politics had long been noted. It was viewed as having the potential to be used to silence, co-opt and create new dependencies for women, and this study only confirms this. Many scholars have made this point (Tripp 2000; Tamale 1999; Lakwo 2006). However, its impact on women's participation in the media had been subtle.

Whereas affirmative action was considered a problem in most of the media interviews with both men and women, the issue was put in perspective by women in public life. Affirmative action is premised on the idea that women lack access and that given access, they will become 'experts' in public life, leadership and governance, when, evidently, more is needed to make this legislative framework have 'teeth'. The lack of access is compounded by numerous factors, including the hegemonic nature of patriarchy that a policy like affirmative action does not by itself address. One female academic had this to say:

The women who are in politics, most of them are there by virtue of the auspices of the NRM government. And we also know, that by that, they need to be careful of what they say, lest they will not go back the next time because Uganda, we don't like opposition, we are not used to it, we are not accommodating it. It's hardly accommodated. [...] the more freedom there is in the nation, the more likely the media is to be free, and probably the more likely the women are to be free. [...] I think they cannot speak because their mouths are muzzled by the institutions to which they belong. They cannot criticize the institutions that made them. And I think we need to be very careful. We shouldn't blame the policy, we should blame the context in which we are. I said the level of freedom, the level of democracy in a particular country, has implications for freedom of speech. And what freedom of speech do they have? Ugandan democracy is calculated democracy. And we need to accept that. We shouldn't pretend about it. It is democracy to the extent that you don't oppose me. (FR. Marylin May 2015)

Several issues emerge in this submission. One, the role of the NRM in giving women power, even as it silences their voices. It is this silencing that is responsible for women not speaking out, or turning down opportunities to participate in public debates and dialogue. On a broad

level, the nature of democracy and the extent to which citizens practise free speech is a more critical factor when women's participation is addressed. Policies like affirmative action could be double-edged, given that it only provides women with the opportunity to be seen (visible) rather than to be heard (voice), especially on critical issues of public interest. The issue of context was succinctly advanced. From the above insight, the issue is bigger than just loopholes in a policy such as affirmative action. The impact of the policy is also limited, as this media manager argues:

In truth, we have the policies, beautifully written! In truth, have the laws, well-articulated and we even have women scattered across the political social and economic, cultural spectrum but when you come to what a social movement is supposed to achieve and the aims of a genuine gender mainstreamed society, you don't see that. If you see the speaker of parliament and you count the head of URA, KCCA and UNRA, to what extent are they a representation of women and how do their roles reflect the achievements of the women movement in the society? I would rather not look at the top because I think the top is vulnerable to tokenism, it's much easier to pick out a woman and appoint them, it's much easier to find an educated woman anywhere. (MR. Charlie, interview 2015)

The link to failure by women to participate in public dialogue on mediated platforms is not very obvious. The real problem with affirmative action is that it shifted the empowerment of women to a higher pedestal, making it accessible to only a few women, who must toe the line. It also perpetuated the 'women are weak' and 'women are not made for public life' narrative, the consequence of which is dependence on affirmative action to access political participation. This dependence, in turn, has made women afraid of speaking on issues of policy. "Women fear controversy," I was told, or their political career will be over. As such, women shun public affairs programmes, the arena where matters of policy are discussed, and accountability demanded. The media has been seen as the problem and in discussing the determinants of participation, cases where the media structure is problematic have also been pointed out. However, it is clear that women contribute towards this under-representation, too, by refusing to participate when invited.

Many women in public life admitted to the limitations of affirmative action in interviews. The evidence of this effect was overwhelming, fuelled by the debate on the relevance of women MPs, given their perceived weak performance. The Uganda Law Society (ULS) also proposed to the parliamentary committee handling the constitution and electoral reforms that the affirmative action policy be abolished. This proposal by the ULS was not necessarily their

position, but one that emerged through their research across Uganda, from different communities, owing to a lack of understanding of the role of women in Parliament and their perceived lack of relevance.<sup>15</sup> Critics argued that affirmative action urgently needs a review, that something has gone wrong with it.

The ULS was just one of many sections of Ugandans who questioned the relevance of affirmative action. Newspaper reports openly called for its review, although its proponents called such proposals unfair and retrogressive, demanding 50-50 representation instead. Other women remain vocal, and these, it was argued, continue to be taught lessons by the regime, because they have ‘gone astray’. Others have been wooed back from the opposition into government and appointed ministers. These have become strong voices for President Museveni and the NRM in general.

Without addressing issues of affirmative action, which have been raised in a large body of scholarly work, women will continue to fear interaction and engagement with the media, and as such remain under-represented. This is not to blame women, but to underscore and answer the question as to why few women’s voices are heard on critical matters, and why their visibility is limited. Besides the paucity of invitations, it also means that where women are engaged, they are not making news. Those who get covered are covered largely by virtue of their positions, and they have to be covered anyway. So they may not engage with any programme, but they are subjects of discussion. The First Lady, Janet Museveni, was on a number of occasions a topic on a show.

### ***6.2.2. Politics and patronage: Promises un-kept?***

The limitations of the affirmative action policy must be framed within the political system, current political climate and patronage. Issue was taken with how the promotions of women appear to be conducted, on the basis of ‘know-who’ rather than integrity, qualification and merit. Ironically, most of the women are highly educated, although this view has persisted. The NRM was considered the women’s promoter and problem all at once. According one show host:

Majority of the women that you have in Parliament are supporters of the ruling party [NRM]. [...] Many of them are not willing to come and articulate the

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<sup>15</sup> In an interview with Ruth Ssebatindira, then president of the ULS, it was a position that their research had picked up rather than the position being their own.

positions of their party. In their hearts, they are against the positions, so they fear. That's one of the biggest challenges. You speak to someone in confidence they tell you 'I am also against that position, but if I come and say it on air that will mark the end of my career in politics.' (MR. Shem February 2015)

If women's participation is examined in isolation from the nature of politics, it is possible to blame affirmative action alone. As has been noted in the section on affirmative action, the nature of the freedom enjoyed and the democratic system matters. The subject of patronage in Uganda as a problem for women's political effectiveness is old. It is argued that there is the systemic failure across institutions of accountability to make the state answer for its gender equity commitments, but also with regard to how different parts of the state monitor and hold other parts accountable. 'Political institutions can have strong gender biases which undermine the impact of women's voice and presence in public office' (Goetz 2003, p. 73). This lack of political effectiveness is what has been transplanted into the media, accounting for the underrepresentation of women in public affairs. The hosts and producers of all programmes in all media types faced similar challenges when it came to the inclusion of women in public affairs programmes.

The majority of media practitioners do not feel a responsibility towards women's empowerment and gender equity, both with regard to the employment of women and the advancement of women's interests. According to them, it is merit and good performance as well as 'good journalism' that count. Many of the women interviewed in the media said that once they were good at their job they faced no difficulty in getting promoted. Many reporters indicated that women's issues were not in their 'driving mirror', and that there was nothing peculiar to women.

The state has used affirmative action to enable women to participate in politics, but does the state have any capacity to enforce commitments to gender equity within the media in a neoliberal era? The credibility of female politicians is in doubt, although this could apply to male politicians too. The politics of intolerance to dissenting views implies that few women are likely to make progress in politics as independent or opposition politicians. Their survival depends on the regime. Some men have also become subject to this political shortcoming. Critics argue that the aspirations of the political revolution of the NRM have evaporated. Men and women must find intelligent ways of surviving. In this system, women are far less likely to survive outside the state patronage system than men. Affirmative action is the sure way

through which women's political career survives. Those who exhibit independence are fought and thrown out of the system.

While affirmative action must be framed within the political system, participation in mediated forms such as radio and television needs to be framed generally rather than specifically for women. As Frederick Golooba-Mutebi (2004, pp. 301-03) points out, 'In a context where political culture dictates obedience and deference towards people in positions of power and authority, years of oppressive rule have rendered avoidance of politics the sensible way to ensure personal safety and survival.' Three decades of the NRM in power have ensured mostly women's complete loyalty to the NRM, since they are unable to survive outside it.

### ***6.2.3. Public administration: Women invited to the king's table***

The climb to top positions is largely as a result of strong networks, patronage and sectarian tendencies that are prevalent in the state. The image of women as being used to purge the civil system of those opposed to the state, particularly in strategic state agencies or those who might be easy to manipulate, is deeply entrenched. Some claims may be untrue, which speaks to a more nuanced problem, i.e. the view that when women become part of the decision-making body they lose themselves. They are invited to the king's table and must behave, as one woman argued:

I think we enter there at a price – and this price is definitely to dance to the tune they set for us and there are very few women who strike out there ...and these women come out as even for us women ourselves, come out as quite not like us. [...] And you don't want to be controversial in a situation where you are negotiating your place to partake of this big thing which the men are sharing. So they end up really betraying themselves. [...] Everything is a gesture – everything is symbolic – but not fully dressed in the garb of the woman. So I think – um – the ideological thing is our own, even as women ourselves, our own self-image of ourselves – um – since this patriarchy has gone on for such a long time. It takes quite a while and it must be sustained by concerted and continuous never relenting stream of activities. To be able to reach the level where we can, we can say yeah, I am happy to be a woman and I will camp here on my term as a woman – and behave as a woman. Otherwise if it is done at the level it is being done, you are invited to come to a table – yes, and ...when you now come, you come as a visitor and you have to behave the way the host wants you to behave, and when you behave differently, you can be easily ejected. (FR. Denise February 2015)

Although few women are heading strategic government institutions, in the civil service their presence remains thin. The notion of being invited to the king's table at which one must observe

table manners speaks to the expectations foisted on women when they are given top positions in the state bureaucracy. However, other respondents also considered the participation of women at the top level as an imperfect measure of achievements for women – ‘the women have made it’ narrative’. One must look at the mirror of society, which is the media, and the bottom of society where the policies that matter to the ordinary elite come to bear fruit and produce actionable objectives. It was argued that no matter how restrictive a society is, exceptional people will shoot through, making the perceived achievements that women have made illusionary. One media manager remarked:

What you see in the media are powerful women but who do not reflect the women’s movement; you see powerful women who do not reflect the essence of gender equality; you see powerful women who have made it simply because they are exceptional or they happened to be at the right place and at the right time or because we are using them to continue to perpetuate a situation that enables us not to attempt to solve the major issues. We sort of try to use them that way for our own convenience and for the convenience of the society. The women that you see in public functions, the women that you see in leadership positions are not doing it as part of a mainstream recognition of the women’s role in the society. They are doing it as part of the benefits of that short sharp achievement of the ‘90s that brought in a few individual beneficiaries into public life and so when you look back, they are not representative of the social movement but rather people who took benefit of what happened in the ‘90s. That there was an opening up and a few people managed to slip through into public life and they stayed there and, if anything, some of them work very hard to make sure that they stay not as representatives of the movement but stay in order to reap the benefits. (MR. Charlie, interview 2015)

The image of women in public life, particularly those who hold high positions, as ‘being used’ was quite dominant. The explanation for this narrative about women who belong to a certain network closely linked to State House is still unclear. Some specific names continued to appear along with these accusations and, unfortunately, none of these women were available to participate in the research, or to clarify issues, citing their busy schedules. It is thus difficult to put these issues into perspective. The respondents asked why the same women appeared to be recycled into different positions, and why some new ones belong to one or two networks of the NRM cadres.

Women’s loyalty and allegiance to the state and its bureaucracy produce various levels of collaboration between women in civil society and the women’s movement, women in the media and women in politics. It does appear, thus, that the state has unwittingly disempowered

women, whose visibility on media remains minimal and their voice rare, and whose image is damaged. Those in civil society are accused of being co-opted and those in government of refusing to engage with feminism and activism. In the end, what counts is who is in the loop of the state. State culture and its sub-cultures in policy, politics and public administration, or bureaucratic practices, account for whether women will have effective representation, interaction and engagement.

### **6.3. Society: Culture and the Failure of a Social Revolution**

Most of the structures and systems of women's oppression remain deeply rooted in society. There were signs of a social revolution in the offing, the fruits of which had become visible. Yet, the hype around women's empowerment is now lukewarm. I was often told that gender is no longer the 'thing' that sells, that there is no longer money in gender, that it is a failed social revolution that has left patriarchy and male dominance to thrive. Nowhere is this more visible than on public affairs programmes. One respondent noted that when it comes to politics and business shows, that is when you wonder: "Are there women in this world?" Issues revolve around patriarchy, gender roles and perception.

#### ***6.3.1. Patriarchy: Of male dominance, women's weakness***

In examining the media and women's participation in public affairs programming, there was agreement that real constraints on women's participation in public affairs programming remained ingrained in the patriarchal nature of society. With regard to most of the women interviewed, society has put them in a place where they are the needy ones, and society calls them the special group. For most men, some things are not meant for women – it is as simple as that. These views represent many:

We cannot be shy to acknowledge that we are dealing with a patriarchal society of many years. ...Reliance on primary instincts in a society like ours will always make men more dominant since it's a patriarchal society. And so women will go to institutions that are more organized like in the corporate world, like in banks, law firms, and do very well there. Public life is a hustle, and thus women will prefer to stick to the corporate world. (MR. Paul February 2015)

The idea that public life is too much of a hustle for women, and that the higher they go the more overwhelmed they become, permeated every interview. What is clear, even in literature, is that 'the rules, structures, and practices continue to promote existing political and social interests, making it difficult for women to realise their interests' (Tripp 2000, p. 219). The other



issue closely tied to patriarchy is that women have low economic power compared to men and are seriously constrained by it. They may fail to appear for a programme because they cannot afford transport. The reality of the media in Uganda is that it is commercial and competitive. The people invited must be good already, not needing to be made by the media.

The issue of sexuality as a deterrent to women's participation in programmes was evident. In one programme I observed,<sup>16</sup> I witnessed sexual harassment. One day in the studio, as we sat in various positions, mostly on the floor, the one on the microphone was a lady. One man passed by and touched her inappropriately. She said on air that she was married and did not want to be touched. The producer immediately went into a commercial break. Then the men were up on their feet, speaking at once – not blaming the man but the woman who had complained of a violation. They harassed her and said the programme was not for women. The host came through, and also blamed her for using the 'wrong forum'. I sat there and simply watched the drama.

The scenario I witnessed had been happening before. I had written notes about it in previous shows. Surprisingly, the other women's response to the issue when I engaged them after the show evinced little sympathy. The dynamics of a political talk show are many and more complex in the case of an audience discussion. After two weeks, the woman in question did not return. I could not find her for an interview.

### ***6.3.2. Gendered roles: Women, family and domestic roles***

The nature of the education and professional training or practice of women was a big indicator of whether they were going to be in the media or not. Society and culture have assigned women the responsibility of looking after the family. They carry out this role even when in public life. The understanding within the media was that women must be excused when it comes to appearing on public affairs programmes, because they have families and the programmes run late. In all interviews with the women, they traced their success to their families. There was always something about 'my father used to tell us this'; 'my mother encouraged us to do this', and 'our parents ingrained in us principles of equality right from when we were children'; 'if it were not for my husband'; etc. Family played a big role, so where coverage appeared to

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<sup>16</sup> Observation field notes (May 2015).

interfere with their family, few women would engage. Men made no complaints about the timing of the shows, and rarely turned down opportunities to participate.

In a strange way, there was sympathy towards the women who have children to attend to. So they cannot be invited when programme time is late. One talk host said this:

Sincerely, since I started I do not remember having received any phone call from a lady. At that time, I am thinking maybe that is when *women are busy with the children*, at work [...] but then again, what are the men doing? That is an issue that I will never understand. (FR. Hellen February 2015)

Another talk show host also made similar points, confirming that women get busy with children as men do 'other things'. He relates these views to himself:

I don't have to pick up at school usually. And if I pick from school and drop, I won't have to tuck them, I don't have homework to do, all those – you have the women, being fair really. My friend [...] usually tells me, she leaves Parliament, she is racing to Entebbe road and she needs to see her children before they go to bed and I want her on television for a talk show that begins after the prime news, 10.00 pm. She says, 'I don't think I am being fair to my children.' So it's very unlikely that during the school time, you will have her, same as the 7 o'clock show on radio. Somehow the time that – while a lot of men are rushing to the bars and sports clubs, the women will be in the wheel driving home or racing home and this is the nature of our society. Somehow, *the mother is the matriarch at home and she needs to go there and watch over*. It's a lot easier for women who have weaned off their children. (MR. Paul 2015)

During school time, women in public life should be 'understood' if they cannot come to the show. Others suggested that maybe public office is good for those who have weaned off their children because most women use their families as an excuse not to appear on a programme, even when invitations to such programmes are not common. One women told me that every time she agrees to appear in a news segment, the editors are very happy and want the discussion to take place in the early part of the news, because it is rare to have women. Some women may agree but then not show up without offering an explanation.

There was agreement among producers, presenters and hosts as to the difficulty in getting educated women to speak up and how women in the villages are usually willing to speak out. The working class women were considered a lot more difficult because they fear their employers. However, women who work with NGOs were considered different – readily available and responsive. This could be as a result of government policy which dictates that information about certain institutions can only be given by specific people, who most times are men. In the content analysis, the women visible on programmes were mainly women in civil

society (activists) and lawyers, who dominated appearances as analysts, subjects and sources. A number of the prominent women are lawyers by training.

### **6.3.3. Perception: Stereotypes and labels**

There was also a general perception that women lack confidence, character and competence. Women face challenges as a result of these perceptions and stereotypes. These perceptions also impact on their performance. One programme manager's perception captures a lot:

*They prefer to be morale boosters. Even in Parliament, you watch it live, you see many of them cheering. How many of them are going to stand up to speak? How many of them are going to stand up and speak? I think those are some of the biggest hindrances to women, why they do not effectively engage with the media because the media has its formulas for choosing people, unless maybe it is like Mama FM which is specifically for women issues, but if it is a commercial radio station that is going to run shows that are going to compete, you are going to find yourselves not being fair to them. You are going to find yourself in that position. (MR. Shem 2015)*

Another respondent, a female producer, was more specific:

*If you do a general thing of participating, they participate a lot in sending greetings, in calling back on music programmes on radio, they ring us, but when it comes to serious issues, you have a political talk show; you have a business talk show, that's where you will wonder, are there women in this world? But also as women we do not bother to study a lot, to do research, we are not interested in internal affairs. There are women who watch soaps, but when it comes to news... (FR. Dina 2015)*

Strong perceptions exist as to what women like when it comes to media participation and elsewhere, say in Parliament. They can participate but not in serious issues. It is less an issue of participation than that of what to participate in. The other perception that came out strongly was that women do not have clear convictions and commitments. Women's credibility as good leaders were doubted, owing to the perception that they get jobs because of their connections at State House or because of where they come from. Some programmes are designed to include women without strong opinions, who cannot appear on the other serious and critical shows. This implies that when a show is considered as serious and critical, women are excluded. Women were against this kind of programming that perpetuates the notion that they are shy, weak-minded, have no opinion and lack confidence. Mostly, the perceptions reinforced

stereotypes, yet they were offered as key explanations for the lack of women's participation in these media programmes.

#### **6.4. The Media: Reproducing Cultural Narratives**

It was evident, in both the interviews and observation, that the public sphere is a men's domain. Women have either voluntarily excluded themselves, or the media actors have excluded them. Media culture, with its own talk show and programming sub-cultures, accounts for a great deal of the gender gaps in participation. The media poses challenges in three areas: the media structure and the nature of programmes; interactions with civil society and the feminism discourse; and the reproduction of cultural narratives.

The media could champion gender equality and women's empowerment in the Beijing Platform of Action, it was argued. The BPfA notes that 'Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women' (UN 1996, p. 133). Specific actions were identified. The research findings suggest that this optimism largely remains a potential. Most media houses have tried inclusion, and sometimes failed. The narrative for a long time has been that the media marginalises women, gives them little and/or negative coverage, and marginally consults them as sources (Tamale 1999; Mukama 2002; Nassanga 1997). In short, the media is to blame. To what extent and how is the media to blame?

##### ***6.4.1. Media structure and programmes***

Women in public life elude the media or allow their male deputies, who in turn are considered strong, to speak for them, it was revealed. It was interesting to hear both female and male media practitioners express their own disappointment with women in public life. A number of these views demonstrate that, contrary to the popular view that women are excluded by the media and marginalised, some women in public life exclude themselves while some of them placed, 'albeit indirectly', the blame on themselves, indicating that they sought merit, salability, competence, charisma and confidence, which inexperienced women lacked. They do little to attract desirable coverage, and rarely contact the media for engagement. Yet, many men invite themselves to programmes while women, when invited, either turn down the opportunity or simply do not show up at the appointed time. In short, women disappoint the media.

For some respondents, it boiled down to women not perhaps having that many viewpoints, which explains why there are fewer women being invited to be part of public affairs

programmes. The media sticks to specific women who are considered vibrant. Not even the women's radio is spared, as it, too, struggles to get women to participate in the programmes that target women and especially political programmes. One of the programme managers asserted:

It has really been hard convincing women to come and talk about those things, like the political issues. [...] it is still a challenge up to now, because most of our programmes even when people are participating, *it's the men who call in, women do not call* [...] Even if you invite some for the political talk show, they decline [...] 'now what will my neighbour say', 'you know my husband does not support that thing'. [...] yes they decline. (FR. Carla February 2015)

In spite of the challenges emanating from the women's side, the culpability of the media was evident. One female producer expressed her utmost frustration with women, but placed the responsibility on the media. Why do women shy away from the media?

*Women are always being put in the negative.* You are looking into them if they are having extramarital affairs, whether they are sleeping with so and so. Sometimes we stigmatise them. So by the time you call her to come, already she is stigmatised. ... How do you bring the same woman to talk serious issues? I think all those things somehow, though we think they do not impact on us, even if you are not doing it at the end of the day, all women are somehow affected in one way or the other. *They keep bringing us down*, especially in the entertainment side, women have chosen to really water down women. (FR. Dina February 2015)

While admitting the refusal of women to participate, women in the media put the blame on the media which is male-dominated and does not try hard enough to find 'good', fresh women. They claimed that sometimes a woman is tried once and then 'sent back to the dungeons'.

Competition is also a major issue. The producers are driven by the need to keep viewership and listenership high. The nature of the media is such that it is market-driven. Sometimes every media house is scrambling for the best. The perception is that men are much more eloquent.

Not a single male respondent saw the media as being problematic, while some women did. The media is improving overall, though. Many media houses have family programmes and women-specific programmes, and feature women leaders, though rarely in current and public affairs segments. Special programmes are like newspapers, where women are relegated to special pages (Tamale 1999). Yet, women were blamed for disengaging from the media. Indeed, women said they were not media people and that they preferred not to be part of it, instead preferring to guard their private lives jealously. Dealing with the media is difficult for women in public life, and is considered a major challenge.

#### ***6.4.2. Media interaction with civil society and feminist discourse***

Women's agenda has largely been driven by gender-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Uganda. Mary Ssonko Nabacwa (2011) argues that these NGOs may seek to maximise their interests in their relationship with the state and the donors. Some respondents argued that there is nothing peculiar about women and the media because Uganda is not like the Nordic countries where there is a specific focus on women, the disabled and children. There are issues marked as women's issues for which women may be targeted as guests, say around Women's Day. Those who participate will largely come from civil society, and may pay for appearances.

It is argued that 'many Ugandan women face the dual challenge of engagement in political life while maintaining loyalty to women's causes, which may be at odds with government goals' (Tripp 2000, p. 25). This was found to be true of women's engagement with the media. The perceived death of *Kamwokya* Women's League, that represented the women's movement, according to these respondents, and always produced a woman of prominence in public affairs, coupled with a lack of mentorship and change in the strategies of women's organisations, was blamed for limited progress. The few women who rise up get so committed to trying to prove their effectiveness that they have no time left for women in society.

Part of the real problem is the idea of feminism and its roots in the western world. During the first phase of data collection, I set out to interview the producers and hosts of media programmes selected. The majority of them turned out to be men. It was difficult to convince some of the men to give me an interview because most of them insisted I should talk to women. I had to persuade them, and insist. The existence of the word 'women' in my thesis title had rendered my study a feminist endeavour that most men felt they had nothing to do with. Some men still 'switch off' in the face of gender or feminist talk. I was often labelled a feminist, and told that feminism is a western idea and not for 'good women' in mild jokes. One respondent urged me:

We need to also question, where is this thing of our marginalisation is coming from...Is this thing really an African frame or it's something that we have now appropriated as if it is in our African culture. [...] Although the decision-making may be made later on by a certain category of people, the platform is given for everybody to speak if you want; the women also are part of these groups. When the village woman can speak in this platform, so what happens to the educated

woman who is supposed to be even more equipped to speak, in the public forum? (FR. Denise February 2015)

It is evident that although things have changed, the ideas of gender and women's role in society have not evolved much. The expectations of women and women's response to them remain culturally and traditionally anchored, as well expressed by one woman involved in education:

I think there is a sense in which they use the traditional modes of understanding of a woman to write their stories. And the traditional mode is that she is a wife, she has to be faithful, she has to be beautiful. [...] The challenge is, most of the women who are in public life have already outlived those traditional roles and traditional presentation of a woman. So they will not auger well with the media. In fact they will repel, they will repel it. And that is why when they are reporting about them, they report – that's my analysis now – from the wrath point of view. And by the wrath point of view, I mean from the negative point of view. (FR. Marylin May 2015)

It was suggested that the media reports about women from the traditional point of view. The expectations of women in public life remain anchored in their traditional roles, and this failure of understanding makes journalists misrepresent women in public life. Uganda demonstrated strong leadership of the women's movement that negotiated for women's place in public life and provided notable women trailblazers. The challenge is to desist from using exceptional women or those with greater connections to power, to conclude whether women have made real progress or not, as has been pointed out before. The women's movement was considered far weaker than a decade before, and also responsible for the scorn poured on the idea of feminism. Activists in the women's movement were negatively perceived.

