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FINDING THE WOMEN'S VOICE

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ABSTRACT

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women,” Kofi Annan (UN News Center, 2005). The empowerment of women takes different forms such as pursuit of education, participation in political activities and representation in leadership, equal employment opportunities and wages, access to health care and ability to make decisions on personal reproductive health, economic bargaining and decision making power and access to all public social services among others. Embedded in all forms of women’s empowerment is ability to voice their opinions, experiences and knowledge as a means to fully exercising their rights and civic duties. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action declares the acknowledgement of “the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances” (UN). The acknowledgement, production, exercise and building of women’s voice are themes that run through the discussions in this thesis. Using the metaphor of voice, this thesis asks and demonstrates how Mama FM - women’s radio - is working to facilitate and contribute to women’s civic engagement in Uganda.

This research is grounded in principles of ‘sciences from below’ and ‘phronetic social science research’. Both principles emphasize the need to conduct research from the perspectives of the marginalized groups and institutions in society and in this case the women’s radio. The thesis draws on theoretical frameworks and previous research to situate its arguments and relevance of the study. The thesis made use of case study and content analysis of radio programmes as the methods to conduct the research. Case study and content analysis worked well together to uncover underlying matters of concern that manifested in the radio programme content. The combination of these methods produced in-depth and critical analysis of the issues that stood out during the radio programme review process. The findings of the thesis are covered under two themes: women’s voice and gender constructions of content. The results highlight sites of weakness for the women’s radio but also important strengths that justify its existence and need for sustainability. The strengths identified demonstrate the importance of having a women’s radio and inspire strategies to deal with the weaknesses for the improvement of its operations and structures.

The arguments in the thesis not only focus on Mama FM as the women's radio but open up debate towards broader discussions on subjects such as; feminism, gender, civic engagement, civic participation, media responsibility, economic market forces, all worth exploring when researching about the process of building and exercising women's voice.

Keywords:

Gender, Feminism, Media, Radio, Women's Radio, Voice, Women's Voice, Civic Engagement, Women's Movement

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother who I will forever be grateful for.

I dedicate this thesis to my son – I hope you will be inspired to seek knowledge and ask critical questions about the ways of society and life.

I also dedicate it to the activists working tirelessly to amplify women's voices across the world.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The feminist critique of the media is evident in most scholarly work. The criticism is based on the fact that mediated messages are broadcast and shared about virtually all aspects of everyday life. Most analytical to the feminist critique is Van Zoonen's (1994) view that the mainstream media often neglect women's issues and when women appear in the media, they are often present alongside sexist narratives. While the feminist and women's movement world over has made tremendous strides in raising awareness of the sexist and often non-liberating mediated messages, the issue of women's representation remains "an important battleground for contemporary feminism" (Van Zoonen, 1994:12). Representation can be understood from different angles such as media content, genre and personalities - that is, both the media staff and guests or sources – among others. However, as noted by earlier writers, women and their issues are often underrepresented and undervalued on all these fronts. Feminists argue that in an ideal world, the media should equally present women with empowering messages and role models as they do men. It is this ideal world that feminist critique strives to achieve. Feminists and the women's movement world over have devised various means to influence fair and balanced representation of women; for example awareness raising and legal campaigns as well as the establishment of women's media sites such as women's radio stations and magazines.

In past years, communicative and democratic spaces in Uganda were mainly exclusive to men. Owing to the patriarchal nature of the Ugandan society, governance debates and spaces often excluded women's representation and opinions. The women's movement then had to create spaces where women could discuss some of these issues on their own terms and in their turf. Some of the women spaces, though not political in nature included for example the Mother's Union. Tripp explains that background of Mother's Unions – "In 1908 the Mother's Union was initially started for the wives of students attending King's College Budo" (2002:25). Even with the existence of these recognized spaces it did not guarantee that their opinions would be adopted into the larger public and democratic debates. However, this is majorly a thing of the past with many strides made and successes gained to engage and guarantee women's participation in such debates and dialogues. It is from the exclusion to participate in the mainstream public arena that the women's radio was

conceptualized and started to provide a platform that offered an open invitation for their participation in the media. The women's movement is of the view that media and particularly radio is not only a key source but also key media tool that engages the audience with relevant, accurate and timely information. Breaking through years of cultural practice, women's radio presents as a critical platform with great potential to reach and engage audiences on matters of central importance to them. The design of the radio programmes has over the years built trust and inspired confidence among the audience thereby empowering them to speak out and give opinions on not only matters that concern them but also local and national development issues.

1.1 Uganda Media Women's Association and Mama FM

Founded in 1983 by a group of female journalists, the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) seeks to enhance the status of women by providing them with development information. "UMWA exists to see that Ugandan women can make informed decisions by having access to the right information on rights, and to fight for the rights of women working in the media, but also not excluding bad portrayal of women in the media. UMWA believes that access to information is key to solving critical problems women face socially, economically, and politically" (UMWA). By enhancing women's visibility UMWA hopes to promote meaningful participation of women in the policymaking and implementation processes for the realization of improved livelihoods and gender equality. With a focus on development communication, UMWA established 'a women focused development oriented radio - Mama Fm' (UMWA). Mama FM, a women owned community radio set up in 1997 became the first women's radio station in Africa and only the third in the whole world.

The founding members of UMWA and thereafter Mama FM sought to use effective communication strategies that mainstream the voices of women thereby increasing the levels of their engagement and participation in public discussions. The active solicitation of the perspectives on women is crucial in enhancing participatory democracy of the country. With the evident male dominance in the mainstream media structures and environment it is increasingly important to create spaces that promote meaningful participation of women in democratic discussions and processes. The

form of effective and strategic media strategies envisioned by UMWA to enhance women's participation could be described as communication that takes place in the public sphere. It is important to note that the public sphere is not a locatable place and is characteristically a communication infrastructure. The need to locate/place women and women's voices in this communication infrastructure of the public sphere cannot be overemphasized. The women's movement believes that when women speak out in the public sphere, the content of public debate will expand to include women's rights and their empowerment.

1.1.1 Aims of Mama FM

Caroline Mitchell, a feminist media scholar specialized in radio studies, in her book *'Women and Radio: Airing Differences'* argues for communicative importance of radio as "a personal, intimate medium ... entwined into the rhythm of our everyday lives", (2000:1-2). The dailiness aspect of radio makes it an ideal media tool to reach people and specific communities. It is based on this reason that UMWA established Mama FM to reach "large numbers of people who are marginalized or in isolated areas" (UMWA). UMWA believed that "For the disadvantaged groups, radio is a great opportunity to interact with the wider world, as well as voice their concerns and issues". UMWA also chose to use radio based on evidence that shows Uganda's low literacy levels and weak reading culture but a strong oral tradition (UMWA & NCA, 2008:5). Additionally, at the time of Mama FM's establishment, the radio industry had only been liberalized and opened to private ownership in 1993 – for about 4 years. This move saw the proliferation of radio stations as well as the change in style and formatting of radio programming allowing for increased citizen engagement and participation in public sphere discussions without and/or limited state control.

UMWA through Mama FM aimed to provide people centered media programmes and radio proved to be the cheapest and yet most powerful tool to reach larger numbers of people (UMWA & NCA, 2008:8). While research at the time showed low numbers of women's control and ownership of radio sets, the same research showed that women have access to them in the evenings after chores are completed (Ibid: 6). These findings therefore called for time conscious programming that targeted the availability of women. Additionally Mama FM was started as a strategy to address the gaps and

challenges women faced in the mainstream commercial radio environment. Specifically Mama FM sought to provide cheap airtime for women's programmes and campaigns, training for women media practitioners to improve their employability and to demystify the negative portrayal of women and women's issues (Ibid: 9). Mama FM has over the years maintained the visibility of its founding association - UMWA. Mama FM speaks for the relevance of the work of the association and has in a sense maintained its sustainability. Mama FM is especially important for the Ugandan Women's Movement for purposes of mobilization, information dissemination, education and overall communications.

Mama FM is currently on air for 19 hours a day from 5:00am - 12:00am daily. During the course of the week 30 radio programmes are broadcast including news updates. The radio programmes aired on Mama FM can be categorized under the aims of the programme as; informative, educative, social purpose, entertainment, religious, news and current affairs. At the same time categorizing using format of the programmes shows; talks, interviews, discussions, drama and music. The talk radio format is the most used for the various programmes. The synopsis of the radio programmes reveals that dialogue, women's issues, experience and knowledge sharing, engagement, empowerment, information sharing, participation and development programming is at the core of the broadcasting values and principles at Mama FM (UMWA, 2014).

Highlights from the 2014 UMWA/Mama FM Annual report reveal; "The station, has also become a platform for self expression; a training ground for upcoming journalists; and a meeting point for both the rights holders and duty bearers. It has specifically amplified the voices of marginalized and minority groups especially women, children, and persons with disabilities." ... "Several listeners report that they have since become more assertive, women standing up their husbands in the name of claiming their rights; and both men and women claiming for their rightful positions in participating in government programs and benefiting from those services as well."

1.2 Research Aim and Question

"In Uganda, where some 90% of the population lives in rural areas, radio serves as a vital platform for public discussion, information sharing and news" (Pulse Lab

Kampala, 2016). The 2014 National Population and Housing Census Report reveals, “radio was the most common means by which the population received and shared information” with “more than half of the households (55 percent) reported radio as their main source of information” (UBoS, 2016:36&41). Based on its proliferation and use in Uganda, radio presented as an ideal tool to study and build knowledge and understanding of its role in enhancing civic engagement. Women’s radio is particularly unique and its exploration would offer insights outside the mainstream media environment.

The research aim;

“To increase knowledge and understanding of how women’s radio can contribute to women’s civic engagement”

The research question;

“How does the women’s radio work to facilitate women’s civic engagement and contribute to their participation in the democratic development of Uganda?”

1.3 Thesis Overview

The thesis is presented in six chapters - Introduction, Methodology, Methods, Literature Review, Analysis and Conclusion. The introduction chapter makes a brief presentation of the study and case. The methodology and methods chapters outline and discuss the research process and considerations undertaken. The literature review chapter will explore theoretical framework and documented research. These discussions will situate the study and case while stating its importance to the academia, women’s movement and general public. The analysis chapter makes use of theoretical frameworks and research to demonstrate the underlying issues of concern presented in the empirical data. The chapter also documents that while at it is best Mama FM facilitates women’s civic engagement. Lastly but not least, the conclusion chapter sums up the discussion presented in the thesis while situating the study and its findings in the public realm of women’s civic engagement and the democratic development of Uganda.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

At its foundation, this research examines the feminist/gender consciousness and conceptualization as demonstrated in radio programmes broadcast on Mama FM. This chapter discusses the methodological considerations that guided the research process for this thesis.

