

# **Promoters of Gender Equality? A Study of the Social Construction of Specific Male Parliamentarians as “Male Champions” in Uganda.**

by

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

The study engages with the phenomenon of male politicians speaking to gender equity issues in parliament in Uganda. What is particularly interesting about this is that these politicians are selected by women gender activists to speak on behalf of them in a parliamentary context in which men are taken more seriously than women. In the popular media and in some of the sociological literature, these men are often referred to as ‘male champions’, as if to express gratitude to and celebrate as unexpected, the significant role these men are seen to play in promoting gender equality. In contrast my research raises questions about whether gender equality is promoted through the mediation of particular men or whether their idealisation as champions actually serves to institutionalise gender inequalities. The study provides a recent historical overview of the gendering of parliament and the tabling of gender sensitive motions in Uganda. I proceed to draw on critical observations derived from a contemporary ethnographic study I conducted in the Uganda parliament and in-depth interview conversations with women gender activists in and outside parliament and with some of the men selected to table motions in support of women’s rights. The research is informed by critical masculinity studies and post structuralist and African feminisms which critique patriarchal social institutions but do so in ways that do not reproduce men and women as homogenous and binary opposites. The study engages with parliament, itself, as an important ethnographic site in which gender inequalities are produced through everyday social practices and gendered performances in which women parliamentarians are undermined and infantilised. Study findings further demonstrate how the women who participated in interviews in my study (as well as some men) critiqued discourses that celebrated men as ‘champions’ in ways that erased women’s agency and the role they play in promoting gender equality in legislative debates.

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## Key to interview transcripts

| Symbol                                 | Description   |
|--|---|
| [Comments enclosed in Square Brackets] | These are words or statements I use to describe participants' background information such as participants biographical information, visual expressions or any other information not captured in verbal interview conversations. These descriptions which provide contexts in which the interview conversations occurred, highlight innovative ways of researching notion of (gender) performativity and meanings as "context-specific". |
| [3]                                    | Numbers in the square brackets represent the amount of time (in terms of seconds) a participant takes while hesitant to respond during the interviews. For instance, such pauses are recorded as one second [1], two seconds [2], etc.  |
| ...                                    | These dots (ellipses) indicate intentional omission of words from the interview quotations in the thesis.   |
| [=]                                    | These represent overlapping speech during interview conversations, i.e. when the participant and the researcher appear talking at the same time.  |

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Women's entry into Parliament and the Constituent Assembly (CA) in Uganda.....23