When most women gained higher status, such as winning seats in the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), governments, the Parliament of Uganda and cabinet, allowed the organisations that gave birth to their public life to die. These organisations were the springboard for many women except for a few who came from the corporate world and education. International policies had positively impacted on the women's movement in Uganda. For instance:

After Beijing, everyone in Uganda was sharply focused on gender. We had millions of gender-focused programmes, and we even started a gender department at the university [Makerere] and it received a lot of positive funding.... But apart from that we also had a very well-focused, strong personality-led civil society organisations that were gender focused. (MR. Charlie, interview 2015)

Yet, gender mainstreaming was deemed no longer the driving force in institutions, including Makerere University, its honorary birthplace, as if the spirit of feminism and women's movement had died. Has gender and feminism as a discourse lost its glory? This explains women's representation on media.

The constraints, as presented and discussed in this chapter, suggest that there is much work to do. More than ever, the conversation needs to be ongoing and on strategies that focus on dismantling the systems and structures of oppression. The media continues to hold the potential for change. There is need to interrogate current assumptions of marginalisation beyond their definitional origin in western tradition and literature. Perceived as an ill-intentioned western agenda, challenging existing traditions, the feminist discourse is a huge impediment to women's participation in the media in particular, and in public life in general.

Contrary to suggestions that gender is no longer the 'thing', the current arguments for women's lack of interest and low participation in current affairs programming are an indication of a deeper challenge for women. If the cultural narratives that emerged are anything to go by, then a lot of work has to be done, the conversation should continue involving men and women as well as policy-makers in continuous interaction and engagement.

#### ***6.4.3. (Re)producing cultural narratives in public affairs***

An analysis of the areas of public life to which participants belonged, and the topics discussed, revealed a heavy leaning towards politics and the economy. The narratives of media producers and presenters revealed the extent to which media workers may also carry cultural lenses that reinforce traditional gender constructions, which, in turn, hinder women's participation in public affairs programming. This section brings some of the perceptions about women in public life as reproduced by the media players from semi-structured interviews with the producers and presenters of selected programmes, and observation. The nature and structure of programmes, the players and the content all reproduce such narratives.

The common narrative today in Uganda is that women are doing well, and that they constitute more than 30% of the constitutional requirement for women in politics. Some commentators suggest that the political landscape has so changed that women almost dominate the public arena, in terms of how much public resources they control and the number of strategic government institutions they head.



From my research, the greater the number of women who occupy positions of power, the more entrenched the idea that some things are not for women has become. More women are now in the media, according various accounts in interviews, but few are engaged in political and public affairs programmes. Many more women are now in public life, but too few participate in these programmes. Numerous narratives emerged to explain the women's absence. Some narratives were typically anchored in stereotypes. The usual narratives of it were that the media programmes are a man's domain, and men are naturally gifted, trained or socialised for it. While the determinants for participation appeared gender-neutral and could not explicitly explain the absence of women on these programmes, the narratives are revealing. Without much classification, the narratives support the traditional views of women that women struggle with public life and fail to participate in the media because they lack the media participatory culture. Through the interviews, it emerged that four codes were dominant. These include confidence, competence, credibility and courage.

#### *The confidence code*

In explaining women's refusal to participate when invited to debate topical issues, the media explained that many women lacked the confidence needed to debate. These came through in various forms through the actual use of the word 'confidence' or its synonyms. It was surprising to learn that the producers and hosts of these programmes considered women to generally lack the confidence needed to participate in their programmes. The explanations ranged from the character of women to upbringing, the nature versus nurture debate. A female media manager noted that women still think that only politicians speak on radio:

I think we have also been brought up in Uganda as women, in that we are not as aggressive as women from other countries.... You do some studies and people will tell you that they do not also know that politics is also for women. [...] Actually I am doing an annual report and these are women saying, 'for me, I never thought I would talk on radio, *it's only politicians who talk on radio*, people who have money who can talk on radio but now, I am also talking on radio?' (FR. Mel March 2015)

Others are overburdened by public opinion based on their upbringing, as is noted by this female programme manager and presenter:

A woman, how do they see you debating? So if you grew up in that kind of nature definitely if they invite you for a talk show you will not be able to open

up freely. So I think it depends on upbringing, traditions. (FR. Carla, interview March 2015)

Two issues emerge in this submission. The first is that to be on radio, one must be aggressive, and the second is that women think that only politicians speak on radio. This means that such notions among women need to be demystified. The more problematic assumption in this area is that some producers thought women are not made for public affairs and politics is not a game for women. A talk show producer argued:

Let me assume that we have two rooms here today that has a fashion show and another a political show. The one that has fashion will be full of women and the other one will have only five. It's because *naturally when God was creating us, he didn't make women to be into public affairs*. But when it comes to fashion [...] they participate fully. Even if you go down and ask yourself how many women are involved in public affairs, very few, why? *It's not a game of women*. (MR. Mike 2015)

A good question to ask is if a producer truly believes, through their cultural lens or socialisation, that women are not made for public affairs, what are the chances that this producer will consider inviting women for his talk show? Could it be that when women refuse to participate, they are responding to such flawed beliefs? As if that is not enough, some of the presenters, all three of them female, said men are simply easy to deal with and that there are things that men do better than ladies. One female talk show host said:

I think *men are just easy to deal with*, they are more cooperative, and they are more open, compared to ladies. There are things that ladies are not ready to talk about. Sometimes you want someone to explain things using technical terms but *ladies will run away from them...* You will find most of the presenters are women, most of the people in the technical team are men, you enter control rooms and you find ten men, one lady, or five men and one lady, [...] I don't know if it is just my perception but *there are things that men do better than ladies*. We've had experiences even when you go to the field, and you want to talk to the market vendors, *ladies see cameras and they run away. They will not even allow you to take their pictures*. If you manage to get five men to talk, *if you manage to get just one lady, for gender balance*, then you are lucky. Others run away, others say they do not want to talk in English to the camera, but men you know, they do not care, they do not give a damn, they speak their broken English, they have nothing to lose – they are more open. (FR. Hellen 2015)

Serious points on confidence were raised in the above quotation but also in many other interviews. This view was corroborated by a male presenter, who said women are naturally shy:

Some *women are also naturally shy* because, for example, if I go to the village to investigate the cases, I go and meet all those whose names have been mentioned however far it is. So if I go to a lady and enquire about the issue, they will tell it when they are in a group but when you focus on a particular person and ask them, they will say ‘no, no, no, no...’. So the moment you turn the microphone and ask them to tell you more about what happened, ‘no, no, no, no’, so, she doesn’t, but some do. Now another issue is about fear. If someone is married, she fears that if her husband finds out that she was on TV that can bring problems. (MR. Daniel 2015)

Another female respondent concurred on the issue of confidence and fear:

Bosses do not want to employ women because *women we are slow*. ... and then *some have no confidence* in what they are doing. You may find someone fears to ask a question if she wants to get a story, or she wants to get information from someone. But for men at least for them they can ask, and pick what they want, but *we women fear*. ... going out there in the field, at least if you put on a trouser you can move very fast, at least you can get a story very fast, but you may find like I don’t put on trousers, yet I am supposed to get the stories. (FR. Rita February 2015)

When respondents talked of women being naturally shy, they often meant that women are by nature and in character shy. They thus lack the confidence to participate in critical programmes. The fear to participate was dominant, owing to culture or lack of competence, which is the next code. These narratives, it has to be noted, stem from a cultural view of women. The solution to this fear of participation, one respondent suggests, must include women taking action. She explains:

What women need to do, the trend has always been that the media will always look for you, you will be invited, for an interview. I think women need to invite themselves. (FR. Interview February 2015)

What is required to build confidence is to challenge the status quo, the traditional ways. Women need to show willingness and also to use the available space. They must, rather than wait to be invited to the king’s table, invite themselves. This is easy with interactive programmes, where they need not be consulted but can join the conversation anyway.

### *The competence code*

The suggestion that women are not competent and often lack personal convictions and commitment to public life were common. Women were accused of not effectively participating in Parliament and not being knowledgeable, which was mirrored in the media. The narratives

challenge the claim that capable women are everywhere. It is important to note that these are explanations for limited women's participation in public affairs programmes and excuses for rejecting inclusion. They could be speculative and perceptive rather than concrete facts, but they are also the media players' experiences. Why do they matter for women's participation? Do they explain the disempowerment of women in public life, an issue that featured prominently?

Some respondents saw women as not worthy of playing key public roles. These perceptions are troubling, as this producer suggests:

I have been in this industry for five years but you find the other problem with other women in Parliament, you find most of them who are in Parliament, it's their first time to be in Parliament and most of them it's their first time to be in a group of people and you find sometime the language barrier also brings a problem. (MR. Mike February 2015)

I asked the respondent what he meant by language barrier. His response suggested that perhaps only 2 % of women in Parliament could stand up and express themselves in public, even though they could write. He attributed their success in the elections to their use of indigenous languages during the campaigns. He justified his claim by pointing out that many women had never spoken since joining Parliament; so how can they participate in a debate? This doubt regarding competence is not limited to producers and presenters. Where female presenters are concerned, the guests invited to speak, as this anecdote demonstrates, also carry on the view of women as not capable of handling public affairs:

There was a scenario, there was a former minister who passed on sometime back. It had to do with World Food Day. When he saw me, he threw it straight in my face and said, 'What does this little girl know? *How can you give us nobody to interview us?*' in the presence of the person from World Food Programme who was going to be on the same platform as him. I felt small and stepped out of the visitor's lounge, but his secretary told me, 'Please never mind him, he always seems to be intimidating. Please do not mind him.' What I did is, I went and told the producer what had happened and my producer then said, 'We cannot make any changes, I know you can pull it off.' [...] So I get on set, and now because the minister, because of the questions I had prepared, he didn't know that I listen a lot and I pick up a follow-up question from the conversation I am having, [...] so I got him off guard. I didn't intend but for me it was learning, and I was enjoying the topic we were discussing. So when I ask him a question, he says, 'Maybe this question my colleague should be able to respond to it.' Now the gentleman from World Food Programme was able to respond. Then midway [through] the show, he pats me on the back and says, 'Very good

moderator.’ This was live on air. I left feeling that I needed to push harder, and I could do better. (FR. Suzie 2015)

In the above story, the host proved her worth. The minister was surprised by her knowledge, much as he had not expected it. The suggestions that women are born not for public affairs were backed by claims that they are not brought up for the same. Most of these claims have in the past been treated as mere stereotypes. I found that media professionals deeply believe them based on their experiences, and that women reinforce them. ‘Stereotyping means evaluating individuals on the basis of characteristics assumed to be shared by social groups, irrespective of the individual’s personal qualities, abilities or experiences’ (Norris 1997, p. 8). The problem with these stereotypes is that they are untrue, although the generalisation may be overstretched. These conversations depict how these stereotypes are fuelled and dominate the narratives:

The issue of competence involves performance. It was argued that the majority of women also performed poorly on programmes. A female presenter remarked:

If you are going to pick a teacher, a female teacher, who has never been on radio for one reason or the other, it will be a bit of a challenge. In most cases it takes a longer while for them to be comfortable, unlike the males. There are males that will come here, the first two seconds they will introduce themselves and then they are fine, they are in place. *Women will take slightly longer to settle in and address whatever issues.* In most cases the first few minutes they will be beating around the bush, you will be guiding them, you will be spending more time guiding them, because you will be guiding them, this is what I want you to address. [...] You know they are studying the environment. I think most times they are also thinking, the person listening out there, my colleague. (FR. Jenny 2015)

Women will take time to become comfortable with being on air. Many media players do not have the patience to see these women learn. They want ready-made stars. Many ministers and some politicians were deemed poor, superficial discussants, although some few were considered good. Those who are not considered poor discussants are largely inaccessible, unless they want positive exposure. Even where they have appeared, it was very hard work getting them, with exceptions being those in civil society. One show host said:

The Ugandan structure is there to enable women to engage in politics. The vehicle is there. But I *sometimes have hard work getting a woman politician to appear onto the show*, getting a minister who is a woman to appear on the show is nearly impossible. The Minister of Finance [then Maria Kiwanuka], I don’t think anyone has ever found her on a talk show, whether radio or television. She is nearly impossible to engage. Maybe she goes on an occasional press conference, but she won’t do any more. *And there are many like that who are media-shy*, they only go to the media when it is campaigns. Now the Minister

of Finance is not even a politician, so she won't even campaign. (MR. Robert 2015)

Women in public life also make choices. Some are not interested in engaging with the media. What is interesting is that Maria Kiwanuka was deemed as one of the most effective and eloquent persons in government. She clearly would not be accused of being an incompetent person. In addition to that, she owns two radio stations in Uganda, making her one of very few female media owners. Some of these positions are busy and demanding. I am not sure it would be any different if men held the same portfolios. Why it is close to impossible to find female ministers to engage could be explained by other types of relations between women and the state, as well as the politics of the day.

### *The credibility code*

Women whom the media considered good and/or important for their shows never made it, sometimes after making a promise to appear. This has raised questions about the credibility and commitment of female politicians. A radio producer complained:

*It is difficult to find good women who are occupying good seats, maybe ministers, maybe MPs, maybe the speaker. For instance, we have invited the Speaker I don't know how many times but she has only turned up once. (MR. Allan 2015)*

While talk shows appear to be for accountability purposes, largely it is also intended to allow venting on public officials. One would not expect the Speaker of Parliament to hop from one media house to another debating in talk shows. The hope is that she would. The president has been on some talk shows, while the studio has on occasions been taken to the office of the Chief Justice in order to have him respond to issues. Regular male participants, my observation shows, once they have been appointed to higher offices, also disappear from the talk shows. It is just not tenable, unless you are a spokesperson of government.

The real problem is when credibility is integrated with issues of capability rather than reliability and trust. There were suggestions that the most credible guests are men, because women are difficult to find or boring, as if women have a universal character defined by being boring. It was alleged that in the NRM, there were just a handful of women who accepted to come for any show, while others did not. The reason was that they are not credible guests. As one producer noted:

I think they are not considered as great debaters because you can look around and you see that *the most credible guest is a man*...actually most of them are men. [...] They are credible when they are good debaters, *you cannot bring a boring person* and someone who is also stale. (FR. Beti, interview May 2015)

Women in the media included themselves in their judgment of women in public life. Statements like ‘we women fear’, ‘we women are not brought up to be aggressive’ and ‘we women lack confidence’ dominate the narratives. The traditional roles of women came out, which, in turn, cast doubt on their public life commitments, as this journalist suggested:

When we are organising these shows, my producer will be telling you, on a good day, you can call like 10 MPs and no one is willing to appear on a show. So it is not out of the ordinary because they are outside their schedules. But *women will have many more excuses than men*. [...] Of course the excuses will not be connected to what they are doing. They make up excuses: ‘I am supposed to be in a constituency, I am supposed to be doing this and that. Then others, the time you want to call them to appear on a show, *they are picking children from school*. (MR. Shem, interview February 2015)

Women in the media revealed the difficulties they have faced in getting women’s voices in various anecdotes, which still indicated they were trying. The women as mothers were a huge part of explaining why women are less visible in public affairs programmes owing to their timing. Other respondents suggested that while women are happy to take on public roles, they remain focused on their family roles and unprepared for the price of being public officers. Some asserted that public life is messy; women may excel in the corporate world but not in politics and policy-making, where they tend to get overwhelmed, and struggle. Women reinforced these otherwise stereotypical public perceptions of a woman’s role through their actions and the excuses they have given to producers and presenters in these narratives. There are notable exceptions. Specific anecdotes involving many women were provided.

### *The courage code*

When women are invited for the shows and they decline to attend, some do so because they lack courage. The courage code implies that women are given the opportunity to participate but they decline and say so. For instance:

Most women also refuse to come for the shows. [...] Sometimes they fear and they ask, ‘Who am I with?’ and when you tell them, they say, ‘No, I won’t manage’ but they first ask you either about the topic or the guest and then they don’t come. I don’t know whether they fear debating with men. (FR. Beti, interview May 2015)

While it is suggested that they may fear debating with men, it also depends on the men. The character of the talk shows matters. Some participants are combative, and some are militaristic. It is possible that when they get to know in advance who else will be involved, they will not want to be involved themselves. The fear of participation is largely attributed to lack of courage, and to women's preference to play it safe, as this female media manager explains:

What I think is that *women prefer to play it safe*, because you will find not very many women are strongly participating in the hard politics. They want things that are a little bit simple and you know that you have played it safe. But getting into it is really hard. They feel it's like the men's domain. So, *not many women have got the courage* [...] that has taken the courage to even step into that area. If you look at some of the breakfast shows that are running right now, you will get to realise that if there is a woman in that show, in the segment where you have the hard talk, she is just like a filler, a pretty face seated there. She cannot say much but will probably add limb onto what the gentleman is saying. When the conversation tries to get deeper, then you get to realise she is *not informed*. So not many women have ventured into that area. *They can do the normal routine like current affairs* [...] little politics, but not deep to the core. (FR. Suzie February 2015)

These narratives suggest that women are simple-minded and focused on the less serious issues of entertainment and fashion. It also implies that most women are not willing to do the work needed to effectively debate an issue with other participants. The producers argued that they are not against women, and that the media wants women, but that it is hard work getting them, and that they do not cooperate. This short story illustrates this dilemma:

It was on Women's Day, when I went to FAWE [Forum for African Women Educationalists]. We were looking for women to talk about Women's Day. I picked FAWE as a women's organisation, I reached at the reception, introduced myself. I asked the lady who was there at the reception, she said the executive director could not see me. I told her what I wanted, all I wanted was information. I was offering space [...] platform for them to speak. She said 'no' she cannot speak. So I left my card, I told her to call me when she has time. [...] We are heading for another Women's Day, she has never called me. So how do I go back to FAWE? How do I pick the courage to go to such an institution? Because even us as media we want something fast, quick and convenient and easy for me. So we ended up going to Nsambya, to do a programme with young girls, where they talked about women's issues, Women's Day, and a few teachers, and there we were. [...] that's the challenge. *The media wants women*, even as you plan a programme, you feel you need to balance, whether it is a political programme, community programme, any programme – at the back of your mind you feel women's voices should be there, at whatever age, whether they are young people, children, you have it at the back of your mind, that you need to balance your agenda, but the issue is how do you balance when the person does not want to be favoured? (FR. Dina 2015)



Male journalists concurred, intimating that the current environment in Uganda was favourable for women to participate, and that sometimes they too had difficulty finding female participants. It is some of these stories that present a paradox. FAWE has done tremendous work in empowering girls in Uganda, yet, as this respondent, then the TV manager for a major media house, narrates, there is more to women and media engagement than, say, competence. Just because a woman does not wish to participate does not mean that she is incompetent, but some of the other constraints earlier discussed could be at play.

Despite claims for poor performance, non-cooperation, inaccessibility and unavailability, some few respondents felt that the media does not try hard enough to reach out to women. By virtue of the positions that these women hold, they are very busy, too. Their non-participation on media cannot really be taken as meaning they are unserious, but how does the media also fuel this misconception? One presenter argued:

As a society we are fixated on a smaller number of women. There are very many smart women out there, it's just that they have not been given a chance. So every time you want to talk about women emancipation, you think of Miria Matembe, every time you want to talk about women in business, you have Maggie Kigozi, you think about women in business, you are going for Gordon Wavamunno's wife. So, our specimen is this small [holds index finger and thumb together]. And so we suffer from over-exposure, and Jenny is the one that over-appears in all interviews in TV and radio. Time will come when she has to do other things, so she will not be available. [...] that is not right, that is not right, *people don't reach out to the women*. They don't. The perception is, if you want to invite anyone, if you want people to watch, or you want people to listen, then you have to invite Beti Kanya, then you have to invite Amelia Kyambadde, you know. (FR. Jenny 2015)

The idea that the public affairs culture could be problematic provides a plausible narrative to explain the gender gap in these programmes. The evolving public affairs culture is one of dealing with those at the top, who may not have the time but have a support system that should provide the information that the media needs. These, however, may not be women. Others claimed that women are affected by political baggage, are bashed by society and their personal circumstances may also determine their participation. A political talk show host said this:

The ladies that are able to articulate their positions are perhaps affluent and therefore unaffected by political baggage. Sometimes I get women activists [...] *they have really been bashed by the male-dominated society*. So you wonder how many women would be able to withstand that. They are regularly insulted. So you may find that it is hard work. They are really like martyrs. (MR. Robert 2015)

Beyond political baggage and society, the women's movement, which was considered less than vibrant today, has also had its impact. The bashing of women activists has created fear in other women, who want nothing to do with the movement. There is a sense, though, that movement politics has also silenced women. One female media manager had this to say:

People have moved on, people are not cooperative, people think they know better than others, people want money and then *Museveni's issues come into the women's movement*, people are not willing to speak. 'If I speak, they will start investigating me' and all those issues. (FR. Mel 2015)

The problem, some respondents argued, is rooted in political culture. Women operate in an environment in which they have to struggle to stay relevant, and are disempowered when they accept to sit at the proverbial table. It is more than lacking courage, as an academic I interviewed pointed out:

When there are a few women inserted into this stream, these people really end up, it's like you are given a trophy, you are given a gesture that 'well *you are good enough to come and partake of what we do and be part of us*'. And I think when we enter there and become part of the decision-making body, we really lose something about the jacket we wear to enter there. (FR. Denise 2015)

Some women blamed the media. Questions were raised about the possibility of the men hosting programmes actually being interested in inviting women to participate, that men prefer to invite their fellow men or the same women. According to one presenter, the media is the problem:

*I will blame the media* for that because, we are the people that make people, *we are the people that introduce these people to the public*. So Emilly [researcher] will get all these speaking events and opportunities because that is the person that is invited to every radio station. But there is a lecturer, there is a dean of the School of Medicine, there is a dean at the school of whatever, who should be the person to be consulted. But because that person has never been featured on even one radio station, people do not know that person. ... It takes forever to get that kind of platform. I blame our producers; I blame our hosts. Why should we always talk to these same same people? You want to speak about security and you think the only person to speak about security is Kale Kayihura [Inspector General of Police]? (FR. Jenny 2015)

The media was also blamed for prioritising men in its selection of newsworthy sources. One news editor said:

Most of *the media houses always quote men first*, then women say something. I can give an example, like when Besigye<sup>17</sup> is there and Ingrid Turinawe is there, you find that Besigye has said something and Ingrid has also said something,

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<sup>17</sup> Former president of opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and four-time presidential candidate. Ingrid Turinawe is former head of the women's league in the same party.

but the following day in the newspaper, or TV you will just see Besigye, leaving out Turinawe. (FR. Rita 2015)

Still, others contested the ‘media is to blame narrative’, insisting that the media is a mirror of society:

*You don’t blame the press because I don’t think the press manufactures; they bring out what you are. If you are harsh, it brings you the way you are and that is why I sometimes blame the politicians. They make mistakes and when the press brings them out, and then they start blaming us that we are bad and that we are destroying them. But anyway, that is true with women. (MR. David February 2015)*

The media, it was argued, reflects women’s participation elsewhere, as this producer put it:

*The way women participate everywhere is the same way they participate in the media, because even in Parliament they are there but how many times do they participate? [...] they don’t participate even on issues you expect them to be passionate about. They have not come up in society to be that articulate, to be knowledgeable, to be assertive, to watch the media, even when they go up, they are not that confident, and of course in media we look for people that will give us the content that we want. You want to host a guest who will be knowledgeable, who will have things on their fingertips. (FR. Dina February 2015)*

These were some of the many narratives that depicted the extent to which women are viewed through the cultural lens. While the media may be a mirror of society, one must ask: What does the market want to hear? Is there any possibility the mirror is broken and displaying distorted images? Given the nature of the public affairs programmes discussed, and that the media is not funded by the state. The assumption that interactive programmes are more inclusive and likely to bypass stringent gatekeeping practices (Opoku-Mensah 2001) remain in theory. There is no significant evidence to support that claim. If anything, these narratives highlight real barriers to women’s inclusion, which clearly cannot be that women simply turn down invitations.

Looking closely at the text threw up deeply entrenched cultural narratives. The way society views women has not changed. I pulled out these narratives that purported to explain why few women in public life participate in public affairs programmes. We know from literature that Uganda is one of the model countries regarding the implementation of affirmative action; that Uganda’s women’s movement was among the strongest in Africa; that women’s autonomy in Uganda is among the best; and that Uganda has a constitution that fully entrenches women’s empowerment. Reading the transcripts and some of these narratives makes Uganda seem like a different country. These narratives challenge the otherwise dominant narrative that women in Uganda have made it, with the media occasionally showcasing ‘successful’ women’s

profiles. These narratives suggest, though, that there is a lot of work to be done in changing the image of women in society. The paradox is that there are many women out there doing great work, even among the politicians, which emerged during the interviews with women. Yet the perception of women remains the opposite, largely fuelled by under-representation in public affairs programmes on media, and women's lack of meaningful interaction and engagement.