2.1 Sciences From Below

‘Sciences From Below’ coined by Feminist Scholar Sandra Harding, is the overarching concept driving this thesis. Taking inspiration from this concept, this thesis was motivated by the need to investigate and document the voices of those traditionally marginalized in the media - women - by focusing on broadcast programmes at a women’s radio - Mama FM. The operations and processes of women’s radio are inspired by the commitment to take women’s voices seriously in the media environment and the public sphere. Sciences from below stands true to “the feminist standpoint mantra to ““start off research and politics from women’s lives,” rather than from the conceptual framework of the research disciplines, to create knowledge that women need and want to empower themselves and their dependents...” (Harding, 2008:225). The feminist standpoint research mantra is similar to the driving force of the women’s movement that maintains centrality of women in its operations and activities while seeking to emancipate and empower women by building their voice in society and the public sphere. It is from the activism of the women’s movement that we have seen the birth of women’s spaces and organizations such as the women’s radio.

The evolution of this thesis has demonstrated the outcome of many standpoint research projects which “... start off from the lives of the oppressed, but they do not end there ... their main task is to “study up,” to identify and explain the material and conceptual practices of power ... (Harding, 2008:225). The starting point of this thesis is the broadcast programmes at the women’s radio - Mama FM - “studying up” to women’s civic engagement. Investigation of the broadcast programmes revealed practices that pose limitations to starting research from women’s lives because of the distribution of female and male voices in the programmes at Mama FM. However,

this limitation provided an avenue to front and discuss arguments that illustrate practices of male dominance and power often present in most media environments. It further provided arguments for the significance and relevance of carrying out research or science from below. Using this perspective to research, the thesis uncovered and provided an understanding of media structures and traditions that have spilled over from the mainstream into the operations of women's radio. This approach took into consideration the social, economic and political positions of women to question the previously inadequate investigations that did not recognize the implications of female and male representation at the women's radio - Mama FM - to the empowerment of women that had been documented as a success. Not to say that the Mama FM does not have the potential to empower women - it does and success stories have been documented - but not seriously questioning the representation of voices is an oversimplification and underestimation of the impact of the matter. This thesis, through this approach, is able to give attention to this matter and its implications to the empowerment of women.

2.2 Phronetic Social Science Research

The considerations of using the concept of phronetic research fronted by Bent Flyvbjerg are similar to those from 'sciences from below', that is, the importance of research that acknowledges interests and power relations as a basis for investigation. Gareth Thomas presents Flyvbjerg's notion of Phronetic Social Science as "an approach to research which prioritizes research, produced through experience in context as the most appropriate means of generating knowledge that matches social priorities and can contribute to public debate over the affairs at hand" (2012:2). In his words Bent Flyvbjerg defines phronetic research as one "based on a contemporary interpretation of the classical Greek concept phronesis, variously translated as practical wisdom, practical judgment, common sense, or prudence" (2004:284). Phronetic Social Science research focuses on answering the four value-rational questions "(1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains, and who loses, by which mechanisms of power? (3) Is it desirable? (4) What should be done?" (Flyvbjerg: 2001:162). While not in an explicit manner, the investigations of this thesis ultimately strive to answer these questions too. Important to note, "according to the

methodology, the answers are by no means expected to be complete but rather used as an input for further discussion in analyzing social phenomena” (Kuljak, 2014:81).

3.0 METHODS

The above-discussed methodologies inspired the methods that were selected for this thesis. Both methodological concepts acknowledge the importance of experiences, contexts, interests and power relations when conducting research, which were critical to this research. The two selected research methods ‘Content Analysis and Case Study’ are characteristically similar and compliment each other.

3.1 Case Study Research

The case study research strategy is one of the most commonly used by researchers world over. Case study research promises in-depth inquiry by offering a lived reality of a “complex phenomena within their contexts” (Baxter and Jack, 2008:544). Case study research is particularly relevant when exploring a subject where limited knowledge and research exists. Case study research draws on significant “interest in individual cases ... for an identified reason that is peculiar or particular” (Hyett, 2014:2). In other words, Bent Flyvbjerg would say, “Cases generate precisely that concrete, practical, and context-dependent knowledge” (2001:70). While collecting empirical data, the case study research strategy requires the researcher to draw back on the existing information as a means to ensure that the new found data can be applicable and build on the existing knowledge (Yin. 2003:3).

Based on these reflections, the use of case study research proved to be the most appropriate research strategy for this thesis. Exploring the concept of women’s radio in fostering women’s civic engagement required a research strategy that would effectively investigate the under-researched concept of women’s radio. Cases are often embedded with several concepts that contribute to its complex nature. This is true for this thesis from which the case presented concepts from feminist, media and democratic/political fields of study. This thesis attests to the ability possessed by the case study research strategy to develop analytical thinking on a subject when seeking to explore and illustrate complex concepts embedded in the case.

With a foundation in Phronetic social science research, Case study research strategy further proved to pair well with the approach of ‘Sciences from Below’ fronted by Sandra Harding, in the investigation of experiences of participants at the women’s radio drawn from the radio programmes aired. Case study research enhances “standpoint projects (which) insist on looking at ways in which women’s lives are enabled and constrained by the assumptions and practices of dominant institution” (Harding, 2008:117). In reference to this thesis women’s lives refers to women’s radio and the dominant institution refers to the (mainstream) media. The research element of women’s civic engagement is judged from the radio programme content by exploring “what people can come to know about themselves and the worlds around them” (Harding, 2008:118). Harding examines the importance of case studies when she explores the ‘The third world woman’ and ‘The need for postcolonial feminist science and technology studies’, grounding her argument in the absence of a global theory that encompasses the diversity of women, hence, the need for studies that cater to these diversities (2008:155-160). Essentially case study research is cognizant of this matter and drives the study towards the appropriate use of theory and prior research.

Flyvbjerg argues that case studies often reveal narratives that “approach the complexities and contradictions of real life” and when paired with phronesis, it is “a sign that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problematic” (2001:84). Such richly problematic narratives are particularly critical to understanding the realities and knowledge in the media environment. Studying the narratives presented in the broadcast radio programmes drove the research to focus on the ways the content was constructed, by whom, for whom, how and why in reference to societal and political contexts.

3.2 Content Analysis

Descriptively similar to case study research is content analysis, yet another research technique that “seeks to analyze data within a specific context” (Krippendor, 1989:403). Content analysis was selected as an appropriate research technique for this thesis based on its ability to rely on “symbolic qualities to trace the antecedents, correlates, or consequences of communications, thus rendering the (unobserved)

context of data analyzable” (Ibid). In this sense Devi Prasad’s uses Nachmias and Nachmias (1976), to describe content analysis “as a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content” (2008:2).

The arguments and discussions in this thesis are based on qualitative data collection and analysis, which is mindful of “situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances” as key elements of research (Altheide, 1996:14). Content analysis has over time proved to be instrumental in analysis of manifestation of matters for concern in the content being studied. Similarly, in his overview of *Media Content Analysis*, Jim Macnamara, a Professor of Public Communication, lists five main purposes of content analysis suggested by Berelson (1952) that have been instrumental to this thesis as follows: “To describe substance characteristics of message content; To describe form characteristics of message content; To make inferences to producers of content; To make inferences to audiences of content; To predict the effects of content on audiences” (2005:3). The process of review and analysis of the broadcast radio programmes at Mama FM was fundamentally based on and mindful of these purposes.

Analysis of the broadcast radio programme content is grounded in qualitative content analysis principles which seek to assess “the relationship between the text and its likely audience meaning ... (while paying) attention to audience, media and contextual factors – not simply the text” (Macnamara, 2005:5). Considering that the thesis is grounded in methodological concepts - Sciences from Below and Phronetic Research - the choice of content analysis was inevitable. Both concepts require in-depth analysis of the ‘invisible’ manifestations in content, thus, content analysis proved the appropriate method “to understand their deeper meanings and likely interpretations by audiences – surely the ultimate goal of analyzing media content” (Macnamara, 2005:5).

The review and analysis process was further guided by questions that have previously been used in content analysis of radio programmes such as that by Kohut and Parker. They were mindful of these questions in their research: “whether and how women’s issues are discussed on talk radio; and how many women call into talk radio shows

and what they talk about” (1997:229). These questions proved very critical for this thesis especially when drawing conclusions on women’s voice and gender constructions in the content. These questions ensured that a feminist analytical lens was used during the content analysis process.

3.3 Sampling and Selection of Empirical Data

The empirical data for this thesis are selected radio programmes broadcast at Mama FM. Currently Mama FM does not have an online live stream channel or archived programmes on the website. Based on this an official request was made to the management of Mama FM to make available radio programmes to be used for this research. The request included titles of programmes deemed interesting for this study based on their description in the synopsis to the radio programme schedule. The requested programmes dealt with women’s issues, societal, economic and political matters. Important to note, staff at Mama FM did the final selection of the programmes. They selected 25 radio programmes covering a period from February 2015 to February 2016 and these were made available online for downloading. Unfortunately, not all these programmes have been used in the study. Some were repeated shows aired on different dates and others were faulty only playing for a couple of minutes. Therefore only 15 radio programmes are reviewed and analyzed for this thesis.

3.4 Limitations

One of the limitations to the study is the lack of an online live stream channel of the radio or archived programmes. This created a dependency on the staff of the radio to upload the programmes onto tools such as Dropbox. The criteria of selection of the programmes is not known since staff at the station made the selection, however, it is hoped that this was a good representation. Additionally the size of the recorded programmes, cost, speed and reliability of Internet in Kampala, Uganda weighed in on the number of programmes that could be uploaded. Additionally, the radio programmes are aired in Luganda - a local Ugandan language mainly spoken by the Ganda people from central Uganda. Even with the working knowledge of the language it was time consuming to translate the content into English for the thesis readers.

4.0 PUBLISHED BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

4.1 Introduction

At the core of theory, research, and arguments to be discussed in this chapter lies the quest for participation of the voiceless particularly women via women's radio. In Peter Dahlgren's understanding of Nick Couldry's conceptualization of 'voice' he argues, "Fundamentally, voice is a process of giving accounts of oneself and of the circumstances in which one acts. ... voice becomes something to be protected, to be promoted, to give witness to the human reality ..." (2013:54). The concept of voice is particularly relevant to this thesis because it is from expression of one's opinion that they can engage and participate in discussions and activities in the public. This chapter discusses various aspects such as knowledge creation, women's media, women's radio, civic engagement and women's space; which all revolve around and build on understanding the metaphor of voice.

4.2 Knowledge Creation: A Feminist Standpoint Approach To Research

Caroline Mitchell contends, "Feminist media academic have emphasized the importance of alternative sites of media practice" (2000:189). Women's media sites are platforms that aim to eliminate the cultural and socio-economic barriers to women's access to information and the public sphere. Additionally, these media sites serve as points where situated knowledge can be collected, which is critical for feminist science projects. Feminist scholars have often criticized the operations and management of traditional science that has largely been portrayed as a male dominated field paying very little or no attention to women's contribution. For example, Liesbet Van Zoonen discusses Sandra Harding's challenge to science, drawing attention to "the underrepresentation of women in higher education and as scientists ... sexist use of science ... themes, theories and methodologies which have been shown to be male biased in the sense that women's problems have been ignored in many research agendas ... (and) the tenets of science itself - objectivity, value-freeness and neutrality are off-springs of the hegemony of masculine modes of thinking" (1994:14). Feminist scholars criticize this system of traditional science

because it has been limiting in their study and documentation of women's knowledge and experiences.

