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Brian Semujju

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# FRONTLINE FARMERS, BACKLINE SOURCES

## Women as a tertiary voice in climate change coverage

**Brian Semujju**

*Gender meaning construction and interpretation, which suggest women's inferiority to men, is deeply rooted in social-cultural signs and codes drawn from traditional contexts. In Uganda, girls start to face this reality at an early age. Among low income earning families, very few are enrolled in school, thus as they grow up they suffer from invisibility created by low education and income levels. This paper notes how such gender realities in the media have been investigated in other parts of the world and that the general thesis has been that the media have "marginalized women in the public sphere." Turning to the position of women as both sources and reporters, in Uganda this area of inquiry has been given little scholarly attention. To fill that gap, this essay draws upon feminist media theory to help contextualize findings obtained through content analysis (N = 671) data drawn from two Ugandan newspapers. Using climate change as a coverage issue, since 56 percent of women in Uganda are farmers, the results of this study show that the gender gap in Uganda is highly pronounced, with women as sources ranked third in importance after men and anonymous sources.*

KEYWORDS gender; feminism; journalistic norms

### Introduction

The purpose of theory, as the positivists would agree, is to create universal laws that can allow for generalization of conclusions to applicable situations (Pieter Fourie 2007). The question of whether or not research findings (from the West and very little from Africa) confirm that media typically sideline women in coverage is the primary focus of this paper through its examination of the Ugandan press.

Over the years, overwhelming evidence suggests that unfair media coverage of women, in all aspects of life, has become a taken-for-granted feature of media culture. For example, James Devitt (2002, 445) has noted that in campaigns for political office, the American media tends to pay more attention to personal traits of female candidates than those of males. When journalists report on male candidates, what tend to be featured are these politicians' views on public policy. It has been noted that perhaps these findings are not particularly surprising, given the fact that much of the news coverage of politics in the US is written by male reporters. As Cory Armstrong has noted, "male sources and subjects receive more mentions and are more placed prominently in the stories" (2004, 139). Female candidates in comparison "continue to face some stereotypical biases in the news

coverage" (Mary Christine Banwart, Dianne Bystrom, and Terry Robertson 2003, 658). For female sources to appear in stories, a decision has to be taken to send more female reporters to write stories (Armstrong 2004). This relationship between female reporters and the appearance of female sources or female story attributes is also highlighted by Eric Freedman and Frederick Fico (2005, 257). They argue that female reporters have a greater tendency than their male colleagues to cite female sources. Otherwise, in general, they see coverage as dominated by male sources brought in by male reporters.

Although the above relationship (between a reporter's gender and choice of source) was outside the scope of Stephanie Craft and Wayne Wanta's (2004, 124) study, they concluded that gender is a factor in shaping the news. In newspapers with a female editor, there tends to be a greater emphasis on social, human interest, positive news whilst in those newsrooms that are male dominated, reporting tends to focus more on political, public interest, negative types of news. The fact that there is little or no relationship between negative attributes and female journalists, and more negative coverage in male-written stories suggests that gender differences are nurtured in society and carried into newsrooms. This is because, in many societies, strength and aggressiveness, qualities that breed negativity, are attributed to men while women are understood as tender and soft. "Feminine traits" are more visible in newsrooms that have more female managers than those newsrooms with a greater percentage of men than women (Tracy Everbach 2006, 477).

Regarding men's accounts of what is happening in the world as "official knowledge," since they are the key newsmakers, in turn shapes public perceptions that men are more important than women (Cory Armstrong and Michelle Nelson 2005, 820). Journalists also assume that the audiences are most interested in reading about female subjects' bodies (and not their views and opinions). As the commercialization of the media around the world is becoming increasingly important to the press's economic survival, journalists must make sure that they publish what the majority of the public wants in order to increase audiences which can then be sold on to advertisers.

In order to illustrate the gender imbalances in reporting, in this paper I examine the news coverage of climate change in the Ugandan press. This is an issue that is perceived by both journalists and audiences as dangerous to the economic prosperity of the country. Before I do so, I will provide a brief literature review of pertinent feminist news and journalism studies critiques in order to establish a conceptual basis for the study reported on here.

## Literature Review

Liberal feminists assume that women and men are the same in their capacity for rationality (Lisbet Van Zoonen 1992). The most crucial ingredient for liberal feminists is that both women and men have the capacity to think. All other gender characteristics therefore, especially the physical differences, are not important. Nevertheless, studies on gender encoding in media texts and gender and media structures indicate that women are marginalized (Dennis McQuail 2006). Even in areas where women like Madam Curie (two Nobel Prizes: one in Chemistry and the other in Physics) are great achievers, like science, the media have paid greater attention to female bodies than to the scientific achievements of the women (Frederick Thomas Attenborough 2011). Historically speaking, women have been considered as less capable than men to deal with the rigours of daily journalism. This explains, feminist scholars have suggested, why women have tended to be

assigned to “softer” areas of journalism (features, for example) and, in terms of general reporting, why they have tended to have fewer by-lines than men.

