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POWER AND IDEOLOGY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE:
WOMEN AND THE PRESS IN UGANDA

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I wish the very best to you all, sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hope K', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Hope Kabuchu,
The Hague, December 1992.
THE NETHERLANDS

For my Mother, Lillian.

POWER AND IDEOLOGY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE: WOMEN AND THE PRESS IN UGANDA.

CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	
0.1. Introduction: Uganda Women's contribution to development.....	i
0.2. Forward steps for women.....	iii
0.3. Women's involvement with the press.....	iv
0.4. The mass media situation in Uganda.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE:	
1.1. Background to the problem.....	1
1.2. Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3. Justification.....	2
1.4. Research Questions and Objectives.....	3
1.5. Methodology.....	3
CHAPTER TWO:	
THEORETICAL FRAME WORK: WOMEN'S POLITICAL POSITION	
2.1. Patriarchy as a social construct.....	7
2.2. Women's work and the sexual division of labour.....	9
2.3. Cultural attitudes about the ideal image of a woman in Uganda..	10
2.4. Women's interests and the women's movement.....	12
2.5. Feminism in Uganda.....	13
2.6. Media power, Ideology and the construction of reality.....	17
2.7. Spaces for women.....	18
2.8. Construction of reality in media discourse.....	19
CHAPTER THREE:	
THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE PRESS	
3.1. Profiles of <u>The New Vision</u> and <u>Weekly Topic</u>	22
3.2. The 'Women's Vision' and 'Dear Counsellor'.....	23
3.3. Stories published on women in <u>Weekly Topic</u>	24
3.4. Stories published about women in <u>The New Vision</u>	25
3.5. Stories on crimes committed against females.....	27
3.6. Stories on crimes committed by women.....	30
3.7. Portrayal of women's activities.....	32
3.8. Stories on women's domestic work.....	36
3.9. The nature of feature stories.....	36
3.10. Public commentary and general stories.....	37
CHAPTER FOUR:	
COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S TOPICAL ISSUES	
4.1. The Makerere gender weighing scheme.....	39
4.2. Attitude about women's strategies.....	42
4.3. Contesting women's domestic labour.....	45
4.4. Justification through the 'ideal' image of a woman.....	45
4.5. Women as entertainment.....	47
4.6. Language transmission of bias.....	48
4.7. Women in the cartoons.....	50
CHAPTER FIVE:	
STRATEGIES USED TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA	
5.1. ACFODE Strategies.....	52
5.2. Relations with other women's groups.....	54
5.3. Pros and cons of an exclusively women's page.....	57
5.4. The women's magazine.....	58

5.5. Gender sensitive communication.....	60
5.6. The media contact group.....	61
5.7. Making the media participant in women's programmes.....	62
5.8. Women's participation in decision making in the media.....	63

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Textual presentation of discourse.....	64
6.2. The interests at work.....	66
6.3. Conflict of interest and transmission of ideology.....	67

APPENDIX, I(a&b), II, III, IV, V , VI(a&b).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PREFACE

0.1 INTRODUCTION: UGANDA WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT

Ugandan women in this paper are not treated as a helpless and weak group, but as an active social force which has sustained the economy and lives of the Ugandans and contributed to the development of the country. The problem is that Uganda women's contribution has not been recognised. This is reflected in unequal sharing of resources at both material and decision making levels and the general imbalances in the women's social position, the education, the discriminatory laws, the patriarchal ideology and low level of women's participation in state institutions.

There is validity in the thesis that women are producers of development; that they are not beneficiaries or passive receivers of development and that their contribution has been misunderstood by the approaches used to involve women in the development process (Lycklama : 1989)¹. An equivalent of the classical perspective in relation to women and development approach was focused on the women's vote, as a means to gender equality, especially in United states and Europe. In 1980s, the emphasis was shifted to welfare issues such as, health, education and employment. A more recent approach stressed the idea of development from a women's point of view. According to Pietila and Vickers(1990), women's role in development was perceived in relation to key issues raised in the International Development strategy for the Third UN Development decade, focusing on trade, agriculture, industry, energy, money and finance, and science and technology. Implications, according to their argument, were that women were already participating but were not beneficiaries of development, due to exclusion from major benefits. The exclusion of women from benefiting from development was done through the distortion of actual women's contribution which was not assessed in national statistics. The benefits assessment, according to Pietila and Vickers , excluded important features based on income, conditions of work, decision making, power, access to resources, prestige, and many others.

The official United Nations framework for the advancement of women, which has been adopted by numerous countries throughout the world, is built around the objectives of the UN Women's Decade (1975-1985); The Forward Looking Strategies and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The convention advocated for equality, peace and development. Among others, the concept of equality advocated for equal treatment and opportunities under the law. Development was to focus on the recognition of women as subjects rather than objects in the development process. Peace, among many things, was to encompass the elimination of violence at all levels (Pietila & Vickers:1990). The UN convention required states to submit reports on legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures adopted to give

¹ See Lycklama:1989; and Pietila and Vickers:1990 for detailed information on the development of approaches to Women in Development issues.

effect to the recommendations. Although Uganda ratified the above convention in July 1985, not much has been done to implement the directions in the document (ACFODE:1989²).

Women's contribution in Uganda cannot be clearly quantified but the current economic situation reflects women's involvement in the development of the country. The sex ratio in Uganda is 96.1 males for every 100 females, out of the total population of 16,583,000 million Ugandans (MPED:1991)³ About 90% of the population is rural based and depend on agriculture, while only 7% of the people live in towns of more than 1,000 people.⁴ Agriculture contributes 96% of Uganda's export earnings and about 72% of the Gross Domestic product (GDP). Current government export policy, due to the increasing fall in the world market prices of primary products deliberately promotes a shift from traditional export crops such as coffee, cotton and tea, which were predominantly male dominated. The shift is towards commercialisation of non-traditional export crops, which were basically food crops and which are predominantly women's responsibilities. Women's labour contributes the largest share to the 88% of the total labour force involved in agriculture. Women's labour amounts to 80% of the main food production in agricultural work (WID: 1991). Indirect implications which cannot be dealt with in this paper are that women hold the burden of Uganda's exports, which have implications on the balance of payment deficit, external debt repayment and general economic well-being of the country.

Women however, still shoulder the burden of traditional management of households and child care. It is estimated that about 50% of the population is below 16 years of age while 10 % are above sixty years of age (Watson:1992). This implies that women's services to the dependants and the men, as required by tradition puts a toll on their energy. According to a survey carried out in six districts, women's average hours of work per day in Uganda ranges between 12 to 18 hours, with 47% of the women reportedly interrupted during sleep to wait on a late husbands (27%), or to attend to children (8%). About 13% of the women were interrupted to look after the sick or because of anxiety about security(Nalwanga & Natukunda: 1988). In the informal sector, women are said to operate at least half the number of small businesses in the urban centres (UNICEF:1989). There is general low level of involvement of women in state institutions⁵. Women account for only 30% in the Government sector and have marginal presence in other

² See A report by Action for Development (ACFODE): 1989 The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women: The Ugandan Experience.

³ Uganda 1991 Population and Housing Census.

⁴ Figures are from Africa South of the Sahara, 1992.

⁵ Only 0.05% of the senior positions in Civil Service are held by women. (MPED, 1988 b, from UNICEF:1999).

institutional structures such as education⁶ and policy making organs. They do not own land and are customary not allowed to inherit property. Women are generally discriminated against by both traditional customary laws and state laws.

0.2 FORWARD STEPS FOR WOMEN

A few concessions have been made by the NRM government to women because of the important role women play in the development of the country. The concessions are basically due to the pressure from women's groups on the government. The government has a political and economic stake in the advancement of women. The changes, although are steps in the right direction, are not enough. Women continue to demand for more concrete changes. The NRM for five years developed into a mass movement which waged a protracted peoples' war against the then ruling undemocratic regime. The movement was organised along Resistance Councils (RCs) which are peoples' representative groups elected from the grassroots⁷. The NRM government set up a political policy in which an affirmative action was taken to provide a quota for women in parliament. Hence, each of the then 34 districts of Uganda was offered one position in parliament which had to be filled by a woman.

Women representatives at Parliamentary level are 16% of the total membership of 274. The political climate has been conducive to the construction of empowerment strategies on Ugandans about women's needs. The RC legislation also makes a provision for a post of secretary for women affairs which must be contested for by a woman. The NRM affirmative action is strategically arrived at equipping women with political representation. Additional strategies include the formation of a Ministry of State for Women in Development (WID) in March 1988. Women's focal point desks have also been set up in government ministries and banking institutions to facilitate coordination of women's programmes. A positive discrimination policy was set up at the University level where, since 1990, Makerere University puts an extra 1.5 points for women who are at cut-off University intake level. The University has further set up a department of Women and Development Studies at graduate level, following pressure and facilitation from

⁶ Females have less education opportunities than males. Primary school enrolment for girls is 44%; secondary school 26% and University, 16% (UNICEF:1989, p. 80).

⁷ RCs have been instituted as official reform bodies for the democratisation of political power and decentralisation of decision making from State and government. Direct supervision and decision making is done at each level, by the people. Parliamentary representation in the RC system is based on successive election of leaders from grassroots level right to the National Resistance Council (NRC), Uganda's parliament. RC leadership at all levels is elected and voluntary and, with the exception of parliamentarians, members continue with their usual occupations.

women's groups.⁸ The affirmative action programmes and the vigorous nature of the women's movement in Uganda are opposed by certain people in Uganda. Peoples organisations, including the women's movement sprung up in Uganda, due to the past history of resistance to dictatorial regimes. According to a recent report, there are 62 indigenous women's groups operating in the country (The New Vision : June 5, 1991). Categories reported range from agriculture to education, health, income generation, legal issues, population, water and sanitation. Aspects of the women's groups is the lobbying, awareness creation, and empowerment strategies targeted at a cross section of the society. They target the rural poor, the urban rich and elite sectors of the society, both men and women, depending on the nature of the problem.

0.3. WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PRESS

A number of women's organisations have been involved in efforts to dissuade the press from publishing stories which might hamper the development of women. These range from awareness seminars for members of the press to formation of alternative press in the country. Groups which are involved include women's NGOs, and government bodies such as the Ministry for Women in Development (WID)⁹. Select strategies employed by one of the women's groups, Action for Development (ACFODE) will be discussed later in the paper. ACFODE is an indigenous voluntary non-government development organisation which was formed by Ugandan women following the UN women's decade conference in Nairobi in 1985. Its overall objective include, the uplifting of the status of women of Uganda through empowerment of the Ugandan Society. Women's groups as a whole have a high level of consciousness due to the reality and experiences of discrimination in a society where, due to political and economic hardships, both women and men have contributed to sustain the lives of the Ugandans and the economy in all ways.

0.4. THE MASS MEDIA SITUATION IN UGANDA

The mass media in Uganda has class, gender and geographical character in terms of accessibility by the majority of the population. Access to the mass media is limited by economic resources, education levels, and broadcasting and circulation levels which are mainly confined to the urban centres. In certain instances, media facilities such as radio and television are considered to be status symbols. There is evidence to indicate that gender plays an important role in access to the mass media. Ownership and listenership of radios, for example is dominated by males according

⁸ Action for Development (ACFODE) and University Women's Association wrote and presented a proposal for the establishment of women's studies at the University to the Makerere donor's conference of 1986.

⁹ WID has been changed to Ministry of Women in development, Youth and Culture. We shall continue to refer to 'WID' since the time of the analysis in the paper falls within the period before the merger.

to some surveys made in Uganda.¹⁰ The multiple languages further limit chances of listenership of radio. The service broadcasts for about 17 hours a day in 22 languages (UNICEF:1987). The radio ownership estimates, according to UNICEF is about 21.8 sets per 1,000 of the population. Television broadcasting, according to the same source, covers less than 15% of the whole country and transmission is on one channel with an average of five hours a day, to Kampala and recently to a few other urban centres. Access to television sets is said to be less than 1% of the population. Both Radio and television are government owned and controlled.

The newspaper situation is not different from the above. Newspaper readership in Uganda is a select group. This is due to low levels of education, and literacy. Since some newspapers are produced in English, their reception is by the select few English-speaking, educated¹¹ and possibly, middle class readers, especially men. The production of newspapers, according to the UNICEF survey is limited to Kampala, while the distribution only reaches rural towns but on a limited supply. The survey indicates that the readership of the newspapers is restricted by prices, while availability and circulation is restricted to upper income levels in Kampala and rural towns. The New Vision has introduced four regional newspapers which are produced in the four main respective languages of the regions. This study is built on the above background and therefore cannot claim to target the whole of the Uganda population. The advantage however is the existence of room for improvements before the majority of the population is directly confronted with media biases against women.

¹⁰ Natukunda & Nalwanga:1988, Women's Needs Assessment Survey; illustrates gender differences and male privileges in accessibility to the mass media. Musoke & Amajo:1989, 'Women Participation in Existing Credit Schemes in Uganda'. Indicates that few women got information about credit schemes through radios for example.

¹¹ The 1985 illiteracy (reading and writing) figure in Uganda is 42.7% for the total population above 15 years of age. Females make up 54.7% of the total while males accounted for 30.7% (Eurostat: 1991).

CHAPTER ONE:

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM.

Since 1986 women have been politically glorified by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government, which has deliberately taken up a positive public stance on the woman question. Remarkable structural changes, in the form of affirmative action towards the improvement of the status of women and integration of women in development have been carried out in the country. Many women's self-help voluntary organisations have sprung up, at both national and grassroots levels. As a result, there are conflicting strategies about the nature of integration of women in the development process. These have taken a form of contest about different conceptions of equality of men and women.

This trend has been picked up by the press. The government paper, **The New Vision**, offered a page to a women's feminist organisation, Action for Development (ACFODE), to produce developmental stories on woman. The newspaper maintains a double standard because on the rest of the pages, it has freely continued to run sensational 'man-bites-dog' type of stories on women. In a July 1991 the News Editor of **The New Vision**, Sam Serwanga, told me that:

I notice that what you call negative stories about women are those that point out mistakes or crimes committed by women. But for us, we don't view such stories in that light. Our point of view is the news content in these stories.

The problem is that the negative aspects of women are not their only attributes in society. The major competitor, a weekly independent paper, **Weekly Topic**, has offered ACFODE a legal counselling column. The newspaper is very sexist about women's issues and is biased in its policy about women. Secondly, it claims to champion the interest of the majority of the Ugandan 'exploited' women. However, **Weekly Topic** belittles issues raised by the women's movement. The newspaper offers its own conceptions of women's needs and portrays feminists as exploiters of women. In an interview with the then Editor-in-Chief of **Weekly Topic**, Mr Wafula-Ogut, during July of 1991, he said that urban women feminists are very selfish and do not help the rural women and are more interested in bickering. According to him, feminists assume that total liberation means socialising out in the bars or imagining that men are the problem. His argument implied that women should solve the class factor amongst themselves before they can talk about women's domination by men.

While commending the contribution by **Weekly Topic** and **The New Vision** in their efforts to support the development of women for the sake of the country, their strategies employed, in light of the great impact the media has on shaping society, might do more harm than good for women and men.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study focuses on three major problems in the Ugandan press, which portrays, on the whole, a biased representation of the social reality of the women's position. Firstly, women are portrayed according to the cultural stereotypes. The promotion puts emphasis on a combination of both traditional sex differentiated roles and attitudes. The other representation is in a form of 'man bites dog' image. In this case, the woman is given sensational recognition when she has deviated from the image of the 'ideal woman' society expects her to be. Women are thus, portrayed as a social problem. Most stories focus on women as criminals and victims and tend to perpetuate their subordinate role.

A second problem is based on the under-representation of women in their own right as important social, political and economic contributors to society rarely appear in the news. Their range of contribution is not reflected in the media. There is also a characteristic segmentation of women according to class and positions in society. Favourable coverage may be given to women in high political positions, while other individuals are reported about when they are in a controversial situation with men or children. Women are only bundled up as an 'interesting' sector when the issue is related to a call to women to participate in the development of the nation. Trendy references to women are project and seminar related, as if beyond that, women have been redundant. In this case, they get to the press when an important government official, especially a man and a big donor, particularly foreign, talks about or addresses women.

Lastly, the press portrays the women's movement in Uganda as negative. The press contests the leadership of the under-privileged poor women against the 'privileged' rich and educated women. This is in the form of direct attack on the women's movement as foreign and unimportant as a strategic need for change in the Ugandan society. Feminism is associated with neo-colonial exploitation and an economic tool used by the educated and high class women to exploit the majority of the rural and low class uneducated women. The, press, thus claims to champion the interests of the majority of rural women. This is very demobilising for women and leads to increased isolation and divisionism amongst women.

1.3. JUSTIFICATION

Images of women portrayed have implications on the status of individual women and the women's movement in Uganda. A negative press might frustrate woman's struggle to get out of the subordinate patriarchal situation. Government policies which are oriented towards empowering women as strategy for national development could also be bogged down. Yet the press might have an interest in promoting distorted images of women because the current portrayal sells the newspaper. The women's movement could therefore, design strategies in

counteracting the image of women in the press in a way that may not be undermined by the involved interested parties.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The study raises questions as to the nature of women's representation in the Ugandan press. The questions attempt to locate the major areas of fragmentation of reality about women. Which images of women, for example, are reflected in the Ugandan press and what implications do these images have on the empowerment of women? Lastly, the challenge will be to discover possible strategies that could be employed to improve women's representation in the media.

The first objective is to analyze the way women are represented in the press and the implications this could have on the development of women. The study will suggest alternatives through which the image of women in the press could be improved to suit the needs and development goals of the society. It is hoped that the readers and the writer will be more selective and critical in their reading of the newspapers, and be aware of the inherent ideological biases in newspaper reportage which may be taken for granted. Finally, the study will make a contribution to the documentation of information and empirical data particularly on the media, women and development issues in Uganda, about which very little analytical information is available.

1.5. METHODOLOGY

By objective and method the paper's analysis is built from a stand which is heavily influenced by personal exposure to feminist theories and practice, and experience from interacting and working with the press and with women in Uganda. The actual work experience puts me in a conflicting professional position. I have lived through and felt the powers and tensions involved throughout the course of my work, and as a result I tried very much to devise an appropriate stand point (unsuccessfully ?) all throughout the analysis, which would have as minimum a bias as possible in the circumstances. The first nature of conflict stems from my experience as a journalist trying to follow the professional conventions on what is news worthy and what is not. I have learnt to accept that what makes news is most of the times what is anti-social. In other words, what sells is 'bad' or 'negative' news such as scandals, disaster and the extraordinary or entertaining. The second nature of professional conflict stems from my work as editor of ACFODE. I believe and support ACFODE's concern about the media's misrepresentation of women and in the strategies taken by some women's groups to change the image of women in the media. However, it is also a fact that talking about daily routine of the things women do might not withstand the competition for news coverage, unless, women are involved in a controversial situation. Lastly, irrespective of the biased coverage of women, *The New Vision*, in particular, and *Weekly Topic* are commendable for their openness to women's suggestions and particularly in setting up columns

specifically on women's issues. How does one compromise the conflicting feelings without either bordering on advocating for propaganda for women or without taking advantage of the women's disadvantaged position in society in order to compete favourably on the news market; or without sounding unfair to each or some of the initiatives? Finally, I decided to take a feminist stand point in the study. Firstly because of my exposure to feminist theories in the past twelve months and my convictions for a need to question the power inequalities inherent in gender relations and in media coverage. Because I have been involved in the historic process on which this study is based, the methodology of the study is more of participatory in its analysis than objective in the traditional social science sense.

The study, in order to trace the ideology in media discourse adopts Bob Hodge's (1979) method that ideology can be detected by direct interviews with the agents of news such as journalists or the editor (if he/she could be sincere), checking the official editorial policy or examining the material output of the newspaper. This paper picks on the last of the methods, to analyze the content partly because it is the actual end product of the newspapers that gets to the readers and partly because the newspaper content was reliably and easily available to me. The content is considered a real measure of actual transmission of ideology about women. The writer is given responsibility for the text he or she produces. The usage of the text is based on the assumption that the source of the story bears an ideology with the writer as the carrier. In Uganda, the official policy, the editors' beliefs and the material content may be in contradiction with one another. The analysis uses the idea of the frame as advanced by Ryan (1991), which is a notion of ordering of information into a coherent story. Framing is said to be:

'a process of interpreting selected events... of creating events, of signifying, from the pool of daily occurrences, what is important. Struggles over framing decide which of the days many happenings will be given significance.'
(p.53).

Frames are said to have 'ideological inertia on their side'. Ryan argues that; frames may imply distortion or a 'value-laden ordering process', and may not be 'cautiously or deliberately constructed, but operate as underlying mind sets that prompt one to notice elements that are familiar and ignore those that are different'.

Data collection and analysis.

The study is based on analysis of primary data and from newspaper stories on women published in *The New Vision* and *Weekly Topic* in 1989 and 1990. This is because the two are dominant in the country and have shown some interest in women. In the words of Adewa Lemaja-Pearce(1992), "Of all the English-language newspapers currently published in Uganda, only *The New Vision* and *Weekly Topic* deserve the name of newspapers, properly speaking."

The two years of analysis allow a three years period of grace in which the woman question has been politically glorified. The years after the NRM government takeover and their influence on woman is reflected in the practices of both the newspapers and the active nature of the women's movement. The material is composed of all stories whose subject was women from two years of a daily newspaper of about 12 pages (then) and two years of a weekly newspaper of 16 pages. For clearer perception of the institutional set up of the newspapers, the study involved interviews with the news editor, the personnel administrator of **The New Vision** newspaper and with the Editor-in-Chief of **Weekly Topic**. Secondary data from libraries and other documents connected with women and the media, published or not, speeches and seminar reports will supplement the analysis. The research further incorporates strategies used by selected women's groups in Uganda to change women's image in the press. The classification of articles in the study was based on the most recurring subjects as the major variables for the study. Quantitative content analysis of the two newspapers is done not mainly as evidence of a problem but more as an illustration of the extent of priority interests of the press as opposed to those of women and development strategies. A special quantitative category recorded is of stories which have appeared on the pages run by women, as an alternative press to improve the image of women. Qualitative analysis of the stories on the two pages is not done partly because of the positive intentions of the page and due to limitations of time and space. This is not to say that the pages do not have their problems. Qualitative analysis will also be done on select stories for purposes of answering the major research questions. Major focus for quantitative analysis is directed at **The New Vision** while the qualitative aspect will feature more on **Weekly Topic**, especially in the last half of the study. This analysis will employ theoretical indicators of the negative position of women identified in the conceptual analysis.

Scope and Limitations

The study due to time and space will be limited to two newspapers in the country and two years. These are assumed to be a good representation of the Press in the country because of their frequency, circulation and interest in women's issues. Limitations include the fact that some aspects of the study might have been more revealing if the rest of the information which did not focus on women was collected for comparative purposes. But this was not possible due to logistical problems. Hence, only stories whose subject is women will be analyzed. Due to the limited time and space, very few selected stories will be qualitatively assessed. Lastly, the period between collection of the material and analysis is rather long, which means that some issues might have changed by now. While it is beyond the time and scope of this paper to measure the effect of distorted images of women on the reader, the analysis underscores the crucial role played by the intermediary, or reporter, in transmitting ideology to the reader and possibly shaping the character and perceptions of society about women. I am also aware that I cannot measure the effect of the

actual stories on the writer in the process of collection. The limitations have one advantage: they are potential areas for future research.

Chapter two is a theoretical discussion of the political position of women in society, how power and ideology are used to represent versions of reality about women and the women's chances to contest this position. Chapter three features on the quantitative portrayal of women in the press while Chapter four concentrates on a qualitative analysis of press coverage of women's topical issues. Chapter five is a discussion of the strategies used by women to contest the image portrayed in the press. Chapter six is a summary and conclusion which synthesises on the manifestations of power and ideology in the findings of the study and their implications on the development of women.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL FRAME: WOMEN'S POLITICAL POSITION

Different philosophies explain the universal nature of the political position of women in society. A common denominator of all is the outstanding universal aspect that women, occupy a secondary position to men, while men, occupy a much privileged position in society. By implication, this male privilege is a highly contested political position. Political in this case is considered to be in relationship to the imbalance in terms of power and decision making, resource allocation, representation, and equal opportunities (See Randall: 1982; Pateman: 1989,1988; Smart: 1989; Mackinnon: 1989; Rogers, B: 1981; Ryan, C:1991).