Over time traditional science mechanisms grouped women as a homogenous group and therefore the results gave a generalization of women that was not accurate. Policies and services that have been designed and implemented from this generalization have often failed and/or not been useful to women. It is at this point that feminist scholars argue for the diversity among women - such as age, class, race and social positions - and the need to acknowledge this diversity that allows for science projects to represent a true picture of reality. It is from such realities that data of social sciences is derived (Luckmann, 2008:282). However, the male bias of traditional science has often limited the ability for women to share their knowledge and experiences as well as the objective reporting of them. This is owed to the patriarchal, power and social structures that have influenced our modes of thinking. Therefore some feminists and women's rights activists argue that it is important to introduce women's media sites as a safe space for women to share their knowledge and experiences. The study of women's media sites takes into account what Van Zoonen (1994:14) recognized as often ignored by traditional science, that is, 'women's themes and experiences' and it offers 'validity of women's ways of knowing'. This stems from the argument that "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988:583). In this sense it can be argued that women's media sites, as objects of study provide objective results of women's realities.

The acknowledgment and questioning of cultural and power relations within the modes of traditional science is best illustrated by the feminist standpoint theory. Leading feminist scholar and one of the founders of the feminist standpoint theory, Sandra Harding in her book *'Sciences From Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities'* upholds the feminist standpoint mantra, which argues researchers to 'start off research and politics from women's lives' instead of starting from conceptual frameworks of research disciplines (Harding, 2008:225). Essentially, the "feminist standpoint hinges on realizing that the conditions and experiences common to girls and women are not natural, but are a result from social and political forces" (Wood, 2009:397). These social and political forces have therefore shaped women's

knowledge and experiences in a different way compared to that of men. As the dominant group of society, men have often set the terms of research and validation of results. In the position of dominance, men are therefore mostly unable to understand and report the true realities of the subordinate group or their own relations to the subordinate group. Harding argues that the objective natures of dominant groups can be revealed from the standpoint of the oppressed, that is; “Dominant groups cannot understand the nature and causes of their own social situations if they examine such topics from their own ‘native’ perspectives.” (2008:14).

In this respect, feminist research should challenge socio-political relations and traditional modes of science by asking new questions. And this research should begin with the lives of the subordinate group in this case women. Haraway (1988:584) argues, “Subjugated standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world”. It is envisioned that with new research questions and perspectives, a change will be realized in the world. In media studies, the feminist standpoint theory is critical to examining the implications of misrepresentation of women and women’s issues. Feminist theory guides the researcher to exploring gender as a communicative process by bringing attention to issues in content that could impact on women’s experiences, knowledge and opportunities to engage and participate in public life.

4.3 Historical Background To Women’s Media in Uganda

Uganda has made major gains with the enactment of affirmative action policies that have seen more opportunities extended to women in various sectors. On the legal front, a beautiful picture is painted towards achieving gender equality. However, whether these laws have actually ensured women’s empowerment and gender equality is another matter. To assess the impact of the affirmative action policies towards the improvement of the lives of women in Uganda, Ruth Mukama in her contribution to Tripp and Kwesiga’s (2002) book ‘*The Women’s Movement in Uganda: History, Challenges and Prospects*’, put the media to the test. It can be argued that the media is a mirror of society and is therefore the best tool to assess the impact of any policy or programme. In her analysis of women’s situation in the media, Mukama (2002:147-161) examined historical patterns, challenges, transformations and offered

insight into the way forward towards changing policies and practices in the media and the women's movement as a whole. As documented in her analysis the Ugandan media is no exception to the rule in regards to the negative and often distorted portrayal of women and under coverage of women's issues.

To understand why the media often does not take into consideration sensitivity to portrayal of women and coverage of women's issues, it is important to revisit the historical background of the media operations in Uganda. Over a period of 60 years after the first newspapers were printed in Uganda in 1897, it can be regarded that the limited outlets were authoritative voices of the Christian Missionaries' work and the gender factor was never considered by the writers (Mukama, 2002:148). The establishment of other newspapers in the late 1950s also did not show a change in this kind of news coverage as gender was rarely considered and only in the late 1980s was there a slight change of women's coverage beyond fashion and beauty matters (Ibid). This kind of coverage was taken up by the women's movement as a matter of urgent advocacy concern. The women's organizations in Uganda took it upon themselves to engage media houses with the aim of seeing improvement in the coverage of women and their issues. Mukama's (2002:150-157) illustrates how organizations such as Action For Development (ACFODE), Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) and Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) respectively negotiated for the creation of women's page in the leading newspaper, monitored the media to critique all forms of sexism and exploitation, and held workshops and published materials targeted at journalists to sensitize them on women's concerns. These activities saw the introduction and establishment of alternative media tools such as the 'Arise Magazine' in print by ACFODE in 1989, 'The Other Voice: For a Fair and Just Society' - a monthly newspaper pullout in the New Vision in 1997 by UMWA and 'Mama FM' - a radio station - by UMWA in 1997.

Important to note is that the ill-representation of women and their issues in the media has and continues to be an issue of the women's movement world over. A famous critique to the media is by Betty Friedan in her 1963 book "*The Feminine Mystique*" where she attacked the media for reinforcing unliberating stereotypes of women - "the public and self image of woman as a mindless, emotional, dependent housewife with no interests beyond her home, husband and children" (Ceulemans, 1980:101-102). In

her highly provocative and influential book, Betty Friedan explored how society through psychology, media and advertising had directed women only into traditional gender roles to the exclusion of their own talents and abilities. Friedan argued that the problem causing a sense of dissatisfaction among women lay "... in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity" (1963:15). While gender roles are important, it is only fair to present women as people with wholesome potential to participate in the public sphere just like the men are present in the media. The women require female role models who inspire and give them confidence to be able to utilize their talents and successfully achieve dreams in the public.

While Mukama's analysis was done 14 years ago, it is relevant for research today as many of the obstacles to progress in the media that she discusses are still evident. The latest 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) Uganda National Report reveals as much "Women's overall presence in the news was only 28% of news subjects ... women made news most in the topic least covered by the media - Celebrity/ Arts/ Media ... occupationally, women appeared most in fields associated with domesticity and care giving ... Female journalists are more likely than the males to select more female news sources; to write stories with women as a central focus; to raise issues of gender equality and to challenge gender stereotypes" (GMMP, 2015:9). It is on the basis of such recent findings that we are presented with a need to explore how the women's alternative media tools have progressed since their establishment amidst many challenges of women in the media. Mukama envisioned that the women's media tools "could successfully challenge the sexist content of male-dominated mainstream media by giving women a platform to present their own conceptions of reality" (2002:160). This would essentially bring about a change in the media environment in Uganda, worth exploring. Examining the strategies used by women's media sites to encourage women's engagement and participation in matters of private and public concern in the media is critical to women's activism and the growth of the women's movement.

Taking into consideration that media sites are public forum for national political debate, exploring how women's media sites work to contribute to this debate is critical for the progressive development of the democratic dialogue in Uganda. It is envisioned that this platform will develop strategies that will inspire women to participate more substantively in formal and informal discussions on government programmes and policy making processes. At 51% of the Ugandan National Population (UBoS, 2016:8) women's contributions and views cannot continue to be ignored and/or misrepresented in the media. Essentially it is hoped that women's media sites will improve the quality of a democracy, which is measured by the open and inclusive debate conditions that provide access to spaces where all citizens can debate political content thereby shaping their civic knowledge and practices. Civic knowledge is crucial for women's empowerment as it is when women are knowledgeable and informed of their rights, obligations and available government/public programmes and policies that they will rightfully demand for and utilize them.

4.4 Women's Radio: An Engagement Tool

Gaining its reputation from past endeavors, radio has proven to be one of the most powerful media tools to date - "emphasized (is) radio's potential as a medium of public information and debate that might foster a vibrant and broadened public sphere" (Butsch, 2008:88). Researchers argue that radio's ubiquitous nature positions it to have vast influence and impact on its listenership. Important to note is that because of its affordability and accessibility potential, "radio provides information access to illiterate and financially disadvantaged communities, as programming is cheap enough to be produced locally and in a range of languages" (Gatua, Patton and Brown, 2010:165). As an object of study, radio stands to provide rich information, knowledge and experiences that are particularly critical for science projects and more so those that use the standpoint approach. An evident gap in the radio studies research is the relationship between women and radio and women's radio as an object of study. Not only is it under researched, "Women and radio as an area of research within radio studies is also undervalued" (Mitchell, 1998:74). More so is research "focused on women and community radio, especially women in developing countries" (Gatua, Patton and Brown, 2010:165) remains inadequately explored.

The concept of women's media is derived from the feminist standpoint theory, which places women's experience as central during the production of knowledge. "The programming ... shows that women's community radio has the ability to produce 'soundscapes' or narratives based on women's experiences, embedded in the local and the 'everyday'" (Mitchell, 2000:197). Taking the approach of local community radio programming, women's media sites aim to create an inclusive media environment that promotes women's engagement and participation in topics concerning both the public and private sphere. It is in the processes of engagement and participation that knowledge is created and shared by and among women with the aim of meeting the information needs of women and to empower them. The notion of women's media fits well with the methodological and political reasoning for developing feminist standpoint theory as it is grounded in the production and broadcast of experiences and knowledge for and by women (Harding, 2008:114). The examination of women's media is an important feminist research project as it serves to investigate approaches to women's programming and the content thereof, serving also as a documentation of their knowledge and experiences. By applying the feminist standpoint theory, this project seeks to empower women and women's media sites "to see the importance of engaging in political and scientific struggles to see the world from the perspective of (their) own lives" (Harding, 2008:121). The feminist standpoint theory stresses that knowledge is socially situated making it a particularly relevant theoretical framework in research. By acknowledging social positions, researchers are able to design a project that examines while catering the social inequalities.

The advent of women's radio created a paradigm shift in women's participation. Previous research illustrates that women were underrepresented both as participants and radio programming staff (Ceulemans, 1980:196). As the name suggests, the aim of women's radio is to broadcast women's perspectives on issues and therefore offers an open invitation for women to engage on a wide range of issues both in the public and private spheres. At the same time women's radio airs events and processes happening at local, national and global levels with the aim of educating women so that they can make informed decisions and voice their opinions too on matters of concern. Radio has been referred to "as an institution of the public sphere (and)

conceived radio listeners as publics” (Butsch, 2008:85). Women’s radio creates a shift in the participation paradigm by presenting women with a feminist public sphere.