### **Chapter Conclusion: The Politics of Nature versus Nurture**

Whereas the purpose of this study was specifically to move beyond politics, and the programmes chosen were deemed to cover all the areas of public life selected, the narratives veered into the direction of politics. This is because the content of most public affairs programmes turned out to be dominated by politics, with their participants, too, falling within that category. What this shows is that public affairs is still largely political in terms of subject, and is sensitive as well as controversial, which has implications for women's participation. More importantly, it suggests why politics matters, because women are judged through the lens of those in politics. A good example is that the perceived lack of effectiveness of women in public life is still largely based on the judgement of female politicians (which is sometimes harsh) and heads of government institutions, rather than women in general. In fact women in civil society and the corporate world were deemed to be different.

Throughout the interviews, several nuances emerged, explaining why women do not participate in public affairs programmes. Those in the media and others reported on some of these women in public life. The reasons for women's absence revolved around women's fear of participation that, in turn, is a result of nature or nurture which is imbedded in their character. Some narratives suggested that women are 'not born for public life' which implies the role of nature, while others instead argued that 'women are not socialised for public life' which implies the influence of nurture. The characteristics considered critical for participation in public affairs programming were deemed to be lacking in the majority of women, and thus accounting for women's low participation despite gender-neutral determinants of participation and increased representation in public life. It was repeatedly claimed that the majority of women lack confidence, competence, courage and credibility. The following codes were found in data that became characterised and conceptualised as the codes of media participatory culture.

All interviews made reference to either two or three of these attributes as lacking in women and yet being crucial for effective participation in public affairs programming. The

consequence of the nature and nurture debate is that it appears to suggest that public life is messy and not for women, as a result of the way the women simply are or are brought up. Explanations for weak engagement were embedded in lack of *confidence, competence, courage and credibility* because the talk show culture requires these attributes.

We must, however, step back and wonder if women's refusal to participate in public affairs programmes has more to do with their nature and nurture being devoid of the media participatory culture or with the nature of women's interaction with the state, society and media. Feminist questions would demand an analysis of power relations and ideology that are eminent in these narratives. The public sphere and its sub-cultures as identified through the determinants of participation and the media participatory culture cannot possibly answer these questions independently. One must focus on where these narratives come from, who perpetuates them and why they persist. While feminist thought and the public sphere help us to ask some relevant questions, it is cultural studies that come close to providing answers – based on understanding state culture and sub-cultures, society culture and its sub-cultures as well as media culture along with its sub-cultures. How women respond to these multiple cultures define their level of representation, interaction and engagement. Attaining representation is not sufficient to guarantee interaction and engagement.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN:**

### **FINDINGS THREE**

#### **MEDIA INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD**

##### **7.1. Chapter Introduction**

The final phase of the study presented in this chapter examines mass media influence on women's participation in public life. I set out to answer the question: To what extent and how does broadcast media influence women's participation in public life? This chapter answers the question: How does the media affect women's participation in public life? It is exclusively focused on women in public life. The findings here are based on the final phase of the research. The importance of this chapter is that it gives women an opportunity to talk back, to tell their own stories, and to provide insight into the issues raised in previous phases of the study. Whereas Findings One focused on phases one and two, Findings Two combined phases two and three. Findings Three revolves around only phase three, i.e. women in the media and women on media. I used case studies of women in public life and, thus, here present women's encounters with the media and how these have influenced their participation in public life as they see it. Each case is a most likely case, one which represents media influence on women's participation in public life. A total of 26 women were interviewed in the two phases, distributed as 11 women in the media and 15 women on media (four in politics, three in the civil service [health and education], two in education, three in business and three in law and advocacy).

The 10 cases chosen for this chapter were based on the strength of their stories in creating an understanding of women in public life in line with their engagement with the media and their willingness to be profiled. Using cases of women's lived experiences, testimonies and their relationship with the media as well as their participation in public life is more instructive for any theorising of media influence on women's participation in public life. This chapter is in line with feminist thought, that women's lived experiences create an understanding of complex issues, through life histories that add perspective to questions that remain unanswered. The cases are organised according to the conjectural factors of representation (voice and visibility), interaction (consultation and conversation) and engagement (involvement and influence). The choice of women is balanced between women in the media (working in media) and women on media (appearing on media but working in the six areas of public life chosen).

## 7.2. Women in the Media Overview: ‘Carry Them on Our Backs?’

One female journalist, expressing how tiring it is to get women to face the camera and yet they are able to face thousands of voters, shook her head and said that maybe journalists should move with those willing to move. They cannot carry women on their backs. She said:

We shall not carry them on our backs simply because they are women. Let them measure up to what they are supposed to be. If you are a legislator, behave like a legislator. If you are a minister, who has been given a docket, please measure up your game and do the work. If you are to answer questions, answer them. (FR. Allen 2015)

This journalist is passionate about women speaking out, and her stories feature women more than most stories. She made the comment in total frustration, recounting how they push themselves to give women space, often in vain. The presence of women on media is improving, although at a slow pace, the study revealed. The coverage of women’s issues is improving, though not at the desired pace either. The general spectrum of politics, current affairs and public affairs in Uganda reveals that there is a significant number of women participants. When one looks at the number of women in leadership in the different public and civil society institutions, one realises that all of them are in very strategic positions. The presence of women as commentators across the media is now common, with some media outlets deliberately seeking women on their platforms, as this manager reveals:

Women have been fully accepted I would say, but it’s now only for the women to say, OK, I’ve been accepted, what can I do, where can I leave a mark/impact that another woman can say, yes we can do it? So I think it is up to the women to think and see how they can be able to do that, otherwise the men have learnt how to accept us. (FR. Suzie, interview 2015)

Both these viewpoints from respondents Allen and Suzie acknowledge that there is space for women on media, that sometimes women are reluctant to make use of it, but more importantly, that it is up to women to take advantage of this open space. Nevertheless, content analysis revealed that women’s appearance was still unimpressive, at 18 per cent in total compared to men’s 82 per cent. The media is increasingly giving more space to women. One female producer explained the situation thus:

Sometimes we bring in guests, for example that scope of guests, we have some women activists and for several times we have discussed with people from FOWODE<sup>18</sup> when they had some conference where they were calling for

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<sup>18</sup> Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) is an advocacy NGO for women in leadership

women presenters. And we had some guests from South Africa. ...they were encouraging women to work hard, they were calling upon women in Uganda and they said 'it's time for a woman president' so we have. (FR. Betty May 2015)

In spite of the improved visibility, the numbers remain small for women in terms of content. The improvement is largely in comparison to the past. A media manager noted:

The numbers have also a bit increased but also when you look at the current statistics [...] you still have about 80 per cent content and space for the man and about 20 per cent are for women and even within the 20 per cent you have those distorted images. I think actually I am saying this from an authoritative kind of (view) because we did some kind of analysis around October last year. (FR. Melanie 2015)

The majority of the respondents thought that there is great improvement in comparison to the past, with greater visibility of women and women's issues, and women's voices contributing to national development. However, contrary to previous studies that suggested that women were grossly misrepresented and excluded from the media, I discovered that the under-representation of women is not only for lack of opportunities for women to speak, but also because women turn down several opportunities to do so when requested. Men, on the other hand, use up any available space. Every media respondent said this. In the previous chapter, I asked why women turn down these opportunities. This chapter brings in women's views. The lack of enthusiasm on women's part to participate is in line with what women called the 'double-edged sword' nature of the media. This will unfold in the stories as they are told. The writing style leans towards story narration.

### **7.3. Women in the Media and Women's Representation**

I present the influence of the media on women's participation in public life by telling stories of four women in the media in this section (three broadcast and one print). They are women in public life in their own right, and tell of how the media influenced their participation in the media as well as how they have used their positions to expand women's visibility and voice. Although not segmented to allow the story to flow, five aspects based on thematic analysis are found in each story – professional background, relationship with the media, contribution to women, engagement with the state and implication of the case for study issues. In doing so, I wish to allow the women to use their own voice to tell their story, with me as a listener. My researcher position as a woman in academia does not unbalance the researcher-researched power relations as the subjects are established women in public life. This enables the reader to



have a sense of the nature of the influence the media has on women. In writing this section, my role is that of a narrator rather than an interpreter. An integrated discussion follows in Chapter Eight. I bring out the facts through the stories. The style is influenced by both muted group theory and standpoint theory.

The media facilitates women's participation in public life. All the women in the media who were interviewed attributed their participation in the media to early childhood experience with the media, listening to the radio and watching television or, specifically, a female media personality. These women's presence in the media has, in turn, increased women's voice and visibility. The women are role models and inspire young media professionals. Two cases in particular demonstrate the nature of the influence that the visibility and voice of women bring. Jacki Lumbasi became the face of prime news at Uganda Broadcast Corporation (UBC) Television and Capital FM's prime breakfast show. Siima Sabiti became the manager of X-FM, which is part of the Vision Group, three months into the job. She regularly features on Urban Television. Most of her staff are male. Each woman tells the story of being influenced by the media and their never relenting effort to improve women's visibility and voice. They typically work with both radio and television.

### ***7.3.1. Siima Sabiti: Changing the conversation, raising the bar for women***

At the time of the interview Siima Sabiti was the station manager, X-FM. 'I have always wanted to be on radio,' she tells me. 'It was always something that I wanted to do.' She finally got a chance when she contacted someone she knew was working for the then Vision Voice FM on Facebook, which led to a voice test. The voice test did not go well but she was given a chance to train. She confesses that she is 'big on social media', especially Twitter.

Three months later, she became the station manager. 'I was taken aside by my boss and he said, "Look, the current station manager is being moved to manage a station upcountry that Vision Group has acquired, and we would like you to manage this one."' Although Siima was shocked, the promotion came with another surprise, that she would be put on the breakfast prime show. Contrary to claims that joining the electronic media is difficult, Siima did so easily, and was supported by her bosses. Siima became part of the team that created X-FM, literally tearing down Vision Voice that had been incurring huge losses and constructing X-FM.

The media has its own culture and pressures. Siima tells me how during the July bombings in 2010, they lost a colleague. Their station was sponsoring the game, so a lot of their listeners

died while wearing their T-shirts. 'It's a miracle I was not there,' she says. The news of their colleague's death came through but they still had to do the breakfast show. 'So we were sitting there thinking we have to do this show. People are there expecting to hear from you, not that they expect you to be cheerful.' She admits that it is very difficult at such times.

Siima is very modest about her success, but does not see herself as a typical Ugandan female radio presenter. Her biggest frustration is that many female radio presenters, especially on prime shows, tend to dumb themselves down and just giggle a lot whenever arguing with their co-host, usually a dominant male, instead of presenting a proper argument with substance. 'You know, one of my co-hosts normally says "Oh chicks are evil, women are this or that", and you know, in response to something like that, the female presenters don't present a proper argument, they just giggle.' This issue related to 'women as fillers' came up in a number of interviews.

She does not blame the female presenters, but instead society and culture. Women are not supposed to talk back or have their own opinion if they want to get married. 'I have heard comments like, "...which man is going to marry a woman who talks as much as you?"' Despite those comments, she uses her strong voice to speak her mind. She credits her father with this. Siima represents the influence women's voices on the media have on woman's participation in public life. She has had many encounters to prove it, but this stands out:

I am a musician, I play the flute. I remember when I started playing in Uganda in public. Really it was a hobby. I started playing when I was eleven. I remember people asking me, your parents let you and paid for music lessons? My parents were like if it is something you really want to do, we will support you. A lot of people came to me and they were like, oh, my parents saw you perform at such and such a wedding, or such and such a show, and now they have let me go to music school because they have said, you know, she turned all right. She is not on stage, she is not naked, she is not gyrating in a music video but she is a musician. ...Regardless of people's perception of women in a particular field, they have looked at me and said, look, Siima is doing it, she comes across okay.

This brings to the fore the issue of role models. A hard worker and perfectionist by admission, she had not lived long in Uganda when she started working on radio. People doubted she could do the job. The majority of the team were men, and women were very few and not very supportive. 'When I got my position as a station manager, there were just two female presenters,' she says. What shocked her was the mentality of young people.

There is this horrible perception that if you are a woman, who has either risen through the ranks, and you are not related to someone in government, and people

quite can't figure out who you are, you must have slept with somebody. People are like, who is she sleeping with? Nothing like oh it is on merit, she is doing a good job.

At the time of the interview in 2015, Siima had been promoted and would head the creative unit at Vision Group but stay on the breakfast show. She is proud of her legacy at X-FM.

I am really glad that the tone of the office has changed. Of course you know how men are, they will get together and crack their dirty jokes but it's much better in the office now than it was. They are aware of the women who are there, and they know how far they can go, what is acceptable and what isn't, because it hasn't always been that way.

She brings up an important issue, of how women can improve the work environment in male-dominated fields. She believes the change is because she was deliberate about it. As a young woman, she had learnt to assert herself, leading a team that is largely male. Like most women interviewed, she believes the media has not done enough to change people's perception about women, which largely remains negative. She has learnt to fiercely guard her private life, and is horrified by the sexualisation of women, no longer a preserve of the tabloids in her view. Most importantly, she believes that the media needs to do more and change the tone of the conversation, because the media can positively influence women's participation in public life.

I read interviews and some of the questions, they are like, 'Can you cook? Are you going to have children?' You know, they don't ask you, 'Do you run a business? Are you building a rocket ship in your backyard?' [...] Somebody interviewed me and asked, 'Siima look at your nails, can you even cook?' I was like, really? Why are you asking me? Why are you here, that kind of ridiculous question? And so I think the conversation, the tone needs to change. I feel that women are made to feel ashamed for not being married, for not having children. One of the comments I have heard is that I can afford to be harsh; I am that harsh when I am doing the talent contest because I don't have children. So I have no motherly instincts. People say that kind of thing.

The issue of culture was mentioned in virtually every interview. She hopes that she has at least partly changed the perception about women. She also hopes that women will learn to accept that they are powerful and should use their voice, and should not under any circumstances dumb themselves down for anybody at all. She hopes that men will stop feeling threatened by women. She has tried to raise the bar for women. 'Hopefully in my own little way, I have achieved that.' It seemed to me that she already had. Despite her strong support for human rights, she keeps politics largely out of her conversations, perhaps because she works for a government entity.

Siima's case demonstrates that the media influences women's participation in public life. The media brings women to life for those who would otherwise not have met them. The influences women in public life have on younger women have been underplayed. Many of the women in the media attribute their interest in journalism to watching or listening to someone on television or radio, while those in politics admired someone in the field too. The voice and visibility of women on media can encourage young women's choice of a career in the media. The difficulty that women face in accessing the media, it also appears, is over-exaggerated.

### ***7.3.2. Jacki Lumbasi: Inspiring and speaking for women***

Jacki Lumbasi is a radio presenter at Capital FM and a news anchor at UBC TV. During our interview, we got so comfortable, occasionally breaking into prolonged laughter, that her boss came and asked if we were still doing the interview. We were meeting for the first time. After our interview, I was listening to one of the interactive programmes she presents, and she made it a point to specifically encourage women to call in. And they did. Lumbasi knew from an early age that she wanted to be a broadcaster.

At a really young age, I knew I wanted to be in media, a news anchor to be precise. I used to watch TV and I loved how these women looked on TV. Then one of my English teachers was a sports anchor in a state broadcaster KBC [Kenya Broadcasting Corporation], and I liked it. And so when I joined his class, I learnt English very fast, because I had come from a village school, then I went to a city school, and he was impressed. He told me, 'Jacki there is something in you.'

She finished primary school, went to high school, and every now and then was given a text to read for the rest of the class. 'So slowly by slowly I fell in love with reading things out loud.' She read newspapers and news stories, and loved the way she sounded. 'So I made up my mind I will do mass communication, majoring in broadcasting, and news anchoring to be precise.'

Lumbasi's heart and soul are in radio and television, news in particular, she admits. She started out at a small Christian radio station, Power FM, where she read the news in Kiswahili and English, helping with reception work and proof-reading for the editor or selecting stories. Her entry into television seems like nothing short of a miracle.

I asked for a WBS contact. When I was given the number, I called this guy, introduced myself, and Power FM being a Christian radio station, many secular people did not know me. ... I had an appointment, went and met him. The moment he met me, he was so happy to meet me, he liked my personality, he liked the energy, the confidence, he told me, 'You know what, we don't have a

place right now, but I will give you an opportunity to be trained.’ So he assigned one of his news coordinators to train me. I did that for a month on weekends, and as fate would have it, when I was having that training two weeks after that, two of their staff resigned. That is just God.

Although her screen test went wrong, she was given a chance, and propelled into the world of television news anchoring. Like Siima, her entry was less problematic; the opportunity was given, even without an opening. She was employed and worked hard to improve each day. She has no trouble getting women to be on radio, and blames the men for the small number of women.

If you ask me, most of the women that I have looked for to feature in a show, have come. If I am looking for you because you are the person in authority on a subject, if I think the only person who can speak on this subject authoritatively, such women when I have gone to them, they have always come... That is it, I have always got them. There are a few other political figures that will tell you that’s a sensitive issue, I’d rather not be the one talking about it, go to our spokesperson, which is understandable. I would not say such a person refused to appear on radio.

Lumbasi puts in perspective this whole question of women being reluctant to participate. It appears that two factors come into play in the attempt to get women to participate: the person who approaches the women and how the approach is managed. When women look for fellow women, they are more likely to find them. I should quickly add, though, that since her programme is a breakfast show, it invites guests to give perspective, and is different from talk shows. Fortunately, Lumbasi has not found her work environment toxic or repressive because of her gender.

I haven’t reached that point where I feel that I am being treated the way I am treated because I am a woman. If I am seated with you on a show then it means we have something. [...] It’s not about being woman or man it’s because we have something to bring to this show... so let’s look at it that way. There isn’t a time even once where I felt this has happened to me because I am a woman, and not just at Capital, in my whole working experience. I haven’t. Maybe cases where you are having an argument with a man and someone says, ‘Look at this woman’ [...] but then to me that is nothing because after all I am a woman.

Lumbasi demonstrates that women’s visibility matters. She believes that her presence on the breakfast show encourages more women to participate. More women are articulating their issues, texting into the discussion and calling or getting interactive on social media. She goes so far as to give her personal number to people who wish to participate but get frustrated going through the call line. Lumbasi understands the power of the media in influencing women’s participation in public life. She believes not enough has been done to cultivate it.

If you want to spread a word, to talk to the women, you want to tell them it's time for work... to rise up and take our position in society, it's time for us to work so hard, to show these men that we can work, and be far and beyond what they are capable of doing, if you want to do that, the media is the right place to do that.

More importantly, Lumbasi is confident that it is women in the media who must lead the way in getting more women interested in public life and also in getting those in public life to participate in the media. 'If I endear them to me, if I speak for them ... criticise them where they have gone wrong, they will feel free to talk to me. And they will have the will to participate in that show.' She blames the limited representation of women in current affairs on society being fixated on a small number of women, who are recycled in all positions in government, and called on by producers to participate in debate. She believes promotions are largely on a 'know-who' basis rather than integrity or qualification. 'Why don't we have a 28-year-old elevated, there must be a 28-year-old with a PhD, why isn't she heading an organisation, why isn't she a minister, and educated?' Lumbasi illustrates the power of representation by women in the media.

Lumbasi and Siima challenge the assumption and position that the electronic media is a difficult space for women to get into. Their entry into both radio and television seemed painless. Interest and initiative are required, in addition to commitment and competence. Despite the terrible screen and voice tests for both Jackie and Siima, they were given opportunities to train and to learn on the job. They both had got in without having references per se, one by making a call, and the other by sending a Facebook message. They went on to become phenomenal and prolific at what they do. Both women have grown in the system, and demonstrate that the media demands excellence, and as long as women are able to provide that, they will be rewarded. They also demonstrate that the media can inspire women.

#### **7.4. Women in Media Management: Do They Make a Difference?**

Although critics generally downplay the role of female managers and reporters in influencing women's coverage owing to their limited numbers and traditional training, this study found that even a single female manager makes a significant difference. Women editors and managers make a difference, contrary to claims that they count for little, if they make deliberate efforts in that direction. Two cases show that women in media management have contributed to better coverage.

Margaret Ssentamu-Masagazi is the executive director, Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), which runs Mama FM. Ssentamu goes beyond Mama FM and uses UMWA to rally women in the media and to challenge the negative portrayal of women through a variety of methods. She sometimes crafts policy for her own radio or develops a gender manual for journalists. Carol Beyanga is the managing editor of the *Daily Monitor*, and her word can be final. Whereas Beyanga is in the print media and this study focuses on radio and television, she is chosen as a woman in public life in her own right and her participation in the UMWA conversations I attended had clearly brought out the role of a female editor in making a difference for representation. The *Daily Monitor* is fully accessible on line, thereby stretching Beyanga's role from print towards online media, given convergence. Beyanga uses her influence to build the confidence of the women she works with and getting the female readers as a matter of good business sense.

#### **7.4.1. Margaret Ssentamu-Masagazi: Persuading women to join journalism**

Margaret Ssentamu-Masazi is the executive director of UMWA, an organisation whose mission is to increase women's representation on media. After a first degree in political science and sociology, a diploma in journalism at Uganda Management Institute (UMI), a postgraduate diploma in journalism at the University of Nairobi, and working for United Nations newspapers, Ssentamu returned to Uganda and joined Uganda Television as a news editor. She then went to work at UMI as a lecturer.

Bothered by the absence of women in her classes, Ssentamu became actively involved, practically looking for scholarships for women. To her disappointment, women were not coming for the scholarships that she secured. Combining training those on the job and persuading women to join journalism, she went so far as to coach women in order for them to excel in the interviews conducted as a prerequisite for admission. 'Margaret's women' became a common way of describing the women who joined the training among her colleagues.

Ssentamu's involvement did not stop with getting women into the media but extended to engagement in elections too. In a contemplative way, she adds, 'We were involved much more into civic education using the media, doing spot messages on how the people can be involved in the elections, a lot of spot messages for television, radio and newspaper articles.' It is difficult to meet many people with Ssentamu's passion for talking. 'I would practise reading the Bible in my father's living room so, really, I think that might have prompted me into getting

into the media and after A-level, I practised at Radio Uganda.’ She tried television too – news reading and television announcing – for which she had been trained.

It is Ssentamu’s work at UMWA, founded in 1987, which has a single purpose – changing the landscape for women’s coverage on media in Uganda. UMWA’s involvement knows no bounds, from developing a gender mainstreaming strategy for the media to organising women to dialogue on critical issues that affect female journalists. Ssentamu is indefatigable. Mama FM is her tool of trade and ensures improved women’s visibility and voice on the radio through involvement in management. There are stories of women who have grown from the humble beginnings of Mama FM to become important public figures, including Members of Parliament. There are many women one can name, who were influenced by Mama FM. This, she argues, has yielded some fruits in terms of media influence. She explains:

We have very many examples [of women] who have become good and even Members of Parliament. You know Nambooze (MP Mukono Municipality), she started with us then she went on CBS. From here we taught her about media and so many other women councillors who had not spoken on radio, they had not communicated in a community dialogue and now they have become politicians and even talk on radios. We have women with disabilities whom we have also supported and can now talk well on radio.... I think there are several where Mama FM can say that we have contributed to getting them to participate in other areas of public life.

Despite this achievement, she still feels there are gaps. Almost in tears, she shares her frustration with her achieving this goal of better representation and women’s failure to use public space effectively. Even on her Mama FM, things do not look so good where public affairs programming is concerned. Not only are these hosted and produced by a man, even the participants are largely men, just like at other radio stations.

Come to Mama FM and the story is almost the same. However, there is a policy that there must be a woman voice in every voice piece. You have a programme, there must be a woman. That is the policy and we fight over this every time.

At Mama FM, they are deliberate. If you cannot get the woman physically into the studio, you must get their voices, record them, and there is no bargain about this. Ssentamu insists that there are women out there, that their voices must be heard, and she refuses to accept the common excuse that women are not interested in discussing topical issues. A presenter must find those interested, or interest some.



That Mama FM had an impact on women's participation in public life came through testimonies of other respondents from the radio. Women-specific programmes are also developed to improve representation. Shaking her head, Ssentamu tells me, 'They have never invited me for the shows' that run on Mama FM. She hates it that the same people are hosted all the time, and thinks part of the problem is the idea that a person who speaks on radio is somewhere out there, someone special perhaps. She is candid regarding the form of interconnection between women and the media and why there is weak involvement. She says:

This is a women-focused radio station and when we are launching it, we invite women NGOs and leaders. And because this is their radio station, we are always sure that they would come and support it but so you know what happens? They prefer to go to commercial radio stations because of the mindsets. Women leaders who even have budgets for the media-related activities will go to commercial radio stations where they will pay about three million shillings for a programme of one hour but here? They don't come even for free because for that one programme, if they are to pay, it will be just for cost-sharing and to contribute towards operational costs. They ask, 'But who listens to Mama FM?' Women leaders: really?