The media in Uganda is influenced by patriarchy ideology which reflects a position of unequal power relationship. By implication, women enter the media at a much lesser footing determined by the low status society accords them. This chapter examines the construction of power in the media in relation to its role in spreading fragmented versions of reality. The first part of this chapter focuses on the discussion of patriarchy as a social construction. The second part deals with a theoretical analysis of media power, ideology and the construction of reality. Indicators of these meanings in this study are the practical and ideological perceptions of women's work, the sexual division of labour and its relation to women's cultural image, importance of gender interests, meanings attached to feminism in the Ugandan context and the socio-economic and political approaches to the development of women in the country. The concepts are analyzed in order to trace manifestation of power in the mainstream media discourse and the available spaces for women to contest for adjustments in power relations.

2.1. PATRIARCHY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

The original conception of patriarchy was in relation to a society ruled by men, or feudal rule of the father as head of the household over "his women, children, labourer and servants", writes Dahlerup (1987, p. 93). Common usage of patriarchy revolves around what is classified as the:

authority of male head of the family, whether in its extended or its nuclear form.
(Randall: 1982; p.16).

Randall argues that broad definition of patriarchy would feature on both male 'dominance' and 'supremacy'. Her own usage of patriarchy is on these two levels: supremacy as a form of male power stemming from the authority of the father or male household head. Dominance is interpreted as 'male power over women as a whole'. Male dominance at the household and private level is accordingly projected into the public world where women participation is very minimal due to cultural barriers. The male privilege denotes power which is said to be political. Patriarchy is a concept in which power and politics are linked and the only one which:

refers specifically to the subjection of women, that singles out the form of

political right that men exercise by virtue of being men.
(Pateman: 1988; p.20)

Power over women is echoed by Mackinnon (1989; p.55) as 'unchecked', 'unlimited' and is a 'maldistribution'. She points to sexuality and economics as central to the women's condition. Specific allusion is made to biology and psychology, and control of women's consciousness as a basis of patriarchal power. Patriarchy may also refer to material relations of production, whose material base is the control of women's labour power (Omvedt:1986). Patriarchy involves structures which deny women their natural and civil freedom. The dominant point of agreement by feminists as to why women are not involved in the actual running and policy making in state matters is that women in society lead a binary life and are more prominent in only one area: the private sphere (Randall:1982; Burton:1985; Hartman:1981; Sassoon:1987 and Pateman:1988, 1989). The second sphere, the public, represents the political. The private is apparently representative of the social, domestic and household situation. The extent of women's mediation between the home and public activity, is a complex life experience which is dependant on differential aspects and needs of women and the power relations of the society in which they live. This paper adopts the argument that the two spheres are interdependent and cannot be separated (Pateman: 1988, p.4). The domination of women is argued by Pateman to be based on the 'sexual contract'. To Pateman, the sexual contract is:

a principle of social association and one of the most important means of creating social relationships, such as the relationship between a husband and a wife.
(1988, p.5).

The observation and application of the contract is therefore said to favour the male side of the agreement. Women are as a result subjects of the contract. She argues that women are regarded as men's 'special kind of property... that individuals are held to own in their persons'. This apparently gives men command over women and is further the root cause of denial of women's natural freedom, on which civil freedom is constructed. The command and domination of women is manifested in the institutionalised and social state set up. The state, according to Pateman, enforces society's agreements (social contract) made by individuals (men) who are regulated by civil law. This social contract which involves intervention of civil freedom, equality, contracts and individuals, Pateman adds, is the foundation for the public sphere. The equivalent of the imbalance is mirrored in the historic formation of Uganda as a state. Uganda as a neo-colonial state is composed of heterogeneous ethnic groupings with a variety of cultural norms, beliefs and interests.¹ The constitution in Uganda is discriminatory². The patriarchal nature of Uganda's

¹State formation and consequent constitutional formulation was a negotiation between former coloniser, Britain and a male only leadership at the time. The common fear from the African side was the official erosion of ethnic traditional autonomy, especially in local political matters. The compromise during the negotiations was to make tradition a major aspect of the newly formed constitution (see Morris and Read: 1966). Traditional structures were abolished in Uganda particularly the traditional rulers and kingdoms. The constitution has been abrogated, revoked, reinstated and abolished since independence in 1962

society is reflected through the laws, policies and the tradition. The usage of patriarchy as a concept in this paper will not stress its historic origin as a the rule by fathers. Emphasis will be placed on its manifestation as a power over women and as an ideology guiding daily relations and beliefs of the Ugandan civil society, and how patriarchy denies women civil freedom and access to resources and decision making. Patriarchy is used to imply politics, power relations, material resource control and control of women's labour. The result would be both ideological and actual political, social and economic domination of women. Patriarchy is used as an ideological indicator of versions of perception of women by society, which are part of media discourse in Uganda.

2.2 WOMEN'S WORK AND THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

Patriarchy is manifested through different structural arrangements which determine the position of women. A major indicator of patriarchy is the construction of sex and gender roles during socialisation of boys and girls. Society has constructed the biological differences into a socially constructed sexual division of labour. The two determine the kind of social expectations from women and men by society. They are both moral and social indicators of women's importance and act as a point of reference on which women are judged. Society perceives sex and gender as identical. And yet gender roles, are determined by culture rather than biology and may, to a certain extent, be determined by sexual characteristics (Rogers: 1981). Sex, according to Rogers, is physical while its role is biological. It is the divisions attached that are 'cultural interpretations of physical differences', which accrue from learned behaviour, a view advanced by Friedl that:

There is little physical determinism about which gender performs which role, apart from pregnancy and childbirth. (cited by Rogers, 1981, p.12 from Ernetine Friedl, Women and Men: An Anthropologist's View. NY, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Basic Anthropology Units, 1975).

Sexual division of labour functions by a structural principle which makes different women's tasks into unpaid 'women's - house - work' while men are allocated paid work (Bennholdt-Thomson: 1988). Lack of validation of women's work and its payment, on the part of modern society, results into the cheapening of women's contribution. Economic approaches to women's work are influenced by Marxist analysis of household labour which is in terms of 'use value' and 'exchange value' production. The fact that women's labour is used up within the household and is unpaid (use value) is made to cheapen women's contribution, while paid labour (mostly men's) which has market value is regarded as productive.

and is currently undergoing a process of reformulation by the masses. However a constant factor throughout these political process that has not changed at all is the issue of patriarchy and customary practices which oppress women.

²Discrimination in the Ugandan Constitution (1967) is interpreted to mean unequal treatment of any person on grounds of 'race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed' (Article 20, pp. 18 - 20). Exceptions on where such a law may apply are with respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property...customary law etcetera.

Mackintosh (1981) also argues that sexual division of labour, perpetuates women's subordination by men, society and the state in both paid and unpaid work. This division implies that women work for men, and therefore, is one of the reasons that place men in a superior position (Hartmann, 1981). Women are relegated to a subordinate position which, according to Hartmann, has caused the problems in the family, the labour market, the economy and society. The argument is supported by Mackinnon's critique that:

If women's work produces male labour power, housewives are an undiscovered sector of the working class whose product is expropriated and sold by man in the act of selling his own labour power as a commodity in the market place...
(1989, pp. 67-8).

In formerly colonised countries, among which Uganda is one, Bennholdt-Thomson argues that the housewife was created by the church, legislation, medicine and in the organisation of the workforce for capital. Judgement on a women's usefulness in many cultures is based on how much work or how physically hard working a woman can be. Women's over-work is said to have negative effects on women's health, retards schooling of girls, damages nutritional status of women and their families and prevents women from participating in any kind of local decision making (Pietila & Vickers: 1989, p.17). The concept of women's work and the sexual division of labour is relevant in this paper in order to assess ideological meanings attached to women's productive and reproductive contribution to society and the implications of women's advancement. Sexual division of labour within the household is discussed in relation to its implications for internal and external control of women's resource power; a control which may be manifested in form of individual, community or state powers.

2.3 CULTURAL ATTITUDES ABOUT THE IDEAL IMAGE OF A WOMAN IN UGANDA.

Different ethnic groupings in Uganda may differ in their cultural perception of women. Culture in this case is used to mean 'the practice of every day living' (Brown : 1990). The daily practices encompass social values attached to productive and reproductive power relationships. Of specific interest to this study, are the assumptions concerning social sanctions and terms of reference in which women are allowed to participate within the social set up of the cultures in Uganda. For example, culture in gender terms in Uganda, may be defined as 'man's embroidery on nature' (Kabwegyere:1991). An ideal example, according to him, is said to be women who have been embroidered culturally to permanently fit traditionally into certain roles. Cultural distortions about women are common, for example:

... culturally all negative things in the home are attributed to the woman while the positive ones are to the man's credit. If all the children belong to one sex, it is the woman's fault; sterility and perpetual child deaths are also solely blamed on the woman, and so does dullness or stupidity and other terms of objectionable conduct.
(Kabwegyere: 1991, p. 183).

Another example are the conventional legacies which fragment society's perception and internalisation of women's image. These include stereotyped labels such as, women are "weak and vulnerable", "a source of evil and conflict", "to be seen and not heard", "part of men's property" and "family beasts of burden" (Matembe:1991). Some customs, according to Matembe, may be detrimental to women, but are maintained on the pretext that they are acceptable in the society, irrespective of whether the women derive any benefit from them or not. Above all, a woman is expected to be able to produce children, preferably males because of the material benefits involved in property rights. Both customary laws and the state gives legal preference to patrilineal inheritance³. In some cultures, women are led into asserting their womanhood, according to Kabwegyere, through reproduction even at the risk of their lives, due to cultural distortions which degrade women to being mere machines of reproduction, thus shattering their self - image and sense of individualism. Many children are culturally treasured as a source of labour and a social security for the old parents. Such a culture which puts a high premium on childbirth, according to the same view, has implications which put a high premium on maternal death.⁴ Women in Uganda are expected to be chaste, humble, hard working, healthy looking, etcetera. (See Obbo: 1989). The contemporary cultural image of the Ugandan women is closely related to the socio-economic and political background of the country. Regulation of some women into ideal models in colonial Uganda was done by formal and informal religious and educational institutions based on the culture and ideology of the British colonial masters. The post colonial cultural image of women in Uganda was manifested in an anti-imperialist and military coalition which dictated women's way of dressing in the 1970s, under the pretext of preservation of Ugandan culture.⁵ A law was passed which banned women from wearing mini skirts or dresses, trousers, tight attire, or make up, wigs etc. This image has now been internalised by society even after the military regime⁶.

³ Succession (Amendment Act) Decree 1972, Ch. 139 says about the legal heir (in case of 'equality' amongst the deceased relatives), that "a male shall be preferred to a female".

⁴ Maternal mortality rate in Uganda is 2.65 per 1,000 live birth excluding abortions (UNICEF:1989).

⁵ Idi Amin's declaration which prohibited the wearing of certain dresses in public offices, Decree Number 9 of 1972. The pretext was that the garments exposed women ungracefully and thus "destroying our (Ugandan) culture". (see Halbach, 1973).

⁶ Recently women Journalists on two occasions were refused entry to the parliament building by security officers because they were wearing trousers. The first time, the woman was going to cover parliamentary proceedings. The second occasion, a female University student was refused entry on her way to interview a minister in charge of Presidential affairs. (The Weekly Topic, 27/9/1991).

Uganda has a contradictory dual legal system,⁷ with implications on matters of personal law in the case of marriage and divorce laws. The law, as a result, sanctions the norm of the traditional ideal woman. The cultural values attached include economic regulation through the sanctioning of brideprice, virginity before marriage, emphasis on procreation, polygamy and husbands autonomy and wife submission⁸. Procreation has strong connotations of sexuality as synonymous with sex as penetration, and male sexual satisfaction. For example, many men, according to Kabwegyere (1991) believe that 'sleeping with a woman without aiming at pregnancy is a waste of time'. And procreation, among the ethnic groupings of Uganda, has its base in marriage and a family. The family is upheld as a vital institution. The status of women within the family situation needs to be questioned because it contributes to women's subjugation in the public and private spheres. Because of this construction, any violation of family norms may be highlighted by the press as extraordinary, and newsworthy. The sanctions are supposed to keep women 'in line' with society's requirements. This 'cultural image' of women in Uganda will be considered in this paper as an indicator of the dimensions in which power is exercised directly and indirectly over women (even by women through self censorship) and how patriarchal ideology is transmitted and perpetuated in the media.

2.4. WOMEN'S INTERESTS AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

Gender Interests

Women's interests cannot be bundled into a form of 'black box', due to the different priorities and hierarchies which exist among women and in society at large. Women's differences and interests may vary due to class, ethnicity, age and society's meanings attached to the gender relations, and the level of development of a particular society. These interests have been summarised as ranging from individual, women groups, community and national levels and beyond. It does not exclude the fact that these interests might be in conflict. Gender interests on the other hand are said to be those that:

women (or men for that matter) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes. Gender interests can be either strategic or practical, each being derived in a different way and each involving differing implications for women's subjectivity.

(Moser & Levy: 1986, p.7 on Molyneux:1985, p. 232)

⁷The first is the archaic patriarchal British law of marriage and divorce, the second is the Customary law which is indirectly given a legal Constitutional recognition. There is also the Resistance Councils (RC) and Committees Statute (1987) which functions as a form of grassroots social and political platform. RCs may also administer cases of civil nature.

⁸Customary Marriage Registration decree (1973) and Mohammedan Law (Chapter 213), allow men to marry several wives.

Strategic gender interests are said to be derived from the analysis of women's subordination. Out of this, identification and formulation of a satisfactory alternative to the organisation of society, is said to be derived, in terms of the structure and nature of relationship between men and women. Guidelines to the formulation of strategic objectives to overcome women's subordination may include varying ethnical and theoretical criteria, which may be culturally specific, according to Molyneux. Strategic objectives may include abolition of the sexual division of labour, alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare and the removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination. They may further include, according to the analysis, the establishment of political equality and adoption of measures against male violence and control over women.

Practical interests on the other hand, according to Molyneux's argument arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning by virtue of their gender within the division of labour. The practical interests are accordingly, a response to an immediate perceived need which are identified by women in specific contexts. Inadequacies in living conditions which women face on a daily basis, for example, may not directly require immediate strategic goals as would be required in issues as women's emancipation or gender inequality. Practical strategies, however, can be used to achieve strategic goals or vice versa. Practical strategies are said to be more accepted because they do not challenge prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of the imbalance (Moser & Levy, 1986, on Molyneux: 1985). Moser and Levy (1985) argue that emphasis on anti-poverty and welfare approaches to women's problems increase women's burdens because they do not consider the rest of the responsibilities women have outside project and community obligations. The Maxine Molyneux divide of strategic and practical gender interests in this paper's usage is constructed from a technically theoretical stand point. The dichotomy built by the two approaches is not visible from women's experiential standpoint. The terms are used with a recognition of their relational and interdependent co-existence in actual experiences. The approach is also used from an understanding that practical goals require strategic notions to be achieved (or frustrated) and vice versa. For example, an empowerment strategy to change attitudes about women necessitates a plan of action that is by implication a practical strategy. For women (and men) in real life experiences, the differences may not be visible, feasible or even impacted the same way. The practical and gender interest approach is used in this paper, as an analytical guideline to unmask the complexities involved in the day to day approaches to women's programmes. The divide, theoretically, sheds light on the various levels of negotiation and the interests of the different subjects and parties involved in the press discourse.

2.5. FEMINISM IN UGANDA

The analysis of feminism uses Griffin's (1989) orientation that feminism is not a unitary category with a consistent set of ideas within a readily identifiable boundary. She argues that the concept

is continually under a process of negotiation. Feminism according to the argument cannot be measured in quantitative terms, and is therefore best situated within a specific context. The term is said to be interrelated to gender. The experience of being female, Griffin argues, may also vary with class, age, race, sexuality and region and must also be understood in a social historic process.

Strategic objectives, according to Molyneux, are generally considered "feminist", because of the 'level of consciousness required to struggle effectively for them'. Key aspects in this definition are the "objectives" labelled "feminist", and the "consciousness" implied as a vehicle to feminism. By implication the argument does not consider the means to the attainment of the objectives as feminist. Hence, the fact that women are involved in an ongoing struggle, implies that feminism is not a process but the 'utopia' women struggle for. The other side not considered by Molyneux's definition is that consciousness raising however intangible, creates needs, not previously aware of, (derived from "objectives") that may require practical solutions. Feminism in this paper and in the Ugandan context is used as process and means directed towards an end realised by achievement of women's differential interests. The process is considered within a context in which resources, to enable women to achieve their goals, are constantly contested and negotiated with the underlying powers in the struggle (Griffin:1989).

Women's issues in Uganda are constantly dealt with from contradictory perspectives, both of which claim to aim at the ultimate achievement of a better status for women. Two opposing views in Uganda, are on one extreme, that discrimination against women is not only detrimental to the individual or female groups concerned but also deny society a chance to realise its true potential since half of its human resources remain under-utilised (Kakwenzire:1990). The opposite view, accordingly held by the rest of the population, looks at the emancipation of women as part of the overall emancipation of the rest of the African continent and others in the Third World, from social economic backwardness. Singling out women as a special target group, according to the view, may undermine the national struggle for emancipation. The argument echoes a marxist approach to the women question where the latter is disqualified as less important than the class divisions. Feminists critiques of Marxism feature on the latter's being sex-blind, particularly in overlooking the differences between men and women under capital, women's oppression as a gender and for not recognising the vested interests men have in the continued subordination of women. (Hartman:1981). Such views are not peculiar only to Uganda but are common in various liberation struggles in which women have participated worldwide. (See Maxine Molyneux (1985) on Nicaragua or The Africa National Congress [ANC]). In Uganda, the second view, according to Kakwenzire points negatively to the urban women's organisations that they are,

dummy organisations who hold otherwise busy women with too much of officialdom and its attendant vices, and who serve to sustain foreign manipulation of African women folk.
(The New Vision, September 26. 1990).

The official approach to women's interests in Uganda is oriented towards both approaches. One dominant approach aims at the satisfaction of women's needs with emphasis on practical equipment of women with economic resources. The NRM Government acknowledges that the involvement of women in the development process 'is not a matter of ethics but of good economics' (Kasirye on Museveni, in WID:1990). Government policy aims at:

"strengthening the position of women in the economy by raising the value and productivity of their labour and by giving them access to and control over productive resources. By productive resources I mean land, capital, credit, seeds, fertilisers, tools, water, energy, education and information"

(Museveni, in WID:1990)

Despite the favourable government changes for women, state legislature is basically discriminatory to women. Limitations of time and space will not allow analysis of the patriarchal nature of Ugandan laws. Women's organisations and the women's movement are, continually frustrated by emphasis on this approach because in reality, ideological barriers hamper the achievement of practical needs. For example, strategies to credit facilities for women may not succeed, even for the government or other implementers, if women do not have legal access to land or security. The third related approach, is a grudging official acceptance of women's demands which has its basis in the establishment of the NRM, first as a guerrilla movement and secondly as a government. The approach is based on ideological beliefs and contradictions with the practical reality within the cultural set up of the Ugandan society. As a guerilla movement, the NRM⁹ leadership was in principle aware of and opposed to women's discrimination and oppression (Karagwa-Byanyima:1992). But in practice the NRM leadership did not speak out against male domination of women because:

Some of the leaders of the resistance took the view that it was dangerous to highlight women's particular oppression within the larger, imperialist system because this could divert and divide the struggle. Some leaders believed, therefore, that in order to avoid the mistake of obscuritism it was necessary, at least for some time, to subordinate women's problems to the larger struggle for national liberation. Others believed that the exploitation of women by men would end once neo-colonialism was abolished and a national self-sustaining economy was established. Since men more than women were required on the battlefield, the leadership did not want to alienate men by directly attacking their domination of women. Also as the leadership was predominantly male, neither could it be particularly sensitive to women's desire for equal participation in the struggle and beyond, nor could it fully appreciate the problems that limited women's involvement.

(W. Karagwa-Byanyima:1992, p.140)

The above conflicts and mixed views are derived from the struggle for the NRM to satisfy the

⁹ The contradictory perceptions of women's emancipation started as early as the NRM guerilla struggle in Uganda in which women participated both militarily and otherwise. The war is said to have provided an opportunity for women's political activity. See W.Karagwa-Byanyima(1992) for full analysis of women's struggle in National liberation in Uganda.

various interests and powers involved in the movement and without compromising its own position, or alienating any of the interests. The benefits for the NRM from male domination are reaped from the support for the more physically and militarily powerful forces, both in the practical and ideological sense. The contradictory nature in which women are treated is translated into conflicts involved in day to day running of women's activities in Uganda. Grudging acceptance of women's demands by the government, which in itself is an indication of negotiation and positive steps for women, is said to be linked with the realisation that the mobilising power of women, is important for both socio-economic change and for the government's own political strength (Kakwenzire:1990).

Women thus continue to demand that their rights must be observed in the constitution, by taking appropriate action with regard to the laws, institutional arrangements, cultural practices and attitudes which discriminate against and disadvantage women. They demand personal development and advancement by actions which expand women's opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the national and district development policies and programmes; economic self-reliance by increasing the range and fostering of women's money generating enterprises through actions which encourage economic activity and increase access to economic resources and support structure; and full participation in decision making by actions which promote the participation of women in the political and government processes, leadership and policy formulation at all levels (Kasirye on WID:1990). Some of the demands have been met by the establishment of the women's ministry. The ministry was a result of women's political pressure on government in order for the women to have access to the making of legislation that can remove official discriminatory state laws and policies. But calling for equal treatment of men and women provokes resistance from the different interest groups which claim to know priority needs of women.

2.6 MEDIA POWER, IDEOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Many scholars and researchers in media-related fields believe that the media plays a crucial role in the perpetuation, transmission and shaping of ideology of a particular society. Of particular interest to this section is van Dijk's (1989) analysis of structures of discourse and power and the importance of ideology in shaping realities in the media. The first approach is a social scientist view which, according to van Dijk, is macro-oriented and involves a general and integrated analysis of dimensions of power, in its relation to class, institution or group. The second is a social linguistic approach in which language is used to assess its usage in discourse. The third approach, adopted by van Dijk, combines the two approaches. The approach adopted by van Dijk is emphatic on collectivity and group approaches as opposed to individual forms of power and ideology. Unlike van Dijk, this study re-enforces the potential of individual power in the collective make up of power and construction of ideology of social groups.

A new approach to the concept of ideology, advanced by van Dijk (1989), is based on a separation of ideology as not merely a set of beliefs and attitudes, practices or institutions but as a form of social cognition. van Dijk excludes systems of individual beliefs or opinions, and puts emphasis on those of members of social formations and institutions. He argues that the concept involves 'group or class "consciousness"' which may not necessarily be explicitly elaborated in an ideological system on which the social economic, political and cultural practices are rooted. The group members are said to ensure that their class interests are in principle optimally accomplished.

Power in this paper will be used as a relational phenomenon (van Dijk:1989, Cleg:1989). The manner in which properties of power are manifested, from van Dijk's analysis, are in two contesting forms. One point of view uses a set of properties in which power is from a hierarchical top to bottom influence. The other view relates power to its form as a resistance against the established social order. Properties in the first category, according to the argument, include social power which is relational and interactive. It may also inhibit or limit interaction because of control by agents and limitations of social freedom. There is social power which is said to be indirect and resulting, from dominant groups which may offer self-censorship. Another property of power, van Dijk argues, is connected to practical and material resources which guarantee privileges of the dominant class. The dominant class likewise guarantees and guards their material resources. There is also a power which is a form of consensus building and involves making the interests of the dominant class known. In addition, conflicts within the dominant class due to the member's differential aspects, may result in differences in interests. The conflict may for example, be based on sharing of scarce resources, either on individual level, gender interest levels or other grounds.