The notion of the public sphere was first introduced by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and it has over time become one of the most widely discussed theories by media academics. By design the public sphere is a critical component of democracy and is of high significance for good governance. In Thomas McCarthy’s introduction to the translation of Jürgen Habermas’ *‘The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society’*, he states that the public sphere is one “... in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed” (1989/2015:xi). The public sphere can be literally described as a space where individuals discuss matters of societal concern with the hope of influencing political action. Taking the understanding that the public sphere facilitates dialogue among people, illustrates its communicative function for civic and political participation. The communicative function of the public sphere therefore brings into play the role of the media as communication channels that create an enabling environment for such dialogue to take place. Karen Ross (2004:786) contends that the media are becoming the ‘real public sphere’ based on their ability to inform and educate the public of the political processes. By promoting free exchange of ideas and information and enabling the deliberation of matters of public concern, the media lives up to its principal characteristic as a facilitator for the presence and sustainability of the public sphere.

Peter Dahlgren (2009:2) argues, “the media are a prerequisite ... for shaping the democratic character of society”. With the potential of bringing the democratic and public sphere closer to women, the women’s radio plays a crucial role in fostering women’s civic engagement and democratic participation. The women’s radio breaks down some of the barriers that have for a long time impeded women’s civic engagement and eventual democratic participation. The women’s radio presents as a safe and autonomous place for them to freely take part in debates and discussions of local and national concern. Through studying the radio programmes, this thesis will examine and highlight the democratic character that the women’s radio is shaping in women and the larger listenership. By definition, character refers to the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. The analysis of this study will explore the

intended understanding and meanings of these programmes by the programme makers and those concluded by the participating listeners while also establishing a moral and ethical position on the issues being discussed. By analyzing the content of the programmes, this study will document best practices while also exposing gaps for improvement in women's radio programming. It is also envisioned that the thesis will determine the importance of having a women's radio and its potential for replication in other parts of the country and world.

As cautioned by Dahlgren (2009:3), this study is aware that the media are only one of the many factors that foster civic engagement and participation. In this study it is believed that the media is such a versatile tool that can be integrated in all other activities and plans. By getting it right with the media then all other activities fall into place. This thereby ensures wholesome implementation of civic education and engagement programmes. It is therefore important to establish a good foundation and relationship with the media. Argued for in literature, the media present as principal institutions that shape the public sphere and therefore play a significant role in fostering civic engagement and participation of the public (Curran, 1991:29).

4.5 Women's Civic Engagement

The documentation of women's efforts and contributions during the transition periods in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe edited by Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. Wolchik offers insight into women's roles in achieving and consolidating the democratization processes in these regions. The documentation argues that for women to realize full political citizenship it is critical that they "first become conscious of the effects of their political marginalization" (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998:12). Such documentation is particularly important as it offers a justification for women's engagement and participation in democratization processes. Furthermore, this documentation highlights the impacts of democratization on gender equality with the decline of women's movements and co-opting of women leaders into parties and the government in some countries (Tripp, 2013). Overall, this argument suggests the need for specific attention to be paid to the role of women in political processes and factors that enable their engagement and participation. While this documentation is not necessarily a record of best practices it is important for the women's and feminist

movement to be aware of and refer to these experiences as learning points for future realization of women's rights and gender equality.

At 51% of the Ugandan National Population (UBoS, 2016:8) women's contributions and views cannot continue to be ignored. As in previous documentations of women's activism, it is important to document Ugandan women's efforts in such processes and factors that enable them to participate. The study of Mama FM is a significant step in documenting best practices that foster women's civic engagement and participation. It is envisioned to offer learning points not only for the radio station but the women's movement as a whole. This study is also particularly important based on the fact that women's political representation in Uganda has increased over the years with over 35% of parliamentary seats occupied by women (Tripp: 2013). This change in the political terrain is a significant success of the activism of the women's movement. However, the increase in numbers has not necessarily guaranteed positive improvement in the standards of living by the women and the general public. Women still constitute the biggest percentage of the country's poor. Anthony Giddens contends, "Until you had the full inclusion of women you had nothing like a complete democratization..." (2002). This situation therefore calls for strategies and programmes that through civic education increase women's engagement potential and bargaining power through political participation.

Previous research into citizen's engagement and participation in political processes points to their inadequate knowledge and experience with how the political system operates but also questions the role of the media inciting their participation through educative and informative programmes and writings (Ross, 2004:785). More important to feminist studies is women's engagement and participation via the various media channels. One feminist study questioned "the role that women and women's issues play on the talk radio airwaves" (Kohut and Parker, 1997:221). Because of the traditional and conservative nature of talk radio, it is critical to feminist projects to study avenues and strategies used to engage women in discussions. More interesting is how women's radio has used the talk radio format to engage and encourage the participation of women in civic discussions. It is also interesting to study how women's radio frames information about the political process for its target audience the women.

The concept of talk radio comprises of radio programme formats that characterized by debate, discussion and interviews. These particular formats encourage the exchange of ideas and information among different people namely the programme host, guests and the audience. The main role of the programme host is to moderate the show while providing a background to the show, keeping the conversation within the set parameters of the topic, probing for additional information and allocating all participants ample time to voice their opinions. Previous research of relevance to this thesis has focused on observing time sensitive and/or period specific programmes, while measuring their influence to the practice of a public sphere around a specific process for example elections (Ross, 2004:786-787). Another particularly interesting research sought to examine the gender gaps in talk radio. In their research, Kohut and Parker (1997:221) concluded that women were less likely to participate in such programmes neither as hosts nor as call in participants. The study revealed that extent of women's engagement and participation in the programmes can be explained by the gender differences in terms of political interests, opinions and stances, accessibility, awareness and knowledge (Kohut and Parker, 1997:222-224). Interestingly, both pieces of research highlight that women are more interested and likely to participate in programmes that discuss matters that relate to their personal lives and relationships. Taking this into consideration, it would be interesting to examine the contribution of women's perspectives on shaping the overall civic discussions and political decisions.

The study by Andrew Kohut and Kimberly Parker (1997:221) examines the phenomenon of talk radio with a particular aim of exploring the element of the gender gap in all aspects of talk radio. The study acknowledges that talk radio is a well-trusted source of information characterized by productive and wide-ranging discussions thereby making it a 'powerful political force'. The initial claim of this study is that talk radio is majorly accessible and used by men. "The gender gap is evident not only in terms of attitudes and participation; it can also be seen in the content of talk radio" (Ibid). It is important to note that this study was published 19 years ago when women's status and position in the public sphere such as talk radio was only starting to get recognition. In the years preceding this study, talk radio was an exclusive space for the conservative men. Since then women have been extended a greater invitation to participate in the discussions of the public sphere.

Over the years, the notion that women are less interested and less likely to participate in talk radio programmes has been studied and disputed. Cognizant of the cultural and socio-economic barriers that limit women's participation, there has been a registered increase in the number of women who pronounce their interest in politics and those participating as programme hosts and call in participants. The opinions of women who are documented in the research by Ross attest to this change in civic engagement and participation especially via talk radio programmes (2004:788). The positive shift in participation of both women and men to more equal rates gives importance to the need to sustain of talk radio programming as a tool that fosters civic engagement and in the long run democratic participation.

4.6 Women's Spaces and Women's Voices

Existing research into women and radio as an area of study has often focused on the following themes 'equality in radio employment', 'women's interests and perspectives in radio discourses', and 'women's programming broadcast via public radio stations' among others (Mitchell, 1998:75; Ceulemans, 1980:324). The study of women's participation in radio programme discussions is often limited mainly in comparison to men's participation and focuses on public/commercial radio stations. While these studies are important, they don't take into consideration the socio-political and power structures that govern our modes and levels of participation. Additionally they have not explored the creative ways 'women's stations forge a gendered space' that facilitates women's discursive engagement and participation in matters outside the private sphere (Mitchell, 1998:74 & 77). Women's radio presents an open window and door for women to get educated and informed about matters of public concern but also for them to voice their opinions and contribute to growth of discussions and decisions to be made.

The invitation to participate was made possible following years of women's rights and feminist activism that led to the enactment of laws and policies that safeguarded women's rightful place in these spaces. Even with gender sensitive legal provisions, women's civic participation in public spheres has not been fully embraced. This is particularly true for traditional and conservative societies such as in Uganda. This

study will give the utmost need and importance to the establishment of women's radio as an autonomous space for women deliberate on key issues of concern from both the private and public sphere. The women's radio offers a space where women are provided with actionable information by allowing open discussions and interactions with fellow women, experts, political practitioners and the general public. It is envisioned that by building women's confidence to engage on these issues, it will ensure their civic participation on a whole. More so this study gives relevance to studying women's radio and how it is being used as a tool to encourage women's civic engagement and participation

The political and social purpose of women's spaces is to serve as collective yet supportive spaces where women share their experiences with one another. It is in these spaces that women learn from each other and also organize activities and campaigns for the advancement of their rights. The inclusion of men in women's spaces has been a highly contested matter with arguments for and against this move. However, relevant to this study are arguments for women's spaces. Women's spaces cultivate women's full participation potential without facing or adhering to the standards of society's stereotypes. Patricia McFadden, a radical African Feminist Scholar, argues "The issue of male presence, in physical and ideological terms ... is also a serious expression of the backlash against women's attempts to become autonomous of men in their personal/political relationships and interactions" (ISIS International). Her argument is that space is 'gendered and high politicized', characterized by male dominance which influences the construction of discussions and activities within different spaces. Examining space from a gendered perspective is a critical starting point for feminist studies to understanding the social, political and power relations evident in structures and institutions. Specifically, women's media space such as a women's radio exponentially increases their exposure to social, economic and political information, knowledge and processes - critical elements to building women's voice.

4.7 Summary

Women's voice is a valuable yet critical area where slow progress has been registered in the Ugandan context. Building women's voice will require active solicitation of

their opinions as they engage and participate in public debate. This chapter has explored particularly two ways in building women's voice that is research and women's radio. There is substantial evidence documenting the impact of women's social and political voice in favor of gender sensitive policies and laws. Additionally women's collective voice is instrumental to their ability to negotiate transformative change.

5.0 FINDING THE WOMEN'S VOICE

5.1 Introduction

The underlying reason for this thesis analysis is shared among feminist media scholars such as Caroline Mitchell, who in her work aims to carve out and define “the ‘space’ for women on the airwaves” (2000:4). The term space in this chapter is used in reference to platforms for citizens’ civic participation. Spaces for participation are critical features to the advancement and growth of the feminist and women’s movement. Spaces in media studies serve a communicative purpose where citizens can dialogue with themselves and also interact with the leaders that represent them (Dahlgren, 2009:114). Having been relegated to the private sphere, women often only engaged in discussions about personal and family life among themselves as dictated in patriarchal structures as areas of importance and priority to them. Historically women were denied access to the public sphere and this is practice is still present in some communities today. Consequently women’s concerns and needs are not adequately represented in the public sphere.