The history of media use and access shows that men not only have early access to technology, but also have tended to use and appropriate it (Pradeep Krishnatray, Pushpendra Pal Singh, Srividya Raghavan, and Vinay Varma 2009, 20). Therefore, in a newsroom that has more equipment than the people who operate them, women are considered as less capable than men. Simply on the basis of being women, men tend to be of the view that they are less technologically literate than men. This points to what Scot Phillips, Laura Potter Hass, and James E. Coverdill (2012), while writing about gender and capital punishment, have called “a familiar gender script,” in which men are portrayed as “aggressive” and women as “vulnerable.”

Assuming that men have certain personal attributes that are different to those of women creates a vicious cycle of gendering in society where girls take inspiration from the women in their (mediated) surroundings (Brian Semujju 2013a). In Norway, Toril Aalberg and Jesper Stromback (2011) have demonstrated that female politicians only accounted for 33 percent of sources on the primetime evening news and 25 percent in Sweden. The rest of the percentage space is commanded by men. To explain this imbalance, journalists told Aalberg and Stromback that it occurred because “women are more reluctant than men to act as a source of news” (2011, 170).

However, there are cases where the imbalance has been upset. While analysing how the Australian media covered Cathy Freeman, a 2000 Olympic medalist, Emma Wensing and Toni Bruce (2003, 387) pointed to a rare instance when “gender lost its place as a primary framing device”. The reason the authors give is that Freeman was recognized as “a symbol of national reconciliation,” having come from the minority Aboriginal community. Another case where women received coverage that was similar in tone to that of men was documented by O. P. Fawole and B. R. Olajide (2012) while investigating coverage of gender roles in Nigerian agriculture. The two scholars reported that the total news space allocated to women on this issue was 51.3 percent to men’s 48.7 percent. There was a catch though. The study indicated that although men lagged behind in coverage, “they enjoyed more strategic placement” (p 30).

### **Traditional and Modern Gender Emphasis in Uganda**

Uganda has fifty-two constitutionally recognized tribes, all of which share a common view on the position of men and women in society. In the traditional Kiganda culture, for example, men are the dominant while the women are the dominated (William Bwewusa 2008, 8). The Kiganda culture also treasures the practice of bride price where, before marriage, a man must provide her family with a certain number of items, all of which are decided by the father of the bride (more than ten cows preferably). Studies have long found a correlation between the bride price and women’s status in marriage. “The larger the bride price, the lower the woman’s decision-making powers about crucial aspects of her life, including family and child spacing” (C. Davies 1999, 13). Such traditional gender imbalances influence how modern ideas about gender are understood, since modern Ugandans initially come from any of the fifty-two tribes. For example, although the country’s education ministry spends 68 percent of its budget on school fees, 47 percent goes to female students and the number reduces to 29 percent in rural areas (Sarah Ssewanyana and Ibrahim Kasirye 2010, 16). An assessment of gender and higher degree attainment

reveals a similar pattern. Of the sixty PhDs that the leading government university produced in 2013, eleven were females and none were represented in areas typically associated with males, such as Mathematics, Civil Engineering, Chemistry and Physics (Semujju 2013a). Such imbalances have made it easier for men to inhabit most of the country's top jobs, and thus, in turn, making them appear to be the most credible sources for news stories.

## Gender and Climate Change

A study undertaken by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) indicates that in Uganda the highest money-yielding crops, like cotton and tobacco, belong to men even when it's the women who planted them, while crops used for food at home are seen to be associated with women (FAO 2000; Amber Peterman, Agnes Quisumbing, Julia Behrman, and Ephraim Nkonya 2010, 5). During harsh climate days when farming is impossible, men have a cultural advantage over women because they can leave the garden and go to look for employment elsewhere, while women tend to stay home to look after their families (Zerisenay Habtezion 2012, 4). Despite their hard work on the farm, only 16 percent of women own the land in Uganda (Aslihan Kes, Krista Jacobs, and Sophie Namy 2011, 2). A typical rurally based Ugandan housewife would begin her day by making breakfast for the husband, after which she would go to dig in the garden, wash family clothes upon coming back, fetch firewood to cook the family meal, fetch water after that, on top of several other chores. Tap water in Uganda is only in the capital and a few towns near the capital. That means that in rural areas the water source is communal and distance depends on where a particular family's house is. It could extend as far as five kilometres or more.