2.7. SPACES FOR WOMEN'S POWER

The second category of properties of power identified by van Dijk feature on aspects of resistance, to the dominant forms of power. The agents of power may have limited resources, or may be dominant in one social aspect and not the other. Power is also said to be exercised within an ideological framework which may be altered. van Dijk maintains that power should be analyzed in relation to forms of counter power. The existence of counter power is important to this study, because it offers space for women's resistance to the patriarchal order. Dominated groups and their members, according to van Dijk, are 'seldom completely powerless'. van Dijk down plays individual power as not very relevant for systematic account of power in discourse as a social interaction. In gender terms, individual struggles are vital in order for women to deal with relational issues which are confronted and impacted privately. Gender relations of men and women are in a state of unequal power relations which are manifested in practical experiences and cannot therefore, be relegated to the group struggle.

The potential for women's ability to contest the dominant order is contained in Rosaldo's (1974) observation that, while authority legitimates the use of power, it does not exhaust it. He argues that 'actual methods of giving rewards, controlling information, exerting pressure, and shaping events may be available to women as well as men'(p.21). By overlooking individual contributions, van Dijk undermines the basis of mobilisation and group power since its manifestation depends on individual membership and support of the larger group. The analysis borrows from the resistance theory as advanced by Mary Ellen Brown in her analysis of Television culture. Resistance theory is said to be an overlap between the major strands of feminist psychoanalytic critique and semiotics, which is to an extent similar to van Dijk's approach. Both approaches deal with power and resistance but one from a feminist point of view while van Dijk's is premised on power and discourse. Resistance theory, according to Brown, is a conception of language which speaks directly and uniquely to the audience. The theory is comprised of:

a body of work which address the issue of how ordinary people and subcultural groups can resist hegemonic, or dominant pressures, and consequently obtain pleasure from what the political, social and/or cultural system offers, despite that system's contradictory positions in their lives.

(Mary Ellen Brown: 1990,p.12)

This paper is oriented towards resistance theory, basically, due to the crucial aim of protesting the dominant ideology and the fragmented versions in which women are represented or excluded from the media. Women need to contest the versions of reality in the press because of possibilities of weakening and demystification of the controlling forces. Cohen(1981) argues that power is maintained through symbolic mystification of events during the socialisation process and can likewise be weakened if the process is neutralised. For example, the history of the ruling elite, according to Cohen, shows that 'when the symbols of their cult lose their potency' and the outside

world learns to defer to them, 'such elites lose their legitimacy and are likely to lose power'(p.4). This may be the space for women's empowerment. The forms of resistance power, among others gathered from Cleg's (1989) analysis are two fold. The first kind of resistance may consolidate itself as a new power, with a new relational field of force. The second kind of resistance is targeted at the operations of power but does not question the foundation in which power is premised. Both forms of resistance offer room for women to set up empowerment strategies. They are important in the establishment of women's alternative media both outside and within the mainstream media, and contesting contradictory versions of reality about women.

2.8. CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

The media as an institution of power is an ideal model for the transmission of the kind of ideology which may suit the interests of the dominant groups. The versions of patriarchy ideology are reflected in the discourse depending on the nature of interests involved in the ownership of the newspapers, the reporters and the readers who sustain the process of news gathering. The intricacies involved in the media construction of reality may be partly explained by Bob Hodge's(1979) analogy of the community. Hodge writes that newspapers and other mass media have a set of interrelated communities. The analogy of communities summarises the relationship between the media and society and the nature of transmission of versions of reality in the media. According to his argument:

There is the community constituted by the act of communication, those who produce the paper and those who read it. There is also the community which the newspapers transmits or creates; the world it records, the images of social relations and events involving people in its pages, and the community implied by the content. Finally there is what we can call the real world, the world of people and actions which are recorded accurately or inaccurately, or ignored by the paper concerned.

(Hodge:1979, p. 157).

Three distinctive suggestions for analysis of the newspapers, according to Bob Hodge, may indicate the type of ideology transmitted. The first one is the newspaper version of the social world, the second is the world it claims the version belongs to and lastly, the kind of people the newspaper targets with the version. This creates potential for extraordinary fragmented coverage of reality. Lack of acknowledgement of the other version of reality is also a form of distortion. Distortion in this study is used in relation to its literal and figurative meaning¹⁰. The idea of distortion of reality is used to imply exclusion of other versions of reality about women, refusing women access to the media and representing one dominant form of reality about women as

¹⁰ Meaning as used by The Double Day Roget's Thesaurus in Dictionary Form, 1977, Double Day & Company, Inc, Garden City, New York. This is interpreted as to misrepresent and mislead, misconstrue, misstate, deceive, misinterpret, misquote, pervert, falsify, dissimilate, angle, slant, colour, garble and marble.

representative of all other versions. These kinds of irregularities and changes in media content, according to McQuail(1987) are built on the assumption that they reliably reflect some features of reality at a particular moment in time. The degree of pre-occupation with news reports of a particular incident, according to the same view:

indicates either an increase in these phenomenon, or a heightened awareness of these as problematic, or a policy by those who hold power and influence over the media to call attention to such matters.

(McQuail:1987, p.178).

McQuail maintains that lack of preoccupation with a problematic phenomenon does not rule out its existent reality and therefore can be called attention to. The attention could also be called to the communicators or their organisations, according to McQuail, because the content reflects on them. Since the content is chosen by identifiable groups and individuals, the argument is that they may necessarily transmit their intentions, attitudes and assumptions about the society. Likewise, the readers are assumed to know what they buy before they know what is in the paper and in the process, the newspaper forms its own character and its own readership (Hodge:1979).

2.8.1 The role of the media.

The media, according to Ryan (1991), is an important arena of ideological struggle in which social forces contend to define an issue and its significance. The media consolidates power because it is one of the institutions in which ideology and ideological practices are organised(van Dijk: 1989). Ryan argues that power, control of resources and rules which shape social practices are at the core of the struggle for media coverage. The media as a communicative medium covers dimensions of cultural and social values, social relationships, distribution and reception, organisational, technological, economic and political functions in society (See McQuail: 1983 & Ryan: 1991). In a development context, communication plays a central role in dissemination of new knowledge and skills, introduction of new values, raising of aspirations and forging a sense of nationhood (Kivikuru:1990: p.15). The media also has potential for spreading propaganda and consolidation of power, according to Kivikuru. It can raise consciousness and empower both the reader and the writer. For example, the media can organise support, influence or create public opinion instead of just reporting it, according to Ryan (1991). Consciousness raising in this case is meant as ' the systematic attempt to break through ideological assumptions ' (Brown:1990). Empowerment by deconstruction of ideology is used in relation to its aim, as analyzed by Pietila & Vickers (1989), as a source of building self confidence and assertiveness. They argue that the process of empowerment entails more than awareness of alternatives, women's rights and the nature of requirements. According to them, empowerment involves the breakdown of powerful stereotyping notions which cripple women from demanding their rights from the dominant authorities.

2.8.2 Women's expectations from the media

Women's groups in Uganda recognised that the role women play in the country is not reflected in the kind of information about women which is portrayed in the press. The media is recognised as one of the social forces which can promote social change and development of a country.

Feminists groups say they recognised the media capacity to influence the public and opinion leaders, to change attitudes. The status of women, according to ACFODE, for example, is considered a barometer of real democracy. Hence, feminists understand that the media can be a measure of democracy through free and fair representation of all interests in society. The groups recognise that the media can as a result play a liberating role for women (Arise:1991). The press is recognised as a vehicle to change people and to redress inequalities on sex grounds. Mary Mugenyi (1991), outlined expectations of Uganda women from the press as including, creation of confidence in Ugandans so that they can believe more in a participatory, democratic and meaningful development. The media, according to Mugenyi, is expected to reflect the range of contribution made by women in society. The media is also expected to broaden social attitudes towards women and women's attitudes about themselves. Mugenyi asserts that:

By its portrayal of women, the mass media can either impede or foster women's dignity and role in the development process. If women are portrayed only in traditional roles in the media, society and attitudes and women's expectations for themselves will necessarily be confined to these roles.

(Mugenyi: p.10)

The media, according to Mugenyi, would foster women's education, literacy training, academic and vocational training, dissemination of information and reduction of women's isolation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE PRESS

3.1 PROFILES OF THE NEW VISION AND WEEKLY TOPIC

'The New Vision', is the third title of the Uganda government newspaper, founded in 1955 by Lonrho as the **Uganda Argus**.¹¹ Idi Amin took over the newspaper in 1972 under a new title, **Voice of Uganda**. The newspaper was moulded into a propaganda mouthpiece for the government until Amin's fall when it was re-launched in 1979 by the then government as the **Uganda Times**. The newspaper maintained its propaganda reputation until 1986 when it was inherited by NRM government under a new name, **The New Vision**. Where as before the newspaper was subsidised and controlled by the Ministry of Information and broadcasting, it is currently a self-financing and money generating Printing and Publishing Corporation. While the previous newspapers have had a lot of government interference, there is an indication that the newspaper has some level of autonomy from NRM government. There exists a certain level of self-censorship and some degree of uncritical acceptance of certain government policies. For example, political editorials in the newspaper according to a staff member are strictly handled by the top editors while editorials on other issues may be written by other members of the staff. **The New Vision** has still been a target for government criticism, to a point of facing court charges from some government departments.

Weekly Topic is what would be described as a quality paper. It has a long history of resistance to the dictatorial forms of political power. The establishment of **Weekly Topic** in 1979 took advantage of Amin's expulsion and the removal of censorship of the media. It was banned in March 1981 for its sharp criticism of the Obote II government.¹² The newspaper re-appeared during the six months emergency period between Obote II and NRM governments in 1985. **Weekly Topic** is privately owned by two cabinet ministers in the present NRM government, which could to an extent cause doubt on the newspaper's critical objectivity to some state policies.

The New Vision has a circulation of about 30,000 copies while **Weekly Topic** has 12,000. Both papers are male dominated in terms of ownership and employment. In 1989 and 1990, average employment of women in the editorial section was, for **The New Vision**, 2 women and 29 male journalists, and 1 female sub-editor compared to 7 male. The **Weekly Topic** employed one woman in the two years and an average of 8 men in the editorial section. She was the only woman reporter.

¹¹ Profiles of the two newspapers are built on information from the Index on Censorship, July/August 1992, Vol. 21 No. 7.

¹² Milton Obote was prime minister of Uganda (1962-1966), President (1966-1971). The period is referred to as Obote I. He came back after the fall of Idi Amin and became president (1980-1985). The second period is referred to as Obote II.

3.2. THE 'WOMEN'S VISION' AND THE 'DEAR COUNSELLOR'

The New Vision pioneered the introduction of an exclusively women's features page in 1988. The establishment of the 'Women's Vision' page in *The New Vision* and the 'Dear Counsellor' column in *Weekly Topic* was a practical and strategic choice made by ACFODE after the realisation that the media was an important aspect in empowerment and emancipation of the public and in changing attitudes about women. Two years later, the page was concretized by ACFODE's establishment of the first developmental women's magazine, *Arise* which was a complete alternative to the mainstream newspapers. A few other newspapers have recently introduced columns on women. But they are not run by a women's organisation. The 'Dear Counsellor', is a legal counselling column run by ACFODE in *Weekly Topic*. Questions are invited from the public, particularly women, about any legal problems. The most frequent issues raised are related to marriage, divorce, adoption and affiliation, succession and inheritance rights. This column has become very famous that the bulk of the requests are more than the space offered in the newspaper. Detailed analysis of the 'Dear Counsellor' column and content analysis of the 'Women's Vision' in this paper is not possible due to limitations of time and space. The page is discussed to illustrate the inherent powers and possibilities and limitations of some of the women's strategies.

The objectives of the women's page were to gather activities of women in the country under a common forum which would publicise the potential and contributions made by women to the livelihood of Uganda. The page serves to educate the public about women, provide them with information, and offer women a chance to exchange information about each other's activities. The page started as a monthly, later to a bi-weekly and is currently a weekly. The onus for its production lay on ACFODE. ACFODE was to provide an editor for the page from its own pay roll. The organisation would also take semi-autonomous responsibility for the content, in terms of collection, and selection of the material for publication. *The New Vision* would provide training for the editor. The nature of stories agreed on were at least trouble shooting articles which would awaken the public to the recognition of women. The page's main focus was to be well investigated developmental feature stories on women. The major emphasis was to be rural women; their daily subsistence work in production and reproductive duties, the rural life, their problems, chances for assistance and recognition of their contribution to the economy. Secondly, the page was to include a feature profile of at least one woman who would be an inspiring model to the rest of the society and especially to other women. Lastly, it would include networking news which focused on short news items of women's activities. In principle, the page was not objective about reportage on women. Stories which portrayed women in negative acts such as, crimes were not carried on the page. Consumerist articles, which are typical of women's consumer magazines, with topics such as beauty and fashion are also in principle not entertained on the

page. The task was to make the page pro-women, without turning it into an obvious propaganda forum for women. The page was to be ACFODE's responsibility in the collection of the stories, editing and producing. The New Vision offered the space and guidance on journalistic and editorial ethics.

3.3. STORIES PUBLISHED ON WOMEN IN WEEKLY TOPIC

The *Weekly Topic* newspapers, unlike *The New Vision* has a completely different approach to coverage of women, in terms of content and angle. While the latter basically emphasises news items and events as they happen, the former includes detailed coverage and discussion of events. The difference is based more on the nature of the newspapers. *The New Vision* as a daily paper will be interested in hard news which must come out immediately. *Weekly Topic* has a whole week to cover stories in detail otherwise they would report old events. Hence, it is more of a quality paper while *The New Vision* is a popular press. *Weekly Topic* stories are more of investigative news features than actually brief events.

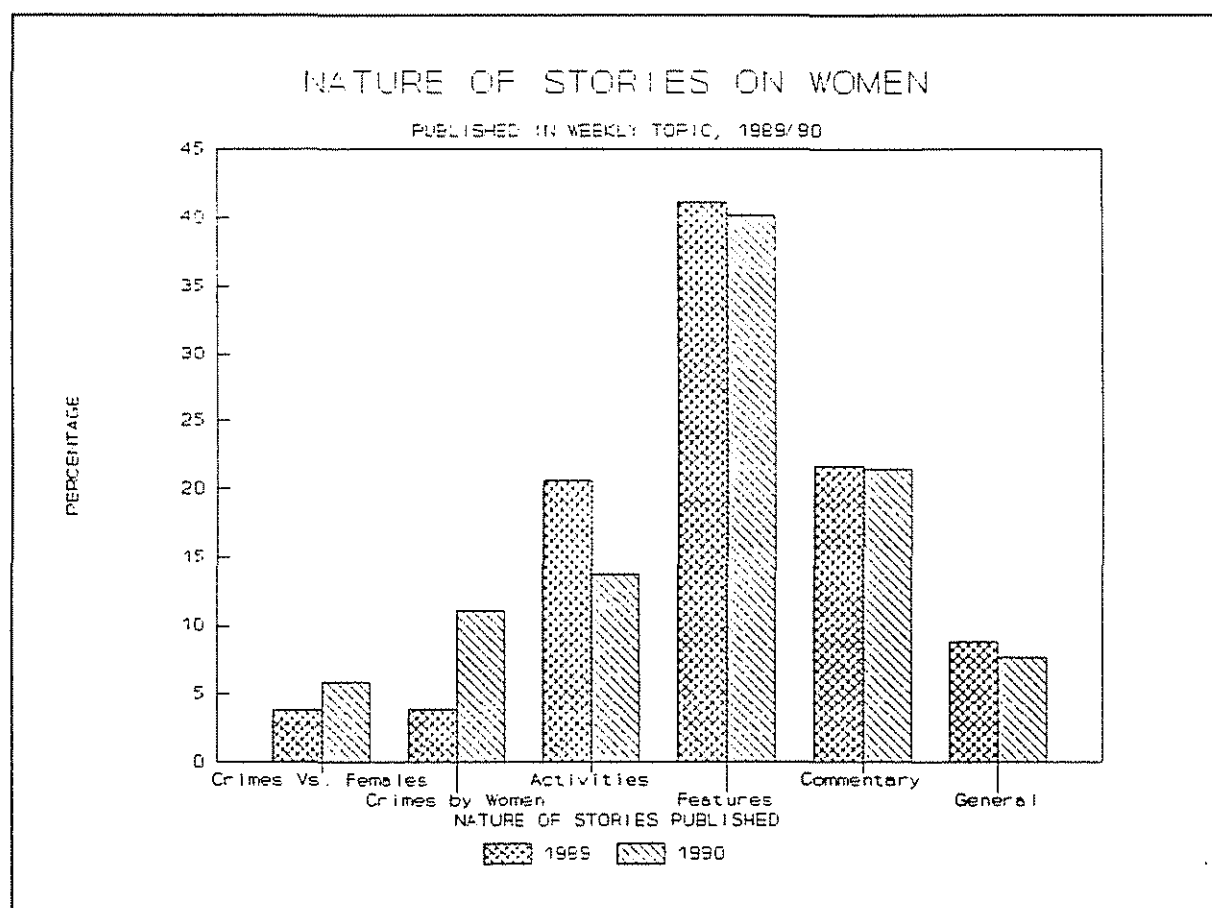


FIGURE ONE: Weekly Topic nature of stories published about women: 1989 & 1990.

The nature of stories published in *Weekly Topic* are classified according to the variables, also applied to *The New Vision* which are news stories on crimes against females, crimes committed by women, activities of women, feature stories, public commentary and others of a general nature. These develop a pattern of the newspaper's preferred topics of interest about women. A summary of topics qualitatively reported about women are illustrated in figure one. *Weekly Topic* runs about 2,208 major stories in a year. In 1989, coverage of women amounted to about only 4.6% of the total number of stories published. In 1990, coverage increased by almost twice as much to 8.9% of the total amount. The increase is attributed to the fact that *Weekly Topic* started consistently publishing, a women's legal counselling column "Dear Counsellor" in March 1990. The column since then took up about 45% of the total number of stories run about women for the rest of 1990.

3.4. STORIES PUBLISHED ABOUT WOMEN IN THE NEW VISION

In 1989, *The New Vision* published 258 stories about women, other than what appeared on the women's page. The Women's page in the same year run 184 stories. These were part of the estimated 26,158 number of stories carried in a year with an average of about 82 stories per issue. Only 1.7 % of these stories were devoted to women as the subjects. The 'Women's Vision' represented 0.7% of this amount while the rest of the 1% was published on the rest of the pages. In terms of space, the 'Women's Vision' page occupied 1.4% of one issue once a week in 1989. By implication, in the whole year, the stories which appeared on women's page could be collectively fit into only 5.4 full 12 page issues of the likes of *The New Vision*. Since the volume of the newspaper has currently been increased, it means that the percentage occupied by the women's page has correspondingly decreased. The most re-occurring subjects are depicted as variables out of these stories on women as the major points of analysis in the paper. These are, news stories on crimes against females, crimes committed by women, activities of women, feature stories, commentaries and stories of general nature. The assumptions are that the portrayal of the subject and topics covered would be indicators of the level of perception of reality about women, by the press. The extent of interest and bias in the stories is measured against the frequency of the topics written about and by exclusion of other relevant topics on the development of women. The nature of choice of topic under each subject variable would also determine the extent to which patriarchal ideology runs through the newspaper reality. For example, analysis of coverage of women's activities will unearth the type of people and events which a particular newspaper is interested in. The newspaper interests have implications on their outlook about women and therefore the kind of ideology the perpetuate or transmit to the reader.

Stories published about women: 1989.

The stories on women accounting for the 1% coverage in 1989 were published as indicated in the

figure two below.

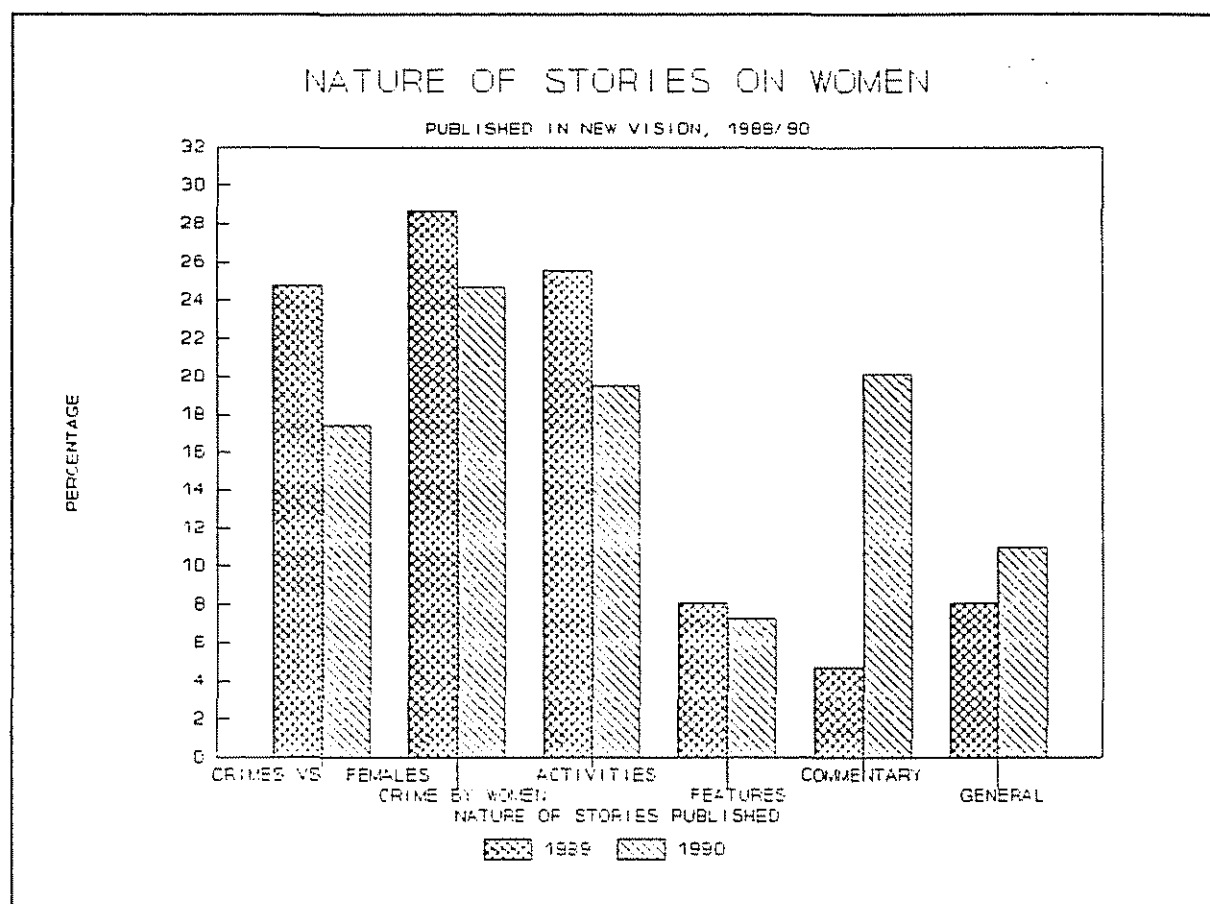


FIGURE TWO: The New Vision nature of stories published about women: 1989 & 1990.

The most outstanding coverage was of stories of criminal nature which accounted for 53.5 percent of the 1 percent of the stories published on women in 1989. The crime stories have a major difference in that some have been heard in a judicial court of law while others never get there. Most of these stories are anti-social with negative news. These can further be divided into two types of stories, firstly, of crimes committed against females, which accounted for 24.8% and secondly, the stories which indicate crimes committed by women (28.7%) out of overall coverage of crime. By implication, the single coverage of crime stories whose subject is female is directed at women as offenders rather than women as the target of the crimes. The third nature of stories frequently reported in *The New Vision* involve activities performed by women. Women's activities reported in 1989, amounted to 25.6% of the coverage and were mostly connected to women's 'involvement in the development process'. The stories covered public functions in which women participated. The fourth category, classified as feature stories, took up 8.1% of the stories. The feature stories are divided up according to major subject of focus which are

recurrent. The fifth category involves public commentaries on women related issues, which was 4.7%. The commentaries also include the editorials which were written about women's issues. Lastly, there were stories whose subject matter was women but of a general nature (8.1%) and did not exactly fit into the above classifications.