To counter this undesired situation, Mitchell (2000:115) argues for women’s media as those that “negotiate an alternative space” which Dahlgren (2009:115) would term as “viable public spheres” of civic relevance. Women’s alternative communicative space in the public sphere is of significant importance to the feminist and women’s movement as it is in these spaces that women’s needs, will be discussed and decisions are made with their opinions and participation taken into account. Women’s media serves to uphold the principles of democracy that promote the inclusion of all citizens within civic spaces and dialogue. The terms space and participation have connotations to concepts such as voice and power, which will inform this analysis. Voice and power are critical determining factors to the participation of citizens and more so women in civic discussions in the public sphere. This chapter will explore the two concepts by analyzing their presence and implications at Mama FM as a communicative space. Using empirical data, voice and power will be illustrated under two themes that is, female versus male voice and constructions of gender in radio content.

5.2 Is It A Female or Male Voice?

Research about women and radio often reveals an overwhelming number of male voices as programme hosts, guests and audience participants compared to their female counterparts (Ceulemans, 1980:196, Kohut and Parker, 1997:221 and Ross, 2004:790). These findings have been interpreted as a “striking indication of sexism on local radio” (Women’s Airwaves Survey, Mitchell, 2000:84). Analysis of Mama FM’s radio programme schedule revealed the same trend. In 2014, the number of male hosts was twice that of females, with about 68% male hosts compared to 31% female hosts (Mama FM, 2014). In 2016 the ratio declined with about 70% male hosts compared to 30% female hosts (Mama FM, 2016). Further examination of the schedule revealed that only one female presenter hosts more than one programme compared to seven men who host more than one show, with one male presenter hosting up to three shows. Additionally the results show four female hosts work as solo broadcasters compared to eleven male solo hosts and there is one female co-host compared to three male co-hosts.

Taking a step back, it is important to recognize, that not all women operating in the media will be cognizant of gender issues and its constructions and it is not impossible for men to effectively cover gender matters (Kangas, Haider, and Fraser, 2014:78). However, the predominance of male voices particularly on a women’s radio station raises a number of concerns and questions worth exploring. For instance, what are the implications of having more male voices at a women’s radio station? How does this affect and impact on the realization of the long-term mission of the women’s radio station - ‘to amplify women’s concerns and increase their participation in local programs’ (UMWA/Mama FM)? What are the implications to women’s empowerment efforts? How are women’s issues constructed from a male perspective? These questions are not separate from each other as they all provide insight into carving out and defining women’s communicative spaces in the public sphere.

To explore the implications of the predominance of male voices, this thesis will use Nick Couldry’s conceptualization of the word ‘voice’ in his essay “*Alternative Media and Voice*” (2015). Couldry examines the word ‘voice’ by situating the concept “in the sphere of politics” and characterizes it in terms of “expression of opinion” and/or

“the expression of a distinctive perspective” (2015:44). Specifically it is Couldry’s political use of the word with reference to “contexts where long entrenched inequalities of representation need to be addressed” that is most relevant to this thesis (Ibid). The predominance of male voices is typical of the media environment that feminists and the women’s movements have for a long time criticized (Van Zoonen, 1994:7). The dominance of men is typical of most social, political, economic and cultural structures of society and this situation is owed to the systems of power and patriarchy that govern most societies more so in the Ugandan context. Inequalities of representation present power dynamics worth exploring in reference to the expression of voice and ultimately determine the construction of our lived realities that is broadcast in the media.

Dominance of male voices at a women’s radio questions the voice Mama FM is producing - is it a female or a male voice? It also begs to question what is a female voice and how is the female voice being constructed at Mama FM? Often heard during the radio programmes is the Mama FM radio sound/jingle, which captures the audience’s view of the station:

“We are sure that there is no radio station as enjoyable as Mama FM. We like Mama because it educates us. We like Mama because it entertains us. We like Mama because it represents and airs out our opinions as women. Do not tell me about any other but 101.7 Mama FM”

Relevant to this discussion of voice is the part “We like Mama because it represents and airs out our opinions as women”. Essentially this would mean that Mama FM is working to broadcast a female voice and women’s interests. So then the question to inform this analysis is how the female voice and women’s interest are being broadcast at the women’s radio? The analysis of the radio programme shows a contradiction in the ideal (female voice) and actual (male voice) practices at the station. Why then is there this contradiction and what does it mean? The analysis seeks to explore more into this predicament at the women’s radio station as a corruption of women’s voices.

The predominance of male radio programme hosts at Mama FM can be simply referred to as a gender imbalance in this departmental structure. But that would mean an over simplification of power dynamics and missing out on understanding the implications of gender imbalances in any structure. A critical illustration to this

discussion is that the listeners are 3 times more likely to hear male voices than female ones and points to “the normalization of men as both consumers and narrative protagonists” (Martinsson, 2014:21). Better said “the absence of an equal representation of females and males means that audiences form a view of the world in which women are symbolically absent in these spaces” (Krijnen and Van Bauwel, 2015:32). Essentially this represents the “denial of voice” which Couldry argues as ignoring “another one’s capacity for narrative” (2015:45-46), a significant element to the process of voice especially for women at a women’s radio. While this situation is probably a coincidence, it is not desirable for a women’s radio, it cannot go unnoticed or unexamined and therefore presents grounds for further inquiry. But then is it really a coincidence and an undesired situation? Maybe it is for the women but this cannot be said for the men at the station. After all, the men hold significant positions of influence and therefore would not be unhappy with the current structure. In these significant positions of influence the men are able to exercise subtle and/or invisible power and control over women’s voices and the information broadcast. Even in its subtle nature, it important to examine this power as an extension of male power and influence into women’s spaces. Male presence and dominance in women’s space undermines efforts for feminist and women’s autonomy in the public sphere.

Overturing the status of male dominance at the women’s radio will require institutional reflection and internal evaluations as this current staff structure is a contradiction of feminist leadership principles, that is, to have men ‘being spokespersons of women’s organizations’ as the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists (AFF/AWDF: Pg.13) indicates. But then again it begs a question as to whether Mama FM and UMWA as a whole consider themselves feminist organizations and commit to these institutional ethics in the Charter. While that is to be determined, this thesis argues that as a feminist and/or women’s radio station it should be a matter of organizational policy and principle to ensure that more females are represented as programme host at the radio. This is the only way to preserve women’s spaces while sustaining the representation of women in the public sphere. Some might argue that the increased presence of men at the women’s radio is a measure towards ensuring male engagement as is on the international agenda to have more men involved in the advancement of gender equality. Male engagement is

important but the issue should not be about inviting and having more men who end up taking control in women's spaces, but the need for men to feminize their spaces too.

Interestingly the UMWA and Mama FM programming and staffing policy mandates higher representation of women. Quoted in an organization brochure "Gender balance in the programming with special focus on women." "Work with both genders, but women more represented." "Management positions: By women. Why? The founding mission 'says so'." (UMWA/Mama FM). This begs a question why the practice is not in line with the policy? This contradiction calls for further research to understand the situation.

The gender imbalance is not only evident among the hosts but also among the guests, pre-recorded participants (vox pops) and call in audience. Analysis of 15 radio programmes reveals that approximately a third of invited guests were women compared to the number of male invited guests but there was an equal (50%) share of vox pops among both women and men. The female callers and text messaging audience comprised of less than a quarter of the male callers. It is important to note that while Mama FM has no control over who calls in or sends messages, the programme hosts and/or producers do have control over who to invite and whose voice to record prior to the show. The analysis further revealed that in the 4 programmes hosted by women, the number of women participating as guests and pre-recorded voices was three times more compared to the number of women participants in 8 radio programmes hosted by men. The significant difference in the rates of participation of women and men in female and male-hosted programme implies that there is also a difference in the voice and issues being broadcast on these particular shows. The question would then be, what issues are being discussed on these shows and whose voice is discussing these issues?

One quarter of the topics hosted by the male hosts had central focus on women that is; 'Domestic Violence Exclusive on Bride Price and Sex Video leakage - Revenge Pornography' compared to three quarter of topics that were themed in a general nature. While these shows were themed in a general nature, they tackled key political issues at the time such as 'Voter Rights', 'Rights and Responsibilities during Elections' and 'Parliamentary Candidature'. These radio programmes almost offered

a picture of a true democracy, with the representation of the government authorities, experts and the ordinary citizen all at one table. With government authorities sharing their plans and visions for its citizens, the experts contextualizing them, giving statistics and success or failure stories from other communities, and the ordinary citizens sharing their lived experiences of these plans, policies and programmes. What was missing to complete this picture was a fair representation on women at the table of discussion. With a country history of women's low participation in political activities and leadership it would have been important to discuss these issues with a gender lens exploring how both women and men can engage and participate effectively in these processes. The lack of a gender dimension to the discussion ignores the political inequalities present in our communities therefore failing to adequately foster participation of all citizens. Additionally there was no specific motivation in the content for the women to engage and participate in the discussion, which is demonstrated in the low rates of audience participation.

Even the two programmes that had a central focus on women's issues had more male participation. Discussing the relationship between bride price and domestic violence is an important question. Giving context to the topic of discussion, the institution of bride price is a long-standing custom and tradition in a number of societies and is widely practiced in Uganda. The payment of bride price serves as the validation for the legality of a marriage union. Historically bride price was a valued practice that created bonds between families and communities through the marriage. However, recent studies established a connection between bride price and domestic violence. The studies carried out in different communities in Uganda reveal that the payment of bride price is a gender issue that worsens power relations in a family, is a form of commodification of women, has implications to reproductive health decision making and has negative impacts on girl child education (Hague et al. 2011; Kaye et al. 2005; Muthegheki, Kule & Abrahams, 2012).

With more male participation, the discussion did not focus on how women are affected. Both bride price and domestic violence are characterized by aspects of imbalanced power relations and therefore have an effect on the realization of gender equality in the country. Important to note about this programme is the failure to moderate the discussions around the connection between bride price and domestic

violence. While this is the initial intent of the show, the outcome is not the same. The male host does not effectively steer the discussion towards analyzing this connection which is merely discussed in passing with the bulk of the contributions from the men concentrated on the value of bride price, its importance in today's society and the commercialization of the practice:

“The value of the bride price has been lost. In the past the groom would take few things to the bride's family but now it is exaggerated” (Male - Vox Pops).

“Taking gifts to the woman's family reduces tensions and space between the two families. It helps the two families get to know each other formally” (Male - Vox Pops).

“It has no meaning. It is now a show off. The bride should not be taken for free but we should go back to the old meaning of the practice” (Male - Vox Pops).

Taking into the consideration of the incidence of domestic violence in the country rating at 81% of victims of domestic violence being women and girls compared to 18% men and boys (UP-ACR, 2014:22), the representation of women's voice at this show was too low - 1 woman to 7 men. Being the most affected by domestic violence, their voice on this matter is lacking in this show. It is no wonder that the male respondents do not discuss the power relations. The one woman who managed to speak without her call getting dropped made the connection to power relations:

“Men know that they are all knowing and can do anything. They know that they control the household and everything. He controls you because he paid bride price. That is the way of men” (Female – Caller).