While she acknowledges that she has never been invited to speak on her own radio and, surprisingly, hardly on any other electronic media, she has also never directly contacted any media house to participate in an ongoing conversation. She, like most women, is waiting to be invited to the table. Typically, one would expect that Ssentamu, of all people, should not wait to be invited. If not invited, she is content to involve women in the process of increasing women's engagement with the media. I found it interesting that men invite themselves as women wait to be invited. The significance of Ssentamu not being invited to speak on her own radio and her not doing anything about it, knowing she could inject some of her energy as a female voice, is huge. She represents women doing great things, which are hardly captured or shared. And she is in the media, which says a lot. But at least, she will imbue everybody with the passion to find female voices.

For Ssentamu, every available opportunity, a conference or workshop, is an opportunity to talk about women and the media. I first met Ssentamu at a conference organised by the East African Communication Association, where she was invited to speak on community radio and gender in 2014 at Uganda Christian University. This form of involvement demonstrates that the media can facilitate, and thereby increase, women's participation in public life, if they are deliberate about it, and to keep pressing:

I have tried to press on some of these issues that women are still lagging behind and so it's the responsibilities of leaders to make sure that women also come up. If it's a forum for women, then the talk would be a little different and we would be challenging women on why they are not there. For example, you know that Mama FM is for women and you know that it's going to be taken over by men, what are you (women) doing?

It is possible for a radio station started by women for women to be used more by men. Women see this as an avenue for influencing men. Women's involvement is powerful, even when they are not in the media themselves. I interviewed Ssentamu shortly before Women's Day in 2015 in a long, deliberative discussion. She invited me to attend a pre-Women's Day dialogue on women and the media that UMWA organised. However, it was in that meeting, rather than the interview, that I understood the extent to which Ssentamu had influenced the media landscape and other women's participation in public life.

Although the case of Ssentamu is unique because few women own media in Uganda, it presents a model of deliberate involvement in changing the landscape for women's media coverage, without necessarily being on media herself, but causing a change in media coverage for women as well as the possibility that women's involvement in the media makes a difference for women's participation in public life. It thus expands this theorising of women's representation to interaction and engagement. The absence of women on media does not mean that women are not engaging in feminist causes.

#### **7.4.2. Carol Beyanga: *Deliberately pushing the women's agenda***

Carol Beyanga is calm, and speaks softly. When she was 14, she watched CNN Television and there was Christiane Amanpour reporting on some war zone. She was inspired and decided she would be a journalist. The broadcast media was her target. Somewhere along the way, she realised she liked writing more although she admired Amanpour. She joined Makerere University and studied Social Sciences instead. While at campus, she started to write for the *Sunrise* newspaper and worked for a bank after university. She returned to journalism after a master's degree in Journalism Studies in the United Kingdom. Her determination was to work for a newspaper, and she tried both the *New Vision* and the *Daily Monitor*.

Beyanga just wanted to be a good journalist. She was hesitant to take up the managing editor position at first. 'I don't thrive on tension, I thrive on peace and harmony,' she says of her reluctance to take up the job because at the time there were some tensions. But her excuse to decline the offer had been that she was not as political as other people might wish a daily

monitor managing editor should be. 'You just have to be a good journalist,' her boss told her. With that she agreed, and has had to learn much of the politics too, and now enjoys it.

Today Beyanga can claim some influence in the newsroom. She credits her parents and her spouse, who is a broadcast journalist, with her success. Their children have to be cared for by her husband when she is working late. Beyanga has been deliberate in increasing women's stories. First mentored by an editor, Loy Nabeta, Beyanga learnt to do a good job. 'Loy, my God, she demanded the best.' She credits Nabeta and a host of editors. 'Many people feared Loy and did not want to work with her. But the more I worked with her the more I realised she just wants a good job done, that's all she wants. I learnt from her.' But she is quick to add, 'There are guys who really brought me up.' Daniel Kalinaki, who was the managing editor at some point, is the person she credits with building her confidence in leadership. Like many of the cases in this study, as long as someone is hard-working and proves themselves, they are likely to be encouraged and supported. Male editors are not necessarily keeping women down, as evidenced by Beyanga's assertions about the role of various managers in making her who she is today.

Beyanga dislikes being promoted in the media, but she is happy to have women in public life who do not get a fair hearing reported on. Her boss is supportive of increasing women's coverage. Having been a features editor, Beyanga has a knack for looking for the story behind the story, where women have been negatively portrayed, to provide an understanding. Beyanga had to persuade her colleagues, including the women, that women need not wait for Saturday when there are stories about women in the women's magazine, *Full Woman*. 'There is a story we can do like this every single day,' and her colleagues are beginning to support her in this. As managing editor she can choose to have a story full page, if it is good, or front page.

She sees it as a way of attaining growth for the paper. 'We need women to buy every day, getting women in news, page 1-4,' she argues. 'We have to be deliberate,' she emphasises. 'It can be a Parliament story, if a woman is being grilled there, let's cover that story. Attract the woman reader. If we find a very good story, then we make it a cover story.' The men feel that women's stories are trivial, and sometimes the women on the team think so, too. So she understands the need to be deliberate on her part. She realises that there is very little mentorship within the media environment because people are busy and few men are willing to help mentor others. So she reminds her team that they, too, were mentored.

Beyanga remembers being reminded by a former boss that ‘there is either good journalism or bad journalism.’ She senses that she is being considered as too soft. She has not been in the political arena. Although she is liked and respected, she is conscious of the environment. After years in the media, Beyanga asserts that the media is a powerful influence. She explains:

I think the media can influence women if it writes about them and shows them that it is important for them to do that because many times when the media writes or talks about women, first of all when they talk about those affairs, they make it look like it is a man’s thing. So they are, you find that number one, it is a man writing the story, it’s a man reporting the story on radio or on TV. Number two, the men will speak to the men. So they go out there and speak to the minister who is a man, they will speak to the councillor who is a man, that sort of thing. So it becomes, the whole thing becomes so manly and the women feel like, OK, that’s the man’s domain.

In order to address this manly environment, Beyanga thinks what should be done is ‘first of all for the media to again deliberately show women that this is a space that they must play into, not that they should be interested, they must play into these spaces because it affects them.’ The media should do that by getting women to write about those issues because you find that a lot of the time, it is men who write about those issues.

You find that public affairs, women will talk about especially health and education usually, and it will be fifty-fifty. You find that if there are four reporters, two are women, two are men. But then it comes to say, infrastructure, Parliament, politics, policies, it’s the men writing about those and reporting about those. And who are they talking to, they are talking to the men who are involved in those sorts of situations. So I feel like we should change that by getting women to write about those stories. And then also getting them to talk to women because there is a way that it changes perception. When you begin to see that this woman can write this story, and she is talking to fellow women, you begin to feel like, OK, it is something I should be interested in.

As managing editor, these dynamics are becoming glaring for her. She knows that there are certain stories that if written a certain way, regardless of whether the author is a man or woman, the woman will be interested. ‘I find that if you are writing a story and your language is combative and tough and all, it feels more male even if you talk about health.’ Her mission is to get news written in ways that make it interesting to both men and women, without making the people the story, but focusing on the issues and the main stakeholders. ‘We do stories about domestic violence, it’s “FIDA has said”...you never talk to the woman who has been battered. She is the main stakeholder.’ She would like more of that because she believes that the way a

story is written will determine whether women will be interested in it or not. But she must strike a delicate balance, and ensure that their loyal male readers remain interested too.

Personally, previously there are some stories I was never interested in, like Parliament. Never, because of the way that it is written. But now that I am there, I call the guy and I tell him, now what do we have? [...] So I tell him make sure your story has a, b, c and d. He does it, and because he is a very good writer, I am trying to get him to tell a story not to throw the facts at us. I am getting myself deliberately interested.

Throughout the interview, Beyanga kept going back to the issue of being deliberate. She identifies people and sees who should be grown in what direction. There are many women she needs to slightly push to cultivate their strength. Her role as a female editor is not just to get good journalists, but to grow the women also into good journalists. It is already a tough environment for women, she acknowledges. There was a time when she wanted that for anyone to take up a job they must do so purely on merit regardless of gender. 'But then I realised I need to push the women's agenda because already they are disadvantaged.' She also needs to push the women's agenda because most of the managers at her level are men and are not thinking about the women's agenda at all. Even if it pursuing this agenda means getting a day-care centre for her female staff, she will do so. Her aim is to retain the good female journalists they have and attract more.

Beyanga understands that women need to be grown, to be encouraged, so she is pushing for more women writers and editors. 'We must do the monitor story' is her motto. 'We should do as many positive stories of women as possible.' She is focused on getting more profiles on women. 'I have no problem with men but there are women out there. I want us to look out for more women. I am not saying please think about doing this, I am saying I want this,' her final word to those who do profiles when for four months they had been profiling men.

Some respondents expressed scepticism that a female journalist or editor would add much value to editorial policies. Beyanga demonstrates that, on the contrary, a female editor could make a huge difference, not just in having more stories about women published, but in changing the perspective of those in the newsroom, especially men, about women while attempting to include more women on the editorial board. She further demonstrates that even one woman can make a substantial difference. Beyanga further proves that it is not about the numbers, it is rather about pressing on for good journalism that is objective and balanced. Women are part of

the balance she seeks in her readership and also coverage. I met many female journalists, who like Ssentamu and Beyanga, even without editorial roles, try to increase women's representation. Sometimes they get frustrated. They represent women-media engagement within the media that has implications for women's participation in public life.

### **7.5. Women on Media and Interaction: Sources or Subjects?**

Media-women interaction through consultation and conversation is crucial. Women and media interaction is a function of both consultation and conversation. Women's representation is limited to the extent to which women's voices and visibility exist. Consultation looks at women as part of public affairs dialogue and debate. They are among the guests invited to the table. Consultation could also be through calling women during the show to provide an expert opinion. The study revealed that the practice is for women to be invited through a process of consultation where they are sources. The media-women interaction is about cultivating the line between consultations of women by the media and joining in the conversation. Conversation looks at women contacting the media during the programme (calling in, social media, SMS, dialogue etc.). It answers the question: Are women part of the conversation? All the respondents in the media agreed that they have consulted women to be sources and analysts on their shows. Consultation places the burden of interaction on the media, and that of conversation on women, where women do not have to wait to be invited.

Two cases present the nature of consultation and conversation that influences women's participation in public life. Marren Akatsa-Bukachi, the executive director of Eastern Africa Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the advancement of women (EASSI) has worked with women most of her life, and there are no simple things in that area. She must persuade people about the need for women's empowerment. She has taken the battle to the media sometimes, paying for space to talk about women's issues that do not make it to news because they do not sell. Theopista Ntale Ssekitoleko, the Country Direct, Uganda Chapter, New Faces New Voices (NFNV), a non-profit organisation that works to deepen the participation and influence of women in the financial sector, is always open to consultation. She has been on international and local Ugandan media.

### ***7.5.1. Marren Akatsa-Bukachi: Getting into the conversation***

Marren Akatsa-Bukachi is the Executive Director of EASSI, an organisation she has headed for over a decade. A Kenyan by birth and East African by choice, Akatsa-Bukachi knows that women work very hard but their contribution is not recognised, even in their own homes. Women don't attribute success to themselves. They don't think that what they are doing is important. 'Women don't make news. Women are not newsmakers.' In her analysis, 'the news about women is mostly negative news. The news about men is about their masculinity.' So, she gets herself into the conversation, which often means paying for space.

Rather than blame the media entirely, Akatsa-Bukachi believes that sometimes women do not consider themselves as part of newsmakers, that the media can call on women to give their opinion but they fear, while men do not fear. It surprises her that women leaders are part of these. Her organisation has gone beyond just getting involved in the conversation; it has facilitated the training of reporters in the East African Community and the development of a gender training manual, albeit without much benefit, but she is not giving up.

Part of the work we do is promote or advocate for more citizen participation in the East African integration process, and we realised that the way things are reported is very subjective, there is nothing ah, no analysis of the impact of some treaty or something on women. So we organised some training and trained journalists in Arusha ahead of the EAC summit of heads of state. Of course nothing ever came of it. They never did any gender-sensitive reporting.

Akatsa-Bukachi's frustration is that the way women are stereotyped in life follows them in the media. The education system and the curriculum paint a mental picture of a woman as a nurse. '...it is ingrained in us that a woman is a nurse or a teacher. Our leaders, when they talk, they just say he, he, he...he still means he and she.' When women refuse to give their opinion, they are feeding the stereotypes, but that is because they fear and do not have much confidence.

Those women, just because they are in Parliament does not mean that they are different. They are still intimidated mentally. And they still fear to express their opinion the same way the women in the village fear to express their opinions. It's just that they are in town and those ones in the village but they are sisters, kindred spirit.

For Akatsa-Bukachi, something needs to change in the way the role women play in society is appreciated. Some of the key constraints on women's participation, she contends, are poverty, their reproductive roles and patriarchy that still controls women's lives at the community level. In addition, are the problems of tokenism and what she calls 'blanket condemnation'.

Many times people say women are not supporting women in public life, but we say that the women in public life when they go to Parliament, they forget that they are women, and that they forget that they have left women at home, and that they behave like men, they become funny [...] there is that sort of divide, where maybe the expectation is high, and there is blanket condemnation.

There is a blame game that goes on between those in the women's movement and those in government. Akatsa-Bukachi has never been invited on electronic media to participate in a show but featured on Women and Power, the news feature that focuses on women in public life run by NTV. So she has arranged shows to highlight some issues by paying for space and also uses community radio.

We pay for most of our shows, and they are expensive, but men are there for free, because they are being consulted as opinion leaders. But for us women because they don't contact us, we have to arrange ours.

Again the issue of invitations comes up. Women have to gain entry while men are invited. Her disappointment, shared by many of the other women advocates interviewed, is that once they have paid for their voices to be heard, these shows get hijacked.

No one ever calls me to ask me so many things. But when I do pay to be on the media, talking about land, talking about violence, talking about small arms, someone calls and says, 'Why do women undermine each other?' What has that got to do with small arms and light weapons? What has that got to do with land? 'Ah, you women, women are their own worst enemies.' They completely divert the conversation from what is the central reason why we are there.

Marren Akatsa-Bukachi does not discount the role of the media in influencing women's participation in public life, which is why they keep paying for shows. 'The kind of media you are constantly interacting with influences a lot,' she says. 'If you only see women washing clothes in adverts, it changes your perception about the role of women in society.' Yet, misunderstanding women's issues among reporters also remains key.

What we are doing for gender in Uganda is just token. But in the real sense it doesn't work. Uganda needs to do more to enable gender policy analysis, and for media to have policies on featuring stories about women that can change perception.

There are gaps in interaction, that is a given. It is true that few women are involved in ongoing conversations, even when those issues involve women. But it is up to women to get involved in the dialogue and debates going on in different platforms, if they are not invited. These spaces are presumed to be open to all citizens. The issue of conversation is thus largely dependent on women rather than the media, contrary to popular narratives. Furthermore, those consulted may



not wish to participate, owing to the fear of being intimidated. Akatsa-Bukachi's case demonstrates that the media is unlikely to invite women most of the time, but women can find creative ways of joining the conversation and improving both voice and visibility. She recognises the influence of the media on women, hence she seeks to change the landscape of reporting on women, through training journalists on gender-sensitive reporting and buying space on radio to join conversations.

### ***7.5.2. Theopista Ntale-Ssekito: Priority must be economic empowerment of the masses***

Theopista Ntale-Ssekito lives by one principle: 'You never bulk people, even if they are your children, they can never be the same.' Yet, women are often bulked. Ntale is the Country Director, New Faces, New Voices, an organisation founded by Graca Machel, former South Africa President Nelson Mandela's wife. Widely consulted, even by international media, she believes that women must help each other, and avoid unhealthy competition. 'People have to appreciate that when it is my calling, it is mine. I am not going to be a PhD, I don't need it. So when you come here, I must give you all the support,' she tells me.

Theopista Ntale advocates economic empowerment of the masses. She suggests that the biggest challenge that women face, which men do not, is culture. However, although women suffer more because of culture, Ntale believes that women should take some responsibility for the negative media coverage. She demonstrates this below:

Women are playing a role also in promoting themselves as sex objects. For God's sake, I have seen women who go on stage to sing and people literally walk out because these women are naked. But I have also seen musicians who dress decently, long dresses to the toes, covered to the arms, but they still sell. I don't know where women get this perception that I have to show my breasts, and my thigh for my music to sell. As much as the media are profit-oriented and are looking for profits, the women have allowed to be used because if am dressed like this, nobody is going to remove my dress and take my picture. The woman contributes in the process of that.

Media influence on women's participation is quite limited in Ntale's view, in particular to elite women, whose participation in public life is affected by it.

The percentage of women that can be influenced is very small. Even under these women, we have women that are called women by title, but their mindset is not women. There are some women who are called women because they have breasts, but their mind is still locked into the previous cultural constraint, is still locked into their selfish agenda, is still locked into the 'I'. It's about me.

Although these cases demonstrate the influence on women's participation in public life, it is important to acknowledge that that influence is small and limited to those who get early exposure or are involved in public life. When interviewing female journalists, I was surprised that at least three described themselves as not typical (Ugandan) women. One told me she often forgets that she is a woman. Ntale, claiming some women are just women in name, explained:

They believe that maybe they are just women by default but their values, and their hard work is actually male. So there is a very big number of that. But also the element of selfishness, because she is there, the rest can stay. If you see certain things that women do – there are some women running NGOs, you already have what I would call enough or reasonable, for God's sake allocate what you have been given to the right beneficiaries. Are you a woman? Because a woman is supposed to be a kind person, a loving person, a forgiving person, a giving person, that is the definition of a woman.

Ntale's submission indicates that there are lenses through which women are judged, even by fellow women, which are not used where men are concerned. Although totally unafraid of the media, often consulted and engaged in conversation with the media, she thinks media influence on women's participation is limited. 'As one of the leading women in this country, especially on the economic front, priority must be economic empowerment of the masses.' Celebrating a Speaker of Parliament makes little sense to her in light of the condition of the masses.

Before you use the media you sort out the economic status. I know from an economic perspective, you cannot talk about media, when people have no access to power, you cannot talk about media when people don't have access to proper training. On the prioritisation list of African media, the media is a top-up, luxury. We have to look at the root cause. Why is it that they are not looking at it as priority, as a luxury? Because there are things they must have that are critical to their lives before a radio, and they don't have those things yet.

In addition to sorting out the economic situation, Ntale believes that family, upbringing and building confidence in girls right from home matter more. The role her father played in making her who she is comes out easily and, of course, the never-ceasing support of her spouse. All of these things make a woman in public life either succeed or not, hardly the media. The media then consults women when they are engaged in other meaningful things.

## **7.6. Women and the Media: The Power of Engagement**

Despite the strong suggestion that women fear the media and often refuse to participate, there are cases of involvement and influence by women in public life that make the case for better engagement. Ruth Ssebatindira was the president of the Uganda Law Society until 2015, and

became the face and voice of the law society during her three-year tenure. To her no issue is too difficult to engage with, from tasking the president to explain why there is no substantive Chief Justice to presenting the then attorney general with a certificate of incompetence. Her engagement with the law, the public and the judiciary made her a newsmaker in every sense of the word. Rukia Nakamatte was the Public Relations Officer of the Ministry of Health at the time of the interview. Nakamatte knows literally every journalist in town, complete with their telephone numbers. No question is too difficult for her to face the media with. Nakamate and Ssebatindira demonstrate the power of engagement with public life that results in effective media representation and interaction.

### ***7.6.1. Ruth Ssebatindira: You must be vocal when it matters***

That the media can build women's profile and propel them to greater heights was a common narrative. The case of Ssebatindira is no different. The former president of the Uganda Law Society (ULS) is a founding partner at LIGO MARC, a commercial law firm in Kampala. Her credentials speak volumes, in contradiction to her soft and cool demeanour. She holds a master's degree from Manchester University, where she majored in international taxation. She also set up a female lawyers committee at the ULS. She was the third female president of the ULS since its inception and one of only a small number of women to have set up a law firm in Uganda. Judging by the glittering office where I interviewed Ssebatindira, the firm is thriving.

Ssebatindira admits that within the legal profession there is an expectation that a female lawyer should do some types of law – family law and children's law. She does exclusive tax work and helps fellow women. 'I will personally give cheques to FIDA<sup>19</sup> to feel that in a way I have contributed,' she says. Her work with the law society also helped her to greatly contribute to that space, through legal aid, because most of the clientele at the ULS are women.

It is her journey to the law society presidency that exemplifies how women's engagement in public life opens up avenues for women in many ways, including visibility and voice on media. Having struggled to find female lawyers to mentor her while establishing her law firm, Ssebatindira became determined to ensure that the law society sets up a women's committee to address women's issues.

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<sup>19</sup> Federation for Women Lawyers in Uganda.

I wrote quite a number of times to say you know, as a female lawyer, I set up a law firm but in the law society I don't feel like you are addressing our issues as women lawyers that are starting out, let alone female lawyers who are in employment.

Few women were making it in court then, which bothered her. There were about four or five women who made their mark. She was concerned that women's prowess faded out in the field yet in class their performance and that of men would be fifty-fifty. Her passion became focused on getting women back into the profession, through the ULS platform.

It took about I think two years. I did go for a women's conference in London and when I came back I was on fire. I told them guys, what I have seen, what they are doing, we must do. The law society agreed. So they wrote to me and said you know, the female lawyers committee is set up and you are to chair it and tell us what next. Now, that's where I said, aha, careful what you wish for.

The responsibility then fell on her to look for people, chair the committee, set the agenda, and build it. The committee became vibrant. This was to become her biggest asset when seeking the ULS presidency. During her time as president, the law society was constantly in the news. Ssebatindira became very visible and a voice for the ULS on media. She admits that the media was not exactly looking for her, but she recognises that the media helped build her profile.

I think the media was not looking for Ruth, the media was always looking for the law society. What is the view of the law society? Yeah? And then because the spokesperson of the law society is Ruth...I think I was in the right moment, the right place at the right time. In all honesty, then it helped to profile me also as an individual because when you call me to give a talk wherever, then I will be introduced. I talk about my firm, what I do, my partners would creep in. There is a whole thing that the media will profile you, will propel you but I know that it was not that they were looking for Ruth.

Ruth Ssebatindira believes that we are very far from bridging the gender gap. Having women as heads of government institutions does not paint a fair picture. In the communities things are tough for women. She knows that women still harbour the fear of participation across the board.

The fear is not just with the media, it is the fear of participating. Even the agenda that we are setting at law society we had to address fear as an issue for professionals. Why were there fewer women professionals going to court? They fear. It is the fear of the unknown. It is the fear of not knowing what will happen if it doesn't work, it is the fear of being judged, and harshly at that. We really had to address fear. It is not just a media thing.

Most of these challenges, she admits, would not have occurred to her without the work she did at the law society. She was not aware of the extent of the gender gap in the communities.

I think I am very, very happy that I did the three years with the law society because it opened a whole new world for me. When you sit here [in Kampala] you don't know what is really happening in the communities.

At the time of her presidency the law society proposed that affirmative action for women in politics be removed, a position she says emanated from the communities. It is a position that raised concerns. Her personal view is that affirmative action remains relevant.

For me I think *we must be very deliberate*, we must hold hands of the women and mentor them and teach them and just scale them up to the heights which they can attain. I feel that affirmative action should still be there, that is my personal view. We are very far from bridging the gender gap.

The number of cases to deal with for women made her realise how little had been achieved in bridging the gender gap. She is disappointed that of all places where women should be leaders, in the judiciary, they have fallen short. During her presidency, the law society did take some really strong positions in opposition to government.

We were pushing for a female DCJ, deputy Chief Justice. We said this is our slot. But then you see as it came, it came like that. As you know any bar association, *you must be vocal when it matters*. When the biggest of the legal issues are on the table, you must be at that table to set the agenda, so that you must be there. If in that debate we had not participated, what would the law society be? We had issues with the president. He was saying he could appoint the former Chief Justice, and we were saying, no. We had a series of meetings with the attorney general until we fell out and gave him a certificate of incompetence.

It is being vocal when it matters that made Ssebatindira visible on media. The ULS went on to engage the president and disagreed with him, boycotted the judiciary and maintained that they were right. In the end, the president did not re-appoint the retired Chief Justice, Benjamin Odoki, after his constitutional mandate as he had wanted, in part, owing to the law society's involvement.

What made her successful in the inclusion of women at the ULS, she says, has to do with deliberate attempts to address fear and build confidence. She believes that when helping young people, mentoring, holding the hands of young people, confidence-building should be a big issue. As a woman, the fact 'that you are in the limelight, [means that] the standards are going to be higher for you. It is a thing we must handle as professionals.' Fear creeps through all professions, aided by some cultural tendencies. 'Even the media, the female journalists, I don't think they are at the same level with the guys.' Recognising this helped change the situation

for female lawyers, after she was deliberate. Her crowning achievement is that there are more women in court.

I will tell you for me one of the things that I am very happy about and I don't know whether you could one hundred per cent attribute it to my engagement with the law society engagements we had done, but when you go to the courts now, there is enough female lawyers.