Stories published about women: 1990

In 1990 the stories carried by **The New Vision** about women, excluding the Women's Vision were 328. Women's Page stories increased by 12.5%. This was because in August 1989, the frequency of the page increased from being a bi – weekly to a weekly page. But in 1990, due to the shortage of newsprint in the country, the newspaper reduced the volume temporarily and the first casualty was the women's page. Stories published on women in general increased to a mere 2% in 1990. Women's page stories were 0.8% of those. The rest of the stories which appeared about women, amounted to only 1.2 %. The quantity of the coverage may not be indicative of major improvements but the type of topics had significance. The nature of attention paid to women changed especially in the coverage of crimes, women's activities, features and public debate. There was a general decrease in the coverage of women, with the exception of public commentary and the stories of a general nature which increased tremendously . Although the stories increased, the rate of increase was not remarkable. In general, the frequency of coverage declined.

3.5. STORIES ON CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST FEMALES

The nature of crimes committed against females vary. The label 'female' is deliberately used in order to include babies, children and adult women. Generally, negative news stories whose subject negatively affect women have been, for the purposes of analysis, classified as crime. The crimes committed against women are subdivided into those whose source is the court room and others from outside. The outside stories involve crimes committed by other members of society, especially men. There are other criminal charges reported which are of a general nature as indicated in figure three below. Stories of crimes committed against females by members of society varied in the reportage in the newspaper. These accounted for 24.8% of all the crime stories. They ranged from rape and defilement, murders, thefts, wife beatings, arson, forgery, and violent accidents. The violent accidents included, for example, grenade bursts, or attacks by animals such as cows or unexplained deaths. The court cases indicate the nature of crime, which in this case are dominated by rape and defilement. In 1990 reportage on crimes committed against females and not taken to court increased by 19%. The positive aspect of the increase is that crimes against women were recognised by the media. Court stories of crimes committed against females registered a tremendous fall from 1989. Rape and defilement stories reduced by 56%. Other types of stories of crimes about women heard in court however, increased six fold. There was an indication towards positive recognition of assault of women, chargeable in court. There

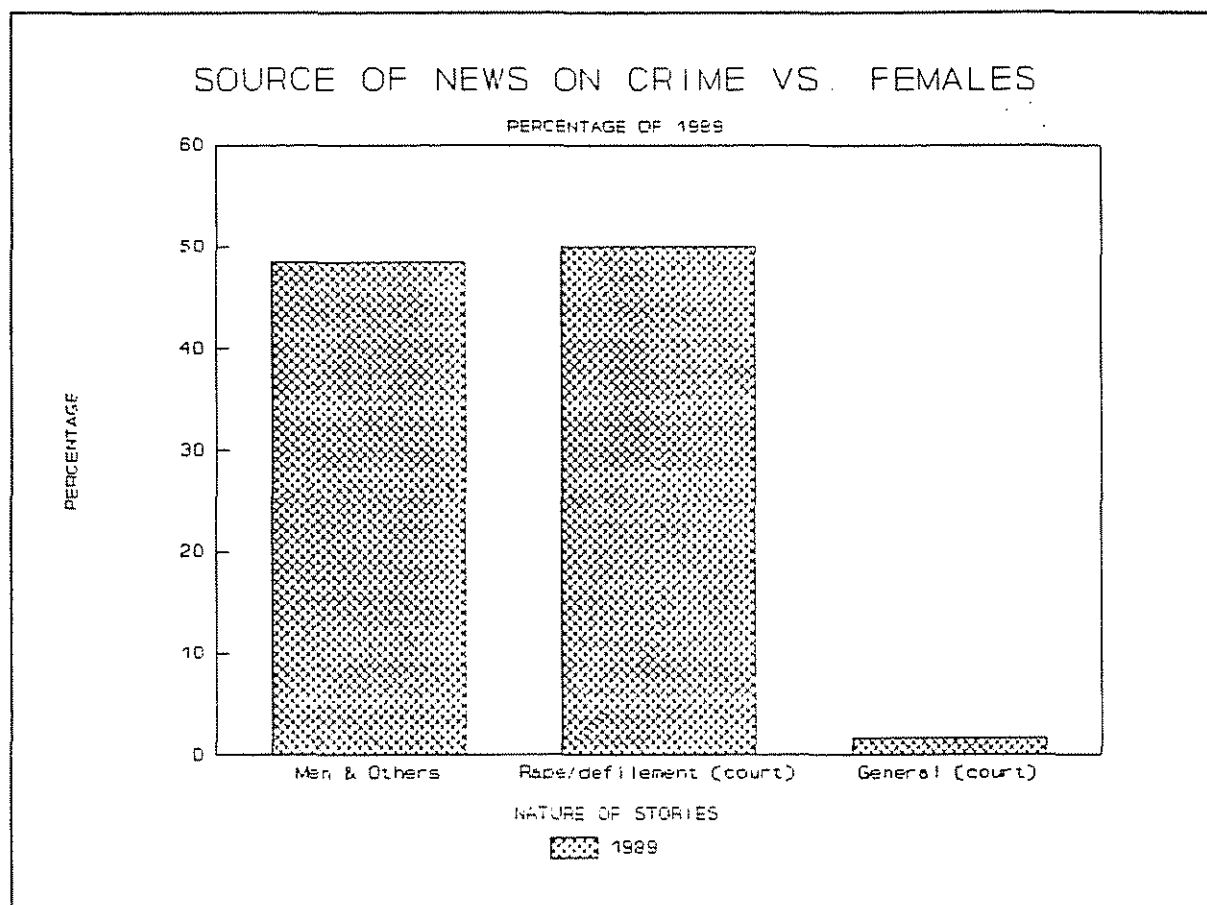


FIGURE THREE: The New Vision stories on crimes committed against (vs.) females: 1989.

was also a registered decrease, in real terms, of about 11% in reportage of crimes against women.

Rape and defilement stories

The dominant level of coverage of defilement and rape have a source from the court. The stories of this nature accounted for 50% of all the total court news stories of crimes against females in 1989. These were either acquittals, convictions or mere court hearings. Defilement cases involved sexual assault of minors, from babies to young children. Rape cases involved unlawful sexual assault of teenagers and adults. Defilement stories accounted for 41.7% of the reported cases and the rest were devoted to rape. However, less than half the stories on rape were actually about women. A single case took up 62% of the rape stories. The case had a series of court hearings in which a former Ugandan deputy envoy was alleged to have raped a fourteen and a half year old girl. The immense coverage of this trial was because of the status of the accused and his position formerly held in government. The coverage was not necessarily due to the fact that a woman was raped, but rather, the personality involved. One quarter of the rest of the rape stories involved sexual assault of women who were above the age of fifty. For example, two of the home news page stories carried the headlines that: "Boy, 20, rapes 56 year old women" and "Man,

25, rapes 80-year old woman". Socially, women of that age are not even expected to be sexually active or attractive for men, and let alone targets for getting raped. Old women are post-menopausal and as such not even considered 'proper women' since they cannot bear children, especially in a culture in which sexual intercourse is highly related to procreation. Elderly women are also not culturally viewed as attractive and enticing, and especially not to young men. The fact that a young man would rape an old woman is an ideological problem. The emphasis in the stories was therefore not the personal offenses to the old women but the ideological twist which formed the entertainment aspect of the age differences. The appearance of the contrasted age groups of the 'men' on one side and 'old women' on the other, deliberately sets out to dramatise the spectacle.

There is a peculiar distinction made of a 20 year old who is called a 'boy' and a 25 year old a 'man'. This is open to all sorts of interpretation. In the first one, the emphasis on the 'boy' implies first that he is a minor and therefore, exonerates him as if he is not responsible for his actions. The emphasis on the 'boy' also gives an impression that an achievement has been made by a 'young' person over an adult. One cannot help suspecting that the headline implies a kind of conquest over the old woman. The opposite impression is reflected in the envoy case, in which the press lacks emphasis on the fact that the girl was only fourteen years old. For example, some of the stories were written under such headlines as "Rape victim was girlfriend", "Habib tricks revealed", "Habib shouts in dock", "Habib reveals love life", "Habib shows girl's letter", "Habib's guard collapses" and many others. There is an underlying acceptance that the relationship between the envoy and the girl was acceptable and, to an extent, the girl was responsible for her actions. The girl, unlike the old woman, was probably attractive and fertile such that ideologically, the elderly man would be seen as justified in lusting for her, whereas the young man raping an old woman would be hard put to justify, according to male ideology. In both examples women were the targets of the crime. Although the reportage in both achieved some form of sensationalism in order to entertain the readers, the ideological bias is more prominent in the old women case, while in the envoy case the attraction is oriented towards power and authority. Besides, there were very few cases in which the same kind of rape instances of women in acceptable sexually active age are reported about. The stories are examples of different interpretations of versions of reality of a situation which is impacted in a similar way but, based on ideological bias and the interests of the newspaper. Women in acceptable sexually active age are almost absent from the news in 1989. Various reasons may be due to the existent barriers for women to deal with law enforcement officers, the gruelling court procedures and the social stigma

attached to such cases¹³. The other explanation may be due to the fact that such incidents of rape in which adults in a sexually active age group are involved are not considered newsworthy.

3.6. STORIES ON CRIMES COMMITTED BY WOMEN

Of the 28.7 percent of the crime stories committed by women, the dominant source of origin was from the court, while a few others were from other parts of society. The stories of negative nature involved crimes committed by women against other members of society, such as children, men and other women. For the purposes of this analysis, the stories on crimes committed by women are distinctly divided up into three main categories almost similar to ones on crimes against females, as indicated in figure four.

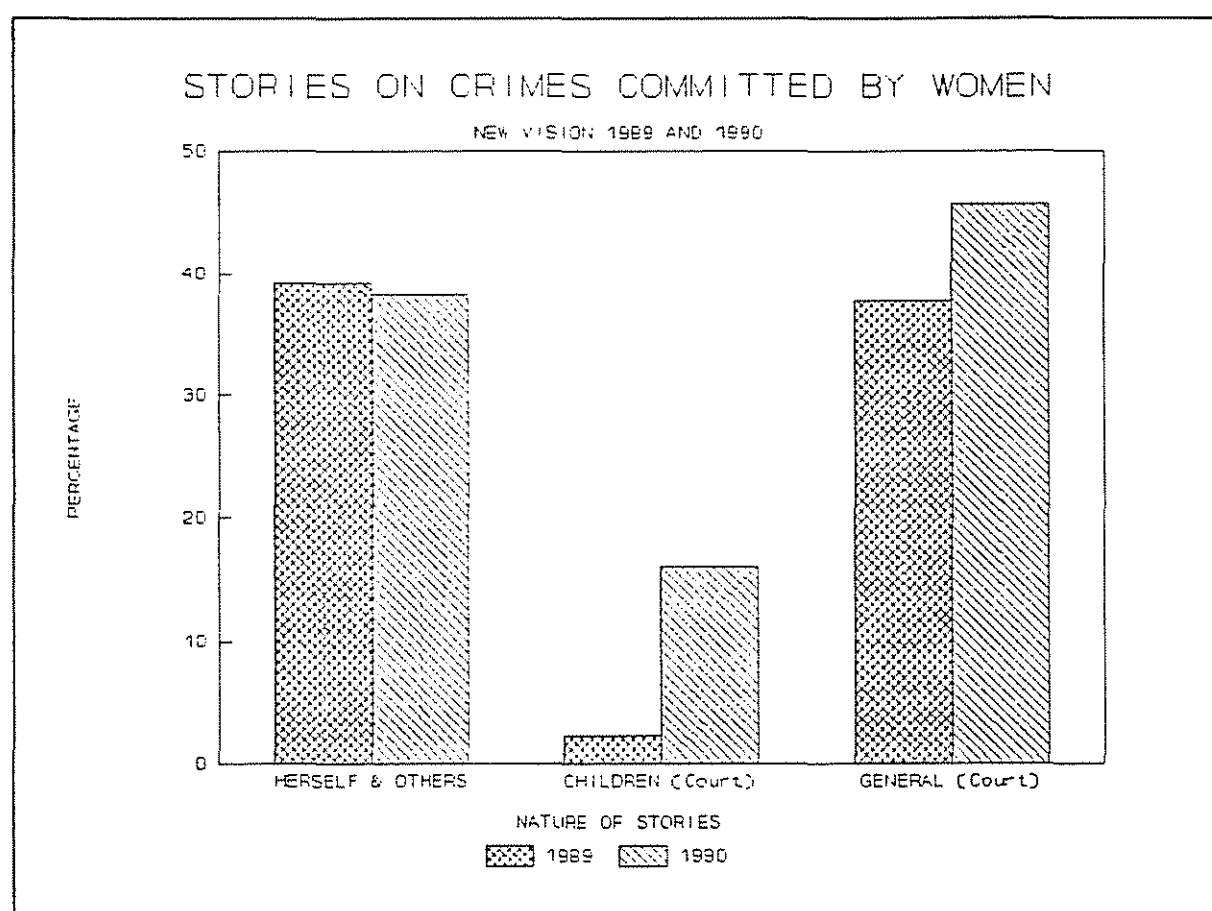


FIGURE FOUR: The New Vision stories on crimes committed by women: 1989 & 1990.

The woman may be depicted as evil, especially in cases of child abuse and abandonment. The subjects may also include quarrels with other women, witchcraft accusations, fights over men and

¹³ Usually, rape cases according to the Ugandan laws are difficult for a woman to prove. In many cases, the woman is made to look like she consented because of the way she was dressed, where she was and what time it was. Sometimes the court requires proof of the degree of penetration.

many others. The situation in 1990 was not very different. Stories about crimes committed by women increased by about 9.5%. However, as a percentage of the overall stories on women, there was a decline from 28% in 1989 to 24.7% in 1990. In real terms, stories of crimes committed by women, and whose sources were other than the court, as a total of all the crime stories increased. Child abandonment and abortion stories reduced slightly, while stories from the court increased by about 3%, from 1989. In general there was more coverage of women in court cases. The stories published had a lot to do with the fact that some defendants were women, 'charged', 'jailed', 'fined' etc. In real terms, criminal stories reported involving women in 1989 and 1990 remained constant. It was the nature of the crimes reported whose emphasis changed.

Court stories on women's crimes.

Crimes by women get to the news more often than those committed against women. A comparison further indicates that although stories on women who commit crimes to other women (39.2%) are less than those committed against women by other members of society (48.4%), women's stories in court are given more coverage than those committed by others against women. On the whole, the newspaper gave a lot of coverage to incidents in which children were involved. The newspaper gave 37.8% of coverage of cases of general nature in which women were defendants, unlike the meagre 1.6% given to men and others who commit crimes against females. There is a possibility that criminal offenses against women are not of interest to the newspapers. The possible reasons for this nature of newsworthiness may be based on ideological interpretations of the various incidents. In this case, although women may be abused regularly, the newspapers choose to keep silent about the matter. The exclusion of such incidents also indicates an ideological bias based on news selection criteria because abusing women is an everyday happening and not extraordinary. Another possibility is that women's criminal acts are much more important to the newspapers, basically because of women's symbolic ideological mystification which regards them as humble and pillars of kindness and peace. In this case, if a mother abuses a child, it is considered extraordinary and therefore newsworthy.

Women's appearance in court is exploited by the press possibly because of society's misconceptions that women are supposed to be honest therefore not expected to commit any crimes. The irony within the newspaper selection criteria however, is that one would expect that the magnitude of the frequency in which women appear in the newspaper charged with crimes would have been enough to demystify the misconception. Women by now would no longer make news if they committed crimes of the nature that is reported. Then why is there a continued reportage against women offenders? This reportage rhymes with the contradictory traditional symbols of women in which women are culturally stigmatised as 'a source of evil'. The fact that women are 'a source of evil' would no longer make news. This indicates that what makes news are the different

interpretations (biases) attached to each form of 'evil' in relation to women.

Take for example another contradiction in the newspaper reality in which some of the reportage identify women with traditional society conceptions of femininity. These include newspaper reportage of women in court situations such as "weepy", "funny parent", "mother" or reference to the husband's profession or the women's marital status such as, 'wife' and occupation such as, 'housewife'. If such stories do not tell a story, they are out to legitimise an ideological bias. The ideological bias is based on the powers and interests which are served in the newspapers. For example, while it is culturally 'unmanly' for a man to cry, it is acceptable for a woman to weep. However, one wonders why it becomes newsworthy if, for example, a woman weeps in court and the same situation is played down if a man does it? The nature of criminal court charges against women reported in the newspapers capitalise on petty offenses such as when a woman is "fined" or "pickpockets". Since some of these crimes are not grave social offenses, the obvious reason why they are published may be because there is some amusement and entertainment derived from them. The subject gives an impression that women's petty crimes are amusingly tolerated, a condition which is highly patronising. The reportage achieves the result of ridiculing women. It further belittles women as petty and evil.

3.7. PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES.

Women's activities are classified into those whose major subject matter involves work outside the home or of a public nature and those in which emphasis is of household and subsistence nature. The activities outside the home are divided up into two types, based on the number and status of the people involved. Women's activities were reported as figure five below.

Women's work in the public domain

Stories of public nature concerning women's work outside the household situation amounted to 95.5% of all the stories published on women's activities in *The New Vision* in 1989. Generally, the stories of a public nature could be easily classified on one hand into, those related to women gatherings, and on the other, those related to individual dignitaries. The dignitaries and women gatherings are indicative of the newspaper conception of the extent and type of women's contribution to the public sector. As a percentage of the total number of stories published on women in 1990, both the quality and quantity did not improve much. There was a general decline in reported group and individual activities and a slight increase in stories of domestic nature. Dominant stories were still on workshops and seminars. Dignitaries dominated the stories.

Group activities.

Stories related to group activities accounted for 33.4% of the stories involving women's work

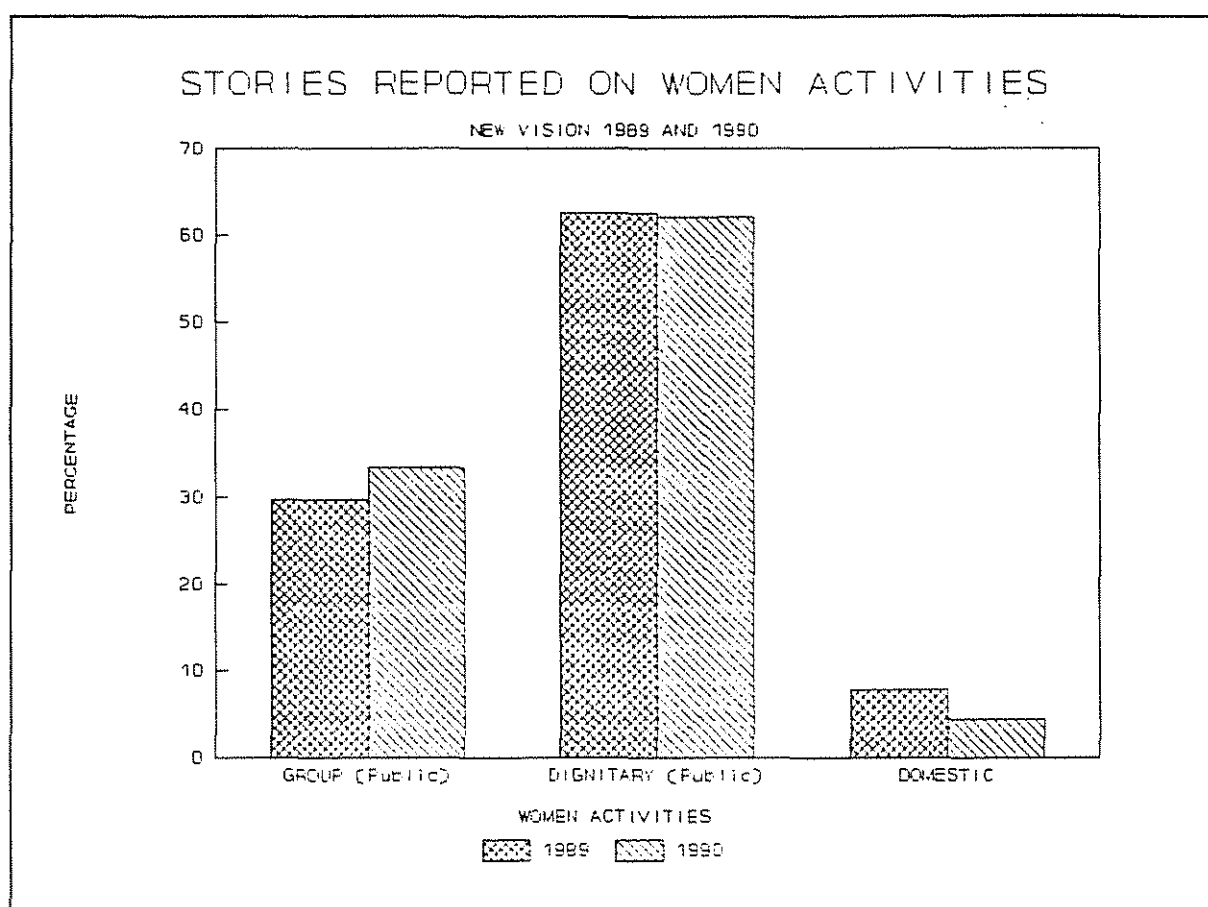


FIGURE FIVE:The New Vision stories on women activities:1989 & 1990

outside the home. About three quarters of the group stories were dominated by reportage on seminars, workshops, resolutions and other kinds of welfare related activities involving women.

Some of them depicted women in efforts to get mobilised or starting up money generating projects. The possible reasons why these incidents were reported and published in the newspaper is highly attributable to the new wave to 'involve' women in the development process in Uganda. A major aspect is that very many of the stories in this category relate to women in a group manner. Little effort is made to break into the specifics of individual women's involvement in a comprehensive manner. Women are thus denied a sense of individual identity. Besides, a lot of these seminars are organised and funded by other influential parties such as non-governmental organisations which may have local or external origins, religious institutions or government and foreign donors. Hence, much of the seminar coverage is targeted more at the organisers and sponsors and how important they are to the press and in society, more than on the relevance of the seminar to the women. Some of the stories carry non-representative headlines as "Women resolve", "Women's seminar opens", "Women's seminar ends", "Women attend workshop" and many

others. The end result is that women appear to be only attending seminars and doing nothing much beyond that. The kind of coverage given to women further omits the reality of the important contribution made by women's daily work. One can deduce that the above nature of coverage is an indication that the press interest in women has much to do with the reality of the powers involved in contesting media coverage. Besides, there is a level of public awareness that women have become a topical issue in Uganda with relatively easy access to funds both from a national and international base. Hence, this type of trend raises some interests from the press. Press coverage is thus, oriented towards seminar and project strategies employed by the mobilisers of women. Newspaper reportage is silent on the substance of the investments and objectives of awareness creation seminars and workshops as set out by the organisers and further, down plays the women's potential in the development process.

Coverage of dignitaries.

Dignitaries include government officials, politicians and people in high positions in Uganda. The dignitaries reported about dominated the biggest share, 62.1%, of all the stories which dealt with women's activities outside the home. These people either talked about women, opened or closed some of the seminars. These stories sometimes included both men and women ministers, wives of ministers or politicians who said something about women. Other stories were published because they involved a woman dignitary who got press coverage during other duties whose subject may not have been necessarily related to women.

Newspaper interest in the high class people is clear indication of the fact that women are only important to the press when they associate with a dignitary. Secondly, the dignitary, by implication, ranks highly in the power hierarchy and would therefore interest the press. The officials are portrayed as celebrities whose coverage is more of what they 'say'. Most of the reportage is patronising to women in the style in which it is presented. For example, the news angle identified from women's activities is such as women "challenged", "advised", "told to...", "urged..", "hailed..".¹⁴ The alternative news angle would be to focus on the actual needs and interests of the women (bottom up approach) so that the readers may know the women's point of view. However, the bulk of the women have very marginal influence on news selection as compared to officials. The impression given from the top-down reportage is that the majority of the women are only important if a dignitary approves of their actions, or "advises" them. By implication women are not considered responsible enough to make rational decisions about their lives or they do not have a point of view. Ideologically, the above form of reportage rhymes with the voiceless nature in which women are culturally situated. For example, women are not

¹⁴The 'Women's Vision' has also been caught in a similar method of reportage particularly in the selection of headlines.

expected to talk unless they are asked or talked to by those in higher power hierarchies. The implications on the power relations are that women are marginalised to a secondary position in society where they have to be led by somebody in a powerful position.