The woman's evidently different contribution to the discussion goes to show “women's voice accordingly provide(s) both an answer to and an explanation of women's positions” in society (Simpson & Lewis, 2007:21). Resultantly, having more men engage and participate in this discussion is evidence of a male voice. It shows that community and women's issues aired on Mama FM are constructed from a male perspective. The construction of - especially - women's issues from a male perspective subtly implies that men are still determining what women are allowed or not allowed to listen to. It takes men's media control a notch higher from giving women access to the radio set and/or choosing which station to listen to, they are now doing it from the inside when they influence the content, guests and vox pops of the programme to be aired at the women's radio.

The outcome is however different when women host programmes at Mama FM. Four analyzed programmes titled “Abakyala Tweyogerere/ Bazira” (Women Talk Back) aired for 2 hours every Sunday, hosted by a female, all had a central focus on women’s issues. That is; ‘Work and Life balance for women journalists’, women’s political participation - ‘Women’s Manifesto 2016-2021’ and ‘Women’s Situation Room’ as well as “Breast Cancer Awareness” programme aired on the “Obulamu bwe bugaga - Health Is Wealth” show. Three quarters of the participants in these programmes were women. With a female host, women centered topic and more women participants these shows embodied the female voice. During these show the women shared their expert knowledge and lived experiences in reference to the topics being discussed;

“Women have set up these situation rooms for the purposes of ensuring peaceful elections. It started in Liberia 2011. I participated in 2012 Nairobi Women’s Situation Room as an African Eminent Woman. We trained the youth to avoid violence as well as made contact to authorities for urgent response in cases of potential violence and/or malpractice” (Female - Vox Pops).

“I was diagnosed with breast cancer and was told that I needed an operation. Many people discharged me from the surgery saying that ‘a woman’s breast is her life’. I went ahead with the operation and other treatments. I have changed my lifestyle and participate in a counseling group with other survivors” (Female - Vox Pops).

“The women’s manifesto is based on research in 112 districts and documents voices of women’s concerns. Background to the manifesto is based on Beijing Platform Action. The research showed a gap in government programmes and policies towards women having a good standard of life. The manifesto states what women want in programming and policies” (Female - Vox Pops).

Storytelling holds enormous power in attracting audience interaction during a show. In radio storytelling is basically based on the expression ‘I’ll show you mine, if you’ll show me yours’ (Anonymous). The more a presenter and/or guest shares their personal knowledge and experience in relation to a topic of discussion the more the audience will want to participate and share their own stories too.

A downside to these programmes is that they were not aired live and therefore did not attract participation from the audience. The host blamed this on the timing challenges since Barclays English Premier League football matches were broadcast at the same

scheduled time of the programme. The host too expressed her concern over the disruption in timing for live air broadcasting and reassured the audience that it will return to the previous schedule soon. While these programmes featured mostly women's voices, the women of the audience were essentially denied an opportunity to air their voice and contribution to the discussion. Taking into consideration that these are just a few radio programmes hosted by women of the many other shows aired on Mama FM, it begs to question why only women hosted programmes were not aired live? Could it be a measure to have control over what is aired since not much control is present during live shows? Airing recorded shows by women hosts would mean that there is need to check what they are planning to discuss. It therefore denies them the ability to speak freely and eventually is a demonstration of the denial of women's voice. Again choosing to air a football match live instead of the scheduled programme would suggest a change in priorities between women's issues and entertainment. That's not to say that women are not interested in football but it questions the priorities of the station.

Expanding more on the choice to air a recorded women's programme in favor of live football matches brings into play Dahlgren's (2009) discussion on 'the evolving media landscape'. "There are currently over 250 FM radio stations across Uganda..." (Pulse Lab Kampala, 2016). This proliferation of radio stations places Mama FM in a highly competitive media environment. In Uganda, the most influential radio stations are privately owned and commercially oriented. This is a typical media environment in which the women's radio operates. But this also means that Mama FM has to compete for advertisements and sponsorships from corporate companies. Even though some of the radio station activities are donor funded, it is neither sustainable nor are the funds sufficient to make Mama FM independent and compete favorably with the other commercial radio stations. According to Dahlgren "the commercial imperatives of the media have hardened over the past few decades, the balance between public responsibility and private profit has been steadily tipping in favor of the latter" (2009:36-37). Essentially this competition means that the radio station has to strategically position its content and programming practices to fit the expectations of the sponsors and corporate companies. Resultantly this competition for revenue affects the overall objective of the women's radio for women's centered programming. Important to note is that the character of a patriarchal society not only

influences content but also forces of economics. Dahlgren further notes, “Normative goals are increasingly giving way to economic calculation ...” (Ibid), in this case the women’s radio is forced to adapt to the market forces. Without playing by the rules of the market Mama FM stands to lose its revenue and audience. It is also important to be aware that many of the commercial radio stations air women’s programmes too. While these programmes might not follow the same gender and ethical guidelines as those at Mama FM, the women audience can still identify with them. What is perceived as weaknesses or even failure of the women’s radio can also be viewed as a struggle for Mama FM to sustain itself in the media environment through competing for revenue and audiences like the stations.

The difference in rate of participation by women and men in the female and male hosted programme further implies two perceptions about selection of news or information sources and consequently bear implications to media content. Arguments from the 2015 Uganda GMMP findings show that females are more likely than men to select female news sources (Pg.9). It is also argued that women are less likely than men to be relied upon as experts or spokespeople (Pg.14). Resultantly these arguments have continued to influence the underrepresentation of women in radio. The second argument illustrates the ‘culture of gender stereotypes’ in the media (Walsh, Suiter & O’Connor, 2015:30). It is also important to note, “the relationship between gender and media production does not stop solely at the number of males and females working in these institutions” (Krijnen and Van Bauwel, 2015:93). However, the link between the level of participation of women in the media and its potential improvements in the representation of women is critical to feminist studies. Thus increasing the number of women radio hosts and participants bears positive implications for increased representation of women and their issues considering that female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women’s needs and perspectives than their male colleagues.

Dwelling more on the issue of women experts versus men experts is of critical importance as it is an illustration of the traditional importance given to men’s opinions at the expense of women’s knowledge and experiences. Essentially, if women are not considered as credible professionals who can provide expert information in media programmes, the audience not only misses out on an alternative

perspective but also reaffirms the traditional notions that men are more knowledgeable (Irvin, 2013:39). There is in existence enormous amounts of unknown and unrecognized material and knowledge produced by professional and local women world over. If professional and local women are not tapped into to offer their expert and indigenous opinion at the women's radio, it begs a question to the efforts of the women's radio to research about these women and extend such invitations. Sadly this situation essentially undermines the efforts of the women's movement who are advocating for more women professionals in the public sphere. It also calls for increased efforts in gender mainstreaming at the institution.

Untapped women's knowledge is not only an issue in women's media but also in scientific research as the underlying basis for the Feminist Standpoint Theory. By increasing the number of women's voices, the women's radio is supporting women's way of knowing and critical thinking about societal issues and the way they are affected taking into account their diversity. When women engage and participate in public discussions such as those on radio they offer alternative insight into understanding gender differences, promoting equity and equality and ultimately deconstructing patriarchal hierarchies. Research findings in West Africa attest to this "Women appreciated women's programmes as a space to express themselves, to participate in public life, educate them on their rights and give them protection against harmful traditional mindsets" (Fortune and Chungong, 2010:83). Women's radio presents a platform to share and illustrate the connection between scientific research and community initiatives that will enrich the listening communities. Facilitating women's knowledge production and dissemination is a key-contributing factor to the documentation of women's 'herstory', which largely goes untold.

Couldry argues, "citizen's media is not a matter simply of setting up a new station ... it is an ongoing process of building voice" (2015:51). It is therefore of importance to be critical about not only the way voice is being built but which voice is being built at Mama FM. Building an effective women's voice through Mama FM will require alternative practices and principles that recognize and give importance to the core ideals of feminism and the need for women's perspectives to be sought after, heard and shared on air (Women's Airwaves Survey, Mitchell 2000:92). The core ideal of feminism and the women's movement call for the questioning of power relations that

contribute to the especially women's inequality in society. Fundamentally, the presence of women on radio is more likely to address these inequalities by providing positive role models for women and girls, to build the confidence of women as sources and interviewees, and to attract a female audience. This will then cause a ripple effect in motivating and grounding their levels of civic engagement and participation in the public sphere. Having more women civically knowledgeable and engaged will contribute to the challenging of stereotypes and patriarchal structures.

5.3 Gender Construction of Content

The media play an important role in informing and educating the masses while inciting their discussion on occurrences and processes within society's structures (Dahlgren, 2009:2-3). Essentially the media produce and reproduce our everyday understanding of our surroundings, relationships and knowledge of the world. It is important to note that the media influences the norms and values of society that shape our understanding of gender roles in all spheres. Therefore the media is not immune to but in fact facilitates the gender constructions of society. Gender can be understood as the social construction of everyday roles, norms, values and expectations in terms of femininity and masculinity in the public and private spheres (Moinuddin, 2010:xi & 2). Critical to feminist and women's studies is the predominant role media plays in facilitating the gender construction of our lives in both the public and private sphere. Exploring how gender is constructed and represented in media texts and images is a relevant and critical research question for feminist media studies (Van Zoonen, 1994:43). Worth exploring as well is how the male dominance of hosts affects the women's radio's role in informing and educating the masses from a women's perspective.

Taking into consideration its ubiquitous form, the media publish and broadcast content that creates and shapes our perspectives and/or opinions from both media practitioners and the public. Evidence shows that the media have been and still are perpetrators in reinforcing conservative patriarchal traditions, norms and values which have often been negative and non-liberating with more damage towards women's status in society (Women's Airwaves Survey, Mitchell 2000:89 and Uganda GMMP, 2015:17-18). Ideally as great influencers of society the media have an obligation and

responsibility to offer information that not only mirrors society but also challenges negative gender constructions. When media does not challenge negative gender constructions they in turn reinforce stereotypes and traditions. For example, during the discussion on 'Tuteese' (Open Air Forum) aired on 13th November 2015 hosted by Lawrence Kalanzi (man), a woman called in and expressed her disappointment with the government that supports women's rights:

"It hurts me that this government has given women freedom. Everyone does what he or she wants and what makes him or her happy. I did not know that women wore trousers. Even the men allowed this to happen. You leave the house with the wife, daughter, son all wearing trousers. Who of you then is controlling the other and is the man? It hurts me. I will support a president who will work on this" (Female Caller).

Highlighting this isolated example is relevant because no one in the studio - neither the host nor the male guests - commented on her submission. Her submission exemplifies a conservative mindset characterized by men's control over women and their decisions.