## Gender and Media

It's the above gender interpretation that the Ugandan media tend to carry in their daily coverage. There is very little reporting about the lives of women and what little there is tends to be negative (Goretti Linda Nassanga 1997). Specifically in terms of radio, the gender stereotypes are perpetuated, in part, by the fact that employees who run most programmes are male (Bwewusa 2008, 5). In television, popular TV dramas often depict the "good woman" as a naïve housewife while a man typically has a job in an office and he gets everything done by the click of a finger back home. In terms of print media, the ideal front-page picture is that of a man while women appear in the inside pages (Bwewusa 2008). As Michael Wakabi suggests, "although more time has been allocated to women issues, their representation at the top of the hierarchy remains an issue" (2008, 39). Despite the fact that the constitution legally protects women's rights and the government tabled The Uganda Gender Policy in 2007, the gender imbalance between women and men remains a critical issue.

In the next section of this paper, I outline that the usage of women as sources for climate change stories is not different from the established patterns of gender news sources as some of the above literature has shown. I argue that female reporters tend to follow a global gender script in which women are marginalized as news sources. Therefore, it might be concluded that such marginalization is a global phenomenon, even when the issues such as climate change are being reported—an issue which would not appear to

have a gender bias. This point will be further explored in what follows through an engagement with feminist media theory.

### Feminist Media Theory

Using the term “feminist” means that theoretically, we acknowledge the existence of “traditional devaluation” (Leslie Steeves 1987, 96). Once we add the words “media theory,” then we are limiting ourselves to studying that devaluation with regard to media related issues. In the main, feminist media theory has followed two trends: the first one is that media often portray women as objects of sexual desire, and as housewives or mothers (Fourie 2007). Such content elevates the status of men in society at the expense of women (Gilbert Motsaathebe 2009). In terms of female sources in this case, women, as this paper shows, are given fewer voices about issues that are most closely related to their everyday (gendered) lives. Instead of being active in the discursive layers of issue politics, women are often “overpresented as bodies/images” or as forms of entertainment (Sue Thornham 2003). Where some attention has been accorded to women in news reports, “it [news coverage] is simplistic, especially in conflict situations” (Fiona Lloyd and Ross Howard 2004, 19). The real issues affecting women like “women-employment and wage discrimination, spousal abuse” (S. Craig Watkins and Rana A. Emerson 2000, 152) and several others are typically ignored or only occasionally addressed.

Apart from media content, concern has also been raised about the discrimination against women in newsroom structures. Here feminists question the predetermination of “women’s jobs” as being those of secretaries or soft news writers, compared to their male hard-news-writer colleagues. In other words, in typical newsrooms, there is “gender inequality for female media professionals” (Danica Minic 2014, 134). The “gendering of work,” where particular jobs are recognized as “men’s,” or as those that women can’t do, still exists (Teri Kwal Gamble and Michael Gamble 2003, 263). In most newsrooms, especially print media, the traditional practice, which is “masculine and hegemonic, in which men dominate the decision-making roles and female journalists remain, in most cases, en masse in lower paid, less senior roles” (Louise North 2009, 744), is still the norm.

The combination of the above two trends explains the few by-lines accorded to women under climate change coverage upon which this paper reports. The presence of very few female sources is due, in part, to the fact that most of the reporters sent to cover events are male. Consciously or unconsciously, it would appear, male reporters tend to promote men’s status in the newsrooms and in the wider society.

However, the credibility of some feminist media theories on these issues has been questioned by some recent studies. In her examination of journalists in an Australian newsroom, North (2009) reveals that some journalists think that feminists, especially those that work in newsrooms, sometimes exhibit some questionable qualities. Some interviewees suggested that feminists were “‘aggressive’, ‘strident’, ‘insecure’, ‘abrasive’, ‘not nice’, ‘demanding’, ‘over the top’, ‘full on’, ‘emotional’, ‘scary’, ‘abrupt’ and ‘self-righteous’” (North 2009), not the very qualities that an objective journalist should have. Another critique is that, generally, feminists denounce labelling or classifications where one class dominates over the other and yet feminism itself is prone to classes (Katharine Sarikakis, Ramona R. Rush, Autumn Grubb-Swetnam, and Christina Lane 2009). Some of the types identified (Sarikakis et al. 2009, 505) include: liberal feminists (advocating for granting and protecting of equal rights and opportunities for women and men), Marxist–socialist