The New Vision coverage of dignitaries was uncritical, unlike in **Weekly Topic** which is sceptical about women(especially) in middle class status. There were few exceptions in which **The New Vision** reported about women who were in controversial positions, especially with the government. One was a former rebel leader, Alice Lakwena, who had been fighting the government, and a woman who claimed to have a cure for AIDS. Reportage on these women was most of the times negative and portrayed them as 'mad' or 'crazy'. There was an overwhelming 40% coverage of one woman minister. The same woman dominates 1/4 of the 1989 stories of a similar nature. The reportage is due to the contradictory nature of her job. The stories target the political conflicts in the northern part of the country. She is in charge of the pacification of northern region where there are military confrontations between government forces and some opposition groups. The newspaper interest in the woman may have been more political and her being a woman in charge of peace, to an extent was also politically motivating. Although the woman minister is competent and very hard working, it is more than a coincidence that her appointment had something to do with the fact that the major resistance group against the NRM government, the Holy Spirit Movement, at the time was led by Alice Lakwena, a woman. The stories reported about her are more oriented towards creation of favourable opinion about the government. Since the woman minister is a government representative in the issue, the newspaper reportage portrays her positively. Another version to the issue is the fact that a woman in such a controversial position would interest many people. The fact that she is a woman doing her job well in a male dominated activity would probably make news. By comparison, a man in her position would probably be expected to perform even better at a similar job and probably get attention if he deviated from the expectations. The woman would get attention when she excelled in the public life, while in a similar post, a man would be newsworthy if his performance was questionable. A positive and symbolic aspect of reportage of women dignitaries is the public acknowledgment of the dimensions of women's potential. There is a clear indication of change in ideology, and positive recognition that women are doing a good job, particularly as reflected in **The New Vision**. The newspaper had a low level of bias indicated in the interpretation of women's contribution. **The New Vision** attitude, although based on class bias is not in contradiction with the dignitaries versions of the importance of their contribution to the advancement of women. Recognition of women, even in a contradictory manner as seen in **Weekly Topic** symbolically shows that there is a threatening, potential counter power in form of women dignitaries and women in general, in Uganda.

3.8. STORIES ON WOMEN'S DOMESTIC WORK.

Domestic and subsistence activities of women took up only 4.5% of the stories on women's overall activities. In 1990 the stories on work increased by about five times as much as in 1989. A different version of interpretation shows a symbolic 95.5% exclusion of women's subsistence performance. This form of ideological bias tallies with the exclusion of the value of women's domestic and subsistence contribution to the economy in the national statistics of many countries. Implications are that the exclusion of women's household social and economic contribution towards society is not publicly recognised and therefore, marginalised by the press. The reality of lack of validation of the real value of women's work, indicates that there is a powerful patriarchal ideological force which has an interest in keeping women at work. For example, reportage is given only when women act in contradiction with the domestic roles society expects of them. The benefits to the system are that it regulates women not to default from provision of their labour or else, they end up as public scandals in the media. The press is comfortable not to tilt the balance of the 'harmonious' domestic status-quo. Women get to the news when they are bad parents, or criminals. The reality in the field is that women's work is the backbone of the economy, while newspaper reality indicates that women are just getting 'organised' and learning through seminars and workshops to start contributing to development.

3.9. THE NATURE OF FEATURE STORIES.

Feature stories concerning women were not a major aspect of news reporting in *The New Vision* in 1989. The features covered a twelfth of all the stories published about women. Most of the articles featured on health related issues (61.9%), the majority of which were of foreign origin. The dominant subject was family planning. The second aspect of features was on children's and general entertainment stories. The children's tales, most of them traditional folklore focused on issues of family, marriage, and men and women relationships. Ironically, some of these tales have been influenced by western ideas of a family as transmitted through colonial education. The children's stories are written to be both a source of entertainment and an educative lesson for the young, such as obedience, honour, subservience and many others. Time and space does not allow a detailed discussion of the possible effects and objectives of folk tales and myths. However, a dominant aspect though is that the children's stories carried a lot of traditional stereotype roles of men and women, boys and girls, some of which can no longer fit into the current reality. The newspaper version of reality is still based on a version of traditional reality.

Most of the other general feature stories (23.8%) were basically entertainment stories which are written by columnists. Lastly, there were some features out of the general ones whose subject matter may not dominantly be women but are of benefit to society. These could be encouraged as they are more balanced in their portrayal of versions of reality. The stories of a general

nature in 1990 also amounted to 20.1%, compared to the 8.1% reportage in 1989.

3.10. PUBLIC COMMENTARY AND GENERAL STORIES.

Commentary stories include opinion letters and editorials whose subject was women. In 1989, the commentaries in *The New Vision* were only 4.7% of all the stories. This may be because the selection of the letters does not give priority to women unless there is some kind of controversy involved. Women in Uganda after all make news when they are in a controversial situation. Public debate about women is the single aspect with a most extraordinary increase in 1990. The increase from 1989 was five times as much in 1990. This amounted to 20.1% of all the stories published about women in the same year. The increase is mostly attributed to historical circumstances at the time, than just mere enthusiasm about women by the newspapers. The sharp

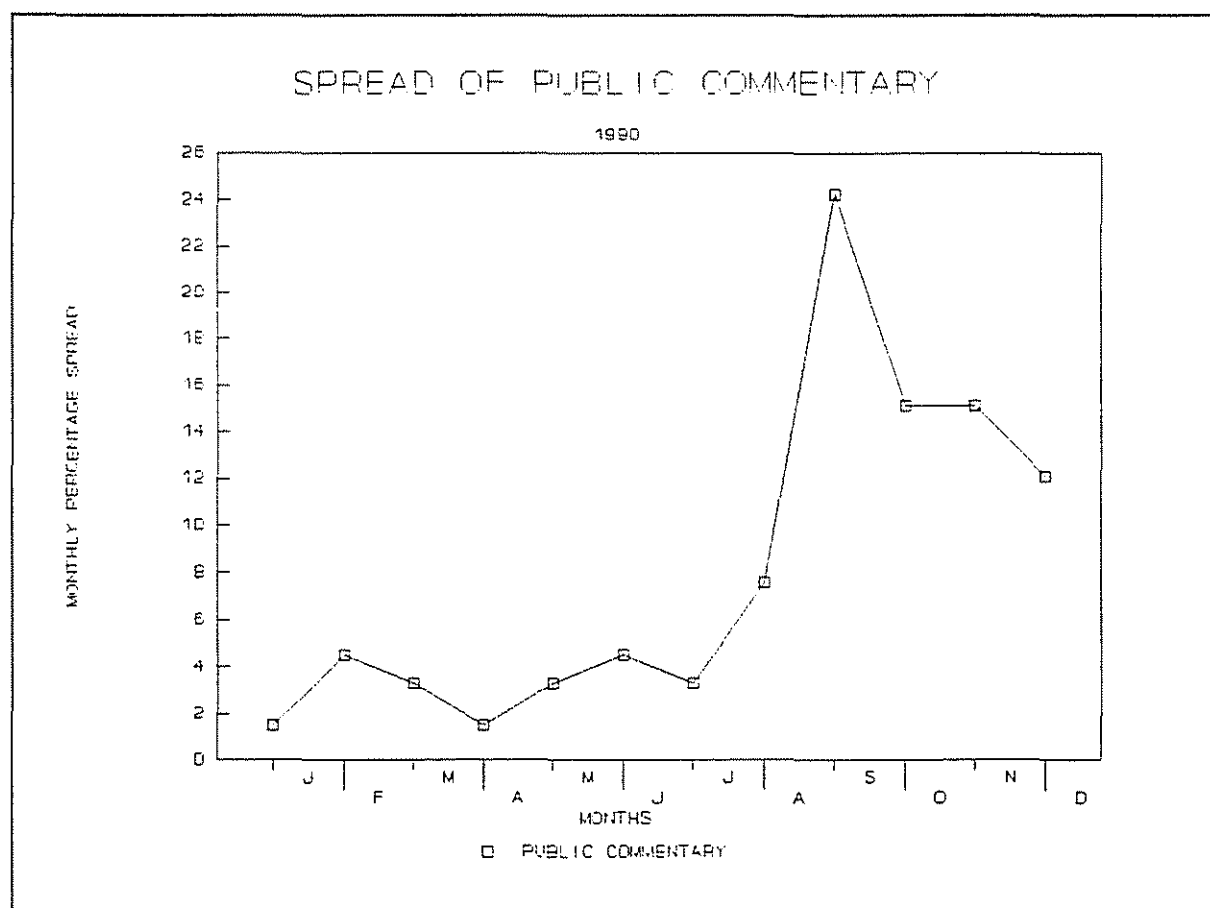


FIGURE SIX: The New Vision Public debate: 1990.

rise in the last quarter of 1990 is a result of the Makerere University announcement of a positive discrimination policy towards the in-take of first year female undergraduate students (see figure six above). The '1.5' issue provoked the most sexist and negative debate about women in the two years of analysis. The second historic incident which accidentally coincided with the Makerere issue was a marriage between a 63 year old man and a 9 year old girl, which was sanctioned by

a local village council. The situation was exploited by the media because of practical action taken by a feminist lawyers's group which went to the girl's rescue and high ranking politicians who condemned the marriage. The incident involved a physical battle between the police and some of the people from the village who resisted the arrest of the old man.

The general coverage and debate about women in the last quarter was provoked by the above incidents, and to a minor extent, the issue on women contributed to debates towards stronger control of women. This refers to an inexplicable revival of a 1989 religious debate. Some leading Islamic institutions of higher learning introduced a compulsory dress code that demanded all female students, irrespective of religious beliefs to wear 'shariat', a dress that covers women from head to toes. Students tried to resist the code, supported by some members of the public. The revival of the dress debate has implications on issues of power and control of women. Why would individual women's way of dressing be made in the first place into a matter of public decision and secondly a public debate? The possible threat to the opposition, particularly at a time when another dominant force (the government) was willing to offer some educational concessions to women were that by empowering women with more privileged education, there was a possibility of weakening of both religious and patriarchal powers.

CHAPTER FOUR

COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S TOPICAL ISSUES

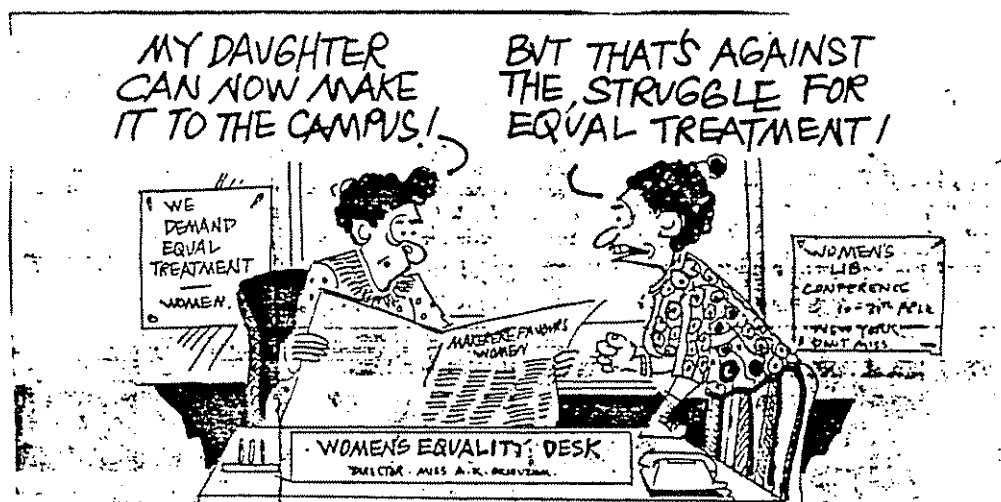
This chapter concentrates on qualitative illustration of the spread of patriarchy ideology in the newspapers. It is discussed in relation to feminist approaches in Uganda. Feminism in the context of this analysis deals with press treatment of strategies and demands made of Ugandans to alter and improve the quality and status of women in the country. These strategies affect the balance of power and access to resources by the major beneficiaries in society. The ideology perpetuated and transmitted to the reader about feminism and women's issues may be detected from various newspaper editorial policies about the issues. These policies have implications on whether the media would genuinely promote the development of women. This part of the discussion uses the analogy from Herman & Chomsky (1988) of creation of worthy and unworthy victims. They argue that in propaganda transmission through the media, people who are abused by enemy states for example, are treated as worthy victims. Those treated with equal or greater security by its own government, according to the argument, are portrayed as unworthy.¹⁵ The analogy fits into *Weekly Topic's* portrayal of women as favoured by the government, women as distinctly divided in class systems and middle class women's exploitation of other women and the men.

4.1. THE MAKERERE GENDER WEIGHING SCHEME

Highly debated women's issues in the press in Uganda was the child marriage and the Makerere gender weighing scheme. While the former had a relatively fair and just debate about the need to protect children, the latter is the most glaring issue that exposes press bias and marginalisation of women. In August 1990, Makerere University announced a positive discrimination policy towards the intake of women for first year undergraduate students. The policy introduced a gender weighing scheme in which women at cut-off points would be allocated an extra 1.5 points in order to compete with men at the same level. The aim was to increase the number of women with University education. The policy increased the number of women to 30% of the total number of students admitted the same year at Makerere. Women were marginalised by choice of the stories published and by choice of headlines which accompanied the stories. Both were a reflection of the newspaper attitude about the scheme and about women. This discussion will feature on the debate in the *Weekly Topic*. The newspaper marginalised the issue of Makerere into a conflict between men and women. *The New Vision* wrote a well-balanced and favourable editorial which emphasised the urgent need to spread the example to the grassroots. The headline announcing the news was trouble-shooting because it came out with 'Makerere favours women'. The vagueness of the statement already implied that men had lost their privileges. The headline

¹⁵ Definitions of worth are political and the media, intellectuals and the public remain unconscious of the fact and maintain a high moral and self righteous tone. Herman and Chomsky refer to the situation as evidence of an effective propaganda system (1988:p.37)

coloured the relevance of the exercise. However, a contrary policy was applied in balancing the argument during the selection of the rest of the stories from the public. The following cartoon by Fred Senoga was run in The New Vision.



Ironically, Weekly Topic was critical of The New Vision's journalistic competence in the 'ironic' headline: 'Makerere favours women' which the former suggested should have been 'Makerere insults women'. Although the newspapers run some articles which supported the scheme, the complaints overshadowed the arguments for the move. Some of the headlines are in the table below: and appendix I, on Impressions of the two newspapers.

THE NEW VISION (August - November 1990)	WEEKLY TOPIC (August - November 1990)
Gender entrance scheme must spread to grassroots Women fell into trap Varsity points valid Women despise 1.5 Favouring women Makerere University women intake swells Urban girls will benefit Equality a mere song Equality front elsewhere Hang on man's neck Male brains sacrificed	Women should protest Makerere not serious Give extra points to rural candidates Makerere 1.5 is far for women 1.5 emphasises women's inferiority 1.5 a blessing to male graduates The 1.5 Spinsters No broken hearts over 1.5 Varsity ladies Women speak about gender scale scheme Compromising Makerere standards Against male chauvinist pigs

Weekly Topic editorial was basically opposed to the policy and built up a conflict between the sexes and at the same time, as a war against low class and high class women. The paper took a

stand which disqualified the policy as exploitative to the rural women and women's claims for equality as the move implied that women were academically weak.¹⁶ The weekly Topic turned the debate about the issue into an attack of women and a sacrifice of the males.

At the top of the negative debates were the popular column 'Does it make sense' a column which focuses on debate on topical issues in the country. The Column was titled, 'Women should reject Makerere sectarian insult'(Weekly Topic, 3/8/1990) (see Appendix II for extract).

This story is an example of biased interpretation of issues about women. The article is written from a privileged standpoint in which the columnist assumes women have been insulted by the scheme. The story is packed with biased sentimental sarcasm and indignation. The reasoning used is deceptive about the position of women in Uganda's education. There is actual distortion of the essence of the scheme as presented by the university. The argument rotates around and marginalises the scheme to a mere contest for equality between men and women for the sake of equality. The story incites a point of view that the extra points would cause discrimination during employment. He quotes the principle of the theory of equality of sexes, which gives the impression that the theory is given and cannot be questioned. An alternative version is that men in Uganda have violated the principle by the privileges accorded to them. This would also make men academically weak since they have always taken favours from the patriarchal system. The media bias about women is reflected in the article's deliberate omission of some education factors about women which prompted the setting up of the programme in the first place.

The university argument was that the ratio of female to male in graduation statistics and in general enrolment does not reflect the role women are expected to play in the development of the country (Onyango:1991).¹⁷ The academic registrar, Mr Onyango, in his paper about the gender weighing scheme argued that the policy was not a prescription for admitting unqualified women. They argued that Makerere entrance regulations required at least two principal passes at advanced level. For the past years, due to the high academic competition in the country, the university intake had increased to an average of at least three principle Cs for the candidate to gain university entrance. Hence, even men and women with Cs could not get to the university although they would qualify for University education probably in most universities outside Uganda. The girls who entered the University could therefore not compromise University standards. The girls could not compare with women and men of the nineteen sixties, seventies and the eighties who entered the university with only two principles. Notice the deliberate labelling of the girls.

¹⁶ The best performing top 10 schools, in national examinations at both Ordinary level and Advanced level for the past decade in Uganda have been dominated by girl's schools.

¹⁷ Graduation statistics at the University show that the percentage of women was: 6% in 1954, 14% in 1964 and in 1990/91, the figure increased to 30% after including the 1.5 candidates.

Firstly, the scheme is labelled a "conveyor belt", secondly, the girls in the scheme are the "backdoor entrants", and lastly, the "entrants" are linked again with the scheme to be labelled "conveyor belt entrants". This is a deliberate construction of stereotypes and name tagging which bundles up the women candidates into single phrases, and thus dismiss women's individuality. The implications are that the girls would be identified with equivalent meanings of easy life and academic misfits and hence, increasing women's level of stigmatisation at the university.

4.2. ATTITUDE ABOUT WOMEN'S STRATEGIES.

A common platform for dampening and belittling women's potential is the Women's day celebrations which are held on March 8 every year. The day is an important symbol in the struggle for equality of sexes and women's emancipation in Uganda¹⁸. The day's celebration as a national event are deliberately made visible in the media. **The New Vision** has particularly been gender sensitive in its approach and coverage of the day. **Weekly Topic** on the other hand uses the day as an opportunity to humiliate and jeer at women. For example, coverage of the 1989 women's day celebrations in **Weekly Topic** was under the headline: "Women's day at Iganga: Was it a fashion show?" (22/4/1989). The emphasis was middle class women's attires which were used symbolically to show the class differences among women. The Editorial "Women: What have you done?" was run for international women's day, in the **Weekly Topic** of March 8 1990. The editorial argument builds fiction and fantasy on undisputable facts to explain the situation of women in Uganda. The editorial used the venue, Kabale district, in which women chose to hold the national celebrations, in a symbolic manner to interpret the versions about the women's day. The women chose Kabale because the theme for the week was "Women and the Environment". Kabale district is one of the regions faced with disastrous climatic changes due to agrarian abuse by the population resulting in negative implications on agriculture and food production in the area. The celebrations aimed at awareness creation about the dangers of environmental abuse. It is a fact that Kabale district is one of the coldest parts in Uganda since it is also one of the highest regions of the country¹⁹. The symbolism in the editorial however, is the implication that women chose to hold the function in Kabale because:

The weather in Kabale is presently cold in the morning; warms up in the afternoon; and is chilly at night.

Ugandan men and society treat women like Kabale weather. They are cold towards them most of the time, warm some of the time, and chilly towards them whenever they are not cold or warm.

Mystification of events is one of the ways in which ideology and biases spread. The newspaper

¹⁸ Women's day in Uganda, beginning with March 8, 1992 was made a national holiday.

¹⁹ Kabale's lowest average temperature is 9.1 degrees centigrade mainly because it is 1, 871 metres above sea level (Eurostat:1991).

chose to interpret the day in a "Kabale" symbol of coldness representing society's temperament, and thereby presenting different forms of reality. The editorial does not mention the theme of "Women and the Environment" which was the women's concern. Just as in the symbolism in the changing weather, the editorial diverts the argument to another fact that the government set up a quota for women in parliament. This fact is however distorted to imply that women who enter parliament are not concerned about other women because of their class position. Hence the editorial continues:

There is always relevant argument that it is only middle class women (who hold advantageous public office, are educated or are married to males who are big shots or wealthy) who benefit from openings offered to women by male dominated governments and societies

But we shall forget this argument for a while. As the women look back on March 8, what they should remember is that they have made very few lasting political and economic gains. The place of women in public life today was given to them by the men ... To use the fashionable words, the women's gains are "not irreversible"

This editorial has a smug and patronising tone which praises men for women's position in Ugandan politics. If the editorial accepts the fact that men are responsible and in control of women's discrimination, then why would the newspaper oppose the feminist struggle to break the control? The fact excluded from the editorial is that only educated women get to parliament because the criteria for entry into Uganda's parliament demands a minimum level of educational qualifications. The precondition of education for NRC elections applies to both men and women. Men who enter parliament are likewise educated and middle class. The newspaper, if it claims to be championing democracy could also critically consider the overall system which excludes uneducated and rural Ugandans out of parliament.

The editorial reasons given why the women's situation is reversible are biases which are an affront against women leaders amid their class. The conclusion of the editorial is that a male chauvinist government may change the law and remove women and "women would not do a damn thing". However, the editorial puts the blame on women rather than the would be dictatorial regime. A developmental article would contribute to the strategies which could be employed to ensure that there is true democratic representation even by women in Uganda. The second reason given by the editorial is biased and contradictory. According to the editorial, women's organisations are organised from above and patronised by governments and donors. Hence, women are to blame if the organisations 'collapse or get terribly wrinkled'. (not the donors or male dominated governments). The assumption made by the editorial further blames women parliamentarians as responsible for the collapse of women's groups. The contradiction is that women are blamed if they get organised from the top, and at the same time the paper employs a double standard by blaming women for not organising the low class women. The third reason given by the editorial about why political opportunities for women in Uganda are unnecessary is a case of 'female

prostitution industry' in Uganda which is 'hit badly by AIDS'. The blame once again is on women's groups and leaders. According to the editorial:

'no female leadership has emerged to galvanise their energy into groups to organise them into productive cooperatives like in Zimbabwe or a mass movement to agitate for legislation that ensures that women are not discriminated against in employment, for example, which is why most of them choose to sponge off men'

The editorial marginalises the achievements made by Ugandan women to struggle against discrimination in all sectors of society. The conclusion deduced is that women's unemployment and discrimination at work should be blamed on a so called redundancy by the organisations. The editorial is anti women and claims to fight for the interests of the disadvantaged women. Prostitutes are mentioned as victims from middle class women's selfishness. The fact that men are the consumers in the prostitution industry, and therefore more likely than women to exploit women's sexuality is not portrayed, thereby presenting a biased version which serves males' interests. The newspaper capitalises on building up prostitutes as victims who are apparently exploited by the educated women. The accusation about the middle class position overruns the editorials written about women in *Weekly Topic*. For example, the Editorial, "Black women suffer from inferiority complex", carried in the May 10, 1989 issue, was reductive and cynical about women's contribution to development of the country and the so called privileges of middle class women. The second issue is of government favours to "middle class women". The Newspaper assumes that women are not entitled to representation and ministerial position and the selection is a question of favour. Men have been ministers for a long time and they dominate both cabinet and the parliament. The position of middle class men is not questioned, but is instead defended against the interests of middle class women. The editorial evaluated the ministry as redundant just as the accusation is made to the representatives. According to the editorial;

The public is yet to see the usefulness and impact of that ministry. To date, the ministry still means nothing to rural women and to her friend the slum woman in the town. After about three years of its existence, it could appear that our leading 'ladies' in the ministry are still trying to find their way to tackling the women question in Uganda. This means that they have not found their bearing in dealing with real issues which force our (my emphasis) women into a disadvantaged corner of life.