Her commitment to inclusion has clearly paid off. She had wondered, 'If there are fifty-one per cent of women, why are there five female lawyers in court?' She took the initiative to engage the law society. She hopes more people engage. 'Everyone is doing small things,' she says. She continues with engagement. The former ULS president sets aside every Wednesday to mentor lawyers and for German Development Cooperation (GIZ) to mentor young women. Rather than focus on the government and politicians making noise, she hopes, 'the women's movement will be deliberate in that arena. We need to do the softer things.' She insists that having a few women in high places will not cut it, and the media can play a significant role.

I like the programme *women and power* on NTV. ... There are women who are organising their communities, the nurses. By the way, those women also inspire us. It doesn't mean that I am the one to inspire her. It can be the other way round if the programme can go further down. Let them go down to the communities.

The media had been criticised for focusing on a small segment of women as successful. The call to go to communities and find women doing great things was dominant. The case of Ssebatindira demonstrates that when women are involved, whether or not their involvement has to do with women's issues, they become visible on media and become women's voices without having to talk about women's issues directly. In the end, their engagement in public life turns into interaction with the media that not only builds their profiles but also enables them to become influential. Their resulting engagement with the media helps to change the perception about women and facilitate women's participation in public life.

By the time of writing, the former law society president had been appointed as a member of the powerful Judicial Service Commission (JSC) to represent the ULS. The law society gave her a platform which she effectively used, and it has propelled her to greater heights. No doubt, her wish for a female deputy Chief Justice is more a reality now when she will sit on the commission that recruits judicial officers, including recommending judges and the Chief Justice and the deputy. Her case further demonstrates that appearance on media is not a given but once women are engaged in the right places, they will be sought out by the media. More

importantly, women can use their spaces to directly address women's issues. In the end, the media does facilitate women's participation in public life rather than frustrate the women.

### **7.6.2. Rukia Nakamatte: It is all about the relationship with the media**

Government policy is that there are specific people who speak for the government, a common practice in many organisations too. This could account for why there are few women on media, as they may not be authorised to speak on behalf of the government. The Ministry of Health PRO, Rukia Nakamatte, is a trained journalist and social worker. She has been in the media. She practised for six years with the *New Vision* newspaper and moved on to development work. She has been in her current job for six years also, and has become the face and voice of the ministry. Like almost all female journalists interviewed, her inspiration to be a journalist came from an encounter with the media.

I have always wanted to be a journalist since I was young. And when I finished high school, that is Senior Six, that was 1996, I really looked forward to being on TV (laughs). You know I would look at CNN, look at BBC and I would always see women reporting people, women in the war reporting about different issues, and throwing their hair. So I said I want to be on TV at one time. And that is what inspired me to, you know, study journalism. So I studied journalism at Makerere University, I did a bachelor's degree in mass communication, and I specialised in broadcast media.

However, when she finished, the earliest opportunity that availed itself was in the print media and she has no regrets. She holds a master's degree in development studies. She joined the Ministry of Health as a communications officer for a World Bank project, but the ministry gave her an additional responsibility to be the spokesperson for the sector. She credits the Ministry of Health bosses, particularly the permanent secretary, Dr Asuman Lukwago, with building her confidence and giving her all necessary support. 'The support I received from the team helped me a lot. If people had fought me or what, I wouldn't be where I am now.' She admits that she has had a lot of interaction with the media.

I have had a lot of interaction with the media, first of course working in the media and two, having a title that gives me a mandate to be the person to talk to the media about health sector issues. So being the spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, I am responsible for interacting with the media and guiding them, talking about key issues that the public out there needs to know. So I work both with the print media, with broadcast media, being able to be the mouthpiece for the health sector and giving them information on a daily basis.

Her typical day is unplanned. Before she even reaches the office her day is already changed as she tunes into the radio on the way to work. ‘There will always be something to do with health every single day,’ she says. It doesn’t matter how much she plans, her day is open to dealing with matters of the day. ‘So the first thing you do is to look at the newspapers...we have a radio in our office, we only switch it on at prime time.’ As the spokesperson, she is the person to be reached to give perspective on all matters of health. She also decides who in the ministry should answer questions from the media. The health sector has a lot of challenges, which has kept her on her toes because the media will only focus on the challenges.

Nakamattee is a true picture of cool, calm and collected. Even when speaking about the earth-shattering challenges of her job, her demeanour is calm and friendly. She does not only speak for the Ministry of Health, but the entire sector, which, in turn, has different sub-autonomous institutions. ‘It’s quite challenging, you have to have information at your fingertips.’ At times you get information from the media itself. When that happens, she sets out on her own research, calling all parties concerned to get the real issue and then feed all the people in the ministry who might be called upon by the media. After that, she faces the media with the official position.

How did she manage to craft what seems like a seamless network of interactions between her office, the health sector and the media? How did she gain such influence? She formed a database of the institutions that fall under the Ministry of Health. ‘When you check in my phone, I have contacts of almost everyone in this sector.’ She also created a family-like kind of relationship with the media.

The first thing that I did when I came to the ministry is to create a rapport with media managers and news managers. Of course *New Vision* was very easy because that is where I trained from, I was there for six years. So all the editors were my friends. So after *New Vision*, I went to *Monitor*. When I had just come into the ministry I went to all the main media houses, they all know me. Even the ones you know came in later, they know Rukia. ...you talk about NTV, you talk about NBS that is like family to me now. ....What made it tick for me was the fact that I created this relationship with the media managers. After the media managers, I went to the journalists.

She created a forum for health journalists where they interact a lot. Anything that comes up, you just send it out. She knows that the Ministry of Health, unlike corporate organisations, does not have a lot of money and there is no funding for journalists. When she calls a press conference, the best she can do is hand out a bottle of soda, but journalists come and walk away very happy, because of the relationship she has with them. She does not pay them. This



relationship has paid off. At times, the media calls her and gives her the story, before it runs, then guides her on how to handle it, provided she has something done about the situation. And when she has promised that something is going to be done, she sets in motion processes that ensure something is done. That is the depth and breadth of influence she has in the ministry and with the media.

Nakamatte handles each issue respectfully. She credits the media with bringing some of the problems to their attention and they have been addressed. 'What I want to show you is that there are even some duties that we do as PROs that are never seen.' When that story is killed at that level, you will not know. So you will not say that Rukia did something.' During the day she is with the news manager making sense of the issue, then at the ministry to face the permanent secretary, ensuring something is done. The next day the problems have been addressed without the story being run. 'What makes you tick is wooing the media managers and journalists on your side, and it is not about money.' Journalists are changing the way they address health stories, because she was deliberate about it. The quality of the relationship matters.

Her interaction with the media gives her a lot of insight into the challenges of women's participation. She asserts that we live in a men-dominated society, and women have come up but they have their own constraints.

Women, they look at time, as work time is work time. You tell me to go for a talk show after five, 'No, I'm going to pick kids from school. I am not working beyond that time. ...for me after that time, is family time.' They look at that as an extra added duty onto my assignment. Like, for example, I'm not technical in health issues, I am not a doctor, I am not a pharmacist, so some of these issues if I'm going for a talk show, I would need a technical person. If it is a woman, in most cases they will tell me, 'No Rukia, I will not go if the talk show is after five.' So you end up like looking for a man. So it's a man getting more publicity, the woman will miss out on the opportunity. So I have seen this, the news managers if they are calling in someone, you see this segment of news, and they are asking you, 'preferably a man'. ...do you know why? Women always disappoint them.

The unavailability of women is real. When she goes for those segments in news, she makes sure the segment is in the first ten minutes, because rarely are there female guests in such segments. For Nakamatte, not going for media does not mean women are not serious as the media assumes. 'I have talked to media managers and they tell you there is always an excuse, and it is usually a family excuse.' This is significant, because being on a talk show means

people will vent on the guest. The precarious state of service delivery also means the public is hostile to guests.

At times, when you find dedicated women, who want to work, they are always busy. So they will find it difficult, and they don't prioritise the media, 'that's not my job, let Rukia talk to them'. Some of them, there is the element of 'we don't have the time, this is not my mandate'. Some of them are like camera-shy.

What surprised me was that the majority of women in strategic positions, by their own admission or through anecdotes from other interviews, do not prioritise the media, let alone understand its influence. Some even believe that the media is a waste of their valuable time, and adds little value to their work. This lack of understanding has also created some sort of hostility between the media and these women. The women who had been largely covered negatively were nearly impossible to reach, even for me. Journalists had warned me that I would face challenges meeting them.

Nakamatte believes that, besides women being too dedicated to their work, the talk show culture can be a burden on participants. She vowed never to go back to a certain radio station. 'We went to talk about different issues. When we got there, they were now attacking the women species. Now you Rukia you are talking like that because you do not care about women.' Other female respondents spoke of unpleasant encounters on specific shows. The talk show culture also focuses on specific women, which Nakamatte explains.

The challenge is you open yourself to talk shows, you will always be on radio. They hear you here, someone will call you there. It's still the competitive nature of media houses. So, it becomes a job. So there are those one can attend and those they cannot.

Despite these challenges, the media continues to influence women's participation in public life through the twin processes of inspiration and motivation. Nakamatte transcended national media.

When I had just started, you know like one or two years, people call you from as far [away] as New York, you know I'm so and so calling from CNN, so and so calling from BBC, I would feel nice, ehh. You know then people would call you, Rukia we heard your voice on BBC (laughs), it would make me feel nice. That's one part, now that I have stepped out, that's one part I miss.

By the time of the interview, Nakamatte was moving on to a bigger assignment, a job she says her visibility on media landed for her, another case of media influence on women's participation in public life. She was moving onto Behaviour Change Communication, which she thinks is something she can retire into. 'When I told my mum last month that you know

I'm going to change assignment, "oh no, does it mean that now with your new assignment we will not be seeing you on TV"?" Her mother's reaction was mine too. She has done it all, corporate communications for six years. It is not only the women engaging with the media who get inspired; they, in turn, inspire the younger ones, as Nakamatte tells me:

My daughter told me that ah, by then she was still in P.4 but now she is in P.5, that every time her friend in school would see me in TV, she would say 'Falicia me I want to be like your mum when I grow up'. Just seeing me on TV. .. At school the teachers tell her, your mother was on TV, she said, 'When they tell me I just look and I feel nice.'

Nakamatte's story tells more of a woman whose confidence was built and handles the media with so much ease you can think she was born for that role. She is trying to provide as much support to her predecessor as she can because she recognises her success depended on the support she got from every single boss. She is happy her replacement is a lady, which was her preference. Where women have been at the helm, it is far easier to replace them with women than if there had been men. It is a question of women holding hands. Whether or not the media are going to enhance a woman's participation in public life is also dependent on women deliberately creating a relationship with the media, wooing them, and it's not about money. That is what Nakamatte's case demonstrates, contrary to the media doing things to women.

## **7.7. Challenging Orthodox Narratives: Participation Paybacks**

Women's media participation is critical for women's participation in public life. One of the key determinants of media participation is performance in public life. The media influences women's participation in public life, which is a catalyst for their media participation. Women must make news through participation in public life. Cecilia Atim Ogwal and Cissy Kagaba transcend the participation parameters of representation, interaction and engagement for women in public life by challenging orthodox narratives within the state, society and the media.

### ***7.7.1. Cecilia Atim Ogwal: A lifetime of participation and excellence***

Driven by passion and a dislike of injustice against women, Cecelia Atim Ogwal, the Dokolo Woman MP, set out for a life of excellence from the very beginning. The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) opposition politician started her political career in the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), first headed by the first prime minister of Uganda, Apollo Milton Obote. Hers is a life history of challenging traditions, in opposition to things she does not believe in, reorganising systems to create order, and making news. Ogwal is no ordinary person.

When I walked into her office, which she occupies as Parliamentary Commissioner, Ogwal was reading a newspaper. She welcomed me with a smile. We had never met before. A parliamentary member of staff ushered me in. I had no appointment. In fact, I had gone to seek one. It was her first day in office, from the position of Opposition Chief Whip, where she had been for two and a half years. She was about to leave. Instead of giving me an appointment, she agreed to an interview, if I could cut it in fifteen minutes. I agreed, only to leave her office over two hours later, after a candid conversation, which she termed as given with a calm heart and openness, something she rarely does.

My interest in interviewing Ogwal stemmed from a profile in Sylvia Tamale's book, *When hens begin to crow* (1999). Viewed through the media's lens, she is a no-nonsense woman, dubbed the 'Iron Lady'. Gifted with a sharp intellect and a knack for challenging orthodox narratives, Ogwal is a woman to be admired, envied even. She tells me she has had a life of fighting for one thing or another, since childhood.

It's like throughout my life I was fighting, I was fighting to break away from that shell. It's like I had life but I was cocooned in a shell. It's like a chick who is ready to come out but could not come out because the shell had blocked it out. It's like throughout my life, I had that quiet spirit in me that was fighting.

Her story is one of challenging traditions, breaking walls wherever they existed, and having a singular focus of mind. No one was beyond questioning or assurance. She questioned everything that put a roadblock in her way, and got away with a lot. That also meant she pioneered very many things. 'I was the first girl to participate in the mathematics contest for the Verona Fathers in the post-primary school. If you passed and are awarded that scholarship, then you studied without school fees.' It was very important to her, not because she needed money since her father could afford to pay, but to challenge the idea that girls were scared of mathematics, and not allowed to participate. She got the scholarship.

In a move to provide career guidance at her school, a team talked to her class about their choices. The choices revolved around arts courses because girls were not considered for serious professional courses. She got angry and asked the team:

You have told us about what we girls should do, supposing you don't want to be a teacher? Supposing you feel you can do engineering? Supposing you feel you can do medicine? Or you can do commerce, you can do architecture or anything, or law, what stops you from doing it? Is it mandatory that all girls must prepare to go and be a teacher? [...] You have to prepare us properly. For

me, all those courses you are telling me I will not take them. So you are telling me, either I give up studying or I take these ones, which is wrong.

The team was shocked, but later invited her to speak about her choices, what was available to women and what was not. Her only desire was to do a course that would make her a manager, someone who would run a big enterprise, supervising both men and women. She did not want to do a course that would lump her up with women, but make her a boss over both men and women.

In what seemed like the universe had conspired just in her favour, Ogwal studied for free up to university when an essay contest saw her challenge the dominance of Gayaza High School in winning the Brook Bond scholarship. Gayaza High School is one of the oldest and most outstanding girls schools in Uganda. From then on, she seemed to break one tradition after another. She was invited to Gayaza High School. When her father protested against the invitation, because he feared she would get spoilt and because he distrusted the Anglicans, she insisted it was what she wanted, and assured her father that she would not be derailed.

I looked at my father straight in his face and said, ‘Dad, I have told you always that there is no man on earth that will ever divert me from what I want. Don’t even ever think about any man messing up with me. Don’t. Talk about anything else, but don’t talk about a man messing up with me.’

Her father relented. To be accepted in Gayaza High School at the time (to-date perhaps) is considered a sure way to secure one’s path to success, and Ogwal understood that. She joined Gayaza High School as the first Catholic girl, and demanded to be allowed to go out of school to attend mass, which was granted. Gayaza was a great experience. She was the youngest in the class, an ‘under 18’. She needed a ‘nanny’, Betty Bikaganga, in order to attend their social event, where Lameck Ogwal, now her husband, saw her for the first time, at the Makerere Hall. She was single-mindedly focused and did not want to disappoint her father, whom she was close to. After Gayaza, the other tradition she broke was at Nairobi University where she went in 1966. The university was not allowing women to go for the Bachelor of Commerce degree. ‘We were taken on experiment. And we were only four ladies from Uganda,’ she says, laughing. They were told they would be on trial for one term. At university she made history again. For the first time in the history of the university there were scores for upper second, which had eluded the men who had been considered suitable for the course.

It was our year that there were three upper seconds, one was an Indian from Tanzania, then two were from girls from Uganda. This village girl who didn’t even have examination centre, and Eva Mukasa. But above all, we broke the

tradition at the end when the two of us, the two ladies who should have never been allowed to do Commerce, ended up with distinguished performance. And in my case, I was rated the best overall in university for B.Com. And they used to have a motivation award, by Indira Ghandi because you know B.Com was more or less an Indian kind of base. And so there used to be what they called the Indira Ghandi Award. I was given the Indira Ghandi Award for being the best overall in the B.Com. That shows the fighting spirit in me which has been with me all through has made me break through the ice.

The many stories that formed her cannot be told within these pages and this analysis cannot do justice to her life of excellence and achievements, many of which she shared with me.

Ogwal has made numerous contributions to women's empowerment, beyond party boundaries. Although opposition politics appears to define her, Ogwal's real commitment is to empower women, which she does without making noise about it. In Parliament, Ogwal is often speaking of the budget, looking for instances where the government has overstepped its powers or failed to make proper accountability. She does not, therefore, pass for your card-carrying feminist. But she will not think twice or remember her political party where a woman's leadership position is on the line. She often takes a frontline position when there is a controversial matter or something contentious, such as the election of the speaker. She has nothing to lose.

I didn't care whether I was a member of the opposition or what, but this was the leadership of a woman being challenged. And I had to protect her. ... You touch Kadaga it's like you have touched me. Oulanya there is my son, you know, but I said you young man continue to work under Kadaga just for one term then you will take it next time. But for now if you stand against Kadaga I will fight you and that's exactly what I did. So I normally take that position. Now I am going to take position to try and see how I can help Specioza Kazibwe.

Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, the former vice president of Uganda from 1994 to 2003, the first woman in Africa to hold the position of vice president, was at the time vying for the position of Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Yet, it is not only in Parliament where Ogwal supports women. One anecdote attests to the extent to which Ogwal will go to support professional women. When she became Chairperson of Uganda Development Bank, she found that all the heads of departments were men. She felt insulted and asked if there were professional women in the organisation. She was given the names and files of three senior women to study.

When I looked at those files, I was angry, because there was nowhere in the file where they had shown their attitude to work was bad. There was nothing in the file to prove that maybe they were not performing well. Victoria Ssekitoleko

had been in the bank for 12 years without a single promotion. The other one [was] creeping through promotion, laboriously.

She restructured the organisation, gave Ssekitolesko double promotion because she asked questions that nobody could answer, which meant that she had been unfairly treated. She was told that Ssekitolesko's husband was in the bush fighting the government. Still, she argued, it was no reason to sit on somebody's career. 'This man who is in the bush could have acquired another woman there, and this is a woman who is struggling with this man's children whom he has left behind. Why do you malice this woman?' She also gave the other two women managerial positions. 'By the time I left, there were three women heads of departments, and these women had made it on their own.'

This action to right what she considered as an injustice was to later produce Uganda's first female Finance Minister, Syda Bbumba, who refers to Ogwal as her mentor, mother and everything. Ssekitolesko also had an illustrious career, later being appointed Minister of Agriculture and working with the Food and Agricultural Organisation as well as other NGOs. It is these stories that tell of the magnitude of the work women have done, which remains uncaptured, not shared. The perception is that a few elitist women have made it, who, in turn, have done very little to uplift other women, the reason why the majority of the rural women remain under-privileged and marginalised. She disagrees:

You can say these women have done nothing, but this is what I have done. Nobody asked me to do that. And I'm just doing it. Nobody asked me to fight for Kadaga. I just found myself launching the campaign on the floor of Parliament, and continued with it, nobody asked me for it.

Hearing various testimonies of the wonderful things these women do, both for national development and for women in particular, speaks volumes about why the media matters.

Ogwal's relationship with the media can be described as good – she's a newsmaker at all times. These stories make permeate the question of media and women interaction with greater importance. Why women do so much, and yet it seems as if they do nothing? According to Ogwal, the media has been corrupted, that 'there are some young journalists who have come to Parliament and picked envelopes from MPs. Some of them get dirty stories on MPs' and blackmail them. Ogwal makes the case that the media is to be handled carefully.

It's a *double-edged sword*. Don't brush too much shoulder with the media because they can also become counterproductive. Engage with them they can also build your profile. I know *media can really build your profile* and there are very many people who have enhanced their profile by using the media. They

are still very, very useful in as far as politics is concerned. But *we women for us to break into the media we need to make news, big news*. ...we are still media shy because of our social background. When you are in politics, there are dirty aspects of stories being weaved against you so you should always try to avoid those arena, so that you remain steady, steadfast.

The nature of the media and politics, in Ogwal's analysis, accounts for women's being cautious about the media and increasingly refuse to engage with the media even in programmes where their engagement could make a huge difference in their participation in public life.

One wonders why Ogwal has remained a newsmaker for decades. The answer lies in her engagement with the state, a lifetime of opposition. Ogwal paints the picture of the current administration as a regime and government determined to marginalise the northern part of the country and disrespect the opposition. When she turns to the subject of marginalisation of the north in the national cake-sharing, she looks angry. 'Who is in charge of this ministry who takes the largest share? And you know them, by the budget. If it is not the minister, it is the PS [permanent secretary].' She argues that most of the ministers from the north, such as the second deputy prime minister, the leader of government, Moses Ali, have no budget. 'But he is there, he is second deputy prime minister, title. No budget. You are heavyweight by the budget.' She regrets this state of affairs.

Ogwal is focused on exposing the mischief of the regime and its injustices. 'And people believe in you, they know when you speak, they believe in you because you speak from the heart.' The political space remains closed in reality. 'Mind you, this is a movement system, they cannot even tolerate political party politics. So they are just trying to tolerate them. It's like walking with somebody I don't want to walk with but I am commanded to do that.'

Ogwal is remarkably courageous and confident, with deep conviction. She is totally unafraid of people, whether it is President Museveni or her then party president and two-time former president of Uganda, Milton Obote. She disagrees with President Museveni on many things. At the budget reading of 2016, Ogwal stood up and offered to read the budget because the president had not yet appointed a cabinet, which meant there was no Minister of Finance. Any MP could read the budget. The opposition cheered her on, 'Mrs Ogwal, Mrs Ogwal.' The president replied that he would not have minded to give Mrs Ogwal the budget to read, 'but the problem, she has been so far away from me in the recent past.'

As a senior member of the opposition, permitting her to read the budget would have been unthinkable, but she and her colleagues were reminding the president that he was breaking the



law. Ogwal had been the president's choice for vice president during the no-party system. 'He has never forgotten asking me to be his vice president [...] and I refused.' She was in the Constituent Assembly and was vocal in demanding a return to the multi-party system, as the *de facto* leader of the Uganda People's Congress. She believed that her appointment would divert her from the struggle for a return to the multi-party system and to competitive politics.

Ogwal also understands why few women speak up, whether in Parliament or on media.

The thing is, we haven't yet broken out to build our own credentials for being who we are, and defend our credentials for being a Member of Parliament, for being this or being that. Some of us are very independent-minded because we have decided to be completely independent, to the extent that I don't care who intimidates me. Like when I became *de facto* leader of Uganda People's Congress, the leader of UPC then did not want me and my team who are in Uganda although he was in exile, to participate in the politics. Why? Because Museveni is a dictator. OK, he is a dictator but I cannot be a footballer unless I'm practising football. So as far as I'm concerned, being here on the ground I had to participate fully.

If Ogwal had a single conviction, it would be that multi-party democracy gives people the freedom to speak out, which has not materialised in Uganda. 'Supposing you are all muzzled now, you fear to talk about the government because you are a member of the NRM party, you are not only gagging your own members.' That explains why few women speak out.

The implication of Ogwal's case for the study is that women's participation is an act of will and self-drive. When all is said and done, it is easy to understand why Cecilia Ogwal has such an impact on people, Ugandan politics and political development in Africa. A tribute was paid to her to appreciate what she had done, when after two and a half years she was withdrawn from the Pan-African Parliament by her party to become the Opposition Chief Whip, having made a huge difference there. 'It was a tribute which made me cry; it is not good to pay tribute when you are listening.' She leaves her footprint everywhere. 'Where I put my foot in I want to bring some change, look at structural pitfalls and see if I can help.'

Blessed with charisma and a competence to match, Ogwal's commitment to and credibility in politics, public service and women's empowerment are beyond question. She is the typical newsmaker, beyond representation, interaction and engagement. Her coverage on media serves to inspire other women, as she mentors and motivates younger women. While I was in her office, the Minister of State for Education, Rosemary Sseninde came in, and called Ogwal 'Mummy'. She enjoys respect and the role of mother to female legislators. During the evening I sat in her office, her openness to discuss issues and the way she was treated as mother by her

colleagues, contrasted sharply with the ‘Iron Lady’ image I was used to in the media, and she frequently referred to me as ‘my daughter’.

The dual face of ‘Iron Lady’ and ‘mummy’ makes for interesting juxtaposition, symptomatic of the dual stances a woman must take in a given ‘engagement’, but also the media/public interpretation of her toughness as something cold, hard and, therefore, not feminine. She continues to live a life of participation, governed by excellence, challenging orthodox narratives and traditions, and breaking walls, almost effortlessly. One day, several weeks after I interviewed her, I woke up to a message on my WhatsApp from Ogwal. The message said, ‘Hello Emilly. How are you? Just to let you know I follow up people.’ Such is the level of commitment Ogwal has to women. It is Ogwal’s engagement with society and the state that has made her a newsmaker.