(calling for an overhaul of capitalism and patriarchy as systems inherently exploitative of women), radical feminists (who call for women to absent themselves emotionally and sexually from men so they may realize their full and whole selves as women), amongst others. Despite these apparent anomalies within feminism, the importance of feminist media theorizing is nonetheless evident as it provides the tools needed to better understand how and why the news media have remained a stubbornly macho profession in many ways. As Angela McRobbie (2011, 104) argues, although women have assumed big political and economic offices that fetch high salaries for them, “gender hierarchies are still intact.” Regardless of certain accusations made about the shortcomings of feminist media theory to explain the persistence of gender imbalances in the news, feminist approaches continue to provide important insights into the gendered nature of the news business in the Ugandan media and elsewhere in the world. In Uganda, there are imbalances at both levels of the media gender analysis (employment and content). This is mostly caused by patriarchal traditional values which are rooted in all ways of life in Uganda.

### Methodology

Content from two daily newspapers, *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*, was analysed to examine the ways in which gender is reported (or not) in the news. The sample content was gathered from these two newspapers during 2011. The choice of the year of analysis was random as any year between 2009 and 2011 could have been chosen for currency. The coverage of climate change in that period had grown exponentially in Ugandan newspapers due to the increase in the importance accorded to the subject by the international stakeholders. Five months of 2011 were representatively chosen. These were February, April, June, August and October. Since climate change in Uganda is covered through the lens of farming, all the major farming activities happen in these months. For example, the planting season ends in February and starts in October anticipating for the November rainfall. April through to August is harvesting time with negligible planting by very few people.

Articles were analysed for size (length and width), placement (location of article), gender (for both reporter and source), and article category. By analysing for article category, I wanted to know which gender typically covers this news issue.

### Selected Newspapers’ Background

The *New Vision* was launched by the Ugandan government in 1986. By 2010, the state was left with 53 percent of shares while the remaining 47 percent belonged to the private sector, divided among workers and the general public. The government interferes with the paper’s management policies. For example, the Media Sustainability Index (2008) reports that the paper’s former Editor-in-Chief, William Pike, was fired by the government for what Uganda’s President (Yoweri Museveni) called “constant negative reporting from our own paper” (p 383). Also, before his death, Brigadier Noble Mayombo, who had served as Chief of Military Intelligence, was the paper’s Chairman of the Board of Directors. The *Daily Monitor*, on the other hand, was established by a group of male journalists in 1992. By the time the *Daily Monitor* was founded, political parties had been banned for nearly seven years. Without parties, the paper found itself playing the role of the opposition (Bernard Tabaire 2007). Between 1993 and 1997, all government offices were banned from

advertising in the *Daily Monitor*, a move that cost the paper over 70 percent of its revenue. President Museveni described the *Daily Monitor* as a paper which writes “hopelessly” and writes nothing. He also said that his government had finished fighting all the big wars (he assumed power through a guerrilla war) and was left with fighting the *Daily Monitor* (Solomon Bareebe 2011).

### *Sampling*

The sample for the newspapers was undertaken purposively in order to select newspapers that have the highest impact measured by circulation. The two newspapers chosen, *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*, circulate 32,218 and 20,673 copies, respectively, and they are the largest of the four English daily newspapers in Uganda (Grace Natabaalo 2013).

The elements of analysis included news stories, features, cartoons, and pictures, and all these were purposively selected. These were identified by reading and scanning through newspaper items looking out for stories that had the following words: farming (agriculture), climate change, wetlands, floods, and drought.

This selection was based on the UNFCCC (2007) report that identifies climate change as: (i) increases in average global temperature (global warming); (ii) changes in cloud cover and precipitation particularly over land; (iii) melting of ice caps and glaciers and reduced snow cover; and (iv) increases in ocean temperatures and ocean acidity—due to seawater absorbing heat and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The above units either related to climate change directly or they were its impacts. The hardcopy search of the above items produced 671 items divide between *New Vision* and the *Daily Monitor*.

### *Procedure*

Hard copy newspapers were selected one at a time (for example *New Vision*) as coders recorded whatever issue that had been picked in order to avoid coding it twice. The coders then ticked against items as identified in the codebook under particular codes.