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| DECLARATION .....   | I         |
| ABSTRACT .....  | II        |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....   | III       |
| KEY TO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS .....  | IV        |
| LIST OF TABLES .....  | V         |
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>  | <b>VI</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION .....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| THE FOCUS OF MY RESEARCH.....   | 1         |
| THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL CONCERNS INFLUENCING AND MOTIVATING MY RESEARCH.....  | 1         |
| <i>My experience as a male undergraduate student of Gender Studies.....</i>   | <i>1</i>  |
| <i>Developing a feminist politics which engages critically with patriarchy.....</i>   | <i>3</i>  |
| <i>Working with men to promote gender equality in a patriarchal parliament.....</i>   | <i>4</i>  |
| A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL DISCOURSES ON MALE PROMOTERS OF GENDER EQUALITY, AND MALES AS ‘CHAMPIONS’ .....                                | 5         |
| THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES THAT CRITIQUE LINGUISTIC CATEGORIES AND THEIR CONSTRUCTION OF GENDERED SUBJECTIVITIES .....                     | 8         |
| <i>Critical Masculinity Studies.....</i>  | <i>8</i>  |
| <i>Post-structuralist Versions of Feminism.....</i>   | <i>9</i>  |
| <i>African Feminism(s).....</i>   | <i>9</i>  |
| <i>Discourse Theory, Narrative Analysis and the ‘Turn to Language’ .....</i>  | <i>10</i> |
| RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....  | 11        |
| SITUATING QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS AS RESEARCH CONTEXTS .....                                    | 12        |
| OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS IN THE STUDY .....  | 12        |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: THE GENDERING OF PARLIAMENT IN UGANDA AND THE<br/>TABLING OF GENDER SENSITIVE MOTIONS: A RECENT HISTORICAL<br/>OVERVIEW .....</b>         | <b>18</b> |
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 18        |
| TRACING THE ‘GENDER’ QUESTION IN PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS .....   | 19        |
| WOMEN’S ENTRY INTO NATIONAL POLITICS.....   | 22        |
| <i>Affirmative Action and the increase in the number of women legislators.....</i>  | <i>24</i> |
| <i>From numbers of women to ‘women’s interests’ .....</i>   | <i>27</i> |
| <i>From inclusion to evaluation: Assessing women political entrants and the reproduction of gender hierarchies .....</i>                                  | <i>28</i> |
| <i>Men who critique gender inequalities in legislative policy reforms on behalf of women: A brief history of this strategy in and outside Uganda.....</i> | <i>33</i> |
| <i>Male promoters of gender equality in policy reform in African countries.....</i>   | <i>38</i> |
| <i>Legislation on prevention of gender-based violence in Rwanda and Kenya.....</i>  | <i>38</i> |
| <i>The ANC Women’s League selection of a few men for the women’s policy conference .....</i>  | <i>40</i> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| SUMMARY .....  | 43        |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE: REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....</b>   | <b>45</b> |
| INTRODUCTION .....   | 45        |
| <i>Reflections on how my Research Assistant and I engaged with the Research Process.....</i>                                   | 47        |
| <i>Working with a female research assistant and her contribution to the research process....</i>                               | 47        |
| <i>Putting myself in the picture .....</i>   | 49        |
| <i>How I related to participants in positions of power (“studying up”) .....</i>   | 51        |
| <i>Theoretical assumptions informing this methodology.....</i>   | 55        |
| SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS .....  | 57        |
| <i>Sampling Strategies .....</i>   | 58        |
| HOW I CONDUCTED MY RESEARCH AND THE LESSONS I LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS.....  | 60        |
| <i>Negotiating access to Parliament and observation of parliamentary debate sessions .....</i>                                 | 61        |
| <i>Observing strategies through which men dominate debates .....</i>   | 62        |
| <i>Observing emotional expressions often omitted in the Hansard .....</i>  | 63        |
| <i>‘Policing’ women’s conduct in parliament.....</i>   | 64        |
| <i>Lessons learned from observation of parliamentary debates.....</i>  | 65        |
| <i>Conducting interviews with ‘powerful’ respondents .....</i>   | 66        |
| <i>Negotiating access to interview participants.....</i>   | 67        |
| <i>Conducting an interview at the residence of a minister and its implications for the participant’s right to privacy.....</i> | 70        |
| <i>Semi-structured interviews and lessons for qualitative interviewing .....</i>   | 71        |
| <i>How I used my research diary .....</i>  | 73        |
| <i>Transcribing the tape-recorded interview conversations.....</i>   | 74        |
| <i>Coding and analysis of data .....</i>   | 75        |
| REFLECTIONS ON ETHICAL ISSUES .....  | 75        |
| <i>Ethical dilemmas in maintaining anonymity and confidentiality .....</i>   | 77        |
| <i>Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality in more specific studies .....</i>  | 78        |
| <i>Summary .....</i>   | 79        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR: GENDERED PERFORMANCES AND ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS IN PARLIAMENT.....</b>                                    | <b>82</b> |
| INTRODUCTION .....   | 82        |
| GENDER POWER DYNAMICS IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES .....   | 84        |
| <i>Female MPs and the ‘maiden speech’ in parliament .....</i>  | 85        |
| <i>The gendering of maiden speech.....</i>   | 88        |
| <i>Ambivalent attitude towards female MPs’ oratory skills.....</i>   | 89        |
| <i>Women’s resistance to men’s bullying in Parliament.....</i>   | 91        |
| CONSTRUCTING WOMEN AS OTHER.....   | 92        |
| <i>Otherring of women in parliamentary debates .....</i>   | 93        |
| <i>Parliament’s response to the Zebra Crossing submission.....</i>   | 94        |
| <i>How gendering of parliament compares with sociological ways of doing gender in other institutional settings.....</i>        | 95        |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <i>How gender performances in Uganda Parliament reflect continuities in colonial patriarchal Oppression</i> ..... | 96 |
| <i>Summary</i> .....  | 99 |