### ***7.7.2. Cissy Kagaba: A life of advocacy and challenging the powers that be***

Cissy Kagaba is arguably one of the youngest but most common faces on television and voice on radio. Kagaba, the executive director, Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda (ACCU) is a consummate advocate. A lawyer by profession, with a master’s degree in NGO management, Kagaba first worked with Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), then joined the ACCU as an advocacy officer in 2007. She became executive director in 2010. Kagaba enjoys good media attention, and deliberately uses media to engage the state.

Kagaba represents the case of women whose relationship with the media spans all the three levels of representation, interaction and engagement. She uses the media and the media is constantly seeking audience with her. ‘Whenever we call them, they will always come,’ she says. She calls press conferences to give information, once or twice every quarter. Yet, Kagaba’s appearances are not limited to press conferences. ‘Now 90 per cent of our appearances are not paid for. If it is cabinet, someone is going to come and say I need this.’ She is very popular among journalists, and admits that when she is not available and suggests someone else that the media can talk to, they [media] prefer to wait. She is not comfortable with this.

The media guys I think the moment they identify a particular person they are going to run with that person. I think the media people sometimes need to do some other research and reach out to some of these women. ... But I also think it is not good for the organisation because I can leave and I go elsewhere, then what happens? So sometimes it is hard for us also to mentor people within the

organisation because whenever they see a particular person, then that is the face, which is not bad but I think the media also needs to be more accommodative.

Kagaba's concern is one that I observed throughout the study period, and many respondents made reference to: a talk show culture that focuses on a small specimen of people, especially women. Usually, these people meet several of the determinants discussed earlier. Kagaba does not think the media has gone far enough to identify other women, or assumes that once women are in women NGOs, they cannot speak on anything other than women's issues. She reiterates concerns echoed elsewhere in the study that the media knows particular people that they think will say things the way they want to hear them, and if they say things differently, jump to the conclusion that they have been compromised.

To do her job well, she needs a thick skin, which is crucial for public affairs programmes that are largely combative in nature and hard-hitting. The low representation of women on public affairs programming to a large extent has to do with those who host the shows.

When you look at these media guys that conduct talk shows, how many do we have that are women? And you see, I think for me it is, are you willing to take on these guys because sometimes you are going to go for a show, a guy is going to blast you and you need to blast them back. Also the thing is, before you go, are you prepared?

She reasons that women fear to discuss political issues such as corruption because they need to be willing to criticise some of the things that have actually not worked. She prepares adequately for any talk show. 'Even if it is 30 minutes, I want to read for three to four hours.' I wondered about what drives her, and where she draws the courage to speak up when increasingly fewer women speak against the current political establishment. She told me it is passion but mostly the arrogance of the leaders, dealing with which needs a bit of anger. She argues that it is impossible for women to speak up under the current system, because it is too risky to be objective. The other problem that takes away women's voices is that there is no way of knowing if the women who hold positions of power use it well, and they do not, in her view.

For me the key issue is whether those women have used those positions to influence women at the grass roots, and if they have, whether that has been captured and shared. .. how has their work empowered the local woman? For me I think that is the mismatch. We tend to think either we have arrived, because we have a cabinet now and it has quite a number of women, but are they using those positions to actually enhance or to pull up their fellow women? Or, 'yes, I am there, I am a minister in charge of whatever, I am just going to do what I have to do at that level' [...] do the women themselves understand that the reason probably we are here is to enhance other women? And also if they have

been brought at the national level, do they have the skill, the expertise and to ensure they are able to bring up other women.

She is quick to add, though, that it is perhaps not fair to blame the women, if there are no systems to enable them to make that change, especially when those same women are used as a political card and yet are unable to use those same platforms to pull up other women. Several issues were raised in the course of the research, explaining why women cannot speak against the NRM establishment, because they bask in these positions, having never imagined they could hold such positions, and hold these positions dear. They understand they have been invited to a space that is not theirs, that they are visitors. As such, women become the president's praise singers.

Women are going to go out there praising, praising, praising the president, praising, praising, praising and praising. Obviously when they praise, they also have a constituency they are going to continue to influence. By the time the elections come, he comes back very easily and with all the women there who have been praising him, they have used their networks.

The image of women in public life right through the study remained that of political cards being used by the regime. Why would such an image be so profound? Kagaba has an insight:

When they go inside there, they change. Now the moment they change, we are able to see this change. Some of them cease to be the people that they were. When you see them you are saying the last thing I want to be engaged in is politics. That is why people will say, these women are being used.

The 'women-are-being-used' narrative goes beyond politics to include those in public administration, heads of specific government institutions that are strategic for the ruling party's survival. However, Kagaba understands that unless women engage with the media, this image is not going to change because it is a cultural thing. The element of culture is so firmly embedded that it must first be addressed, although it is ignored. 'When you are trying to balance, is the situation balanced?' We are not as balanced as we should be, she notes.

Cissy Kagaba may not be in the women's movement, a card-carrying feminist or talking about women at every opportunity. In fact, she confesses to not understanding 'those things', but she is a strong female voice and presence in the fight against corruption on media. Her engagement with the state and the media is what sets her apart. She has become positively represented on media with effective interaction and engagement because of her engagement in public life. Whatever she does is not only captured, but is shared widely. Kagaba clearly has influence, and the media enhances her work. Cissy Kagaba's case is one of representation, interaction and

engagement that, in turn, influences women's participation in public life. She is bound to be around for very long.

## **7.8. Chapter Conclusion: Implications for Women in Public Life**

As I conclude this chapter, I recall Winnie Kiiza, the Leader of Opposition in Parliament, telling me, 'At first I feared the press. I had heard the stereotype that the press can make or break' (Kiiza,<sup>20</sup> interview 2016). Her admission reaffirms the real influence of the media on women's participation in public life. I have tried to tell each person's story with respect, which they told me without reserve. I have also used each story to illustrate specific issues regarding women's media participation as embedded in representation, interaction and engagement. I have used each case, as a most likely case – to demonstrate that women's media participation can facilitate rather than frustrate women's participation in public life. The current levels of representation, interaction and engagement are, however, not sufficient to create strong influence.

Many conclusions can be drawn from the stories of women's experience with the media and how it has affected their participation in public life. The media was constantly referred to in metaphorical language as a 'double-edged sword' which often meant that 'the media can make you or break you', 'the media can build or break your profile', 'the media can empower or disempower you', 'the media can enable or disable you in your work' and 'the media can encourage or discourage'. The cases presented all show that the media facilitates women's participation in public life, thereby playing the role of an enabler for women.

Nevertheless, the media can frustrate women's participation in public life, thus playing the role of a dis-enabler. One particular case, which I have not studied, was frequently brought up to illustrate this double-edged role of the media – the case of former vice president, Specioza Wandera Kazibwe, which could be illuminating. The double role of the media is attainable through processes that, on the one hand, empower and encourage women, thus enabling them and, on the other hand, disempower and discourage women, thus disabling their participation in public life. It would be interesting to study the case of Kazibwe in order to understand how the media influenced her work and the nature of the relationship she had with the media.

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<sup>20</sup> The Hon. Winnie Kiiza is the Leader of Opposition in Parliament in Uganda, the first woman to hold that position.

My study reveals that women's participation in the media is not entirely an issue dependent on the media but women, too, must play their part. These cases represent how the media facilitated women's participation in public life. To the extent that the media is influential for women, illuminating ways that women are empowered or disempowered (Sark 2004, p. 12), this study has found not only ways in which women are empowered or disempowered, but also why they are likely to be empowered or disempowered when they hold positions of power, which, in turn, affect their participation on media. Each story unpacked the conceptual variables.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **MEDIA AND WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE: INTERPRETIVE INTEGRATION**

#### **8.1. Chapter Introduction**

The study was conducted in three phases using various tools for data collection such as interviews, participant observation and content analysis. Case study design and grounded theory were the major research designs. The presentation of data was based on specific phases in a discursive and reflective way with limited anchorage in theory and literature. This section (Chapter Eight) brings together key findings under each research question, highlighting key issues raised in the various phases with linkages to literature and theory.

#### **8.2. Public Affairs and Determinants of Participation**

While women's participation dominates research, whether in development or in politics, little attention is been paid to the media. Using multi-disciplinary and multi-method approaches, I examined women and the media, starting with descriptive aspects that unpacked the nature of participation, the determinants and constraints on participation as well as the influence of the media on wider participation. The media is liberalised and open to competition. Programming is responsive to competitive tendencies. Apart from the national broadcaster, Uganda Television Corporation (UBC) and its radio counterpart that are public-owned, the rest of the radio and television stations are either privately or community owned. The choice of radio and television stations to study was based on a diversity of cases. The study phases were based on observation, interviews with media personnel, public figures (women in public life) and quantitative content analysis for the purpose of establishing the extent to which women participated in these media programmes. Many of the findings would not have been possible without a multi-method approach that helped to verify issues from a variety of sources.

The review of literature indicates that ownership and politics matter. In line with the view that the media exists only for its commercial interests (Ross 2004), the findings validated this view where the choice of guests for particular programmes was driven by the need for high ratings to some extent. Some women decried having to pay expensively in order to use space on radio

and television whenever there were issues of concern that they wished to bring to the table. Other women, who were deemed to put up good shows, were always sought after.

What is the nature of the media system and environment in Uganda? The nature of the media environment continues to deteriorate with limitations on other freedoms, such as that of assembly that is more pronounced with the return to multi-party democracy (Mwesige 2013) and dependence on retrogressive laws (Chibita 2010). The findings in this study reveal an accommodative atmosphere based on the topics that were discussed on programmes. A number of shows featured top government officials who responded to issues of public concern and some of the guests were senior opposition politicians. It should be noted, though, that for some shows, government representatives are always available to counter any accusations levelled against the government and to churn out their own propaganda, there were claims of paid-up talk show participants. The respondents, talk show hosts and producers, mentioned that occasionally there were threats but, on the whole, they could discuss with greater freedom.

The nature of programmes studied featured current affairs that involved issues in public affairs as they unfolded, audience discussion programmes, talk shows that were panel discussions, host-guest dialogue and interviews, and profiling. Each of these programmes provided insight into the nature of the media in question. In line with media that are either coopted, coordinated, competitive and consolidated (Maractho 2015), programming and the subjects discussed on public affairs is a critical part of defining the media system's nature of diversity and independence, and the degree of freedom enjoyed. Enjoyment of freedom is relative and dependent on the subject. Those that have to do with 'peace, stability and security' appear to get government working.

On one talk show that I participated in every Saturday for a period of three months, the participants were vibrant, vented on government officials and spoke their minds, sometimes in a fierce manner, totally unafraid, just as Mwesige (2004, 2009) suggests. Participants from the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), as well as other political parties dominated these programmes. In those spaces, one might form the illusion that there is too much freedom and people can say whatever they want about whomever. Only six female participants appeared in the duration of the study, with each show having two to four female participants at a time. It was the same women who appeared. At least up to 25 men participated in the same period.



Whereas over-regulation of the media has been a subject of debate in Uganda (Maractho 2015) using retrogressive laws (Chibita 2010), not all media are affected by this over-regulation. Specific media houses appear to be under surveillance over contravention of media requirements while certain periods also demanded varied degrees of monitoring. A case in point is the alleged ban on *ebimeeza*, with which some media houses never complied and with the *ebimeeza* continuing to run with the full participation of members of the ruling party. The other case in point is the election periods, when regulation is stringent, characterised by the occasional shutting down of social media, as was the case in 2016 during the general elections. This demonstrates that the media is free as long as they keep away from critical issues that put the state and its actors on the defensive.

The programmes in general can be classified on a continuum that runs from cordial to combative. This classification is based on codes that described the programmes from interviews by both men and women, and also on my observation as well as women's experiences. The nature of the programmes surprisingly became a key determinant for women's participation. The more cordial a programme was, the greater the number of women who participated and the more combative a programme was, the fewer the women who participated. The few women who appeared on the combative programmes also tended to have the character of the male participants. On the combative programmes, participants are likely to shout, bang tables and accuse each other on set. These are mainly panel or *ebimeeza* programmes. Between the cordial and the combative are the competitive programmes that are neither cordial nor combative, but that allow for debate. Contrary to the theory of a public sphere open to men and women (Habermas 1991), a kind of single public which Nancy Fraser refutes in recognition of multiple publics (1990), even multiple publics, if they do not conform to certain programme types, will inadvertently exclude women.

The subjects of discussion on the whole range of the talk shows, with the exception of People's Parliament on NTV and Business Today on UBC TV, tended to revolve around politics and the economy, featuring politicians. The shows are run on the principle of accountability, which implies that heads of government institutions or public officials are more likely to feature than ordinary Ugandans, unless these are renowned analysts. Indeed, content analysis showed a larger presence of women on the two programmes, which are also hosted by ladies. This can be interpreted to mean that women are able to attend programmes hosted by fellow women, who, far from setting a tone that is militaristic and intense, work towards ensuring that it is cordial and discursive. It also means that women are more likely to discuss a diverse range of

issues rather than focusing exclusively on politics. The Morning Breeze, Face Off on WBS and the Fourth Estate on NTV, largely geared towards politics, are dominated by male participants.

The participants in the public affairs programmes remain predominantly male. Face Off and the Fourth Estate attested to some of the scantiest appearances by women. Women hardly participated in both panel shows, held on Friday and Sunday respectively, or it was the same women who did. Women's Day in 2015 fell on a weekday, but Fourth Estate was able to pick up a discussion on the subject of 'women in politics' on 13 March 2015. Four panellists discussed the subject, without a single woman on set. After the 54<sup>th</sup> celebration of independence in Uganda on 9 October 2016, the same show discussed the historical journey of Uganda with four panellists, all men. I watched the programme, and Rita Aciro, the executive director of Uganda Women's Network, sent a text to the host, expressing her disappointment that no woman had been invited to be part of the important discussion of Ugandans' experience with independence. The host, Charles Mwangushya, apologised for not including women. Over the course of research, there were mixed reactions. On the one hand, the media suggested that women are not interested in the said programmes or discussing politics and, on the other hand, women insisted that the media is not doing enough to reach out to women. This incident is a good example. Even though some women may not be interested, there are those who would wish to be invited.

Whereas it may seem that the identified determinants of participation are gender-neutral, this is far from the full story. The interviews with media professionals, producers and presenters all revealed that they never considered gender. In other words, there are journalistic principles that matter, which determine who is invited to participate. For these programmes, people are still largely invited to the conversation, although a few men invited themselves to participate. In the end, issues surrounding the problem (issue of the day to be discussed), the nature of the programme and its intended role, the politics surrounding a subject, the performance of guests whenever invited or their performance in public life, the skill of the presenter and the producer, the professional training of the participants, personality and media or government policy, were the dominant determinants. This emerged in all sets of interviews. These determinants fit within the rubric of competition in programming and commercial interests (Ross 2004) within which gender balance is not a key factor.

While the above determinants appear to be gender-neutral, interactions between these factors ultimately dictate who gets invited. For instance, if the issues revolve around energy, health,

education and trade, all ministries whose portfolios are held by women, whether or not the minister for each sector is invited to speak to the issue depends on their personality and availability. The difference being that, despite being competent and knowledgeable in their dockets, one deputy minister will be approached, while in another the PRO will be, and in yet another, the minister is invited. The relationship between the knowledge about a subject and the personality and perceived performance of the person whose responsibility it is to account is crucial. This is both a media issue and a women issue. The media may define the tone of programmes in a way that exclude women but, also, women can define their interaction with the media in a way that alienates them from the media. To some extent this accounts for the low women's representation on public affairs programming, to which I turn later. There is no single determinant of participation.

It is argued that a basic requirement of a democratic media is representation of all interests and facilitation of participation in the public domain (Curran 1991, p. 23). Is the liberalised media necessarily a democratic media? Claims of interactive programmes eliminating gatekeeping practices of the newsroom culture and the media in general fall flat on their face. Women remain excluded through subtle but firm determinants of participation that every producer and presenter considers first and foremost. What is strange is that despite women's increased participation in public life, and in general their capacity to meet these stringent requirements that for women include being charming to listeners or viewers, and having a vibrant personality, women still scrape through the scale of inclusion as equal participants in these programmes. Rather than the theory of a democratic media or social responsibility, critical theory offers a useful explanation of these disparities within the context of an imperfect public sphere, power relations tilted in favour of men, and women's voices muted in public domains.

### **8.3. Representation, Interaction and Engagement**

Literature is awash with coverage of women in the media that seems to give nothing but absences or presences with distorted images. In this study, I moved beyond representation, and redefined representation. Is it possible to move beyond the image and portrayal debate? What if women were not victims of the media, and chose to participate in the media on their own terms? Rather than focus on image and portrayal, I examined women's media participation in public affairs programmes. The assumption that women's participation in decision-making and public life areas matters for gender equality informed this choice.

This study revealed that it is not enough to focus on representation alone. Women must be both involved and engaged in a manner that attracts media coverage, rather than stay away from the media. What do women lose if they do not interact and engage with the media? Contrary to claims that institutional actors are given standing automatically and, therefore, do not have the mobilisation and validation needs of movements (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993), when women are actors in institutions, they still must find creative ways of gaining access to the media through engagement in a variety of platforms.

It is suggested that movements need the media for the purposes of mobilisation, validation and scope enlargement (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993, p. 115). It was very surprising that the question was often asked whether women need the media to validate what they do. 'Women are doing great things,' I was often told. Whereas this may be true, the perception about women is driven largely by what is not there in the media, rather than what is there. According to Winnie Kiiza (interview 2016), 'many women are doing great things but they do not know how to involve the media. So people do not know what we are doing.' The media depends on public life for coverage, but women in public life are far less part of that interest. While women insist that the media ignores them, the media insists that women are not interested in public affairs programming, although they may take up public office.

The scholarship on the media and women in politics largely focuses on the negative portrayal of women and the image of women (Tamale 1999; Mukama 2002; Nassanga 1997). These works place women as victims of the media rather than actors in the media system, in a relationship of power and dependence that favours the media. In my study, women blamed the media for reporting on women from the wrath point of view, when women have done negative things (Anne, interview 2015; Dina, interview 2015). The media environment has largely changed, and is far different from that in the 1990s when major scholarship on women and media emerged. Today's media is more competitive and there is a large spectrum of media.

One surprising finding was that women are less represented, not so much for lack of opportunities to participate. My analysis suggests that the media and women are actors in a complex system with responsibility on all sides. As Gamson and Wolsfeld (1993, p.115) note, 'movements often have a distinctive and evolving culture that may in various ways, conflict with media and mainstream political culture'. In the current study, which is limited to women but not as movement, the social and political context of interaction is rather crucial. The relationship between the media and movements is more of movements recognising that they

need the media to broaden the scope of their agenda, and media coverage is likely to have a positive effect on either mobilising followers or influencing the target. The fact that women reject opportunities to participate in public affairs programming implies that they do not have a full understanding of how the media can facilitate their work, and hence lose out on opportunities to either mobilise followers or influence the targets of their marginalisation. Women's refusal to participate when given the opportunity appeared to be largely driven by fear.

Women's media participation at the level of representation may be improving but is still very low in comparison to men (less than 20%). However, when it comes to interaction in terms of both consultation and conversation, it is extremely low. Few women are consulted, and fewer still join the conversation. There are notable exceptions of women joining in to make comments on social media but hardly directly making interventions in discursive programmes. Very few women's organisations with good budgets buy programmes to highlight key women's issues. But that is as far as interaction goes.

Engagement at the level of involvement and influence is mixed. To some extent, some women have enough power and influence to ensure that they are covered anyway, even if they are unlikely to directly engage in dialogue. A case in point is the Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga although, as expected, not all the coverage of her might be good. The other case in point is Winnie Kiiza, the Leader of Opposition in Parliament, who increasingly involves the media in bringing issues to the public. Her participation as an opposition politician requires much, but she has learnt to engage the media. 'I used to be afraid of the press,' she says. Her engagement in public life has endeared her on many occasions to the media. The engagement of women in public life might significantly improve representation and interaction.

The impact of engagement in public life is, in turn, impactful for media participation. For instance, in Parliament, the Speaker, the Clerk to Parliament, the Government Chief Whip and the Leader of Opposition are all women. Their engagement in those respective offices guarantees that women will have visibility and voice where Parliament is concerned. And this is where engagement matters, and it improves representation and interaction. The Speaker continues to challenge the media on the fair coverage not just of women but of the institution of Parliament through various directives, using her power as the Speaker. Women's media participation, therefore, cannot be achieved by just improved representation or even positive coverage of women, but has to be a process that will incrementally create impact.

#### **8.4. Constraints on Women's Media Participation**

The choice of a female speaker as the head of Parliament is a critical step towards having women in critical leadership positions. The Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda is the most senior ranking woman in the country. Her presence is a pointer to women's ability to lead in top leadership positions despite the many forms of resistance they encounter along their managerial paths. (Isis-WICCI & UWOPA 2014, p.11)

Contrary to the suggestion that having a female Speaker of Parliament is symptomatic of women's achievement in Uganda, there was significant evidence in the data to suggest that it falls far short of reflecting the gender gap and people's perception of women's ability. It is also not clear if when notable women hold high-sounding positions, women's emancipation is promoted. The common narratives surrounding the appointment of women on a 'know-who' basis and their relationship with State House or the president, and their dependence on these networks, were far more revealing than the presence of women in these positions. While few people doubted the Speaker's credentials as a good leader, nevertheless she was also presented as the key case in women's failure to move beyond affirmative action in politics, having been in Parliament from the inception of affirmative action to-date. She was further named as a case where affirmative action, in turn, becomes a burden to the women, a point well noted in literature (Tamale 1999, 2004; Tripp 2000). The presence of women in high positions should, therefore, be treated as the least likely case, the exception rather than the norm.

The current study concurs with literature that the manner in which women enter political life has adversely affected their participation. This is not surprising, given the amount of work devoted to it in literature. However, what is quite surprising is that it is not only political participation that has been affected, but women in general are affected by a severe fear of participation. This, in turn, is manifested by the absence of women on media in programmes that are more interactive or that call on women in policy-making. There are specific ways in which women have been constrained in public life that are mirrored in the media. The contribution of this study is that the perceived performance of women elsewhere, in particular politics, will largely determine that of women in other sectors.

The first issue is women and the state. The manner in which women in public life relate with the state is a big determinant of how they will participate in public debate and dialogue on issues that matter to women and the general public. There are only a few exceptions. It was

suggested in the data that the majority of women decline to participate in public affairs programmes because they are in public life thanks to affirmative action or patronage networks. This is significant to the extent that it implies that affirmative action enables women who should never have been in the public space because they lack merit to gain access to public life. The implication is that those who speak up independently using mediated forums are less likely to be politicians on the basis of affirmative action. Again, the role of the state in empowering or disempowering women is noted in the literature on women and politics (Goetz 2003).

The performance of women when invited for the programmes is deemed very poor. The explanation tended to be that culturally, women are not brought up to speak out in public life. Many of the constraints were explained in terms of either culture or patriarchy in society. I found that women's participation in public life has definitely improved but certain areas remain dominated by men and no-go areas for women. Participation in public affairs programming, despite open access, remains rare for women in public life. It appears the view that affirmative action can invigorate or silence women's participation (Tripp 2000) in politics is manifested in the media. It was, thus, not surprising that the call to remove affirmative action in relation to women's participation in politics remained strong, even among women.

Owing to the uniqueness of the media institution, affirmative action is not an option. Women are not included on programmes just to cater to the need for gender balance. Moreover, in the talk show genre, being exceptionally good is more important than gender considerations. Many of the feminists and media critics (Tamale 1999) who take issue with the coverage of women pay little attention to media culture itself, the ethos of news and the urgency of media issues. Some respondents, among them women, argued that the problem is that women are not involved where it matters, where they become newsmakers. Many women are doing things quietly, are involved in areas that are deemed less controversial and are doing little to attract the public gaze.

The limitations of affirmative action and the progress of women in public life must be framed within the context of the political system and political culture. Women in public life, whether they are heads of government institutions or politicians, are inherently supporters of the ruling party, or are presumed to be. Their success in public life is strongly tied to this support. The issue of promotions as a result of networks rather than merit has put women in a place where they cannot defend their achievements. Only a few are respected while for many their credibility is non-existent despite their capability. These limitations are compounded by lack

of focused training of female leaders, often left to some NGOs such as FOWODE, which clearly do not focus on their relationship with the media.

The media respondents, including women, accused women in public life of the lacking competence, courage and conviction needed for participation in public life. Women were considered not to be good debaters. However, while women did not deny their lack of participation in discursive programmes and, in general, agreed with media professionals that sometimes they turn down opportunities to participate, they argued that this must be framed within the larger political context. More women are afraid of speaking their mind in a political climate where opposition to the ruling party is very costly, not just for women but for men, too.

Continued intolerance of dissent by the ruling party implies that women are less likely to participate. A case in point is women in politics, the majority of whom belong to the ruling party. This, the talk show hosts interviewed believe, creates a situation where women must not be seen to contradict the ruling party and are reduced to singing praises to the president. This position is not new, and quite apparent in politics, but is now more reflected in the media. In other words, the political institutions have created strong gender biases which undermine women's voice and presence in public life (Goetz 2003).