First of all the ministry (WID) in May 1989 was about 11 months old and not three years as the editorial falsely claims. As a result the editorial in order to collaborate the argument and win support exaggerates the period in which the ministry was supposedly redundant. A common aspect in *Weekly Topic* editorials and debates is the patronising attitude where the writer decides on what should be women's priorities in Uganda. These priorities are particularly drawn from a patriarchal point of view.

4.3. CONTESTING WOMEN'S DOMESTIC LABOUR.

Domestic labour is the single vital issue of women that is down played in both *The New Vision* and *Weekly Topic*. Women's labour is more or less a taboo because the question of women's equality ends up grounded on who should wash up the dishes or who should cook in the home. Women's struggles for equal opportunities in Uganda are considered a threat to male privileges reaped from women's labour. The last part of the women's day editorial of March, 8, 1990 is hostile to women and is indignant about the fact that men's privileges from use of women's labour are threatened. The editorial resents women's political involvement and marginalises women's contribution to the political process.

... when Ugandan women cease to be servants in their houses and become masters in politics and public life, they also become more or less "slave owners" because that is what they turn their house maids into. The housemaids work for food and almost no pay, like slaves from 5.00 am. till midnight to conform to the new habits of housewife turned politician. Can such women speak for the rights of these oppressed house girls? The women in the village have to kneel and pamper her like a newly crowned empress. The elevation of women never brings liberation to a lot of other women too. Their higher status is therefore resented and their fall celebrated.

Until women begin to work on the platform that a tyranny imposed on women by men is equal to a tyranny imposed over women by women; until they begin to mobilise around real and concrete issues affecting all women, one by one they will remain a divided army. Such armies, never win wars, only small battles.

The interpretations by the editorial are based on sweeping claims that all the women representatives are formerly housewives and employ housemaids; that all housemaids are exploited; and that all housemaids resent working for the women. Secondly, the editorial has a male tone which contests men's claim to women's labour and fights males privileges in being waited on by women. The writer is resentful of the fact that housemaids relieve women politicians of their domestic work. The writer overlooks the fact that whether it is a housemaid's or wives labour used, it does not dispute the fact that the object of labour both ways is a woman. The assumption is that women's services to men are justified by the type of class the woman is in. For example, middle class men have a rightful claim to middle class women's labour and not low class women. Low class men too have a claim on the low class women's unpaid labour unlike the middle class woman who pay the housemaid. The sexual division of labour is not questioned. Instead, the editorial builds on the assumption that women must do the housework. Hence, housemaids must be the obvious alternatives for "women turned politicians". According to the biased view, in times of scarcity of women's labour, some men would rather the women's public life was halted. Besides, the writer overlooks the housemaids possibility to have a genuine chance for employment.

4.4. JUSTIFICATION THROUGH THE 'IDEAL' IMAGE OF A WOMAN

The victim-creation in *Weekly Topic* targets rural women and the men. In terms of education, the victims created are the less educated women, as in the Makerere incident, while in terms of

sexuality, it is the prostitutes. Victim creation is also in terms of sexual division of labour where men are portrayed as victims who have been denied women's labour. In some cases, women are said to be, justifiably, victims of their self created destiny. The victim creation process is judged against the credentials of the traditional ideal woman. As a result, the middle class women are alienated against the 'oppressed' group. None of the alternatives suggested by the articles serve the rural women's interests. In the case of Makerere, the solution highlighted in some articles only serves men's interests, while women are assumed to be catered for through male satisfaction.

The **Weekly Topic** portrays exploitation of housemaids and semi-educated women by men as justifiable. For example, extra-marital affairs with house maids are portrayed as an admirable alternative to educated women. The gender weighing scheme, according to some of the stories published by the **Weekly Topic** was symbolically interpreted as a question of women's productive and reproductive services to men. Take for example articles, "Graduate women will float" and "Why men prefer ayahs" (Appendix III). Housemaids are said to be women's victims of abuse. Men are also said to be victims because they are deprived of their wives' productive services once women enter into public life. The biased solution justified in the article is the sexual consolation between the husbands and housemaids. Hard work by a woman is made to be synonymous with women's matrimonial appeal. The articles are built on traditional control of women and undermine the process of women's advancement as reflected in the resentment of women's education. Education of women, especially up to graduate level is a threat to men's benefits from women's reproductive and productive services as expressed in both articles. The second story puts emphasis on the benefits for men from cultural ideology. Men are treated in a moral and respectable package that women should be grateful to have, while the graduate women are presented as immoral, disrespectful (of both men and culture) and therefore, a disgrace to society. The alternative choice for men is to give attention to low class and uneducated women. The newspaper by condoning such biased accusations betrays its middle-class male character in conflict with the middle class female interests. Low class and rural Ugandan women are used by both parties as pawns in the conflict for privileges among the elites. Educated women are constantly portrayed as anti-African, anti-culture and therefore, are alienated as the enemies of society. This has resulted in the branding of feminism as western and foreign, when in fact the major question is about sharing resources from the contested women's labour. Notice also the branding of women graduates as HIV positive and as the 'Nakawangas'²⁰. Branding of women is common in **Weekly Topic**. It builds negative stereotypes.

²⁰ Women who challenge husbands' authority are equated with hens that crow. According to the proverb, hens are female and if they crow, they are assumed to be abnormal and a taboo. The act of crowing signifies a power relationship between hens and cocks which is assumed to be the latter's privilege.

4.5. WOMEN AS ENTERTAINMENT

A common approach to human interest stories in *The New Vision* is frequently focused on women and reported in a way made out to entertain. Another major aspect is that most of the sensational stories which are dramatised originate from the rural areas. They capitalise on detailed reportage of events, most of which are trivial and descriptive. This is unlike the hard news stories in the newspaper in which reporters are not allowed to insert descriptive opinion and details, which suggest newspaper lack of objectivity. The same rules of objectivity do not apply to the rural people, especially women as reflected in the easy and frequent way stories marginalise them. Examples include men – women relationships which involve quarrels, or crimes committed by women. Another common aspect is that the stories are mostly reported as hearsay, long after the events have taken place. Rarely are the women in the stories asked for comments. Instead, other people's opinions about the issue, are what is reported as news. There is a high possibility that there would be loopholes in legitimacy of the facts. Appendix IV shows headlines of some of the sensational stories published by *The New Vision* in 1989 and 1990.

The stories focus on controversies in which women are practically involved. Reference to the women uses coloured words and descriptive adjectives to explain the women (See the underlined words). These words expose the newspaper bias against women and the fact that a negative judgement is passed in relation to the woman involved in the story, before the story gets to be read. The headlines are carefully made to cause a judgemental sensation, hence, attracting readership. The following phrases are specifically used to dramatise women as well as make them evil. For example 'poison women' and 'killer women' are part of headlines which were used for one story. The story reports an incident in which four women were expelled from an area and their houses demolished by the villagers and RCs, for 'allegedly food poisoning a number of people in the county'. In the 'Hot water women weep', two women were convicted in court for pouring boiling water on a friend. The major spectacle in the report was that after judgement was passed, the accused women "broke into tears". The victim in the case and the implications of such a brutal action is given marginal attention by the reporter. Part of the story reads that:

The accused ... was ... involved in a hot water drama in which , ... (name of the Victim), was splashed with hot water.

The main concern is that the women broke into tears and the fact that the incident was a 'drama' to the reporter. This displays newspaper insensitivity to crimes committed against women. Similarly, the women who commit the crimes are treated with amusement as if they are out to entertain. For example, the noun 'poison', used in a combination with 'woman' acts as an adjective which implies that the woman is 'poisonous' and therefore objectified into a toxic substance. The headlines have a sound of slogans. For example, 'dog meat woman' 'panga woman' 'rapist woman' 'hot water woman', 'bearded woman' and 'Slim woman'. The underlined

words put labels on women based on biased interpretation by the newspaper. Slogans classify a category of people or events. They are easy to remember because they are short and precise and may therefore easily stick in the mind as labels. The use of such phrases in relation to the word 'woman' is dismissive of the individuality of women and bundles them up into whatever meaning the slogan may refer to. The headlines used in the two years of analysis, for example capitalise on the sex and gender of women. The implications are that news worthiness relating to stories in which women are involved, especially in *The New Vision*, is judged on the fact that a woman is involved. Only 42% of the headlines on stories run about women in the *New Vision* in 1989 and 1990 were devoid of reference to gender or women's relation to men. The rest of the headlines carried the following gender ascriptions: 0.8% for housewife, 8.8% for wife, 2.6% for mother, she or her for 7.7%. The she/her is judged on the basis of age, for example the use of the word girl. The biggest share went to the word woman whose usage was as much as 36%.

In the story "Panga woman cuts relative" the following was reported:

At least four people were cut with pangas ten days ago at Komkech 10 miles southeast of Nebbi when a woman led a group of three men armed with pangas to that village.....

According to the story, the woman 'led' and 'ordered' the three men to cut the victims. The phrase 'panga woman' and the story suggests that most of the blame should be put on the woman while the men, who made the action of cutting are given secondary position in the incident. Some of the stories are written as scandals with a carelessness that makes allegations about the people involved. Rarely are the comments of the subjects included. The journalists seek for information from the opinion leaders of the rural area. When the exception is made, the report may quote a 'group of villagers' or 'the people said'. The underlying implications are that the newspapers find credibility with the powerful interest parties while the powerless(rural people), are of interest when lumped up in groups. Individually, the latter are defenceless and therefore lack access to the media to contest individual coverage. Village people, just like women may only have credibility with the newspaper and their class of readers if they are bundled up into groups

4.6. LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION OF BIASES

This story 'Police hold rapist woman' (Appendix V) is an example where language is exploited in the spread of ideological bias. Technical feasibility of the alleged crime aside, it is not evident that the locking of the room, and removal of the woman's clothes was evidence for a rape. The headline is in contradiction with the events in the story and passes judgement on the woman as a 'rapist', even when the story does not prove the allegation. The allegation, is defamatory and damaging to the character of the woman. Under the law, a person is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. The reverse happens in the story above. The newspaper further shows a carelessness in the treatment of rural people by taking advantage of their illiteracy and ignorance

about their rights. Hence, the majority of the scandalous stories target the rural poor. The press in this case acts as an instrument of oppression by suppressing the rights of the people and dehumanises them by using them as objects of entertainment for the middle and high class readership. How will the media claim to champion democracy and interests of the majority if they are still objectifying and exploiting powerless people? The reporter uses sources based on town gossip as indicated from the intangible sources such as, "some", "others" and "is said". Although the police would have been a more reliable source of information, it is unclear whether the writer consulted them. Besides the fact that the woman was held by the police is still unconfirmed allegation and hence does not prove that the woman was suspected of the alleged offence. The secretary's bias is embedded in the description of man as a helpless victim who was 'led .. into her house' and 'to the man's surprise' locked inside. The version of the woman alleged to have committed the offence is not consulted. The story mixes symbols such as the post of information to confirm the rape, although such a post would not necessarily give credence to an offence not witnessed by the person. The symbolic use of the woman's physical attributes described as 'black, tall, fat and masculine', however accurate does not prove the offence. This amounts to disinformation and therefore distortion of events at the scene to suit the reporter's biases. The alleged victim was 'unidentified' even by the reporter. While it might be professionally ethical for a reporter not to identify a victim to the reader, the former is expected to at least verify the facts with that particular victim. There are three identifiable levels of spread of biased in the story. The secretary's, the reporter's who writes as a third party and the reader who gets it as the fourth. Between the long chain, there are high chances of distortion of facts.

Damaging opinion that involves all women in the alleged offence is expressed into what according to the writer is a 'joke' by the youth that they are 'avoiding women lest they fall rape victims'. The joke is included supposedly to disguise the statement as mere jest. But jokes are also known to build fantasy and ridicule their targets. The writer has already created a label that women are a kind of 'danger zone'. They can rape and they can spread the killer disease, AIDS. The bias picked up by the reporter is detected in the choice of opinion which is reported as fact. The view that the woman was 'starving' (sexually), and "wanted to transmit AIDS" is equally biased. The reporter confirms the opinion as fact by cleverly developing a debate between the people. The reporter manipulates the language to confirm an allegation, for example in the interviews in which the first group of informers "said" while the second "insisted". The latter assertion implies a confirmation of the accusation of spreading AIDS. The statement accuses women of promiscuity, labels them murderers and therefore criminals. The newspaper, by publishing such a libelous allegations reveals its own policy and negative ideology about women. Women are played up on one side as the aggressors while men who are, supposedly the targets are made victims.

4.7. WOMEN IN THE CARTOONS.

The New Vision cartoons will be used as a point of reference for the portrayal of women in the cartoons. This is because the Vision, unlike Weekly Topic has consistent permanent cartoons in the newspaper. The New Vision runs two major cartoons. One is 'Ekanya' and the second is 'Leo Kivumbi'. Cartoons have a subtle and imaginary way of transmitting meanings which, in the case of the two newspapers are dominated by negative ideology about women. The cartoons are built up to entertain, based on their interpretation of reality. They are, at the same time, meant to give aesthetic meaning to messages in the process of entertainment. The reality is basically built on the cartoonist's point of view. Hence, the artist transmits his own ideology based on interpretations of his experiences and opinion. Due to limitations of time and space, this paper will not make an analysis of the techniques employed in Leo Kivumbi and Ekanya to transmit sexist messages. This section offers a profile of themes and characters in the two cartoons. (See Appendix VI).

Ekanya is an old comic, produced by Dr. Tumusiime Rushegye and Leo Kivumbi is a recent cartoon produced by a caricaturist, Fred Senoga. Both are middle class educated Ugandan men. Ekanya goes as far back to the seventies. The cartoons are so much alike in their messages that one could easily substitute for the other. The protagonists are both male with a wife and family. They are middle class educated Africans while their wives are typical housewives whose major occupation is domestic work. Both cartoons construct most of their pleasure on patriarchal ideals which ridicule women. Pleasure is constructed on basic themes which are portrayed as funny admirable and entertaining. These are drunkenness, smoking, promiscuity, extra-marital affairs, male chauvinism, women's subservience and women's domesticity. They may include a few jokes about topical issues but from time to time, they go back to the question of male pleasure as derived from women.

What comes out in both cartoons is the question of women's labour which is taken for granted as a masculine right. Hence, the women is ridiculed when they do not do housework up to men's satisfaction. Women are depicted waiting on men, doing housework, providing , cooking, serving food, cleaning up, nagging, quarrelling, and worst still they are not shown as good at any of that. The men are not satisfied. Women are portrayed as pleasant when they are meek and humble, when they are naive. The alternative is a portrayal of women as gossips, unfaithful and diseased. Women are objectified and equated with poverty causes. Families are portrayed as defunct. The women in a family situation are depicted in a kind of masochist situation and as a dog master relationship without any remedy. The message offers no solutions for a new direction to development and only gives a hopeless situation which is not conducive to change. Ekanya portrays secretarial profession as promiscuous and depicts the women as objects for sexual pleasure with the bosses. The wife, is depicted waiting on the man and the husband sits on the

table and reads a newspaper. Some readers internalises the reality portrayed by the cartoons to an extent that personalises the characters into a real life situation. An example is the letter below:

SIR; Where is Ekanya Junior? What happened to him? Is he in junior boarding school or what?

Junior should come out and challenge Ekanya as poor Rosie is at least always covered when Junior is around. Please Junior come.

(Signed: The New Vision, 18/11/1989, p.5)

In another public commentary, the following was written about Ekanya:

EKANYA IS UPSTAGED

SIR; While Mr. Ekanya has been treating us to his family life of drunkenness, womanising and fighting, of late someone smarter has come up with humorous educative cartoon on letters page. Please keep it up, and thanks.

(Signed). The New Vision, Thursday,
6/9/1990, p.5.

The other 'humorous' cartoon referred to is Fred Senoga's caricatures which had been introduced on letters page in the newspaper. The cartoons are different from the Leo Kivumbi (see page 40). The letters show that the Ekanya themes need to be seriously revisited in order to accommodate the changing times. The more people get gender sensitive, the less likely the cartoons will have an effect as a source of entertainment.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRATEGIES USED TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA:

This chapter looks at a few strategies a feminist development women's organisation, Action for Development (ACFODE) has tried to employ in order to make women more visible in Uganda by advocating for support from the media institutions so that women's contribution to the development of the country is commensurate with the way they are portrayed by the media. The analysis will be based on personal impressions and is aimed more at raising a few questions and possible solutions to the various ways of portraying women in the media. The intention of this chapter is to offer personal observations of the different experiences as a form of recommendations based on the possibilities of each proposal and with suggestions on how the limitations could be overcome. The discussion does not aim at providing straight forward answers and technical strategies to the women's problems. Besides, a strategy can only be appropriate if it fits within the context of a social, economic and cultural environment of a particular place.

There are numerous strategies employed by pressure groups and social movements all over the world to enthuse the media in the interest groups' respective causes. The common aspect amongst all the methods identified are based on either joining the mainstream media, or working with them to change the women's image from within the institutional framework. The third option would be to work both within the media and outside so as to ensure that all aspects are covered. The tactics used by women elsewhere in the world to improve the representation of women include monitoring the portrayal of women, lobbying for a more realistic presentation of women; pressurising traditional media to employ more women and the creation of the alternative media (Mahoney:1992).

5.1. ACFODE'S STRATEGIES

The options available for women's groups, particularly ACFODE involve a continued process featuring on the need to break the press monopoly by direct contribution of women's stories written from women's point of view. The second option is for women to tutor the media practitioners to be more gender sensitive in the process of collection, construction and dissemination of messages about women. The third but more costly alternative is to break away completely from the mainstream media and set up a competitive forum which would address issues under looked by the media. Lastly, a much more difficult long term task is to change the institutional structure of the media by backing a policy that would influence media institutions to employ more women, and demand respect for women as subjects within the media content.

The women's page

The 'Women's Vision' page, is discussed not as an end in solving the women's problems in the

press but as an illustration of the invisible tensions and anxieties women's media strategies might have to contend with. First are the problems and suggestions on how they were dealt with. Problems that came up in running the women's page were that as an ACFODE responsibility, the page was unable to appear on time if ACFODE did not provide enough material for it. The page was, to ACFODE, a part-time occupation because the organisation did not employ a full time person to work at *The New Vision*. ACFODE is not a fully fledged media institution, although it has a publications programme under which the page is run. This affected the contribution to the page and the stories produced were dependant on the organisations networking trips to the rural areas. For the first two years, the page was fed with many stories from rural areas and other important issues within the urban centres. There was an overwhelming positive response from the countryside, especially from the RC quarters. The page has more and more recently diverted to the publication of foreign news and feature stories about women. It has published more stories by foreign agencies such as, Reuters, Panos and Third World Features network. Although the last two are more in line with what would be ideal for the page, the subject matter is alien and would not be easily identifiable within Uganda. A second related problem is that the page, on the local level, has fallen victim to selection of easy-to-get stories about dignitaries and the coverage has shifted to seminar and project oriented activities of women. The women in the country covered have become less and less, while the politicians and urban based women's organisations have increased. There is need for a concerted effort to redirect the focus of the page to the original objectives. The major reasons for this misdirection are partly due to ACFODE's institutional limitations. These limitations are partly economic and partly due to the membership underestimation of the time, effort and detailed commitment required for running a page of that nature. For example ACFODE could not afford to employ full time reporters to cover required activities of women.

There are possible ways in which the page could be revitalised. One unforeseeable suggestion would be for ACFODE to let go of their control of the page. Recently, *The New Vision* has taken greater responsibility in the production of the page and could easily run it in the absence of ACFODE. *The New Vision* could take full responsibility and deploy a reporter specialising in the field of women. There already exists specialised reporters in subjects of health and environment. The page is already part of newspaper character, that is regularly expected every wednesday of the week. It has proved to be a success and a creditable attribute to *The New Vision*. Yet, there has always existed an underlying connotation that *The New Vision* is doing ACFODE a favour by running a page on women. Although *Weekly Topic* on the other hand pays ACFODE for the contribution made by the 'Dear Counsellor' *The New Vision* does not. Both newspapers charge for publicity supplements from other organisations and therefore non-payment by ACFODE indicates concerted effort by the parties involved to improve the women's image in the media. The page is an empowerment project for ACFODE. The organisation is more or less assured of

its own publicity with easy access to the press. Relinquishing its control would jeopardize the sense of power and achievement ACFODE feels from publishing the page and in redirecting its future. This could be a justifiable apprehension. What should be confronted by ACFODE is; for how long will ACFODE run a page from its limited time and financial budget? If ACFODE pulled out, would they have confidence in *The New Vision* to fulfil the original objectives.

5.2. RELATIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN'S GROUPS

ACFODE's objective in setting up the page was to encourage other women's groups to participate and contribute their own news on the page. The appeal to women was made in a number of ways. One was to introduce the page officially to individual organisations within the country by writing to them about the role of the page and its introduction. It also involved running an appeal to women every week on the page inviting them to participate. A special meeting with NRC district women representatives was called during which ACFODE publications were introduced with a request to the women to take advantage of the pages' existence and to inform secretaries for women affairs at all levels of the district to send in news. In a few isolated instances, even men brought in news and information about women's activities within their districts.

To an extent, the page was an obstacle and a source of intimidation to some women's groups, particularly at the same level of prominence as ACFODE. The organisations due to a sense of pride would rather not give the news to ACFODE and would prefer to pass it on directly to *The New Vision*. With time, it became clear that *The New Vision* would still reserve the stories for the women's page. There was more suspicion about ACFODE's capacity to represent the groups, genuinely. This meant more work and time in preparation of the page. One particular group after realising the fact that the page was useful for its own publicity, kept in a constant flow of news about its own activities. The page was grudgingly accepted but with complaints if the stories were reduced or if some of them were not run. Some groups within Kampala would bring in their reports of events written haphazardly and it was up to ACFODE to rewrite them into readable and publishable material. This would mean following a *New Vision* format of writing news that could possibly reinterpret the information differently from what the organisations had meant it to be. This would result in follow up tensions with complaints about the stories. The obvious interpretations would be based on the issue of competition with other groups rather than media ethics and technicalities in running the page. The changes would be caused by late arrivals of stories past the deadline for the week or because the stories would not compete with the rest of the available ones. Besides, the majority of urban-based groups were more financially and institutionally in a position to organise publicity. This meant that the groups would want to have frequent news coverage. Hence, the major problem was to guard against making the page a publicity arena for urban based women's groups, or a few influential women and politicians, at

the expense of other women from the countryside.

There was also a threat that the page would be turned into a public relations forum for ACFODE. The group had an advantage of running the page. Their own activities would easily take priority in the selection of articles. Secondly, there was a danger that certain individual members would take advantage of the chance to demand for publicity, based on their own personal interests, under the pretext of being entitled as women. For example, what would happen if ACFODE demanded that a story whose subject is ACFODE and written by its own officers must be approved by the boss before it was carried in the newspaper? The advantage is that possible errors and embarrassments could be avoided. However, its own hazards are that the process is time consuming. Secondly, the articles by the time they are approved by the person talked about, the stories would read like what the person should have said and not what was actually communicated to the public at the actual function. The likely danger was that people in attendance could lose more confidence in the page because it would distort the information and thus, be considered propaganda. Another feeling in some quarters was that whatever ACFODE did had to end up in the news. This kind of attitude should be guarded against because it could alienate other organisations. Uniform rules should apply for women's groups and individuals otherwise all sorts of unimportant activities would be expected to run on the page. ACFODE would have to compete favourably with other organisation about what is newsworthy. This safeguards the page against loss of credibility as a women's forum.