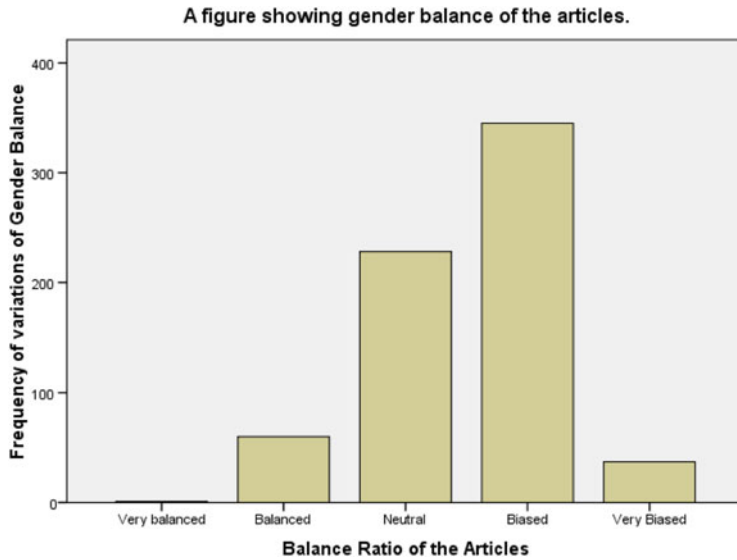
### *Inter-coder Reliability*

The inter-coder reliability obtained by two coders during a pre-analysis of two items—Gender Balance and Story Prominence—was 90 percent and 89 percent. Although the process of identifying all quotes in 671 stories to identify which gender was quoted done manually would be tiresome, a higher coder agreement was obtained.

## **Findings**

Of the 671 climate change articles, 367 (34.8 percent) were news, 159 (23.7 percent) were features, sixteen (2.4 percent) were editorials, 125 (18.7 percent) were letters-to-the-editor, and one (0.4 percent) was a cartoon. Only one article was not categorized. Of all the articles analysed, one article was found to be very well gender balanced. This means that it had an equal number of female and male reporters, and an equal number of sources divided between both sexes. Some 345 (51.4 percent) articles were found to be imbalanced while thirty-seven (5.5 percent) articles were under the category of very imbalanced (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1**

A figure showing gender balance of the articles

In terms of prominence, nineteen (2.8 percent) articles were edition leads, 273 (40.7 percent) articles were page leads while special commentaries made up sixteen (2.4 percent) articles. Articles in other categories took the rest of the 357 (53.2 percent) distribution. Gender distribution of the edition lead stories was as follows: of the nineteen total stories, ten stories had been written by men, two had been written by women and three stories by both men and women (shared by-line). The rest of the four stories had no disclosed gender in the by-line. The newspapers had used either "By Our Reporter," or "By Vision Staff"/"By Monitor Staff." The distribution of gender for the page lead stories (on all pages), on the other hand was as follows: 201 articles were written by male reporters, twenty-eight articles by female reporters, seven articles had a shared by-line while thirty-seven articles had no disclosed author gender. The total number of page lead stories was 273. In order to establish which gender did news most, articles were analysed on the basis of gender vis-à-vis type of article. Findings indicate that 263 news articles were written by men, forty-six news articles were written by women, fourteen news articles had a shared by-line, while forty-six news articles had no disclosed author gender.

The men also led in all categories under the "Length of Article" group. The group consisted of the following categories: "Less than Quarter Page," where the distribution was seventy to twelve in favour of male writers, "Quarter to Half a Page," which had a distribution of sixty male writers and thirteen female writers, "Half-Page to Less than One Page," with 144 male writers and twenty-three female writers, "Full-Page" on the other hand had 124 male writers and thirty female writers, while the last category of "Greater than One Page" had eighty-seven male reporters and five female reporters. In all categories, there were 485 by-lines from male writers and eighty-three for the female. Fifteen articles had shared by-lines while eighty-eight articles had no disclosed gender.

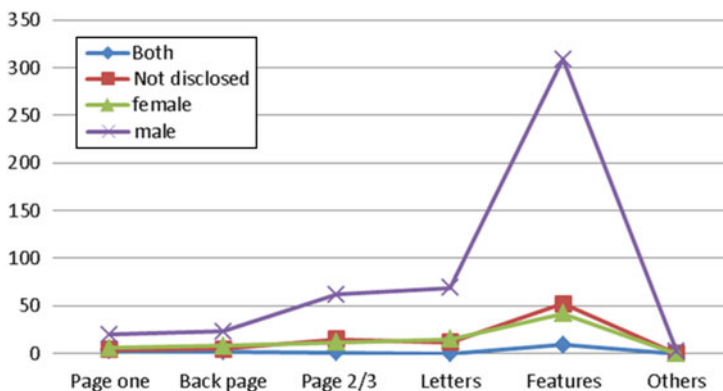
In terms of prominence, determined by placement of article, still the male reporters dominated all major positions. For example, male writers appeared on the front page

twenty out of the total thirty-three times within the period of analysis. Female reporters appeared six times, three articles had a shared by-line while four had no disclosed gender. The back page, which in both newspapers is reserved for the top sports news story of the day, had twenty-three stories written by men, eight stories written by women, five stories with undisclosed gender, and two stories with a shared by-line.