If looked at generally and beyond the affirmative action limitations, one might argue that men, too, are not performing very well in the area of participation, either. Several examples obtained through observation of programmes and interviews support this claim. The talk show culture is built around a few individuals who move from one station to another. While male participants are more, they, too, attend various platforms. There were cases where one participant appeared on various platforms on different days (occasionally the same day in the morning and in the evening) discussing the same thing, as if it was his job. And if the debate surrounding the performance of Parliament as an institution is anything to go by, then the performance issue does not affect only women. A sustained critical assessment of Parliament, headed by a woman, has linked it to the nature of the political system that encourages the building of strong networks and patronage. However, women avoid politics more than men, and suffer from loss of voice.

Another critical issue was the predominant image that the public held of women was that they were being used by the state to clean up civil service and government institutions that are strategic. A rather common perception that the respondents, both within the media and among women, held was that the majority of women enter public life, especially at the high levels of decision-making, by paying a high price. The price is to dance to the tune of the powers that



be, and to respond to the needs of the state and the ruling party. Contrary to claims that women's leadership is now more accepted, I found that there is little confidence in women as leaders, and worse in the women's movement as a whole. The autonomy of the women's movement that defined literature (Tripp 2000) is questionable, if it exists at all. The ruling party is viewed as having broken the women's movement and as routinely ignoring their proposals outright. The influence of the movement has faded.

Part of the responsibility for this was placed on women. Several women suggested that when women take up positions of influence, they change, and rarely for the better. They forget the women's agenda (if they know it in the first place), have no time to mentor young women and frustrate the women's movement. The image of women as praise singers of the president was vivid, too. Whether in public administration or politics, the women serve one goal, i.e. to support the president and mobilise votes for him. These discussions were common both within the media and among women, in the two phases of interviews. Content analysis also revealed that when women were hosted on programmes, they were more likely than not to be praising the president. It is theorised that women are placed in strategic positions where there is money because they can be manipulated, as opposed to cases where men are in charge, and paid handsomely as a reward. These opinions imply that women's leadership, capability and credibility remain largely in doubt and derail the critical gains made for women's participation in public life.

Society and culture came up as a matter of course in each interview. Perceptions could also derive from culture. In literature, the existence of a patriarchal society is presented as the biggest challenge to women's participation in public life. Patriarchy, which permeates society, including the media, gives power to men and disadvantages women. While there is no denying that society in general favours men where the public domain is concerned, these arguments are not very relevant in the context of my study. I found that women used explanations of gender roles, and dominance by men in decision-making and the public sphere in general, to justify their refusal to participate. Media respondents provided numerous cases in which they tried to get specific women involved, and these women's excuses for not showing up ranged from picking up children from school to reserving time for family, usually issues men do not raise when invited. The use of family responsibilities as reasons for non-participation implies that women participate in reinforcing the stereotype that women are not good for public life.

The timing of the programmes was a big issue for women. It became apparent that the stereotypes and perceptions that marginalise women are also effectively used by women when they do not want to be asked questions. This is not to say that women are incompetent in general, as was sometimes suggested, but rather that women, as a result of their nurture, remain conscious of cultural expectations that, in turn, hinder their performance as public servants. Taking up a public position implies that tough questions are going to be asked, regardless of the gender of the person holding the position. It is acknowledged both in literature and fieldwork that women are more likely to be held to higher standards, but they cannot be exempt from questioning either.

While it is true that women reinforced the stereotypes, perceptions and labels that degrade and marginalise women, the media played an equally important role in reproducing cultural narratives. Media structures and programmes are designed for men. The timing of programmes, who hosts them and the subjects discussed, all favour men in the final analysis. The programmes are largely combative in nature, and run late in the night, with the majority scheduled at least after 10.00 pm. While it seemed was a cause of concern to the media that they have to beg women to participate in these programmes, they are not aware of the nature of these programmes and how their structure already excludes women. They are also insensitive to women's social realities. Women did not deny the refusal to participate, but they complained about the structure and the possibility that the media is not doing enough to include women. Perhaps what is clear is that interactive programmes are more than just information vessels (Mwesige 2004) and the mass media is the site through which negotiations over meanings will occur (Sakr 2004), which women do not appreciate or else they would try to make themselves flexible.

The other way in which the media reproduces cultural narratives was evident in the media's interaction with civil society and feminist discourse. The programmes I studied rise above the charges of negative portrayal to a large extent. Women felt largely excluded from the conversations and have sometimes had to buy their space, paying a high price to have their perspectives heard. However, society's engagement with women in the public domain involves women who are corrupted by western ideals of feminism and who are, therefore, out of touch with reality. Consequently, the way these women activists have been bashed, sometimes through the media, leaves more women claiming not to understand what feminism is all about and unwilling to engage with it. Many women confessed to not having a sense of what 'these' women do, and the media has reproduced that identity question to a large degree.

It is in the various narratives of the producers and the presenters that the real nuances of cultural narratives emerge. While some respondents suggested that the negative portrayal of women by the media stemmed from the media's lack of appreciation that women in public life have outgrown the traditional modes of a woman, others pointed out that society is not as balanced as it should be, leaving the media as a mirror of what is there. It is true that women are more numerous than men, but where do they sit in society? Women were described as less competent than men, as lacking courage and conviction as opposed to men, as having a difficult character, as if there was a universal character that was embedded in women. Other strong perceptions that emerged through interviews were that women in general prefer to play it safe, therefore being unfit for public life, which is messy; that they prefer to be morale boosters, singing the praises of the president, even in Parliament; that women were not made for public affairs, and participate a lot on the simple-minded programmes; that men are easy to deal with while women are naturally shy.

Also dominant were the views that women's nurture makes them slow, unable to cope with the speed inherent in public life unless supported, that the most credible guests are men, that women are matriarchs at home, busy with children, and are unavailable to the media. These were the dominant views, held by as many of the men as by the women interviewed. However, a few voices also pointed out that the media do not reach out a lot to the women and that the media quote men first. In its defence, the media argues that they are only a mirror of society.

It was from interviewing women in public life that the image of women as 'invited to the table', moreover not on their own terms, emerged. Different respondents said different things to imply this. What does it mean for women to be invited to the table at which they must observe table manners? The signification here is that decision-making is not a space for women, and when invited the women are visitors and must be careful not to offend the owners of the table. Ironically, women are invited everywhere. Even on media, they wait to be invited, and if they do not perform to the expectations of those who run the programmes 'they are sent back to the dungeons', as one respondent put it. This invitation also determines the level of cooperation among women. That these views persist speaks volumes about the progress made.

The implications are wide and varied. The main one is that the state, wittingly or otherwise, has empowered women and paradoxically disempowered them to the extent that the power they hold is not real power, but is symbolic. In understanding the constraints on women's participation in the media's public affairs programmes, the interactions have created better

understanding of why there are few women on public affairs programming. Many earlier studies have focused on the negative portrayal of women, often condemning the media. I have found that examining why few women are in these programmes can be explained by examining both the media and women, and their relationship with the state and society in general, but also with each other. Success in women's media participation, this study demonstrates, is not going to be won through simple legislative redress that demands the inclusion of women, but rather through women being deliberate in redirecting the narrative and shaping the discussion.

### **8.5. Media Influence on Women's Participation in Public Life**

In presenting the data, I focused on women in the media, women on media and women challenging orthodox narratives. The data in this section was already presented in a manner that provides for women's actual experiences and their perspectives on the media and women. While Chapter Five largely gave voice to media producers and presenters, this section focuses exclusively on women, with the women as the points of departure. I have considered an interpretive analysis in this section in order to provide a more general understanding of what influence, if any, the media has on women's participation in public life.

The first key point is that women in the media play a crucial role in increasing visibility and amplifying women's voices on mass media. Women's representation on media is, to a great extent, improved through women in the media deliberately bringing in women's stories. As women in the media, they are models for young women who develop an interest in the profession. The cases of Jacki Lumbasi and Siima Sabiti show increased representation. While Lumbasi has reached out to more women to get them to feature on her programmes, Siima has spoken for women and raised the bar for effective representation. This is contrary to the view that women in the media count for little in the portrayal of women in politics (Tamale 1999).

The second main issue is that women in the media, especially those in management, make an enormous contribution ensuring that women's stories are heard, persuading those in the business of news to be more inclusive. Margaret Ssentamu-Masagazi is a remarkable example of women doing a great deal to change the negative portrayal of women. Ssentamu's involvement of media houses and women journalists has made a difference in motivating young female journalists. Through introducing media awards, women-specific programmes and gender training for journalists and through her engagement with media houses and legislation, Ssentamu's efforts has led to tremendous progress. Her involvement knows no bounds. The

case of Carol Beyanga, the managing editor of the *Daily Monitor*, demonstrates that when women are deliberate about changing the nature of women's representation, if they have decision-making power, they will make a huge difference. Contrary to claims that there must be a significant mass of women with decision-making power to make a difference, even where they are few they can still have an impact, provided they choose to use their influence to that effect. Ssentamu's involvement and Beyanga's influence go beyond the normal call of duty to create a media that is responsive to women and the women's agenda.

The third main contribution is that women in public life use a variety of methods to engage the media, and are successful. Women push back in the face of negative portrayal. They fill the gap in representation by paying for space to join the conversation where they are not invited, and when invited they use the space to make sure that women's issues are addressed. Marren Akatsa-Bukachi uses her leadership at EASSI to ensure that women are not only empowered economically but that their contributions are made known to the public. She has shared her story on Women and Power, and joined the conversation on radio to speak for women. Theopista Ntale has also, when consulted and invited to speak on media, challenged women to get economically empowered. She believes that economic empowerment of the masses is the starting point. Both women demonstrate the power of interaction with the media that builds on representation. Nonetheless, the limitation of the interactive programmes is that it was clear that participation from the audience perspective is extremely difficult and frustrating.

The fourth contribution is that performance in public life is crucial for media representation and interaction. It is women's engagement with public life that will make them visible and give them voice, and it is also their perceived performance that will result in their being invited. The media is looking for people who make news rather than a particular gender. When women participate in public life in a way that matters they end up on media. The case of Rukia Nakamatte, then Ministry of Health publicist, shows that media coverage is a function of careful cultivation of the relationship between the media and actors in public life. Some positions demand that you answer questions to the media. For Nakamatte, media participation is more about wooing the media and creating a relationship with the media. Ruth Ssebatindira, the former president of the Uganda Law Society, demonstrates that being vocal when it matters is very important. The media may not be looking for someone because they are men or women, but by virtue of the positions they hold in public life. As such, participation in public life itself may be a starting point for media representation and interaction, then engagement will follow.

When women attain effective participation in public life, they need not look for the media, instead the media will look for them. However, the fear of participation must be addressed.

The fifth contribution is that in order for the media to facilitate women's participation in public life, they must be willing to challenge orthodox narratives and the status quo, and get out of their comfort zone and out of the norm. Two cases bring this conclusion to the fore. Cecilia Atim Ogwal, a newsmaker to the core, has achieved that fit through her refusal to be silenced, and through challenging orthodox narratives both within the state and within society. Her lack of fear and her fighting spirit have enabled her to step over boundaries and defy tradition while focused on excellence. Ogwal has had a lifetime of participation and promoting women. Cissy Kagaba has a relationship with the media that enhances her work. She understands that engaging the state is something one must do through interaction with the media. Although women typically do not take on the state in the fight against corruption, Kagaba has lived a life of advocacy and challenging the powers that be. Both women are not self-proclaimed feminists, but their engagement with the state, society and the media makes them reinvent the image of women in public life, and gives the credibility. They are some of the few women in Uganda who engage the state.

The sixth and final contribution is that women admit that the limited representation, interaction and engagement with the media are in part due to women's reluctance to participate, due to the fear of participation, culture and society as well as the nature of the media and politics in Uganda. The level of women's media participation remains too low to allow the reaping of all the benefits that these cases represent, and to meaningfully facilitate women's participation in public life. However, some cases demonstrate that interface with the media can result in women being motivated to join the media profession, that the presence of women in public life on media can lead to modelling for young women and that women in public life can become mentors for young women. Each case, although unique, represents the most likely cases where effective participation through representation, interaction and engagement will facilitate women's participation in public life. The lack of such media participation, or when such participation results in the negative portrayal of women, can frustrate women's participation in public life.

## 8.6. The Practical Reach of Critical Theory

Critical theory proved useful in modelling new theoretical relationships. Critical theory appeals for commonplace values such as freedom, equality and reason as well as assumptions about what is reasonable (Craig 1999), and remains valid. In the context of this study, the perceptions of women, the critical judgement of women in public life, their exclusion, whether occasioned by themselves or by media design, all trample on these commonsense values. It is clear that there are some problems of communication, so that while women are doing great things and are involved in communities in very meaningful and magical ways, much of what they are doing remains un-captured and unshared. There is clearly much ideological distortion going on in the relationship between the media and women, which goes both ways. The media has a limited understanding of women and what they do. Women have little appreciation for the media and could not care less to participate on public affairs programmes. If the media damages the image and dignity of women, what have women done to challenge that injustice? The limitations of critical theory remain within the way in which each theory approaches the media and women.

Much as feminist theory is relevant for understanding the existing critique of media representation of women and feminist interventions in the newsroom, its social change commitments need to be revisited. There was evidence to suggest the fading of a social revolution whose fruits are limited to a few elitist women with access to power rather than the mass of women. The importance of feminist theory remains in the context of highlighting women's experiences. However, my conclusion is that there is a disconnect between the feminist ideology and the practical engagement with the ideology within the context of a country like Uganda, which remains disillusioned, contested and controversial. Many women in public life prefer not to be associated with feminism or 'those women', and feminists characterise the women in public life as being unaware of the gender agenda. Another critical issue also was that the women's movement is not as cohesive and autonomous as had been claimed (Tripp 2000) but remains fragmented and captured by some individuals. In several conversations younger women said they had no connection with either the women's movement or the feminist ideology.

Feminist theorists also need to move beyond the portrayal debate and start to question women's own engagement. The idea that women are victims of the media is contrary to the current findings, which suggest that women are constantly turning down opportunities to participate,

are unavailable and are difficult to engage. This is partly because early studies have focused on framing. In the genre of discursive programmes, the boundaries for participation are porous and women can cross them if they are interested, despite the existence of structural limitations. Unless women engage the media and use it to change narratives that are injurious to women, this is not going to change. As such, feminist theories' limitations in understanding the media are the failure to recognise that despite numerous studies pointing out the media's negative coverage, not much is changing. Women, and the women's movement, have to be deliberate in changing this situation, by interacting and engaging with the media. The notion of an African feminism will not be useful either, as long as feminism remains part of the constructive concept already contaminated and perceived as western in framing, and donor-funded.

Cultural studies remains the most relevant, not so much because of its conceptualisation of representation that includes meaning-making, but rather because constraints on women's participation remain culturally framed, through media narratives embedded in a media culture that favours men, a political culture that breeds patronage, and women being defined largely by societal cultures. There was evidence that women take up public office without accepting the baggage that comes with it, including facing the media when in the frontline. By using cultural lenses themselves and refusing to largely participate based on their gender roles as women, they reinforce existing stereotypes. Indeed, many of the narratives presented in Chapter Seven pick up cultural issues raised by women rather than men. The question of knowledge, power and subject thus become critical points of assessment. If women understand how the media will frustrate or facilitate their participation, then it might be more useful in tackling the cultural nuances and narratives that permeate the state, the media and society.

The public sphere idea of a single public, even multiple publics, is not really relevant, even when the multiplicity of publics takes women into account. The spheres are either male-dominated ones or those for females. The public sphere is heavily gendered. Women are visitors in that sphere, and must act according to the rules set by the creators of each public sphere. However, the public sphere is a participatory space. It means that people cannot be forced into participation; they must be willing and knowledgeable enough to make contributions. Therein lies the dilemma. What if women are indeed not interested in participating for whatever reasons? What if, as the culturally minded respondents pointed out, women are not nurtured for participation in the public sphere? What if there are certain issues that women are going to be better at bringing to the table than men? What if women in public life see media engagement as a waste of their valuable time?



The widespread assumption that if women are covering health stories rather than politics, or that if women debate more social policy issues rather than the military, it is problematic needs to be reassessed. This study which focused on public affairs may create the impression that women do not participate in the media. To the contrary, other programmes have more women engaging. As such, I wish to reiterate that the usefulness of critical theory for this study is to provide an analytical frame with which to analyse representation, interaction and engagement between women and the media. The public sphere nature of public affairs programming, the feminist arguments about women's participation, and the driving factors of participation from the cultural studies perspective, offer great insight into the research questions. Critical engagement with the content of media programmes and participants is understood within the critical theory frame. The theory is used in theorising women's participation in the media and its influence on public life engagement.

The practical reach of critical theory remains limited within the current engagements of research on the media and women. I propose that critical theory remains relevant to the extent that the boundaries of conversations are pushed beyond the nature of the public sphere, beyond the preoccupation of feminist theorists with image and portrayal to where women can challenge narratives by actively engaging, and beyond cultural studies to embrace more of the cultural norms and narratives that constrain women from participating in different contexts.

### **8.7. Theoretical Consideration**

In order to study mass media influence on women's participation in public life, while controlling for an opposite influence, research needs to focus on individual women in public life in order to understand their relationship with each other. Media influence on women's participation in public life is at two levels, i.e. through women being inspired by the media through coverage of stories that motivate them; or through the participation of women on media that, in turn, improves their participation in public life. The extent to which this is happening remains small, but the potential to make a huge impact is there, as revealed by women in their stories.

Women's participation in the mass media is conceptualised as women in the media, comprising journalists and artists, media managers and media owners; and women on media, who are analysts, subjects and sources. Women in the media and women on media are two separate categories of women that form the concept of women's participation in the mass media. The

relationship between women in the media and women on media (usually women in public life, not directly employed by the media but who are on media playing various roles). Both categories are crucial for understanding the relationship between women and the media. Questions that have dominated studies, such as ‘do women media professionals make a difference?’ are targeted at women in the media. The other question that dominates media reports is: ‘Do women in public life make a difference for women?’ This question is targeted at women in public life.

Throughout my research, I encountered these two questions, with each category doubting the contribution of the other. Women in public life thought that women in the media were doing little to improve the coverage of women in public life, and were, therefore, part of a systemic and institutionalised marginalisation of women in public life. Women in the media and on the media questioned what women in public life were doing for women since they never featured in ‘news items’ or important events and issues that they cover.

What I found surprising and, maybe, paradoxical is that women in the media are going out of their way to cover women in politics and other areas of public life, and are extremely frustrated that women do not wish to speak about or participate in areas that would give them both voice and visibility. Women in the media are also frustrated that the burden in media houses is placed on them to bring more women’s voices, in the quest for balance, and they struggle to get women leaders to speak or defend their credentials. Contrary to research that has often put the blame on the media (Tamale 1999; Nassanga 1997), I found that the media sometimes tries and has a hard time trying to get women to be part of various conversations. Public affairs programming, revolving around accountability, implies that women who hold positions of power must face the hard questions, just like men. Women are not willing to be questioned either.

The theoretical underpinning here is that women’s participation in the media is a function of several things that are not adequately addressed through a focus on representation alone, and must include interaction and engagement as well. For representation, it must also move beyond the interest in image and portrayal, important as they are, and look at the participation of women in these media platforms. Where that participation is limited, explanations and implications should be documented, which is what this study achieves. The figure below (8.1) represents this theoretical model of women’s participation in the media and the mass media.

## Theoretical Modelling for Media Women and Public Life

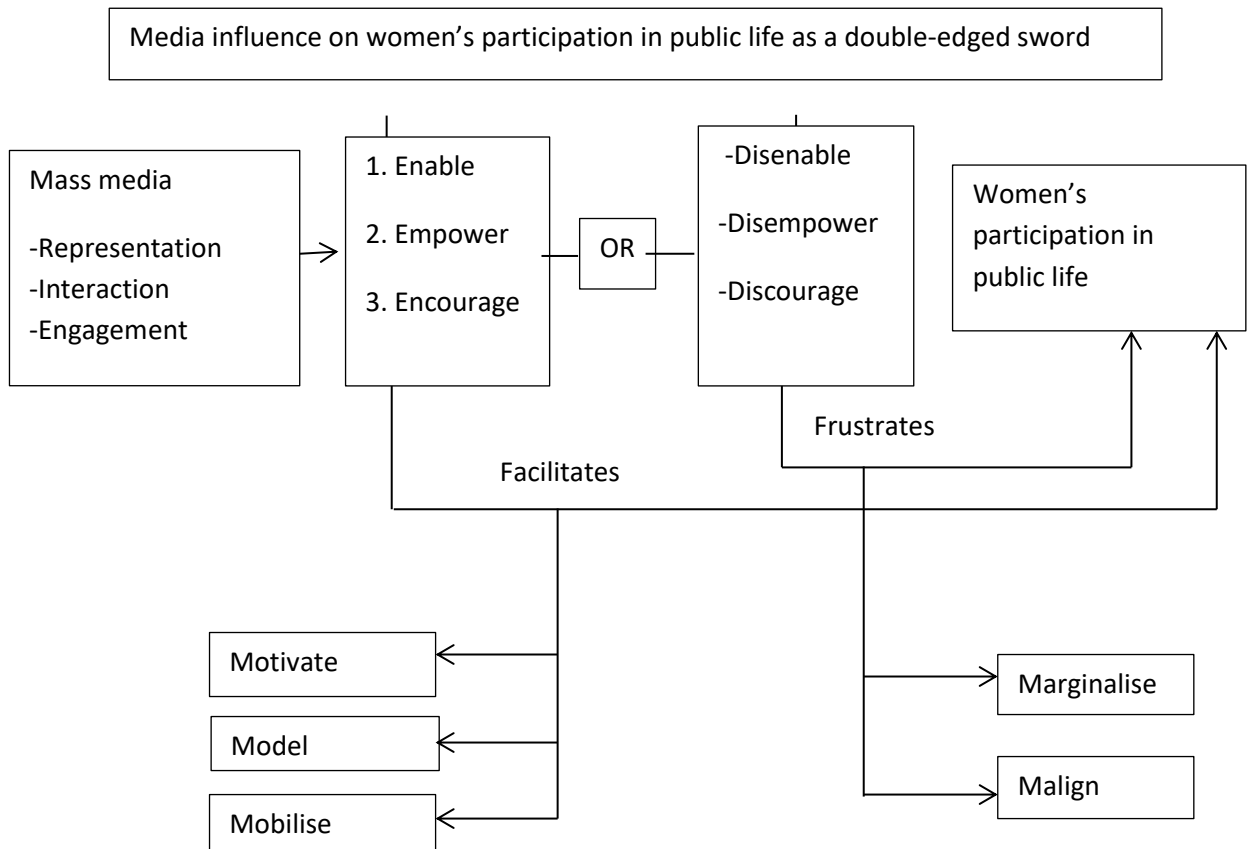


Fig. 8.1: *Media influence on women's participation*  
Source: Author

The figure above represents the causal mechanism through which the media affects women's participation in public life. Media influence on women's participation in public life was revealed to be a double-edged sword that could make or break women. The mass media, through the conjunctural factors of representation, interaction and engagement, can, on the one hand, enable, empower and encourage women so that it facilitates women's participation in public life and, on the other hand, disenable, disempower and discourage women so that it frustrates their participation in public life. This influence, if placed on a continuum, means that low representation, interaction and engagement will frustrate women's participation in public life while strong representation, interaction and engagement will facilitate women's participation in public life.

Many women underscored the role of the media as an instrument that can both build and break, hence their caution with the media and their lack of enthusiasm to get close to it. Some demonstrated sheer lack of understanding of or appreciation for the role of the media in facilitating public life, which meant they could never prioritise media engagement as a way of negotiating changes in current perceptions. The specific ways by which facilitation is achieved and frustration manifests itself for women are motivation, modelling and mobilisation, and marginalisation and maligning of women in public life, respectively.

Facilitation is achieved when women's media participation motivates women in public life to engage more and build their confidence and courage. Several cases presented in Chapter Six alluded to this. Some of these cases were not presented in detail but there was significant evidence that when women get comfortable with the media, they are perceived as intelligent and capable leaders, rarely because of any real outputs on the ground. Those women then become motivated to do more.

Secondly, young women who interact with female achievers through radio or television develop aspirations to pursue the achievers' careers. There was a great deal of anecdotal evidence in the women's stories that pointed in this direction. Women model successful women, who are presented on media as achievers. Women in public life also said that they got inspired to push themselves harder when they listened to stories of women making inroads amid great challenges. Modelling is thus an important aspect through which the media influences women's participation in public life.

Finally, facilitation is attained through the mobilisation of women via workshops, mentorship programmes, talks in schools, supporting women in business and training women in leadership. There were many stories about women mentoring women, training women and mobilising for scholarships etc. Women in politics mobilise the support of female voters either for themselves or for the president and the ruling party. Women were considered very effective in mobilisation through small meetings etc., which are frequently not captured or shared on media. This mobilisation is critical for increasing women's participation in public life.

Frustration leads to women feeling maligning in the course of doing their work and losing interest in participation in public life. With low representation, interaction and engagement, narratives about women in public life become discouraging rather than encouraging, disabling rather than enabling and disempowering rather than empowering. There was evidence of women being presented as lacking confidence, competence, conviction, credibility,

charisma and the courage to participate in public life, that their participation is more about who they know rather than merit. These perceptions are injurious to women and malign women who are in public life or who wish to participate.