## **CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN’S ACCOUNTS OF RECRUITING MEN AS PROMOTERS OF GENDER SENSITIVE LEGISLATION..... 102**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| INTRODUCTION .....   | 102 |
| FEMALE PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES WHEN I INTRODUCED THE CATEGORY ‘MALE CHAMPION’                                    | 103 |
| <i>From discourses of ‘male champions’ to women’s agency: Re-centering women as subjects</i> .....               | 104 |
| <i>Strategic imperatives of involving male parliamentarians in advocating for gender sensitive motions</i> ..... | 107 |
| <i>Tapping into men’s numerical advantage in parliament</i> .....  | 111 |
| <i>Tapping into men in strategic positions of power</i> .....  | 113 |
| <i>Men as intelligible speakers on issues of sexuality</i> .....   | 115 |
| <i>Engaging women and men as gendered subjects</i> .....   | 118 |
| THE SELECTION OF MALE PROMOTERS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN’S AGENCY .....                 | 120 |
| <i>Surveillance, Identification and Training men as promoters of gender equality</i> .....                       | 120 |
| <i>Training and learning from male trainees</i> .....  | 123 |
| <i>Women’s agency</i> .....  | 123 |
| <i>What we can learn from the female responses on the role of male promoters of gender equality</i> .....        | 124 |
| <i>Summary</i> .....   | 125 |

## **CHAPTER SIX: HOW DO MALE PARLIAMENTARIANS ‘SELECTED’ TO PRESENT ‘GENDER SENSITIVE’ MOTIONS ON BEHALF OF WOMEN IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, THEIR INTERESTS AND MOTIVATIONS?..... 129**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 129 |
| HOW I INTRODUCED THE IDEA OF ‘MALE CHAMPIONS’ AND MEN’S RESPONSES TO THIS .....   | 131 |
| <i>How men sponsored ‘gender sensitive’ motions in parliament and the implications of their involvement for the understanding of ‘gender’</i> ..... | 131 |
| Idealisation of ‘male champions’ .....  | 133 |
| Using idealised ‘male champions’ to bridge gender polarities .....  | 135 |
| <i>Men’s ‘longstanding’ critique of gender inequality</i> .....   | 136 |
| <i>“For me, I was doing my work”: Fred’s reluctance to identify as a ‘male champion’ of gender equality</i> .....                                   | 140 |
| Was Fred’s reluctance also about power relations between him and the women gender activists?.....   | 143 |
| <i>How the male interviewees’ responses on ‘male champions’ compare</i> .....   | 145 |
| Sexism: An issue that also concerns men .....   | 146 |
| <i>What we learn from men and women’s identifications in relation to the category ‘male champions’</i> .....  | 148 |
| Conceptualising gender power relationships .....  | 152 |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <i>Men's anxieties about being instrumentalised by women</i> .....  | 153        |
| <i>Summary</i> .....  | 155        |
| <b>CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMINISM AND GENDER EQUALITY ACTIVISM.....</b>  | <b>157</b> |
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 157        |
| UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES IN THE STUDY .....   | 157        |
| <i>Elite politicians in parliament who behaved like 'children'</i> .....  | 157        |
| <i>Critique of the 'male champions' of gender equality discourse</i> .....  | 158        |
| <i>Women's critique of the discourse on 'male champions'</i> .....  | 159        |
| <i>The 'Mr Muscle Ad': an example of a 'male champion' in action?</i> .....   | 160        |
| WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES IN THE STUDY .....  | 161        |
| <i>Deconstruction of taken-for-granted patriarchal power</i> .....  | 161        |
| <i>Theorizing men and masculinities in gender equality advocacy</i> .....   | 162        |
| DEVELOPING 'INNOVATIVE' QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHING GENDER POWER RELATIONS ..... | 163        |
| <i>Interviews as social encounters</i> .....  | 163        |
| <i>Doing an ethnography of Parliament</i> .....   | 164        |
| How I did critical observation and its implications for the analytic focus .....                                    | 165        |
| <i>Implications of my research for promoting gender equality in Parliament</i> .....                                | 166        |
| TOWARDS A NEW WAVE OF AFRICAN FEMINISM .....  | 168        |
| SUMMARY.....  | 171        |
| LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....   | 172        |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....  | 174        |
| <b>APPENDICES:.....</b>   | <b>188</b> |
| APPENDIX 1: SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION CHECKLIST.....  | 188        |
| APPENDIX 2: PROFILE OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS .....   | 190        |
| APPENDIX 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....  | 191        |
| APPENDIX 4: PERMISSION LETTER TO RESEARCH IN THE UGANDA PARLIAMENT .....  | 193        |
| APPENDIX 5: STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (REC) APPROVAL NOTICE .....                           | 194        |
| APPENDIX 6: A SAMPLE OF A RESEARCH CARD .....   | 196        |