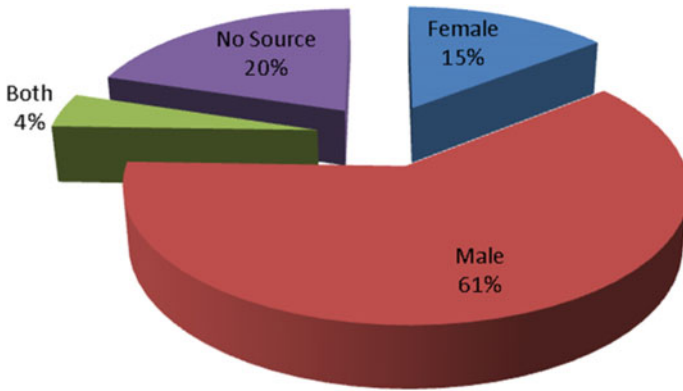
The distribution of gender on Page 2/3 and the features categories were as follows: male writers dominated the females in both categories by sixty-two to twelve in the former and 309 to forty-two in the latter. Additionally, there were more articles in the "Not Disclosed" set than there were female writers in both categories. Under the Page 2/3 category, the female writers numbered twelve while there were fifteen undisclosed articles. The "Feature Pages" category had fifty-two undisclosed writers with forty-two female writers. However, there were nine shared articles under "Features Pages," one under "Page 2/3," while there were no shared "Letters-to-the-Editor." This last category had sixty-nine male senders, while the female senders numbered only fifteen. It also had twelve senders whose gender had been undisclosed (see Figure 2).

On the other hand, the impact of men writing most of the stories in the papers was transferred to the choice of the gender of sources for stories. In total for both papers, 1,289 sources were identified. Of that total number, 186 (for both papers) were female sources, 787 were male, fifty-six sources were used concurrently (quoting both female and male sources in a given article) (see Figure 3). However, 260 objects were personified as sources. Instead of quoting the person behind the idea, the paper quoted the medium. For example, this was done by quoting journal reports, organizations like the ministries, i.e., "the Ministry of Natural Resources says . . .," This kind of quoting hid the gender of the sources.

While we may attribute gender imbalance in media text to reporter bias, patriarchal journalistic norms, commercialization and so many causes, the letter-to-the-editor findings posit a challenging situation for such a conclusion. The fact that the letter-to-the-editor section, which is a feedback loop, has more male writers than female also shows that not only are journalists gender insensitive but so too are the public. However, there is a need for a study to show whether or not the letters editors influence the selection of letters upon arrival or the audience interprets its own gender roles.



**FIGURE 2**  
Author gender and placement

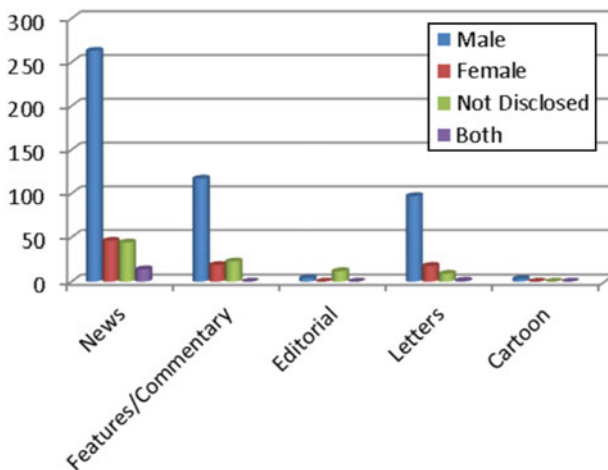


**FIGURE 3**  
Gender distribution of sources

The above data confirm some of the arguments of the feminist media theory as it pertains to understanding the Ugandan news media. Men’s presence is predominant in the two most influential newspapers in the country (see Figure 4). News media researchers’ argument that men dominate the public sphere is evidenced by the findings of the current study in which categories, including both the influential and non-influential, are commanded by men. The most influential edition lead stories and page lead stories are done mostly by men while the gap left between male dominance and the threshold on which women stand is too wide.

**Analysis**

The following section attempts to interpret the above findings and also gives some solutions to improve gender representation in media coverage. Implications of the coverage described above to Uganda are also discussed.



**FIGURE 4**  
A graph showing reporter sex and type of article

By putting men high on the agenda, newspapers reinforce the idea that men are more important than women in the climate change discussion. Apart from promoting their ideals consciously or sub-consciously, the men's aggressive nature or the women's weak nature, which determines who does more stories in the newsroom, is implied. This is because in several Ugandan newsrooms, most story ideas are awarded on the basis of "Who Wants to Take that One," during the morning general editorial meeting. This, however, does not apply to special assignments like those that involve moving with the President to local or international events.