Professional tensions, rivalries and competition among the women's groups was a likely scene from which difficulties for the page would arise. The women's groups are, in principle, expected to be working for a common interest, to advance the status of women. However, the means to do so may not be agreeable by every group. For example, although some groups were happy to take the credit for the work they were doing through the acknowledgement in the press, ACFODE's contribution was regarded with suspicion. Some times it was strategically better off to cover certain women's events, especially from another women's group, under a **New Vision** cover than as ACFODE in order to minimise tensions from other groups. A few groups wanted the publicity but with apprehensions about getting the opportunity via an ACFODE project. The tension could be sparked off from unexpected corners such as a mere byline of a story. Some articles on the page carry the byline of 'Acfode reporter' just for technical purposes. **The New Vision** has a similar system in which 'Vision reporter' may be used as a byline. There are several reasons among which are that; the writer may not want to be identified or has not necessarily been to the source of the story.

An example of the extent of the tension was a personal experience in which I was invited to an

informal meeting with the then information officer of the Ministry of Women in Development (WID). ACFODE had covered series of articles following up women's recommendations from all over the country during the ministry's education and empowerment programmes to educate women about the Constitution. The articles carried the byline of the 'Acfode reporter', partly because they were written from regular reports from the women's seminars and interviews with the trainer. The WID officer attempted unofficially to negotiate the omission of the 'Acfode reporter' byline from the stories on women's page. The reason given on behalf of the ministry was that the byline was compromising the WID's position as a national machinery. According to the WID officer the implications were that the ministry favoured ACFODE by supplying them with news, at the expense of other women's organisations. However, ACFODE happened to be the only women's group with an assured access to the mass media. It was unclear whether the WID proposal was a result of complaints from other groups. The WID proposal was that at least the stories would rather carry 'Vision reporter', or somebody's name rather than the Acfode byline. Impressions from the meeting were that WID did not mind the publicity offered by ACFODE. Their strategy was to take credit for their achievements but at the expense of ACFODE's efforts by down playing the latter's contribution. The plans could not materialise, and the solution was for the Ministry to allocate a reporter who would cover WID stories rather than ACFODE. It was later possible to run the stories from WID under the byline 'WID reporter.'

Controversial stories involving women's groups may also be a source of institutional tensions and rivalries among the groups. Two incidents that come to mind involved at one time a national coordinating body for all women's NGDOs, the National Council of Women (NCW). The second incident was more political and involved the Presidents office. The NCW operates as a coordinating 'NGDO' for women's organisations. However, it was set up by parliamentary decree and is in reality, a government body. Representatives of Women's groups met in a common forum to dissolve the control government had on women through the NCW. The resolution was for women to set up their own independent coordinating machinery and at the same time urgently pressurise the government to revise the NCW decree. The meeting was attended by all the state institutions in charge of women and was hosted by WID, a government body, to discuss possible dissolution of another competing government body. The decision was bound to clash with the interests of the NCW. The resolutions included the fact that the meeting's proposal should be made known to all women in order to decide on the fate of the NCW. The women's page carried a detailed story of events at the meeting. ACFODE was in a compromised situation because there was no way, by virtue of the agenda, of covering the events without alienating at least one of the parties. Ensuing accusations said ACFODE used the page to undermine and destroy the NCW²¹

²¹ The accusations came out during informal talks and during ACFODE's self evaluation report.

Another possible source of compromising ACFODE's position on the page is based on the fact that the page appears in a government newspaper and may not be an appropriate forum for women's critical appraisal of government policies. An example is the second incident which was about the location of WID offices in the Parliamentary buildings, which also house the president's office. Women demanded that the ministry's offices should be as a matter of urgency moved out of the buildings because they were inaccessible to the majority of women. The women complained that they were subjected to security checks at the entrance and that this intimidated many women, particularly from the rural areas to approach the ministry if they had problems. Women would not be allowed to carry their hand bags inside the buildings. The women's demands were carried on the page. The security officers in President's office were not happy about the story because it portrayed them as harassing women. The official rules did not demand checking of women although handbags had to be left behind. The practice was however different because the juniors at the entrance screened women before entering. The security officer in President's office complained to WID for making such an allegation. The WID commissioner at the time summoned the ACFODE editor for another informal meeting. The request was that an apology should be run in the newspaper to correct the 'misunderstanding'. But as many women had complained about the checks, the request could not be granted. Fortunately both the WID Commissioner and security leaders at President's office could differentiate between security guards actions on the ground and official policy. The matter was dropped without an apology. Currently, the ministry has been moved out of the parliamentary buildings.

5.3. PROS AND CONS OF AN EXCLUSIVELY WOMEN'S PAGE.

Content analysis of *The New Vision*, shows a contradiction between the editorials and women's page stories, with the rest of the sensational stories which distort the reality about women. The page is subtitled 'Women's Vision' as an exclusively women's page. Connotations from the title are that either, the page is meant for only women readers and hence the men might lose an interest in it. Alternatively, it could be left to the gender sensitive readers. The page, by bundling women's stories together gives biased readers an opportunity to marginalise it. The implications are that women's issues are not national issues and belong exclusively to women. Hence, this may limit its chances of getting a wider readership. It is currently unclear who the readership is and how wide it is. The exclusiveness has a second disadvantage in that all stories on women would be kept for the women's page which was only once a week. The assumption at the newspaper was that stories on women were exclusively for women's page, thus, discouraging chances of equal competition on other pages. The selection of the stories on other pages is up to the good will and discretion of the sub-editor in charge of the particular page. Hence, most of the stories on women would be outdated by the time the page came out once a week.

The first remedy in the short run, would be to increase the frequency of the page in a week. The second option would be to increase the number of pages from one so that as much material as possible is run on the pages. This would also enable the newspaper to run the foreign articles on women which currently dominate the page alongside well-investigated feature stories about Ugandan women. The long term remedy would be to integrated women's developmental stories within the rest of the newspaper so that they are presented, not necessarily as women's stories, but as national issues. The later suggestion would require a conscious effort on the part of women's groups and The New Vision in the selection of articles to ensure that the subject matter is constructive to the society.

5.4. THE WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

ARISE: Successes and limitations

The first strategy towards a solution to women's negative portrayal in the media was establishment of a woman's developmental magazine. Arise and the second is a Writing Skills project. ACFODE's priority projects as early as 1986 was to establish a women's forum for communication. The idea was to start a women's magazine which would counteract the negative images of women perpetuated by the mainstream media and to address wider women's issues and a more vast audience. The magazine was set up in two stages. First was the establishment of the women's page, and secondly, the introduction of an Acfode Newsletter. At the setting up of the women's page in 1988, ACFODE was not institutionally and financially equipped to run a women's magazine. There was however, an urgent need to start laying a foundation which would assist towards changing of attitudes about women. Since not all information from the rural areas could be carried on the women's page, the response resulted into formation of an ACFODE newsletter. The newsletter served the following needs, which were reflected in the contents. The newsletter's basic features were experiences of other women especially, in the rural areas, collected during networking visits by ACFODE. It served to exchange and inform women about other women. The contents included announcements and events affecting women. There was a section on education such as family life education, family planning information, legal issues, appropriate technology and health matters. The topics were basically based on requests of topics made by women during the sensitisation networking visits.

The newsletter was initially produced in English. The language was deliberately simplified in order to be understood by the women with limited knowledge of english. The reason was because the readership was rural women. Copies of newsletters were allocated to districts through the NRC women representatives. The second method was through the ACFODE regular visits to the areas and this was done by giving copies to individual women. The method of reading was assumed to be by a few literate women in the groups, or children in primary school who would interpret the

information. A similar assumption was used for brochures on legal rights and family life education. As the demand for the newsletters increased, ACFODE decided to translate the English version into four main languages. The English version was the fifth. Translations have their own limitations in terms of expertise, time and production, which will not be discussed in this paper. The Newsletter produced a bulk of information which laid the foundation for the magazine. The production of *Arise* magazine ended the newsletter era.

Arise is a quarterly developmental women's magazine. According to ACFODE, the Newsletter was expanded into *Arise* so as to 'encompass wider issues and reach a greater audience' (*Arise*:1991). The magazine was aligned along the newsletter format but with more analytical subjects related to women. *Arise* is a 32 page magazine and started with a circulation of 2000 copies per issue. The newsletter had a much smaller volume of 12 pages, and a circulation of about 1000 per issue, of the English version. The nature of articles in the magazine have not changed dramatically from the newsletter. The magazine carries stories and information on gender and development issues such as: health, education, technology, mass media, issues of legal reform and counselling, agriculture, women's work, culture and many other aspects of women. But the level of analysis and degree of discussion has become more advanced and sophisticated. This caters for only a certain category of well educated people who could write women and development oriented debates, in English. These are the same people who contribute to the magazine and read it. The demand for the magazine by 1991 had grown that it was expanded to be put on the street market. The magazine is circulated to education institutions, parliamentarians, the ministries, some diplomatic missions in Kampala, Women's groups and NGOs in Uganda while a quota is allocated to each of the districts. The magazines for the districts were circulated through women parliamentarians²² free of charge. Members of ACFODE were entitled to a copy of the magazine free of charge. Recently, the members buy it at a subsidized rate in order to attach a value to the magazine. The magazine is also circulated to some women's research centres, groups and libraries abroad, either on exchange basis or subscription. The contents are thus, geared to suit a variety of readership. In a defensive editorial about the 'Mass media and its impact', The *Arise* argues that:

such publications like 'Arise' have been criticised for being elitist and giving expression to a few over publicised women. We look at this criticism as an attempt to undermine women's efforts to express their achievements through models. These women are playing an important role in society and can be used as vehicles to pass on the message to many un informed men and women. They serve as lighthouses especially to the youth, inviting them to rise from ignorance and enslaving traditional practices and embrace the future with courage. In their own right, these women occupy positions of influence in society

²² This method of distribution has been halted for most of the NRC women representatives. It was discovered that some NRCs would not distribute the magazines to the target groups. Others would keep the magazines at their offices.

and there fore should be given their rightful place .
(Arisc: 1991; Editorial).

The direction of the magazine has changed from the simply written newsletter, to earn itself a reputation of being elitist. In reality, the accusation is genuine although the principle could change to suit a wider and lesser privileged readership in Uganda. Women's strategies should build more on advancing women's points of view about their own reality and experiences within the stories written, rather than falling into the trap of becoming mouthpieces which are an imposition on what the elite think women want. Grassroots organisers cannot afford to overlook even the slightest individual episodes of struggle and opposition because opposition may begin from such marginalised location, and therefore 'bracketing' the marginalised potential 'can leave activists paralysed' (Ryan:1991, p.16). There should be a conscious effort by the women's movement in Uganda to establish a rural women's voice in the media, from the rural women's point of view. This can also be done through breaking the barriers of language, for example by writing in the languages understood and read by women, and as a long term strategy, working on improving women's chances of education. The two are major barriers to women's access to the media and as a result enhancing women's powerlessness.

5.5. GENDER SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION

The Gender Sensitive Communication(GSC) programme was introduced by ACFODE as a strategy to deal specifically with the media content. The problem with the content was identified as gender bias against women, anti-women stories and media exclusion of important subjects about women. The GSC programme as strategy, aims at involving the media practitioners in re-discussing their own stories and editorials. Participants targeted are journalists from newspapers, magazines and development organisations with publications. The workshop is open to men participants. ACFODE members from the various standing committees such as education, research, legal and political and projects are included in the training. Members are given the skills to detect media bias and to be able to write issues concerning women. A more important objective for membership training is to built a support group which can supply ACFODE publications with the relevant issues about women. The intention is to give participants skills to be more gender-sensitive in their work and to empower them to think towards writing development oriented stories. The programme is divided between theoretical and practical exercises and is held twice a year for three to five days. The second phase is a follow up of the first. The theoretical sessions cover general discussions on gender and culture, the role of women in development of Uganda, and women's rights as opposed to men's in the Ugandan laws. The practical sessions involve information gathering and writing skills and are designed according to the needs and suggestions from the ACFODE members and some of the recommendations from preceding workshops. Some workshops have also included provision of skills in photography. The areas covered are how to

write news stories, press releases, all forms of well investigated feature stories and documentation. Although most of the participants such as professional journalists are already familiar with these skills, the purpose is to re-orient them towards investigation from a gender aware point of view. Lastly, the training involves field exercises in which the participants are sent to different sites in which women are involved in various activities to investigate, carry out interviews and write a development-oriented story. The whole programme aims at ending with publishable material. Previously, the participants came up with a lot of well-written and unbiased articles, some of which have been published by the press.

The programme has been a successful strategy on the part of women because it has media practitioners to discuss women's problems in the media. Secondly, it offers women a chance to build a link with the media and demystify the working of the media on one hand and issues of women and development. ACFODE members trained in the programme provide a back up support for the ACFODE publications. The women work else where in government and the private sector and involves professions and occupations ranging from lawyers, teachers, nurses, housewives and business. The advantage is that the women are made specialists in writing about their own field. For ACFODE, the project is potentially a money saving venture because of the support given by members to the ACFODE publications. It would go a long way to solve the problem of shortage of writers. The project, as expressed from recommendations from participants, needs to be more regular in order to cover as many journalists as possible. This is reflected in the requests made by some organisations and the fact that at follow-ups, some groups prefer to send a different participant from the initial ones in order to spread the skills.

5.6. THE MEDIA CONTACT GROUP

One major out come of the GSC programme is the proposal to form a media contact group which would monitor the biased stories in the media and prepare a response. The group would ensure that responses appear in the media. The strategy has not been realised so far. Some of the responses are based on individual responses and lack proper coordination. The failure is partly due to the fact that after the workshops, there are lesser chances of coherent mobilisation of the group since they all go back to their institutions. However, the women's groups could seriously consider forming an independent group in which all are ^{re-}presented so that they pledge their commitment to the task rather than making it an ACFODE responsibility. The media contact group would be facilitated by a strong information and documentation resource bank to supply the writers with well researched data. Research is needed into areas in which the media is silent about women and those in which a lot of facts are distorted. For example, there is urgent need for information about women's contribution, particularly in areas of subsistence and domestic work, in trade such as the informal sector, violence against women, especially in the domestic sphere,

legal rights, implications of differences in gender power on access to resources, implications of media images of women on society, changes in ideology and many others. The centre could be jointly run by the interested women's groups.

5.7. MAKING THE MEDIA PARTICIPANT IN WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES

One of the major obstacles to penetrating the media is because they have kept up, on the surface, a front of non-alignment with the issues they report about. The reality however is that the media serves certain interests which they may be conscious or unconscious about. Hence, the media reporters are usually bystanders and supposedly impartial about what they report. The idea of making the media participant in women's programmes is to ensure that women's issues are demystified and treated as human issues of development. This could be done through involving media personnel in decision making on issues affecting women. The magnitude of the decision may range in importance for as long as the basic issue is positive participation. For example, ACFODE interviews to recruit staff for publications was composed of a panel of a Chief Sub-editor of *The New Vision* and the then Editor-in-Chief of *Weekly Topic* (both men) with the members of the ACFODE Executive Committee, who offered guidance on the basic priorities and interests of the organisation. The ACFODE editorial board which is in charge of the publications is also composed of media professionals, some of whom are men. Although the decision to include them was basically out of respect for their professional competence, it achieves a basic empowerment mission of familiarising them, on a regular basis, with the women's cause. One could not rule out the possibility that the familiarisation has helped to break the ice on both sides and facilitate the positive interest shown by the two newspapers in production of the 'Women's Vision' and the 'Dear Counsellor'.

The Constitutional Consultation project.

The above project offers an example of actual media participation in women's issues. The project was executed by the ministry of WID in Uganda, some women's NGOs and the co-sponsoring agency, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The project was set up to educate Ugandan women about the constitution so that they are able to propose ideas to the Constitutional Commission which was working on the drafting of a new Constitution for the country. The report indicates coverage which involves 113 county level seminars in 25 districts of Uganda. The mass media was identified as a means through which activities of the programme would be publicised (WID, June 1991). The means identified were through newspaper articles, television, radio, song and drama. Two major ways were used to involve the media. The first was a workshop organised for women journalists working with the media. The workshop involved the journalists as women who needed to learn about their constitutional rights. They made proposals and recommendations to the new constitution. The journalists were also met as professionals who

had a contribution to make by empowering the public about the women's needs. The second strategy was the formation of a media monitoring group for the project. The group was composed of people from the mass media, and was a venture initiated under the patronage of ACFODE to keep the media constantly in discussion about the progress of the project and the numerous gender related issues. The project was a most positively covered venture which publicised women's needs, publicly exposed discriminatory laws against women and publicised women's recommendations for the new constitution. Although the media was involved at mid level decision making in the project in terms of choice of content and nature of presentation, in future it would possibly be even more profitable for women to involve the media at both the planning and executing stages of the projects.

5.8. THE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING IN THE MEDIA

There is a clear absence of women's input in the decision making in the media. Currently, the media assumes what should be of interest to the readers, thus, satisfying specific categories of people while others are made objects in the media. The women's movement needs to develop a strategy of influencing policy that promotes women's influence on particularly the media content, and the operational policies of the media. The movement could also push for a policy orientation which would increase chances of employment of women in the media. Women's participation in media matters in Uganda is still very minimal. Although this task could be long term in its realisation, the fact of making it public knowledge would put some pressure on media bosses to consider women's under representation in both the media content and employment. Women's recruitment in both *The New Vision* and *Weekly Topic*, for example, is still too low. There is evident bias in the profession that women are not suitable because of the aggressiveness needed and keeping irregular hours at work and certainly not by married or pregnant women. Such attitudes influence recruitment processes and even the women who would be interested in joining the media profession.

Last but not the least is a more urgent issue of corruption in the media profession, particularly in Radio and Television. It has become almost impossible for anybody to get media coverage without negotiating a side payment to line personnel who handle the stories, right from the producers of the programmes to the technicians. Most women's groups and individuals cannot afford to pay such exorbitant funds from a limited budget of operation. As a result, what determines newsworthiness in the media is the monetary factors. The problem of corruption is deep rooted within the poor economic conditions of the country and remuneration policies of the Civil Service in Uganda. For as long as the state still has monopoly over the media, the problem of remuneration is more likely to continue. An immediate move by women would be to pressurize government to reward fairly their employees.

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The issues which come out over and over again in the study of Ugandan press can be loosely divided into three interrelated levels of analysis of media discourse. Of importance to this paper is the news approach in which, for example, selective topics about women are reported, thereby legitimising a point of view of the press about women. The second level deals with conception of the text in terms of ideology portrayed in the newspaper and lastly, the third level which is on the kind of power struggles involved in the maintenance of the ideological versions reflected in the dominant discourse. Discourse, denotes the textual form of language use (van Dijk:1989), with particular emphasis on its dominance in media communication. Various levels of discourse, according to van Dijk's orientation, are a power within themselves, which is facilitated by accessibility to the instruments of power(media), control of speech acts, domination of a particular topic, particular speakers and the evaluation of incidents by particular powerful people.

6.1. TEXTUAL PRESENTATION OF DISCOURSE

According to van Dijk, discourse and communication play a big role in transformation and acquisition of ideology. This may be done through restricted topic selection, strategic control of knowledge on what is news or not newsworthy(in the media) and in setting up strict ethics and forms of perception. The significant inter relationship between real life experiences and the interpretation and representation indicates that the nature of stories published in the press in Uganda represent contradictory versions of the contextual women's experiences. The selective mechanism employed by the press excludes massive information about women's potential and distributes the few ideas about women which interest the newspapers and a selective readership. The images of women in the Ugandan press are transmitted through, exclusion of positive aspects of women in the choice of subject and by particular down playing of the women's contribution to society and highlighting mostly anti-social stories connected with women. The dominance of court stories are an example which give the impression that what women are mostly good at is committing crimes, or being victims of crimes. Women's credibility in the media is derived from women's association with agents of power, or women's access to facilitators of power. Power in the Ugandan press is by implication an important bait for media coverage. The first nature of stories patronize women in a way that the subjects of the stories are often talked about in connection with others. For example, the usage of gender ascriptions such as 'woman', 'wives' and others, identify women in a relational manner. A term such as 'housewife' or emphasis on the husband's profession suppresses women's individuality. The implications are that the women's identity is lost in the process and therefore along with it the recognition of women as individual citizens of a society. As much as this may be patronising to women, it is also negative to the men as well as to the integrity of the mentioned profession. Women's identification by the husbands

profession imply that women as the responsibility of their husbands. This indirectly connotes a form of power and control over women since for example the women's actions would be an evaluative reflection on the husbands capacity to manage their wives. The second power related recognition of women looks at newsworthy versions of reality such as women involved in crime and scandals. Court stories in particular represent an institutionalised form of power on one hand, and the defendants subordination on the other. The court is, thus, very attractive for the media. Lastly, there is a form of media coverage derived from resource acquisition. Stories in which women are involved in public activities such as seminars and workshops are attractive for the media particularly in connection with the sponsors of the activities. There are also stories in which women are involved in activities which may have monetary value such as fund raising, and income generating projects. The media interest in women is in connection with the amount of money collected or the important guests at the occasion. A similar conclusion can be made from media coverage related to women's association with dignitaries, who wield a form of political and material public and individual forms of power. In the case of *The New Vision*, dignitaries are given a positive portrayal, while in *Weekly Topic*, high ranking women officials are given recognition in opposition to the dignitaries' power derived from their privileged position. This form of reportage overshadows women's experiences, for example, in production and reproduction. The other level of power in media discourse is identifiable in the free reign given to public debates about women especially as seen from the analysis of the Makerere incident. The media subtly let loose particular people's opinion of the incident. The coverage of women's topical issues, was dominated by commentary and public debate. While widening the level of discourse and thereby giving free reign to the ideology, reportage on the Makerere incident for example, exhibited a high level of manipulation in which the actual newspaper policy about the issue, seemingly positive on the surface (in the case of *The New Vision*), in the background employed a double standard in which sexist views were portrayed under the pretext of freedom of expression. A subtle and hidden way of covering up prejudice is explained in van Dijk's example of racist talk which has taken a more "cultural" orientation partly because of heavily monitored official norms of nondiscrimination. Techniques used by white people, according to the example, may include an acknowledgement of anti-racist norms and an affirmation that 'whatever they may say about "foreigners" they do not mean to be racists'(p.34). White people, van Dijk argues, may talk negatively about ethnic minorities, and at the same time, balance the argument by a '...positive self-presentation...., as tolerant, nonracist, understanding citizens'.

Manipulation as a form of power exercises control over the subject through symbolic communication designed to make indirect suggestions, limit, or determine selectively, without appearing to do so, and thereby transmitting certain negative or positive attitudes (Wrong: 1979). Likewise in the *Weekly Topic*, the Makerere programme was dominated by commentary and

debate, such that the final text exhibited the type of ideology the newspaper wanted to get across to the reader by use of part of the readership to debate the issue.

6.2. THE INTERESTS AT WORK

The identifiable groups in the media discourse are at one level, the dominant group of the elite, who form the bulk of the readership and at another level, are the uneducated and poor Ugandans, particularly rural women who are talked about in the media. These are in a hierarchical and vertical power relationship with each other. The elite are discussed as an instrumental group whose status in the society is validated by public ideology which considers them naturally qualified for their position (Cohen:1981). According to the argument, elite men and women's power is built through access to institutions such as education, religion, media, language etc.. Since gender is a relational social situation, there is evident power involved in the relationship between men and women. Media discourse in Ugandan is dominated on one side by male interests, as reflected through patriarchal beliefs, and on the other side, the women elites who are in opposition to the ideas advocated by the former. From the study both groups have a relatively easy access to the media. Women, even at the elite level are also under attack on the basis of their gender. The common aspect shared by both men and women elites and inaccessible to the rest of the uneducated Ugandans is education, which determines the class position, and as a result, the language, English in which the text in the newspapers is written. Language versions, reflect power structures of society and are said to rank groups in accordance with power, and status chances of the groups concerned (Nobert:1991). The language plays a vital role in the press because it excludes many people and confines monopoly of the debate to a few Ugandans.