Macklem Timothy, while discussing Catharine MacKinnon's arguments put it into context "while the voice that women speak in is undoubtedly distinctively female, it is paradoxically and more fundamentally the voice of men, the voice that men have invented for women to speak in, the voice given to those who occupy the subordinate roles that men have invented for women to perform" (2003:49).

It invokes stereotypes such as 'women are supposed to be submissive and men are in charge; men are always at the top and they tell women what to do' and taboos including 'women are not supposed to wear trousers'. Failure to give a response that challenges this way of thinking is also a failure in Mama FM's responsibility to confront negative socialization processes and messages that derail women's empowerment and gender equality.

Digging more into the issue of responsibility - when a presenter fails to respond to such a comment, what does it say about their ability take responsibility for content aired during their show? Not responding to such a comment could be viewed a number of ways: the presenter makes a strategic decision to silence the issue by not talking about it because it could sound controversial; or the presenter is ignoring it causally because they feel that is not important; or the presenter is aware that the comment is product of the socialization process and chooses to let it pass; or the

presenter agrees with it and therefore will not contest it. Important to note is that this comment reflects serious concerns for advancement of women's empowerment in regard to stereotypes and taboos. Choosing not to respond to the comment for whichever reason is a failure particularly on the part of the presenter to take responsibility of their role at the women's radio. Inspiration for this argument is drawn from Roger Silverstone's discussion of *'Mediapolis and Everyday life'* where he seeks to "understand participation as something active ... (and) implies some kind of responsibility (2013:108). Working at a women's radio comes with sometimes unspoken roles and duties to be cognizant of gender insensitive content and the need to protect women's rights. In reference to media responsibility Silverstone notes, "Without challenge, without interrogation, and above all without our willingness to take responsibility for them, they fail us..." (2013:128). Not responding to such comments literally reinforces the existing stereotypes and takes efforts of the women's movement a number of steps back. However, when a presenter chooses to respond and discuss about such comments it educates people while opening up debates that challenge patriarchy. Mama FM as an institution entrusts the presenters – media professionals – to adequately represent them. Furthermore, Silverstone argues, "The point about moral responsibility is that it is, and has to be, the property of the individual, and not of the collective..." (2013:151). In such instances, when the media professionals don't take this individual initiative of responsibility, they fail the institution and the women that they represent.

To follow up this discussion, radio is about conversation and therefore the audience interaction sessions are critical to enhancing dialogue. However, the phone-in sessions during programmes at Mama FM don't necessarily take the dialogue format. Most commonly the caller speaks while the host and guest listen and thereafter responses are given in bulk after the calls have ended. 70% of the analyzed shows allocated 30 minutes out of a 2-hour time slot for the phone-in session and response from those in the studio. Reasons to explain this would be the cost of calls, the host allows the caller to speak and then hang up to save on spending too much for the call. The cost and time allocation to this session means that only a few callers and text comments can be aired. What does this mean for real time engagement? It does not give room for the host to probe and really engage in conversation with the caller. It also questions priorities when structuring these programmes.

Gender constructions are illustrated in media content as stereotypes, misrepresentation and biased reporting. In a discussion of ‘stereotypes as discursive practices that produce knowledge’, Krijnen and Van Bauwel, made a positive note on the increase in number of media that are resisting these stereotypes (2015:45-46). Taking this into consideration it is also important to show examples where women’s radio has served as a platform to challenge gender stereotypes in media texts and images by drawing attention to cases of biased reporting. In one of the radio programmes, ‘Osanidde Omanyé’ (Ignorance Is No Defence) aired on 10th February 2015; the issue of distribution of pornography in the Ugandan media and social networking sites was discussed. The programme was hosted by Moses Kiwanuka (man) and took a discussion format with three guests; a lawyer (woman), media practitioner (woman) and a youth leader (man). Additionally vox pops were aired, calls were received and text messages from social media were included as the audience’s contribution to the discussion. The host presented the topic as a matter for concern based on the increased rates of publishing and broadcasting of pornographic material particularly sex tapes and nude pictures especially of women. This is a good case because it shows the gender knowledge and expectations from the society and the media. It offers insight into how this media content was received and perceived in the public and among the media.

“We condemn circulation of these images and particularly our fellow media houses who publish them. These media houses have not taken time to follow the right procedures to publishing such explicit content” (Female - Guest).

“It increases immorality in the country. These images destroy the reputation of people involved. A responsible media channel would write against it and not publish or broadcast” (Male - Vox Pops).

“There are no laws targeting the media to ensure responsible reporting” (Male - Caller).

It further challenges and questions the intentions and responsibility of the media when it comes to covering stories that have gender connotations and implications.

“When we carried out monitoring of media reports it revealed that stories about women were mainly from a sexist angle” (Female - Guest).

“It is important to talk about this issue. It is shaming to the people. It is more disrespectful to women. The government should have a law against this” (Female - Vox Pops).

“The media should always ask themselves what message they are sending out. You need to keep in mind that the whole country is listening and should keep cautious. What are we teaching children? Additionally people need to give consent to news stories” (Female - Guest).

The expert opinions offered insight into issues of morality and ethics in the society and media respectively. Considering that Uganda is a traditionally conservative society with cultural norms dictating discussion and portrayal of sexual relations in the public, the guests were in agreement that distribution of this pornographic material was an illustration of moral degradation of the society.

“It shows that Uganda is losing its morality... These issues are private matters. In Ugandan culture we don’t talk about sexual matters in public”. (Female - Guest).

The guests equally condemned the media houses that published and broadcast these materials for not acting ethically and questioned their intention for publishing these explicit images and texts. They argued that these channels are commercially driven and only aim to increase sales other than offer news pieces of developmental importance to their audiences. This argument also brought to light the biased reporting of these stories to the detriment of women. The guests argued that the focus of these stories were women. The argument revealed that stories of substance had not been written about these women before, yet when pornographic material is released the media rides on it.

“This woman has been doing good work. She is a woman of influence. However, no news story had been written about Robinah Mweruka’s contribution to the country. But when these images were leaked, the media blew it up and social networks helped to spread it. As women media practitioners, we wonder why there is this trend in the media” (Female - Guest)

Further discussions of the case revealed that these were cases of revenge pornography. Revenge pornography refers to the instance when sexually explicit material is distributed via any medium without the consent of the captured individuals.

“Stories have shown that this is revenge pornography” (Male - Guest)

“People get these videos without consent to hurt those captured. Sexual relations are between two people. Those who publish want to shame these people in public - revenge. It also harms other people who see these” (Male - Vox Pops).

With the focus of the media on the women in these leaked images, the host questioned why the women were the center of discussion and the ones who received the most backlash. He wondered why there was unbalanced blame yet the act involved a man too. This was clarified as an issue of patriarchy and superiority accorded to men by cultural norms and values. A number of customs in Uganda permit men to be polygamous and therefore the public might not condemn their presence in these media images. However, when a woman is featured, it is thought that she is promiscuous and therefore condemned by the society.

“The culture of Africa put men in a superior position of power and views women as inferior. Men are allowed to be polygamous, culture only expects women to be monogamous” (Male - Guest).

“Women’s immorality sells more than that of men” (Male - Host).

“When a woman is featured in these images, judgment is passed at first sight. She is deemed to be the one in the wrong. There is no room to listen to her side of the story in defense” (Female - Guest).

The articulation of the issues of media bias, revenge pornography, unbalanced blame and customs ignored in the mainstream media, gives credibility to the women’s radio’s efforts in promoting gender awareness and sensitivity in the media and society at large.

Furthermore, the decision to discuss the matter other than sharing the pornography like other media houses enhances Mama FM’s credibility and sense of priority to substantive reporting and not succumbing to commercial temptations. To the core of this discussion was the sexualisation of women by the Ugandan media and people on social networking sites manifested through revenge pornography. Sexualisation of women against their will is a common occurrence from unsolicited verbal comments to unwanted touches by men along the streets. Sexualisation is when a person is judged by her/his physical attractiveness to the exclusion of her/his character, personality and capacity for independent action. The discussion tackled the fact that women are disproportionately affected by the spread of revenge pornography content compared to their male counterparts featured in the same content. It brings to the table

of discussion, the manifestation of a larger discourse around the representation of the female body.

“These media stories focus on the explicit images of women’s breasts and buttocks, the clothes women wear and style” (Female - Guest).

The larger discourse would necessitate confrontation of the power structures that control representation of the female body in terms of the commercialization, stigmatization and shaming attitudes. While this larger discourse might face resistance since sex talk is relegated to the private sphere, it is important if attitudes towards women’s sexualisation are going to change.

The concept of women’s radio, calls for specialized programming tailored to meet the needs of its target audience - the women (Ceulemans, 1980:321-322). Tailoring radio programming to meeting the information needs of women requires a change towards creative and scheduling different programme timeslots from those offered by the mainstream radio stations. By making these changes women’s radio presents an opportunity to increase the levels of women’s engagement and participation in the topics for discussion. However, it is critical that women’s issues take center stage in the discussions to ensure women’s sustained participation. Studies have shown that centrality of women’s issues is mostly found in topics that are traditionally deemed to be of interest to women such as entertainment, health and social matters while less in topics associated to men such as politics and economics (Uganda GMMP, 2015:17). This conclusion is also associated with horizontal segregation on the level of genre, where women are assigned ‘soft’ topics and men ‘hard’ topics. Krijnen and Van Bauwel discuss horizontal segregation in relation to Gaye Tuchman who first introduced the notion in relation to gender in 1973 (2015:99-100). The developed discussion reveals the latest associations of quality and credibility to hard news as opposed to soft news, which is not of this description, thereby imposing connotations of quality to gender (Ibid). The assignment of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ topics is unfortunately evident at Mama FM as well. Analysis of the radio schedule revealed that women host shows that are traditionally themed around health, children, family life and entertainment. These include; “Abakyala Tweyogerere/ Bazira” (Women Talk Back), “Obulamu Bwe Bugagga” (Health is Wealth), “Abaana Bogedde” (Children Talk), “Papa Mama Round table” and “Tusaabale” (Evening Voyage). While men are allocated the ‘hard’ topic programmes such as: “Kimeeza” (What’s your view point?),

“Katukyogereko” (Let’s talk about it), “Tuteese” (Open Air Forum), “Agabade mu wiki” (Week in Review) and “Osanidde omanyee” (Ignorance is no defence - Human Rights) among others on religion, sports and music.

Gender mainstreaming is not only important in the staff structure but also in the programming and content. Often times the guest are not aware of the need to be gender aware and sensitive in their discussion. It shows gender responsiveness when the presenter takes extra effort and time to remind and request the guest(s) to adhere to these requirements for the benefit of their listeners. One such presenter is Lawrence Kalanzi (man) who hosts a programme called ‘Tuteese’ (Open Air Forum). At the start of the show he makes this pronouncement to the guests:

“At Mama FM we take every opportunity to engage and take into special consideration four groups of people in our discussions. That is the youth, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Include these in your discussion” (Host).