## **Chapter one: Introduction and motivation**

### **The focus of my research**

Drawing on men to mobilise support for legislation that seeks to challenge gender inequalities is gaining prominence in Uganda and beyond (Tamale, 1999; Powley & Pearson, 2007; Carlson & Randell, 2013; Palmieri, 2013; Wang, 2013; Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015). This study engages with this phenomenon, and explores how and why male parliamentarians are ‘selected’ to speak to gender equity issues and table motions that critique forms of gender inequality, as well as the construction of such men in the popular media and in some of the sociological literature as ‘champions’ of gender equality (Tamale, 1999; UWOPA, 2012, 2016; UWONET, 2013; Wang, 2013; Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015).

The study provides a recent historical overview of the gendering of parliament and the tabling of gender sensitive motions in Uganda. It engages with two pieces of legislation – the Domestic Violence Act of 2010 and prohibition of FGM Act of 2010 – that were passed into law with the apparent ‘assistance’ of some male legislators as crucial mobilisers of the Bills. The focus is not on the content of these Bills but rather the actors and the process through which they were promoted. I proceed to draw on critical observations derived from a contemporary ethnographic study I conducted in the Uganda parliament and in-depth interview conversations with women gender activists in and outside parliament and with some of the men selected to table motions in support of women’s rights. The study engages with parliament, itself, as an important ethnographic site in which gender inequalities are produced through everyday social practices and gendered performances.

### **Theoretical and political concerns influencing and motivating my research**

#### **My experience as a male undergraduate student of Gender Studies**

My interest in male actors in gender debates in parliament is motivated, in part, by my past experience as a male undergraduate student taking a course on Gender and Development at

Makerere University, Uganda. A critical question that I and indeed other male Gender students were constantly asked was – “how, for God’s sake, do you ‘do Gender’ [take gender studies], when you are a man?” We were often ridiculed by other students who sometimes inferred that our desire to do gender studies was influenced by sexual motivations ‘to do women’. In my local Bantu speaking language – *Luganda* “doing women” is loosely translated as “*Nkola Bakazi*” equivalent to, “having sex with women” or “fucking women”. Similar discomfort about my gender studies course was expressed by an old man in our village, approximately 280 kilometers from the city. While I was on holiday, he asked me what I was studying at the university. I proudly shared that I had been offered a course on Gender Studies and that I was being sponsored by the government of Uganda. He later told me how disappointed he was, that I could “waste” the opportunity of attending a university in the city, only to spend taxpayers’ money on studying women.

While these are two separate incidents located in different times and social spaces, the questions raised in both are posed in a way that questioned my masculinity as if gender was synonymous with femininity, and that, as a man, learning gender was violating what it means to be a man. These incidents highlight common assumptions that men are universal subjects and women the gendered other (Beauvoir, 1953). In her work “The second sex”, Simone de Beauvoir points out that “humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; ... she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (de Beauvoir, 1953: 15-16).

To deconstruct essentialist notions about gender, I draw on theories of gender performativity by Erving Goffman (1959) and Judith Butler (1988, 1990) and show how gender is “performed relationally through everyday forms of social interaction” between and among men and women parliamentarians in Uganda.

## **Developing a feminist politics which engages critically with patriarchy**

What political implications follow from reflecting on gender as a relational construction? This is a key question which frames my research. In addressing it, I draw on versions of feminism which critique patriarchal social institutions but do so in ways that do not reproduce men and women as binary opposites, as perpetrators and victims in relation to patriarchal power but rather, as bell hooks (2004: xvii) puts it, about the “need to live in a world where women and men can belong together”.

In this chapter and those that follow, I show how the parliament of Uganda, which is the centre of my investigation, is characterised as historically patriarchal (Tamale, 1999; Ahikire, 2007) where male legislators enjoy power and privilege at the expense of women. I reflect on how men dominate parliamentary debate proceedings and often infantilize women parliamentarians. However, I also show that women are not mere pawns of patriarchy but negotiate power in this androcentric space in ways which enable motions that critique gender inequalities to be presented, debated and passed into law.

I seek to engage critically with patriarchy as a social system in which gender power relationships operate in complex ways beyond men as dominant and women as their subordinates. I draw on feminist scholars such as Cornwall and Rivas (2015), Clowes (2013) and Connell (1995, 2005) to show that, when gender relations are framed in terms of oppositional power relationships between men-in-general and women-in-general, this limits the analytical focus on patriarchal oppression of women and men as well.