The above data also support most of the findings on gender and newspaper coverage undertaken in other parts of the world that have concluded that media encode masculinity. The stories about climate change are covered by and through the male gaze. The gender distribution of sources as indicated above also confirms the above male domination. Generally, articles that were considered very imbalanced accounted for 37 percent while the somewhat imbalanced ones accounted for 51.4 percent.

Maxwell Boykoff and Jules Boykoff (2007, 1) have described mass media coverage "[...] as being a social relationship between scientists, policy actors and the public, that is mediated by news packages." Such news packages, as Boykoff and Boykoff have maintained, include among others, authority order, which then leads to "Authority Order-Bias" (2007, 4) in the production of news. "Authority Order-Bias," argues Bennett, is "where journalists tend to primarily, and sometimes solely, consult authority figures—government officials, business leaders and others—who reassure the public that order, safety and security will soon be restored" (cited in Boykoff and Boykoff 2007, 48–49).

In essence, the authorities consulted will, in turn, have a great impact on how news is mediated and finally understood. In Uganda, men constitute the greatest number of these authorities. They hold the most authoritative positions. For example, the President, together with his vice, the Prime Minister, and the three deputy Prime Ministers, are all male. The gender distribution of the entire cabinet is fifty-eight men and twenty-two women. As such, the reporting that uses quotes from authorities has an unbalanced number of sources. Apart from promoting a male view of the world, male sources help to perpetuate a culture in which journalists tend to seek out other men's views. In an imbalanced society such as Uganda, journalists tend to regard the minority twenty-two female ministers as "the other."

It is important to note in terms of my study that a key factor influencing my findings with regard to source gender imbalances in Uganda stems from the fact that I used a limited scope of two elitist newspapers for analysis. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) (2012), 87 percent of Ugandans live in rural areas and survive mainly on subsistence farming. Data from UBOS (2012) report that Uganda has thirty-four million people. Of that total population, the circulation of *New Vision* is 32,218 papers daily while that of the *Daily Monitor* is 20,673 (Natabaalo 2013). Therefore, to get a representative picture of gender and climate change coverage, the electronic media, and more specifically, radio, might be advantageously included as they command a bigger audience in Uganda than newspapers. Although there is no evidence that studies that include radio will report a greater involvement of female reporters and sources, such broader studies allow for the management of variables like education and economic status, which may render a newspaper study partially useful.

The male domination shown above is also partly caused by the traditional beliefs among African tribes and rural communities. Such beliefs, for example, dictate that for a

woman to say something in public would be to advertise herself for men. The belief may be less prominent in contemporary Uganda, but it has left a chilling effect on the freedom of personal expression for women. After a long history of male domination, women and men continue to be socialized to accept that this is the “normal” order of things; after all, most women in rural Africa, for example, are largely unaware of arguments around gender inequalities. In a way, women tend to be complicit by supporting their husbands perpetuating unwritten social rules that promote this gender insensitivity. In the Kiganda tribe for example, traditionally a woman was not supposed to eat chicken. Actually, it was a taboo for her to do so. However, it was not a taboo for her to prepare it, which she did for the rest of the family. While this custom makes no sense since today’s women eat chicken and it has not had any adverse effects on their health or well being (at least not because it is forbidden), future journalists, like all people, grow up in such homes. Over time, such attitudes become generationally passed on customs that become accepted by a particular tribe, so it is not surprising that such views might later be found in newsrooms.

We could also attribute the imbalance to Uganda’s journalistic norms, news values, and codes of ethics which make no provision for gender balance. Such norms are built on an economic model that aims at exciting the audience in order to get them to buy the newspaper. For instance, the media may find it interesting if a man kills his wife but not as interesting if a man and a woman die (assuming those two events happen at the same time). The data above mean that the current newsroom rules of engagement suggest that women are victims and thus in need of men’s protection. The data also imply that female journalists tend to accept such assumptions, perhaps out of cultural habit. They do this, for example, by refusing to take assignments that they have been made to believe are “tough.”

To solve the imbalance in media coverage, we need moderation between modernization practices and traditional beliefs. Harmonizing the two would help local communities to look at a woman as a human being equal to a man with an opinion of her own. Such modern information about women who are successful in certain aspects, in other parts of the world, can be transmitted. Examples might include the late Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister, and the now many female heads of state around the world, and include female politicians in Uganda with which the public may easily relate.