This is a good practice worth documenting. However, whether this thought and practice is carried along during the discussion is another matter.

5.4 Summary

Being a faceless yet intimate media tool, radio gives the audience confidence to express their opinions without necessarily facing judgment. However, it calls for a conducive and enabling media environment to effectively attract this audience engagement and participation especially among women. Evidence shows that the closer to reality one’s story is, the more other listeners will be encouraged to share their own experience. The faceless nature of radio breaks through societal prohibitions about public discussions on culturally and politically sensitive topics for example sexuality and government accountability respectively. This characteristic of radio has also broken patriarchal limitations of women’s public expression and dialogue.

Critical to this analytical discussion is the carving out of women’s spaces and building women’s voice. A number of issues captured from the radio programmes have been problematized in this discussion that call for attention and positive ones have been documented for reference as best practices for replication and improvement. The

claim for women's spaces is a valid one if the women's radio is to effectively build a women's voice. If women's issues are to be heard from the women's perspective and women's capacity and knowledge is enhanced to civically engage and participate in the public sphere, then the space of women's radio needs to be reclaimed by first the women media practitioners and the entire women's movement.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The choice to study the media from a micro level perspective - one women's radio Mama FM - other than from a macro level - several mainstream media channels - was a deliberate and strategic one geared towards in-depth and critical exploration of the phenomena. The approach used in this thesis demonstrated the inherent power of using an example/case to examine broader societal and political matters of public concern. Flyvbjerg rightly contends, "... case study produces precisely the type of context-dependent knowledge which makes it possible to move from the lower to the higher levels in the learning process..." (2001:71). This thesis took the case of Mama FM and opened up broader discussions of voice, civic engagement, participation, power, knowledge production, feminism, gender, empowerment and contributions towards the democratic development of Uganda. The examination of radio programmes at Mama FM allowed for in-depth and critical analysis while presenting implications of structures, constructions and operations at Mama FM as matters of concern raised during the data review process. Applying examinations of power and knowledge to the data provided justification for the arguments discussed and application of the conclusions.

6.1 Gender Constructions Matter

How gender is constructed in media and the implications of such constructions on women's engagement and participation is a relevant quest for investigation in feminist studies. The prevailing gender constructions shape the different ways in which women and men participate in the public sphere. Gender constructions are not always negative but their application can lead to discrimination and inequalities. Asking questions about what gender constructions exist in the media, who is producing them, for whom are they being produced, how and why is a step in the right direction to understanding the processes and outcomes of marginalization and ultimately exclusion of women voices, experiences and knowledge in public debates. Civic engagement and participation of all citizens is a critical indicator of a functioning democracy - one that respects the rights of all people. Gender constructions ultimately have an impact on policy formulation processes, enactment and implementation of

laws in a given country, which affects the levels of women's civic engagement and participation.

Growth of the women's movement is also affected by gender constructions. When the public is not presented with positive message of gender sensitivity and gender parity, the young women and girls as well as young men and boys are not inspired to live lives that reflect and promote gender equality. It has been argued in this thesis and previous research that young women and girls especially need positive role models in the media for confidence and esteem building purposes. The traditional Ugandan socialization process does not inspire girls to have self-esteem and a voice in the public; however, the increased use of proactive role models in the media changes this. When young women and girls are presented with possibilities, they then aspire to do more and challenge the patriarchal values and norms that discriminated against them before. While the core work of the women's movement is to challenge and campaign for women's rights and reforms, the movement is also a space to nurture talent and celebrate fellow women's accomplishments. Without positive and proactive messages and images of women in the media, the senior women will have less young women to groom and the movement will suffer a painful death in generations to come.

Reproduction of unequal power structures is a common outcome of gender constructions in the media. Gender constructions often manifest in the form of stereotypes that are then reproduced as messages and images. The role of production of messages and images gives the media some sort of invisible power to shape our modes of engagement and participation. The invisible power of the media shapes beliefs, values, and opportunities thus affecting the way we place ourselves and the roles we take up in the society. This invisible power of the media manifests both at the micro (private) and macro (public) levels in society. Feminist and gender theories such as Standpoint theory provide an important perspective to understanding the reproduction of unequal power structures. Standpoint theory suggests that different groups experience power and powerlessness differently specifically on the basis of their gender. Taking this into consideration, examining the power of the media and the power that the media produces is great important to feminist media studies. It opens up opportunities to develop holistic strategies that target both the micro and macro levels of media power.

6.2 Women's Voice In The Civic Discussion

Media studies have an extensive and rich record in the academia, however, there is equally a long history of inadequate research on women as a subject of research. It is only until the rise of the feminist and women's movements that more media scholars took interest in studying women and gender relations in the media (Krijnen and Van Bauwel, 2015:11). The evidence of underrepresentation of women and women's issues at Mama FM presented in the empirical data demonstrates what Deborah Cameron calls the "symbolic silencing of women". Cameron argues that low participation of women in the radio programmes and construction of women's issues from a male perspective essentially meant "women's reality was 'muted', experienced privately by women but unable to find public expression" (2016:13). The silencing of women's voices is a matter of critical concern to women's radio and the women's movement. It presents serious implications towards achieving women's engagement and participation in civic discussions and ultimately advancement of women's empowerment and gender equality.

Majority of the Ugandan population of women lives in the rural areas with limited access to many modern media tools. The accessibility, availability and affordability of radio makes it a preferred tool for many rural communities. Additionally its mass education and mass mobilization functions have enabled it to become an important tool for the development of civic cultures. The concept of civic cultures was developed by media scholar Peter Dahlgren as a framework for civic engagement and participation of citizens. Dahlgren defines civic cultures as "cultural patterns in which identities of citizenship, and the foundations of civic agency, are embedded" (2009:103). Noting that "the concept of civic agency is premised on people being able to see themselves as participants, that they find engagement meaningful, and that they experience motivation via the interplay of reason and passion" (Dahlgren, 2009:102). In this book '*Media and Political Engagement*', Dahlgren presents culture as patterns of communication, practices, and meaning (2009). Radio is a cultural yet significant media tool with mass potential to shape the civic cultures of its audience. As a mobilization and awareness creation tool, radio provides a platform for the development of the six elements of civic cultures that is; knowledge, values, space,

identities, trust and practices. Briefly, civic knowledge is essential in shaping opinions and views; democratic values are the basis of handling political conflicts; available communicative spaces facilitate civic debates; civic identity defines how people see themselves as participating in a democracy; without a degree of thin trust, collective political action becomes impossible; and actions that we take produce meaning thereby molding civic agency and ultimately influencing a citizen's participation (Dahlgren, 2009:108-123). The elements of civic cultures as briefly illustrated are prerequisites for viable public sphere and thus for functioning democracy.

The symbolic silencing of women frustrates the efforts by radio to cultivate civic cultures among women. For a civic culture to be functional and thriving requires motivation, engagement, passion and participation from all citizens or members of a group. For example giving women equal access and opportunities to participate in radio discussions strengthens their engagement ability in the public. Essentially civic engagement is about equal opportunities and equal representation of all citizens in public activities and debates. In her essay '*Theorizing The Female Voice In Public Contexts*', Cameron calls for the active investigation into the implications of 'symbolic' factors such as "attitudes, representations and practices that underpin women's exclusion" and not simply the documentation of success stories of women "carving out public discursive space for themselves" (2016:9). While documentation of success stories is important for the growth of the women's movement, Cameron argues "there is usually a sense that women's position is still precarious and that the legitimacy or value of their contribution still needs to be asserted - it cannot be simply taken for granted" (Ibid). The arguments and discussions presented in this thesis hold true to this position.

The notion of participation is increasingly becoming one of importance in many fields of study and areas of practice. Sonia Livingstone, in her article '*The Participation Paradigm in Audience Research*', asks crucial questions to understanding the participation paradigm. Livingstone does not necessarily answer these questions in the article but presents them as food for thought for researchers. Relevant to this thesis are the questions "whose voices are going unheard, and what should be done about it?" (Livingstone, 2013:26). The evidence from the empirical data in this thesis presented an avenue to discuss these important questions. Examining 'whose voices

are going unheard' and why, is an important research project for media studies and in the case of this thesis for feminist media studies. Cameron calls for the political and intellectual theorizing of issues affecting women as a means to not only state what the problem is but also explore solutions (2016:18). The political theorization of limited women's voices explored the implications of this issue on women's civic engagement. The intellectual theorization process considered the implications to women's professional, social and/or local knowledge production and the potential to document and distribute women's experiences. Critical to note is that these are not only matters of concern to Mama FM or women's radio but should be taken serious in the women's movement, mainstream media environment and in the public sphere if the gender gap in civic participation is to be reduced. Women should not only be considered to play a decorative role in public discussions but be accorded the same opportunities as men to voice their experiences and opinions.

The arguments and discussions in this thesis have served its aim: "To increase knowledge and understanding of how women's radio can contribute to women's civic engagement". Patriarchal practices call for women to only be present in the public sphere when they have a stated purpose. The evolution of women's radio breaks this barrier by not only providing a platform but also showcasing the importance of women's voice in the public. The direction of the discussion is grounded in the argument by Anthony Giddens that is, "Until you had the full inclusion of women you had nothing like a complete democratization..." (2002). The democratization process calls for civic education as an important element to foster civic engagement and participation among all citizens. The thesis demonstrates the need to make women civically engaged from below by highlighting the importance of voice.

The research question: "How does the women's radio work to facilitate women's civic engagement and contribute to their participation in the democratic development of Uganda?" was adequately explored in the thesis. The analysis of empirical data demonstrated the importance of women's voice and the implications attached to side stepping women at the women's radio and in the public as a whole. Further still, the thesis demonstrated the relevance of building women's voice and how to strengthen the women's position at Mama FM, the wider media environment and the civic public sphere.

Promotion and centralization of women's voices and their participation in the media and public sphere needs not only to be mainstreamed but also institutionalized. The advancement of women's voices needs to become a culture - a value, a norm - if women's empowerment, gender equality and women's civic engagement is to be realized. To participate one should have a voice and be allowed to have this voice. Additionally platforms should be made available to all citizens to have a voice. The results of this thesis reecho the need for space dedicated to nurture and amplify women's voice such as Mama FM. While shortfalls have been presented in the analysis, they need to be viewed as things to be cautious of and learning points for the radio. At the same time good practices have been documented. The good practices demonstrate that at its best Mama FM is working to build the voice of women. By critically questioning the structures and operations at Mama FM does not deem it as falling short of achieving its goals but serves as constructive criticism geared towards improving the women's radio.

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27th February 2016: “Post Election Debate with Maureen Kyalya” aired on “Kimeeza – What’s your view point?”

Mama FM Documents

2014 Mama FM Radio Programme Schedule

2014 Mama FM Radio Programme Synopsis

2016 Mama FM Radio Programme Schedule

Uganda Media Women’s Association (UMWA) / Mama FM – Organizational Brochure



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