Through her concept of hegemonic masculinity, Raewyn Connell shows how, in patriarchal societies, specific versions of masculinity become dominant or hegemonic and are asserted not only through subordination of girls and women but also the marginalization of some boys and men who are seen as not measuring up to the standards of hegemonic forms of masculinity and becoming feminized. Influenced by Connell, writers in critical masculinity studies such as Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005), Pattman (2007), Clowes (2013) and Ratele (2016) have

pointed to the vulnerabilities of men as well as women in patriarchal societies. For example, in her article on *Masculinities as Vulnerability*, Lindsay Clowes (2013: 13) points out how men struggle to live up to “normative expectations of patriarchal masculinity” and how this aggravates forms of men’s violence against themselves and others. Yet, Clowes adds that, these ubiquitous forms of men’s violence against themselves are hardly recognized, acknowledged and most importantly rarely addressed.

### ***Working with men to promote gender equality in a patriarchal parliament***

In the previous section, I drew attention to the agency of women parliamentarians negotiating spaces in a patriarchal context in which motions critical of gender inequalities could be tabled. Significantly, motions such as the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation and Domestic Violence, which this study explores, were tabled by men. As I elaborate, this can be read as undermining women and also reproducing gender inequalities. I ask: how can men promote gender equality in parliament without institutionalising patriarchal assumptions of men as leaders who speak on behalf of women?

This concern springs from wariness on whether drawing on men in positions of privilege and power to champion gender change ultimately strengthens or dismantles the gender status quo (de Vries, 2015) in a historically male dominated parliament. Several questions arise from the ways in which males are constructed in gender discourses, especially in the parliamentary setting considered to be patriarchal. How do males constituted as supporters of gender equality relate to female legislators and to other male colleagues? How are some male parliamentarians selected to speak to motions relating to gender equality in parliamentary debates? Why are such men sometimes referred to as ‘champions’ and what meanings do such labels carry? What assumptions about gender and power constitute the construction of men as ‘champions’? These are some of the critical questions which motivated my study and with which I engage.

By engaging with the question of men in gender equality activism in parliament, this study seeks to focus on two different but equally problematic notions. These are, the *practice* of drawing on

men to speak to issues ostensibly aimed at promoting gender equality on behalf of women and *labeling* some of the men who support gender issues as ‘champions’ – a term that is imbued with power especially in the ways it is invoked as a celebration of men’s unexpected role of challenging gender inequalities. As I discovered in interviews with female and male parliamentarians in Uganda (see chapters 5 and 6), males as promoters of gender equality and males as ‘champions’ are not necessarily synonymous even if the two are often tied up together in popular global discourses on gender equality and women’s empowerment. In the section that follows, I briefly examine how notions of men as representatives of women’s voices and as champions of gender equality emerge on the global scene. In particular, I look at how these discourses emerge and are invoked in Uganda’s legislative processes and their likely political effects and implications.

### **A brief history of the emergence of global discourses on male promoters of gender equality, and males as ‘champions’**

Globally, issues of men and masculinities have captured much space on the ‘gender agenda’, including in recent developmental discourses (Palmieri, 2013). There is an emerging trend in the development industry where United Nations (UN) agencies, bilateral donors and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) insist that gender equality programmes and initiatives should involve the participation of men (Meer, 2011; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). This is partly motivated by the need to redress the imbalance evident in much earlier work on gender where researchers felt that the experiences of women, lesbians and gay men needed to be highlighted (Speer, 2005). As Crawford and Pini (2010) have noted, one of the unexpected effects was the reproduction of the invisibility of masculinity or masculinities, and how these operated as sources of power and identification in patriarchal societies, leaving men and masculinities ‘unnamed and unexamined’.

Involving men in gender equality campaigns is justified by the persistent nature of gender inequalities, the power that men hold and the fact that men too are gendered (Connell, 2007; Flood, 2007; Hearn, 2007). As principal holders of power in modern gender orders, men are seen

as ‘gatekeepers’ for reform (Connell, 2007). Yet, these discourses are not devoid of backlashes that threaten to undercut the very idea of gender equality they set out to promote, whether it is about taking men as spokespeople of women, inattention to men’s gender interests or about celebrating male supporters of gender equality as ‘champions’.