Additionally, gender should be put high on the media agenda. The newsroom structure should promote senior female journalists to editorial positions who in return could demand a balance in reporter gender and choice of sources. Most importantly, there is a need to redefine journalistic norms to insist that gender balance fundamentally shape organizational news values and codes of ethics. For example, it could be argued that it ought to be considered unethical to write a story that is imbalanced in gender terms (whether it has more female or male sources).

The news media should also be expected to go beyond what Boykoff and Boykoff (2007) have referred to as reporting that uses authorities only. This is because such reporting brings in bias from the sources that give the news. Having political power does not straight away translate into competence to explain scientific issues like the anthropogenic causes of climate change. Journalists should instead be objective by employing the scientific method which encourages observation of phenomena to reach objective conclusions (Brian Semujju 2013b).

## Implications for Uganda

In the main, evidence drawn from this study suggests that the coverage of climate change in Uganda's print media is gender insensitive. As reporters and sources, women do not have a say on pages one, two, or three. Because news attracts the highest attention of 55 percent, and is mostly covered by men, women are automatically left out of the prominent pages when covering climate change.

Another observation is that women rank number three on the climate change coverage ladder. As sources, men are first at 61 percent, then come the institutions like the ministries and other unnamed sources under the synonym "Anonymous Source" at 20 percent, and then women at number three with 15 percent. There are more institutions personified as sources than women sources. Additionally, the number of male sources is more than four times the number of female sources. Such a big range can't just be an omission—it is structural and systemic. There were also twice as many stories without sources as stories with female sources. This can be explained by the journalistic norm of looking for office titles as credible sources. It also implies that fewer or no women occupy those climate change "credible offices."

There is also the issue of identifying what causes Uganda's imbalanced climate change coverage. The evidence points to a mixed cause source. The media could be justly blamed for instigating the kind of coverage based on reporter/editor gender which, in turn, influences the distribution of assignments and choice of sources. The gender-imbalanced letters' section points to the public as the source of gender stereotypes but also creates a need to understand how letters' editors deal with gender in their selection. There is also a need for a broader study to establish gender and willingness of men and women to act as sources for climate change stories at different levels of expertise. Otherwise, the generalization of the causes of such imbalanced coverage can only be based on isolated individual cases.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to demonstrate that, like the rest of the world, Uganda suffers from gender imbalance in news reporting. Specifically in print media, evidence has been given to show that in newspaper reporting and sourcing priority is given to one gender. Of the 671 articles analysed for example, 51.4 percent are imbalanced while another 5.5 percent come under the "Very imbalanced" category, meaning that they only had one gender reporting and acting as sources. Even within newsroom structures, women still lag behind. For instance, while male reporters had twenty front-page by-lines, female reporters had nine. As sources, where men command a 60 percent voice representation, women have 15 percent, less than anonymous sources that had a 20 percent representation. This is the reason why the study concludes that Uganda's print media rank women in third position after men and anonymous sources. The solution given in this paper to solve the gender imbalance problem in media coverage is that the country should revise its journalistic norms through the ethical codes to include gender balance as one of the requirements for an ethical story.

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**Brian Semujju** lectures at Uganda Christian University and is currently doing a PhD at the University of Kwazulu-Natal South Africa, where he is stationed. His academic interests fall under media law, mass communication theory, and alternative media. E-mail: [briansemujju@gmail.com](mailto:briansemujju@gmail.com)

## Appendix: Code Book

### A. CODER ID: .....

**B. CLIMATE CHANGE:** Coders were asked to include any stories under climate change that had the following words: farming (agriculture), climate change, wetlands, floods, and drought. These stories could take on different subjects like: laws, regulation, environmental degradation, environment management, research, animal husbandry, weather, forestry, impact of Lake Victoria.

### C. NEWSPAPER

1. *Daily Monitor*
2. *New Vision*

### D. ISSUE DATE: .....MONTH...../ 2011

### E. STORY PROMINENCE

1. Edition Lead
2. Page Lead
3. Main Editorial
4. Special Commentary
5. Others

### F. ARTICLE CATEGORY

1. News
2. Feature/Commentary
3. Editorial
4. Cartoon
5. Letters

### G. AUTHOR GENDER

1. Male
2. Female
3. Written by both
4. Anonymous

**H. SOURCE GENDER**

1. Male
2. Female
3. Both
4. Anonymous

**I. GENDER BALANCE**

1. Very balanced (equal voices for male and female in a story)
2. Balanced (one gender is higher than another in voice by one source)
3. Neutral (no identified source)
4. Imbalanced (one gender has more talking heads in the story)
5. Very imbalanced (only one gender talks in the story)