The other issue is that narratives in the media can very easily marginalise women, who then believe that public life is too messy for women. The relationship between the media and the state as well as women and the state can be exploited by both the media and the state to marginalise women. The fear of participation that women constantly referred to implies that women are unlikely to get over that fear if demands on them remain extremely high.

Whether the media facilitates or frustrates women's participation in public life is not in question. To what extent and how it does this is the real question. Largely, the current levels of representation, interaction and engagement demonstrate that the media frustrates rather than facilitates women's participation in public life. However, the cases of women included in this study demonstrate that the media is capable of facilitating women's participation in public life and has done so for a number of women, some of whom are included in Chapter Six. The constraints on participation emanating from the determinants of participation and the nature of the state, the media and society all serve to reinforce and determine the extent to which the media will influence women's participation in public life or not.

## **8.9. Chapter Conclusion**

To the extent that the media is influential for women, illuminating ways in which women are empowered or disempowered (Sark 2004, p. 12), this study has, in interrogating representation, interaction and engagement, found not only ways in which women are empowered or disempowered, but also why they are empowered or disempowered when they hold positions of power, which, in turn, affects their participation on media. The nature of the media and media programmes are critical determinants of participation for women and attention should, therefore, be paid to them. Women need to be aware that, although the determinants of participation appear to be gender-neutral, in the end there are structural qualifiers and media cultures that bar women from participating without appearing to do so. There are real constraints on women's media participation, but neither the media nor the women alone are to blame. There is a multiplicity of factors that involve interactions between women and the media, women and the state, and the state and the media to produce the type of media, women's participation in public life and women's media participation. In terms of answering the overall

question, media influence on women's participation in public life remains a double-edged sword. Women's fear of participation appears to stem from the negative influences that they know of. Yet several cases demonstrate that the media can build women's profiles and inspire women to join journalism because of early encounters with the media, or women on media and in public life. Without claiming too much, each woman's story was very revealing as to the role of the media in making them successful actors in public life and widely respected, because the media has also given them approval. These are important lessons.

## **CHAPTER NINE:**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **THE QUEST FOR REPRESENTATION, INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT**

##### **9.1. Chapter Introduction**

What do women gain by participating in the public sphere at all? Do women really need to participate on media? I was asked these two questions by two male friends I shall call Allan and Alex. I found myself contemplating about them. I would not have thought it over if Allan and Alex did not have PhDs in political science and gender respectively. The propositions herein are driven by the collective understanding of the nature of the media and public affairs programming, the determinants of media participation, the constraints on women's media participation and the influence of the media on women's participation in public life. This empirical data-driven study leads us to some rather surprising findings. The chapter is the conclusion of the thesis and organised around the research questions.

##### **9.2. Representation, Interaction and Engagement**

This empirical research was done in Uganda. As I come to the conclusion, I reiterate what the study issue was. The study sought to explore the broadcast media's influence on women's participation in public life in Uganda. The key question is: To what extent and in what ways do broadcast media influence women's participation in public life in Uganda? This question is answered by interrogating three conjunctural factors of media participation: representation, interaction and engagement. The sub-questions for examination included: What is the nature of women's representation, interaction and engagement on political and public affairs programming of the broadcast media in Uganda? What are the factors that determine women's participation in the media? Why do fewer women in public life participate in the media's public affairs programmes? How do media affect women's participation in public life? These questions have been answered to meet the overall objective of critically examining the broadcast media's influence on women's participation in public life in Uganda.

### 9.3. Women's Participation in the Mass Media (WPMM)

Studies of the media and women have for a long time been about fairness of reporting, portrayal and image. There is frustration that after all the decades of attention given to the subject there is not much change that researchers can talk about. The relationship between the various concepts and how they relate to women's participation in public life is the focus of this chapter. Participation is perhaps a much greater way to understand the relationship between the media and women, as opposed to specific media theories of normative values. Women's participation in the mass media is conceptualised as representation, interaction and engagement. Throughout the study, it became apparent that the relationship between the media and women is one that is endogenous in nature. It is difficult to speak of a causal mechanism or a causal path that is not unidirectional, in the sense that women's participation in the media can influence their participation in public life, but also that their participation in public life could, in turn, influence participation in the media, as shown in the figure below.

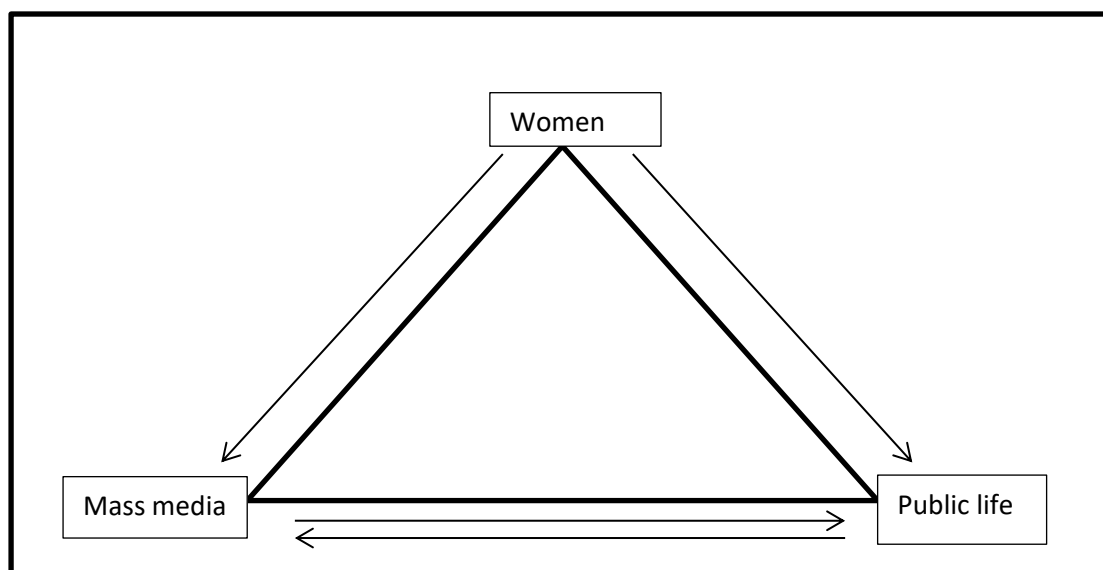


Fig. 9.1: *Model of women's participation in the media and public life*  
Source: Author

Influence is difficult to talk about without discussing effects. I suggest that influence happens both ways. There was significant evidence in the various stories of women that suggest that in some cases, it is women's participation in the media that helped build their profile for better opportunities in public life, while in others, it was the position women held in public life that made them indispensable to the media.



### ***9.3.1. Representation: Women's Representation in the Media***

Women's representation on media (WRM) is the proportion of women to men in and on media, particularly in current and public affairs programmes as identified by their physical presence or through their voice. Representation is the first of the conjunctural factors. It was revealed that there is very low visibility and voice, with a high bias towards visibility rather than voice. Yet where women are more visible is a function of the subject of discussion and the positions the women hold. Four types of representation are possible. The relationship between visibility and voice is what constitutes the type of representation: weak representation (low voice, low visibility); visible representation where there is high visibility and low voice; vocal representation where there is low visibility and high voice; and strong representation where both voice and visibility are high. This theorisation implies that, in its current form, we speak of weak representation since both visibility and voice are minimal.

Visible representation implies that there are more stories about women, but perhaps not all of them are positive, and that women are largely subjects of representation. Vocal representation implies that there are few women on media but that they are vocal and speak for women. Neither is effective on its own, but can move towards strong representation. Actions to be taken to reach strong representation depend on the nature of current representation. Women in the media can amplify stories about women, even when they themselves are few. And women in public life can become newsmakers and bring issues concerning women to the public policy agenda.

### ***9.3.2. Interaction: Women-Media Interaction***

Representation, which has dominated studies, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the media to facilitate women's participation in public life. Achieving representation alone will not be effective. The women-media interaction is conceptualised based on consultation and conversation, which have all been covered extensively. The typology of women-media interaction also suggests a measured relationship between conversation (when women are on media as sources or subjects) and consultation (when women are consulted by the media as analysts and experts). The assumption is that media participation will be initiated by the media or by women. Discursive programming and the assumptions of the public sphere that

participation is open is not sustainable. Women are still invited rather than them joining on their own terms. I found that this state of affairs does not obtain only in the media, but that women remain visitors in the public domain as well.

The relationship is between conversation and consultation. All producers, presenters and programme managers interviewed were decisive that women's participation is very minimal. The reasons for this have been discussed in Chapter Six. Four types of interaction emerge. Weak interaction (where there is low consultation and low conversation), which is where we are at the moment, based on the findings. The other types of interaction are consultative interaction, where there is high consultation but low conversation; conversational interaction, where there is low consultation but high conversation; and the final and preferred type, strong interaction, where there is high consultation and strong conversation. The women-media interaction proposes two-way interaction initiated by the media and women. The WMI addresses the question of who initiates interaction. What must women do in order to be invited or to initiate their invitation?

Interaction grows directly from representation. Minimal representation also implies minimal interaction. Representation is therefore an important starting point that will lead to increased interaction. As women begin to complain that a programme has not included women, and as women are covered on media, they are made available to be consulted by the media, and women, in turn, gain the courage and confidence after being consulted to join conversations on their own terms. Media professionals will then engage women more, as more women gain credibility.

### ***9.3.3. Engagement: Women's Engagement with the Media (WEM)***

Women's engagement with the media takes the discussion a notch higher, focusing more on when women are visible and have voice on media, when they are consulted and join conversations, and what the impact of such representation and interaction is. The engagement question is one of involvement and influence. Engagement moves the relationship beyond access and presence, which concern representation and engagement, to substance. Regarding the context of participation, engagement with the media does not only limit the participation to the media but how women's engagement elsewhere is then captured and shared by the media, either initiated by the media or by women. This is captured in the typology of women's engagement with the media.

The typology of women's engagement with the media brings to the fore four types of engagement. The first one is low engagement, where the levels of influence and involvement are both very low. To some extent, women have been engaging the media, and some gains have been made, but this, too, remains limited. The second type involves engagement, where there is high involvement and low influence. This means that more women are involved in creating messages about women and gender, but have fairly limited influence on the state and on society. The other type is influential engagement, where there is low involvement but involvement which is, nevertheless, effective enough to create influence, thus high influence. Influence is not about numbers but how the few women who are involved are able to influence the state and society. The fourth type is strong engagement, where there is high involvement and influence. Engagement, therefore, becomes an issue of substantive relationship with the media in which representation and interaction result in better engagement, where women are not victims of negative media portrayal but active participants in the media, with substantial power of involvement and influence.

#### **9.4. Women's Participation in Public Life**

Women's participation in public life is a broad term that refers to women who are engaged in politics and policy-making in the public and private sectors. In short, it is outside the domestic sphere. This concept is crucial and suggests that women's participation in public life is not yet the norm although improvements have been noted in various contexts and countries. While women's participation in public life has increased, the media has played a minimal role, with success largely attributed to policies like affirmative action, where numbers are concerned.

Whereas the 1995 Beijing Protocol (UN 1995) recognises the media as having a huge potential for attaining women's empowerment and gender equity, which this study confirms, it remains just a potential, with no specific policy guide to enable the media to play that role in a liberalised arena. Whereas affirmative action has been used to empower women in various areas, the media, privatised, has not been burdened with the affirmative action requirement, where it is unlikely to bear any fruits.

Perhaps more surprising is that despite the increased participation of women in public life within the politico-economic and socio-legal arenas, their representation, interaction and engagement with the media remain very low, limited to a few powerful women in public life. Women's contributions are largely not captured and shared on the media. Just as women in the

media are scrutinised for what they have done for women in public life in order to improve coverage, women in public life are seen as doing nothing for the women they represent. As such, despite sustained suggestions that women in public life, particularly in politics, are doing little to empower other women, that their performance is less than satisfactory in Parliament and in other areas, women's stories revealed some rich and incredible things that individual women are doing. Most of these good deeds of women go unnoticed, uncaptured and, therefore, not shared. There are two reasons for this: (i) Women face the fear of participation in general that is reflected in low media participation. As such, where public debate is concerned, they are not enthusiastic about participating. As such, when opportunities to participate in public affairs programmes avail themselves, they are uncomfortable and tend to decline those opportunities. (ii) The limited encounter with media women have fuelled the perception that women do nothing when given positions of power to help other women.

### **9.5. Pathways and Propositions**

A number of observations and conclusions are drawn from this study. First, I argue that women's participation in the media should entail three conjunctural factors, which means that without strong representation there cannot be strong interaction that, in turn, will lead to strong engagement. These factors are necessary but not sufficient conditions for facilitating women's participation in public life. Because current levels of representation, interaction and engagement do not necessarily go beyond low levels, there are implications for women's participation in public life. The media's potential to facilitate women's participation in public life is limited.

Second, the proposed conceptual framework for participation as representation, interaction and engagement, contributing to varied degrees of participation in public life, provides an analytical tool for studying the media and women. If adopted, it could help create a better understanding of the determinants of participation, the constraints on participation and the influence of participation and, therefore, better treatment of loopholes. Ramifications for media influence on women's participation in public life are huge. Attainment of these conjectural factors will necessarily facilitate women's participation in public life and low levels will frustrate women's participation in public life.

Third, there is no single determinant of participation in public affairs programming. The interaction of eight critical factors determines participation and, therefore, affects women's

representation, interaction and engagement. The problem or subject of discussion, the programme type, the politics surrounding the subject, the performance of women in public life, the presenter's and the producer's skill and gender, the profession of the women, their personality and various policies, all determine the degree of participation. Whereas these determinants appear to be gender-neutral, every choice based on these factors is ultimately gendered, to the disadvantage of women.

Fourth, while the government has opened up space for women's participation in society at various levels, including in political governance, development and public administration, it has paradoxically closed it, too. The politics of patronage, the culture of impunity and political intolerance, the limitations of policies like affirmative action and liberalisation of the media, educational training that does not expand women's choices, and misrepresentation of the feminist agenda and its vilification, the cultural practice that nurtures women for the domestic rather than the public sphere, all constitute constraints on participation for women.

Fifth, the weak participation of women in the media limits the media's potential to facilitate women's participation in public life by reproducing certain cultural narratives of old that undermine women's role in society, particularly within the public sphere. This weak participation is also perpetuated by the nature of the public sphere, in particular the media and civil society. Women's engagement with the public spheres bolsters women's competence, capability, confidence and credibility and reveals them as authentic participants in the public arena in their own right rather than those invited to the king's table based on certain networks.

Sixth, when women assume positions of power, engaging in politics and policy-making, they ought to be prepared for their role in public life. Acquiring an education is not enough to prepare women for participation in public life, which appears to be structured for men. As such, many women take up public office without being prepared for the demands of public life and while naïve about the public responsibility those positions places on them. By their very nature, some positions imply that the media will look for those who hold them and the public will expect accountability. Women cannot afford to act as if they do not like publicity and will not participate in the media, preferring behind-the-scenes roles. They have to adapt and acquire the media handling skills that are necessary for them when they are politicians, public administrators, in the frontline of service delivery and in business. Organisations such as Uganda Media Women's Association should play a more focused role in this area, in collaboration with organisations interested in women's participation beyond the media.

## **9.6. Relevance for Policy and Future Research**

That the world has been focused on women's increased participation in public life is clear. Quota systems are the major ways by which this has been achieved in many African countries, including Uganda. The challenges of affirmative action have since betrayed the intentions of states that create them, as lessons from Uganda indicate. In some cases, women have made great strides, and that is laudable. However, there is no denying that we are still too far away from bridging the gender gap, and that affirmative action policies are not achieving much. Women's participation in the media and on public affairs programmes has the potential to change perceptions of women's role in society.

There is need for more discussion on how women can be better involved in politics and policy-making. The relevance for policy is a rethinking of strategy, and an understanding of the role of the media in facilitating women's participation in public life, as well as addressing gaps where the media frustrates women's participation in public life. This is of particular relevance to intergovernmental bodies like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which is the global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as continental bodies such as the African Union and governments responsible for formulating strategies for empowerment.

There is need to address the fear of participation among women, not just in the media but also at various institutional levels. It was evident that women feared to participate in discursive programmes that are deemed open to all. This fear of participation is also evident in other fora that require dialogue and debate, such as Parliament.

Regarding research, more needs to be done to frame women and media studies differently, using different approaches. There are many insights that I came across largely because of the multi-method and multidisciplinary approach. A lot more needs to be done to extend the boundaries of research. Its current value is the conceptual development and theorising that could be useful in such studies. The narrow focus of previous studies of the media and women either on politics or portrayal of women has limited understanding of why representation is poor and portrayal negative. The focus on politics undermines women's contribution to society.

## **9.9. Chapter Conclusion**

Women's media participation is important for women's participation in public life owing to the benefits attached to motivation, modelling and mobilisation and the baggage attached to being maligned and marginalised. There are many conditions upon which the influence is dependent. For one, the nature of the media and public affairs programming, the determinants of media participation, and the constraints on participation remain crucial elements in the web of relationships.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Semi-structured interview guide (Radio and Television Station Staff)

Name of participant.....Place of work.....

Position.....Date of interview.....

1. What do you consider to be the main role of your program(s)?
2. Can you describe ways that women in public life participate in your show(s)?
3. Describe the category of women who readily participate on your program(s).
4. Why do you think these women participate more or better than others?
5. Can you name at least five women who readily participate in your programs?
6. What aspects/areas of women specific issues feature on your program(s)?
7. What are the key factors you consider when choosing guests to appear on your program, and particularly women in public life?
8. How would you describe the performance of women on your program(s)?
9. What are some of the major constraints for you in the involvement of women in your program and to women's effective participation in them?
10. What do you think is the implication of the women's participation in the media through programs like yours for their participation in politics and public life?
11. Do you think that your station/program has been instrumental in facilitating women's participation in public life? Please give examples and how
12. What strategies do you think would lead to better participation of women in media or public affairs programs in particular and public life in general?
13. Any final thought on the media and women in public life?

## **Appendix B: Interview schedule for women**

Name of participant.....

Place of work.....

Position.....

Date of interview.....

Researcher: Introduction and explanation of research issue and the role of the participant in the study as well as the importance of the study

Section A: General information and background of the participant

1. Talk about the participant's journey to public life (growing up, schools attended and jobs held)
2. Describe your typical day (talk about your work)
3. What factors have contributed to your participation in public life?
4. What are some of the constraints on your effective participation in public life?
5. Does being female affect your work in any specific way?

Section C: Discussion in light of professional practice and experience with media

6. Do you think the media in Uganda feature critical issues that concern women?
7. Describe how you have used the media to enhance your work or public role
8. Discuss some areas where you believe that the media has not been supportive to you, women in general or your organisation
9. Do you believe the media cover women differently from men in public life? Describe in what ways and give some examples?

Section D: other main issues on interaction with media

10. Discuss some of the key factors that you believe determine the media's (i) interaction and (ii) engagement with women like you
11. What are some of the major constraints on your or women's (i) interaction and (ii) engagement with media?
12. Do you think the media influences women's participation in public life? How does media affect women's participation in public life?
13. Discuss the implication of women's participation in media on political and public life.
14. How can the media-women interaction be improved in your view?



## APPENDIX C: STUDY PHASES AND CASES/RESPONDENTS

### First phase: Media Research/Interviews

Media/Area of public life	Respondents	Programme/Responsibility
WBS TV	Peter Kibazo, Host	Issues at Hand/Face Off
	Moses Walusimbi, Producer	Issues at hand/Face Off
	Drake Ssekeba, Host	
NTV	Agnes Nandutu	People's Parliament
NBS	Doreen Komuhangi, Presenter/Reporter/Anchor	Morning Breeze
	Dalton Kawesa, Host/Producer	Morning Breeze
	Baker Zeena, Producer/Court reporter	Morning Breeze
	Simon Kagwa Njala, Host	Morning Breeze
UBC	Doreen Ndeezi, Producer/Manager	Business Today
	Sophie Matovu, Manager	Programmes
	Harriet Atyang	Business Today
CBS	Samuel Kazibwe, manager/host	Programmes
	Allan Nsubuga, producer	Various programmes
X-FM	Siima Sabiti, Manager/Host	Morning breakfast show
Capital FM	Oskar Ssemweya-Musoke, Host	The Capital Gang
	Jacki Lumbasi, Host/Anchor	Morning Breakfast show/Prime News Anchor-UBC
Maama FM	Margaret Ssentamu-Masagazi, Manager	UMWA/Maama FM
	Catherine Apalat, Manager	Programmes
	Regina Nassanga, Editor	News
	Lawrence Kalanzi, Host/Producer	<i>Tuteese</i> /Saturday show
	Lutwama Africa, participant on show	Regular participant
URN	Sam Guma, Executive Director	All programmes

### Second phase: Programmes for content analysis over a period of three months

Media	Programme type	Day/Time
NBS	Morning Breeze-Daily Programme	Mon-Fri; 8:00am-9:00am
UBC	Business Today-Daily Programme	Mon-Fri; 9:00am-10am
WBS	Issues at Hand- Weekly talk show	Tuesday; 10:00PM-11:00PM
	Face Off-weekly talk show	Friday; 0:00PM-11:00PM
NTV	On the Spot, Weekly talk show	Thursday; 10:00PM-11:00PM
	Fourth Estate, Weekly talk show	Sunday, 10:00PM-11:00PM
	People's Parliament, audience discussion	Saturday, 08:00PM-09:00PM
	NTV Tonight, Prime news	Mon-Thur, 09:00PM-10:00PM
Maama FM	Saturday <i>Ebimeeza</i>	Saturday, 11:00-01:00PM

### Third phase: Women in public life interviews

<b>Area of public life</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Occupation/Position</b>
Politics	Rt. Hon. Winnie Kiiza	Leader of Opposition
	Hon. Cecilia Atim Ogwal	Parliamentary Commissioner
	Hon. Rose Akol	Former MP/Minister Internal Affairs
	Ms Flavia Nalule	Aspirant MP
Civil service- Education	Dr Mary Ssonko Nabacwa	Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences Uganda Christian University
	Dr Dipio Dominica	Senior Lecturer, Makerere University
	Dr Jane Agau	Commissioner, Ministry of Education
	Ms Angela Nakafero	Gender Expert, Ministry of Education
Civil service-Health	Ms Rukia Nakamatte	Spokesperson, Ministry of Health
Law and advocacy	Ms Cissy Kagaba	ED, Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda
	Ms Ruth Ssebatindira	Former President, Uganda Law Society
	Ms Marren Akatsa Bukatchi	ED, EASSI
Business and Economics	Ms Mary Lilian Nabunya	HR Manager, GT Bank
	Ms Evelyn Bahemuka	Learning and Development Manager, Stanbic Bank
	Ms Theopista Ntale- Ssekitoleko	Country Director, New Faces, New Voices
	Ms Carol Beyanga	Managing Editor, Daily Monitor

## Appendix D: Informed consent form

University of KwaZulu Natal  
The Centre for Communication, Media and Society  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus  
Durban 4041, South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Informed Consent for the study of “Media, women and public life in Uganda: Interrogating representation, interaction and engagement”**

You have been identified as a participant in the above titled study. The research seeks to critically examine the interconnections between women and media by interrogating representation, interaction and engagement, and the implications for women’s participation in public life in Uganda. The study is motivated by the growth of broadcast media and increased women’s participation in public life in Uganda from the 1990s.

Please note that as a participant, if at any point you decide to withdraw from the research, you will be free to do so. Also note that information given will be treated with confidentiality. And on no account will any other person apart from me and my supervisor have access to the information. If as a participant you wish to remain anonymous, it will be respected and pseudo names will be used.

Participant’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PhD student Contact Information  
Emilly Comfort Maractho  
Email: [emillycm@gmail.com](mailto:emillycm@gmail.com)  
Tel: +256 787 090 774

Supervisor Contact Information  
Prof. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli  
[teertoma@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:teertoma@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix E: Invitation letter to participants

University of KwaZulu Natal  
The Centre for Communication, Media and Society  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus  
Durban 4041, South Africa  
31/05/2016

Prospective research participant

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Dear Madam,

### **Re: Participation in the study- “Media, women and public life in Uganda”**

Greetings from Kampala, Uganda. My name is Emilly Comfort Maractho. I am a doctoral fellow at the University of KwaZulu Natal in the Centre for Communication and Media Studies.

This letter serves to invite you to participate in the study, *Media, women and public life in Uganda: Interrogating representation, interaction and engagement*.

The field study has been ongoing since 2015. It is to be accomplished in three phases. The first phase focused on broadcast media houses targeting hosts, producers and presenters of public affairs programmes. The second phase, focused on media content analysis. The third, and last phase, targets women in public life (women in politics and policy making). You have been identified as a participant in this study based on your participation in one or more of the media programmes selected, you were covered in a programme under consideration, or you are a notable participant in public life.

If you are willing to participate in this study, kindly send me an email, or call me on the Tel. Number indicated on the business card here attached, and give me an appointment for an interview of approximately fifteen to 20 minutes. If you do not wish to be part of this study, please let me know. I will respect that. Also attached is an informed consent form, which, upon agreement to an interview, will be signed.

I will be extremely grateful to hear from you. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely

Emilly Comfort Maractho

PhD Fellow, Centre for Communication and Media Studies.