The common aspect is the conflicting parties' claims to decide priority interests of the rural women. An interesting equivalent of this type of claim to know what is best for the disadvantaged is mirrored in van Dijk's argument that while persuading the powerless that forms of actions are within their interest, the persuader has at hand a crucial strategy which conceals power. The rural people in general and women specifically only gain credibility in numbers or only when in relation to an important and powerful person. In all cases, there is lack of the rural people's voice, even when the story is supposed to be written in their interest. The study shows that rural women are relegated to sensationalist coverage meant to entertain as human interest stories. For example, a woman who beats a husband or elopes is given sensational coverage. Numerous women are beaten and abused every night; many women are victims of domestic violence, but the stories rarely get to the news. Assault against men by women is acknowledged publicly while men's assault of women is treated as normal. Although it is in order to report criminal acts of women, it has become clear that the press does not report women's other positive aspects such as, their daily contribution in terms of domestic and subsistence work, reproduction

and production roles in the country. The sum total is that women seem to be irresponsible, violent and tyrannical in society.

6.3. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND TRANSMISSION OF IDEOLOGY

In order to determine the social relations affecting women within the ideological frame work of the stories published by the press, there is need to look at the contradictory versions said about women in the media. Ideology consists of various interests which, according to van Dijk, are dependant constructions of reality. Fragmentation of women into middle class women and rural women is identified in the analysis. For example, a common aspect to **Weekly Topic** approach to women's strategies is the creation of an imaginary battleground in which middle class women are on one side working to oppress the society. Techniques used to transmit ideology reflected in the study are based on the framing of women particularly in a linguistic or thematic manner. The techniques include branding of women into stereotypes, victim creation, portraying women as exploiters, or depending on class, by portraying men as victims of women's selfishness.

The construction of middle class women is on the basis of high income, political participation, and by association of women with rich men. Another version supported in the media is that the educated women at the forefront who teach grassroots women to demand for their rights have a hidden agenda which is basically to exploit the rural women. The media also grudgingly accepts the idea of development by involving women. However, the method of involvement is contested by both the media and the women's movement²³. Welfare and anti-poverty approaches to the development of women are easily acceptable by the media. The media also accepts, to a greater extent, the government efficiency approach in which women are seen as key factors in contributing to the development of the country, particularly in view of the economic hardships, debt crisis, balance of trade problems, and the IMF structural adjustment problems faced by the economy. Strategies oriented towards equality for men and women such as the positive discrimination issues, or those oriented towards empowerment of women provoke resistance that women are demanding a lot and want to revolutionise the whole system by dominating men. By system, reference is made to the cultural beliefs and ideology about women's subordinate position and men's superiority. The issue of equality is further played against women by the media to focus on unequal relations of women, as a qualifying factor for unequal relations between men and women. The **Weekly Topic's** insistence on the women's class issue is oriented towards a marxist approach which marginalises gender inequalities even within a single class. **Weekly Topic** has a phobia about mobilised women, as seen through the editorials written during women's

²³ Lycklama (1992) gives a systematic analysis of trends in women and development strategies which clearly shed light on the contests on where emphasis has been put in women's programmes. The five approaches cited are; Welfare, Equity, Anti-poverty, Efficiency and Empowerment approaches.

celebrations and reaction to any form of policy advanced in women's interests. The newspaper argues that feminism is western and a new form of hidden imperialism aimed at the exploitation of Ugandan rural women. Ironically, the newspaper class analysis of women's issues betrays an element of foreign influence from marxist theories. The 'exploited' women are further fragmented into victims, such as prostitutes, housemaids, rural women. These make ideal 'victims' because of limited resources, and are as a result considered powerless and therefore, not a threat to the dominant ideology. Middle class women are a threat to the dominant ideology because they have access to resources, such as education which they could use to contest the newspaper version of patriarchal ideology raised in the media discourse. The fragmentation of women is a disuniting strategy on the part of patriarchal ideology. While differential aspects of women are portrayed in the forefront, the men are portrayed as a homogeneous entity, thus giving them a semblance of stability and unity.

The differences in middle class women's perception of reality may not necessarily be in conflict with the rural women's perception, if the ultimate goal is the same. What women should strive to achieve is to make this point of view known to the public. This necessitates a need for women to set up a serious forum which will contest sexist biases in the media, as discussed in the possible strategies earlier in the study. Women's groups could also confront the issue of class which is brought out in a conflict as a defence for patriarchal biases. For example, newspaper treatment of domestic relations between men and women is discriminatory. In Uganda, talking about recognition of women's contribution may be alright to a certain extent. This alludes specifically to the meanings attached to women's work and the sexual division of labour. Any reference to changing the patriarchal ideology triggers apprehension about reversal of roles. It is clearly evident that women's liberation, for many people, implies men doing domestic work. Hence, it is more acceptable to talk about devising appropriate technology projects to reduce the work load of women than involving men.

The press promotes exploitative overwork of women by; highlighting and promoting women's work, especially participatory self-help activities outside the traditional or subsistence domestic sectors. Such formal activities are reported as women's contribution to development of the nation. On the other hand, any deviations by women to denounce or act against domestic expectations of the woman in terms of work is treated sensationally. Secondly, any mention of easing of women's work load by involving men in the work, or a mention of unfair sexual division of labour is treated as un-cultural and 'western ideas' of feminism. This is demonstrated, for example, in the stories in which the writer is resentful of women's participation in politics. The construction of sexual division of labour is from a perspective in which women's labour is contested on gender grounds and used to legitimise a patriarchal ideology. The question of labour should be brought

more in the public eye so that other versions of its usefulness are made known. The question of changing sexual division of labour in a changing environment needs to be addressed. This has implications on women's education, public life and productive and reproductive potential.

Women's work is both an ideological and political issue which is heavily contested in society and reflected in the media. For example, the domestic service issues raised by **Weekly Topic** editorial portrays elites in a clear class conflict of interest. Women politicians are said to require services of a housemaid, in order to fulfil the public obligations. Men want the same women's obligations but from their own class of women. However, in both cases, the powerless housemaids (underdogs) become a contested prey within the ideological and power struggles of the elite men and women. The assumptions made in the editorial are that payment of housemaids is a women's responsibility. As a result, attitudes promoted are that women's education and consequent participation in the public political sphere are a threat to benefits accruing from women's work. For example in the Makerere debate, educated women are said to be below the standards of a traditionally ideal candidate for marriage and are therefore disqualified. Uneducated women are idealised nostalgically as appropriate for the satisfaction of cultural values. Education as a result is a threat to cultural benefits from patriarchy. The major interest in protecting housemaids, for example, is to keep educated women at home in order to wait on men. Hence, the use of women's labour also as a form of control of both women's freedom of movement and participation in public life, and consequent privatisation of women. However, not all housemaids are abused, and certainly not by women only. Women's strategies could be aimed at presenting the version not discussed in the debate; to encourage men, since women are portrayed as defaulters, to supplement the salary paid by women to the girls so that housemaids are no longer exploited. The other alternative is to involve men in domestic work so that women are not necessarily pulled out of their public duties, by stressing the benefits for society as a whole. In changing media biases about women, one must tackle the problem of construction of such stereotyped images which are by implication negative and undermine individual dignity of women, due to the undertones of subjugation and exploitation embodied within the ideology.

The Women's position in the Ugandan media, however is not an exception from the subordinate social, economic and political position occupied by women elsewhere in the country. The bottom line reason why the treatment of women in the media is problematic is because the media practitioners lack a basic consciousness, awareness and understanding of the relevance of women's daily contribution to the development of nation. The paper has indicated the changes and forces involved in the media and how each of them have been treated by the different interests. Steps taken by **The New Vision** and **Weekly Topic** in setting up women's forum, with the assistance of women's organisations, for example are a positive step towards a willingness to change the ideology which keeps women backwards.

Men's superiority complex

Short of establishing a school for men to learn about women's rights, I think what women have done so far is an appropriate beginning for the so-called education of men.

It is now up to women to choose either a career or to stay at home married or to have both satisfactions. Thus being so, you insulted a great number of

Weekly Topic - August 24-31, 1990 Page 3

WESTERN people have a position
the other day I overheard two
men discussing a friend's death
and had been doing this
for over three

Why men prefer ayahs

1971] to exist in the kind by a female (the group of authors about why Malawian graduate leaders have not to become girls in to "Medical West", in use their words in Weekly Star, November 4, 1971)

The first must be congratulated for having received the most beautiful and to some nobility because the 15 girls at the campus to prepare for the bitter truth some of them might have to face after graduating.

I also wish to supplement their findings as to why Makereke makes the better stop: how the two cultural Michael Wends for women and why graduate women have and to them know girls.

The fact is that the students we met take no qualitative measurements of either intelligence and vigor or character and that some of the great luminaries of the subject are

These facts are not amused by the Nakawagas' attempts to come. Neither do they understand Nakawagas' adopted mentality to challenge them in their spheres of influence, imitate their attire, or the assumption that males keep the best of them close.

[illegible]

Finally, I don't see a
Nationalist center. We
have Nationalists.

Makerere's 1.5 points is fair for women

I was amused by the headline to Wale Jones' letter Weekly Topic August 24-31 1990, and his suggestion that Warner should Proper against the laxest eastern female students' Universities.

OUR PLATFORM

Men get plenty of education on the subject of women's rights through arguments, conferences and public speeches. Considering that charity begins at home, I think it is not out of tone for a man to regard it as a victory when his husband bathes the women's fair.

live fat men to reverse their superiority complex. I hold a firm belief that anything done towards earning a living should be looked upon as serious. I was therefore shocked when you referred to drama and handicraft as pastimes.

Women should
protest

[illegible]

Page 14 Weekly Topic - November 9, 1990

Page 14 Weekly Topic - November 9, 1994

Why Makerere girls out to house girls

By Michael Wes

I'VE NEVER
DREAMT THAT I'D
EVER MARRY A
MICHAEL WES

By Kirby Ruth McKay-Harmer
Linda M. Allen

Compromising Makerere standards

WHILE politicians can get away with many things, academics have no reason to be washing their hands in similar foul play. There is a respectable profession and many have suffered indignities defending the stuff as a matter of principle.

I am therefore embarrassed that Makriste has bowed down to political pressure to admit less qualified women at the expense of more qualified male candidates.

I feel sorry for our sisters who earned their degrees that hard way like everybody else and who the

**'blessing'
duates**

[illegible]

...able to fully reap

Have graduated
in 1911 from the
University of
California

Makerere's 1

for women

University students
University's edition of 1
to all-male applications
the life-style under
were raising gender
sensitivity

Faith in "predestination"
gender-sensitive women
ing at the University's
mentary, Asian Ameri
women's sense of self
what the degree of will
when more female stu
nounced in the Univer
fatherly members and
realization of the
resistance who we deny

.5 points is fair

The reports are many but end result is a relatively small number of letters students. Moreover, letters are often in Arabic and require in translation. Some - female students - give many methods have been

1. The 15 points scheme measure is a plausible move, should not be misunderstood, providing unequal or separate dards.

It should be regarded as a "retentive" and temporary measure within the wider and spirit of the Convention on "Elimination of Discrimination Against Women" to which it is signatory. Favourable measure shall

1.5 points a 'blessing' to male graduates

business and clinical concentrations that will "win 1.5 free credit" toward a girls' love number with a graduate and least some graduates will "able to help" applicants. As many as a female graduate failed 17% of graduates will be produced from these women, the previous waiting for five "of the whole" male graduates will be raised. My survey "clearer" that "females and more appropriate 15 points" of those five "graduates are very happier" possibly their love number decreased.

Women should reject Makerere's sectarian insult

By Paul Walpole Senior

It is hardly surprising that as we approach the end of the 20th Century, the World womenfolk's determination to eradicate the last vestiges of male domination has assumed the dimensions of an irresistible force. This situation is the inevitable climax of a pragmatic campaign for equality of the sexes.

pointed to such posts are not all pointed merely because they are women, but because they are suitable persons who only by the accidents of birth happen to be

11. for example, the minimum requirement is 13 points, a candidate with 12.5 points will qualify. On the other hand,

King David and his young wife

THAPS no other case of public attention as it was sensational and drawn 65-year old Omugwesi Bakwiora at a 65-year old girl in Ruwenzori district that was first reported in the East African Standard newspaper.

Editorial:
King David and his young wife

APPENDIX II

WOMEN SHOULD PROTEST MAKERERE SECTARIAN INSULT.

Extracts from the Column, 'Does it Make Sense',

1. What I find most amazing is that, with the 21st century ,..., we have people in Uganda who still nurse the misguided view that women cannot be equal to men unless accorded special favours. And the worst part of this unsavoury situation is that the adherents of this misconception have infiltrated the policy making mechanisms of the highest institutions of learning. This is clearly manifested by the announcement by Makerere University that women have been 'offered' (whatever that is supposed to mean) extra points over men in the selection of entrants to the University... The potentially counter productive move is labelled as "gender weighing scheme", not necessarily because of lack of appropriate terminology.

2. Ironically, The New Vision carried a report of the so called gender weighing scheme under the apparently complimentary headline "Makerere favours women" Journalistic etiquette apart, "Makerere insults women" would have been a better headline. Whatever the case, one may say as " What is the rationale behind the decision to award women candidates an extra 1.5 points merely because they are women?"

In my opinion, unless the minimum entrance requirements set by Makerere are a mockery, there cannot be any justification for discriminating between candidates on the basis of gender. Since candidates, both men and women sit the same examinations and the papers are marked with out applying the obnoxious gender weighing method, the sex of he candidate has no bearing on the results what so ever. Strangely, out of the blue Makerere University authorities come up with a haphazard decision to award women candidates an extra 1.5 points as if one's sex is an academic factor.

3. The Gross anomaly has severe negative aspects, but I will just mention just one or two ... Candidates who use gender weighing scheme as their "conveyor belt" will find themselves in the same class with male and female students who were admitted strictly on merit. Unless the University proposes to apply the gender weighing method even at that level, there is no guarantee that the "back door entrants" will cope with the intellectual acrobatics of those admitted through the main entrance. It is not, in my view, too far fetched to predict that the majority of the "conveyor belt entrants" will fall by the way side.

4. At the end of the day, employers who had hither to refrained from discriminating between candidates for employment on the basis of sex will develop second thoughts. They will wonder whether women weighed on different academic scales are equal to men. It will then be illogical for women to argue that although Makerere considers women to be academically "unequal" to men (which is the only logical excuse for granting the extra 1.5 points) they are in fact equal to men in all aspects that matter.

It is my contention the whoever "invented" the so called gender weighing scheme introduced a machine designed to erode the fundamental principle on which the theory of equality of sexes is based. The obnoxious part of the decision was according to The New Vision story prompted by agitation of women organisations as a means of fostering women's demands for equality with men. Certainly women have a legitimate claim for equality with men in all fields including academic pursuits. But in the case of the infamous gender weighing scheme which they initiated, they are openly admitting that at least academically women cannot be equal to men unless some mathematical manipulation is effected in their favour.

Put differently, their strategy is to run with the hare at the same time hunt with the hound. Does it make sense?

APPENDIX III

1. Graduate women will float; 11/1990	2. Why men prefer ayahs. 23/11/1990
<p>I was amused by a letter from the 'Contented' Lady.... Every sentence indicated rebellion and loss of respect for men. That is one major reason why women graduates will continue to float. Many fear marrying them because they cannot manage them at home.</p> <p>These women have been exposed to all sorts of influence which are very likely to ruin marriages. For example, the "Contented" lady was saying that vibrators are better than men. Which man can marry such a woman?</p> <p>She is already used to an artificial husband that even if she got a natural one, that marriage would not last. I agree with Mr. Lule that graduate women have lost substance and even flavour.</p> <p>In our Uganda (and African) society, for a marriage to last, a woman must obey and respect a man. Many men would consider those two valued when looking for a potential wife.</p> <p>Another reason why graduate women are feared is that they have very high expectations. There is lack of patience, considerations and maturity among the majority of them. Non graduate women are very good at these values.</p> <p>I for one was very much disgusted by the way undergraduate women behaved when I was still at Campus. I used to see the, m changing 'sugar daddies'²⁴ like clothing. How could such women talk of being safe from HIV? If she gets married, how can the husbands be sure these chains of men, do not continue enjoying her?</p> <p>(signed) Graduate Man Kampala.</p>	<p>I wish to react to the article about why Makerere graduates loose out to to house girls or "Michael Wests"²⁵</p> <p>....The trio must be congratulated for having assessed the issue frankly, and to come out broadly to advise the '1.5 girls' at campus to prepare for the bitter truth some of them might have to face after graduating.</p> <p>I also wish to supplement their findings as to why men 'stoop so low' for the succulent Michael Wests for wives; and why graduate wives lose out to their house girls.</p> <p>The fact is that the studies women take to graduate inculcates a sense of open mindedness and argumentative character and consequently your femininity which males adore in ladies evaporates.</p> <p>After the loss of feminism, one behave and acts as men to impress upon them that she is equal if not better than them. She wants to be the hen that crows when the cock does, or to over crow the cock in the home. Most men consider ladies tender and have great respect for them, unfortunately graduate ladies don't appreciate this and are often in the lead to agitate for equal rights and advise others to turn into 'Nakawangas' (hens that crow).</p> <p>Loss of femininity is repulsive to your comrade male graduates and they therefore go for the Michael Wests, or in the home to house girls to satisfy their need for true feminism.</p> <p>Husbands are not amused by the Nakawangas attempts to crow. Neither do they understand Nakawanga's adopted mentality to challenge them in their spheres of influence, imitate their attire, or the assumption that males keep the best for themselves.</p> <p>Again your kind have little respect for our culture, males rights and freedom. It is your type who insist on hanging on men wherever they go because you want to behave 'white'. "the odd-men-out" in our society in a manner comparable to a wife accompanied by the husband to the "LADIES" toilet to ensure her faithfulness.</p> <p>Finally, I don't see why the Nakawangas cannot widen the range from which to select partners by stooping low to male "Michael Wests" At least I know one of your kind who is happily married to a P.7 drop out. She never attempts to crow.</p>

²⁴ Sugar Daddy in Uganda is a commonly used term which refers to rich and elderly men and mostly married. It is often believed that they lavish material things on the girls in order to woo them into affairs.

²⁵ The term "Michael West" is taken from the Elementary English Michael West Dictionary. It is used to refer to Ordinary and Advanced level students who still have to go to the University. The term implies that they are academically immature.

APPENDIX IV

Select sensational stories about women: The <u>New Vision</u> .	
1989	1990
<u>Poison women</u> flee to Zaire/ <u>Killer women</u> flee <u>Hot water women</u> weep <u>Eloping wife</u> jailed <u>Makerere housewife</u> denies 'enguli' ²⁶ charge Woman licks blood Lover badly bitten Nalongo splints naked <u>Dog meat woman</u> held Nun weeps in dock <u>Panga woman</u> cuts relative <u>Indecent in-law</u> fined one sheep Lovers end in court for adultery Rival stoned in latrine Woman 'married' to two officers Grandma testifies in rape case	Woman who became a stone The careless old woman Body causes fight Police hold <u>rapist woman</u> <u>Professor's wife</u> on criminal charge <u>Co-wife</u> taken to court Woman breaks down in traffic court <u>Another wife</u> challenges arrest Wife assaults bar maid Woman rivals murder man Woman bites her customer Taxi man deserts <u>slim</u> ²⁷ <u>woman</u> Women held in <u>abortion drama</u> Barmaid weeps in court Lover stabbed to death How girls become pretty Woman banished <u>Bearded woman</u> netted

²⁶ Enguli is a kind of highly alcoholic rum which is locally made.

²⁷ 'Slim' is term used for AIDS.

APPENDIX V

Police hold rapist woman

By Onyango Kakoba
in Iganga

A woman alleged to have attempted to rape a man during broad day light at Kaliro town was last Sunday held at Kaliro police post for two days.

The arrest of the woman simply described as black, tall, fat and masculine caused a lot of excitement in the area as far as Iganga town, a distance of about 24 km.

Some said in Lusoga: *abayiri g'a ndhala* meaning she was starving whereas others insisted she wanted to transmit *rabukono* apparently referring to Aids. Some youth were jokingly avoiding women lest they fall rape victims.

According to the Iganga RC 5 secretary for information, Mr James Dhikusoka, the woman saw a man passing by at around 3.00 pm as she was sit-

ting at her home near Kaliro town, along Budini road.

She is said to have called the un identified man to her home. The man accordingly responded and the woman led him in to her house.

But to the man's surprise she immediately locked the door and undressed herself.

However after a short struggle the man managed to raise

Turn to Page 12

Woman held

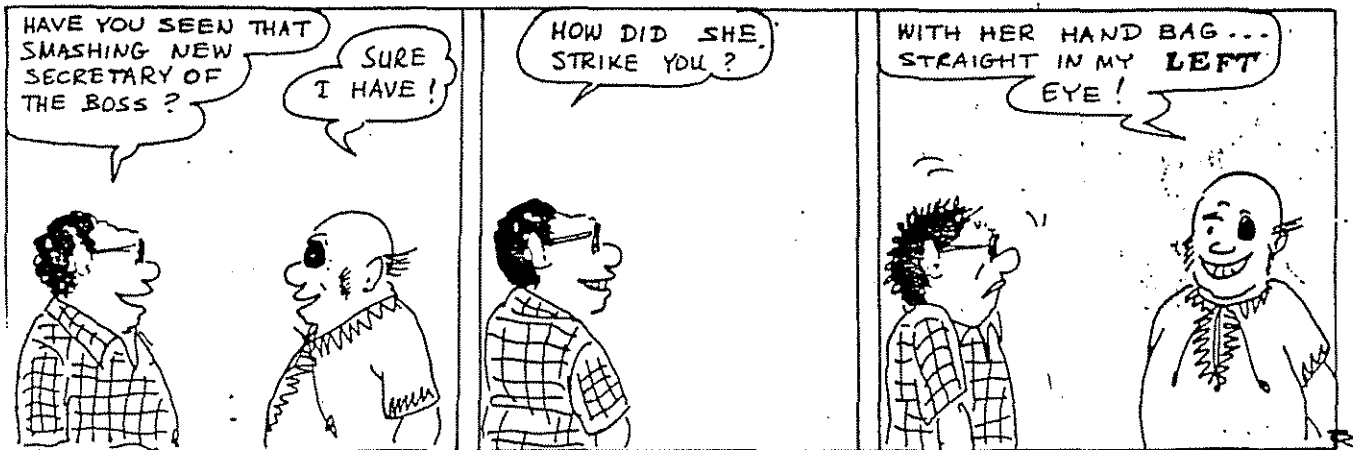
From Page One

an alarm. The town dwellers who heard the alarm immediately rushed to the scene and forced the door open.

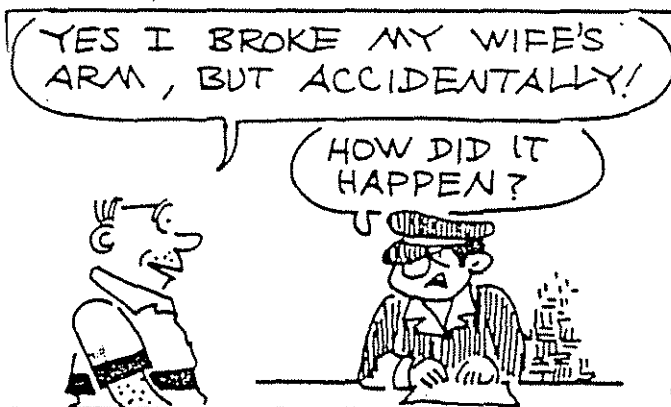
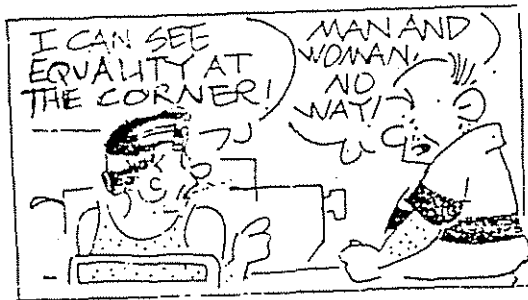
The woman was immediately arrested and handed over to the police. She has since been released and may have gone back to Kenya from where she originates.

APPENDIX VI (a)
(CARTOONS)

EKANYA



LEO KIVUMBI



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