Fora in which men have been drawn on to support gender equality initiatives include the historic International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 that was the first to call for male involvement in reproductive health. Since then, calls to involve men in promoting gender equality have been issued by the Rio MenEngage Declaration<sup>1</sup> and the Male Champions of Change (MCC)<sup>2</sup> convened by Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission (2011). More recently, Emma Watson called for men to be involved in supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment in her speech at the UN meeting in 2014 that launched the HeforShe campaign<sup>3</sup>. An actress in the famous Harry Potter

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<sup>1</sup> This global symposium on “Engaging Men and Boys on Achieving Gender Equality” was convened from March 29<sup>th</sup> to April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 in Brazil’s Rio de Janeiro. In its introduction, the declaration shows how this event was attended by women and men from eighty countries with diverse backgrounds yet working together for a common cause – “social and gender justice”. This group of gender activists defined themselves as “active [members of] community organizations, faith-based and educational institutions; ... representatives of governments, NGOs and the United Nations”. The meeting which culminated into a declaration to step up men’s involvement in pursuit of gender equality decried pervasive women and vulnerability to violence at the hands of men but also highlighted ways in which men are socialised in self-destructive behaviours and practices. Importantly the declaration underscored social differences amongst men “and the potential of men’s and boys’ capacity to change, to care, to cherish, to love passionately, and to work for social and gender justice” (<http://menengage.org/rio-declaration/> accessed on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Male Champions of Change (MCC) is a collaborative initiative of corporate and institutional leaders convened by Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission. Male champions of change that include CEOs and regional Managing Directors of companies in Australia, sign a pact that commits them to actively advance equality across their businesses and to act as gender advocates for the business sector. See also <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/male-champions-change> (accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> HeForShe is a global campaign initiated by the United Nations to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014, “the the campaign encourages the men and boys to speak out and take action against inequalities faced by women and girls”. See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/20-september-heforshe-press-release> Accessed on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2018.

movies and a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, Watson argued that when women and girls are liberated from the shackles of gender oppression (with the assistance of men), men will also be free. I critically engage with this global rhetoric on gender equality in more detail – especially on how it speaks to Ugandan and regional practices of drawing on men to support gender equity initiatives – in chapter 2. This global narrative has inspired a diversity of discourses on men as critical actors in gender equality (Morrell, 2002; Meer, 2011; Tamale, 2014). Some of these discourses are reflected in gender activism and legislative policy reforms across African countries, mainly in the area of gender-based violence (GBV). In the chapter that follows, I briefly elaborate on some of the regional initiatives on male promotion of gender equality and how these speak to the Ugandan case in which some male legislators are selected to speak to gender motions in parliament on behalf of women.

Underlying these global campaigns to involve men in gender equality initiatives, are the consequent constructions of men in heroic ways as benevolent to women to the extent, in some cases, of expecting them to empower women out of gender inequalities. It is also notable that, in some cases, narratives on male involvement tend to focus on men as mere instruments or as a convenient means of delivering on global development goals rather than as being individually motivated by feminist goals of critiquing gender inequalities. For instance, Jenna Price (2014), a columnist with the Canberra Times<sup>4</sup> and an academic at the University of Technology, Sydney and Karen Straughan (2017)<sup>5</sup> decry the backlashes that have hit global initiatives on male involvement in gender equality. In particular, Price points out how the once popular HeforShe campaign and the Male champions of change – which invested in special names and special recognition of men for the work they should be doing – were strangely absent when it came to

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<sup>4</sup> See Jean Price's critical column on "Where are those proud male 'champions of change' when you need them?" <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/where-are-those-proud-male-champions-of-change-when-you-need-them-20141124-11t3zs.html> (accessed on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

<sup>5</sup> "Karen Straughan is owner of the YouTube channel GirlWritesWhat, co-founder of Honey Badger Radio, gender counter-theorist, and a men's rights advocate". <http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/heforshe-emma-watson-s-empty-promise-that-when-womens-problems-are-solved-men-will-be-free-to-be-human-too-3288855-Mar2017/> (accessed on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

gender equality. Jennifer Anne de Vries (2015: 22), who writes about male champions of gender equality in Australia, is also critical of the business-centered approach where male executive leaders of business enterprises are mobilised not only to support gender equality in workplaces but are also celebrated in unusual ways and challenged to “champion gender change in the same way as any other business issue”. As de Vries points out, the problem with this approach is its blindness to the analysis of gender and power relationships. These critical reflections highlight tensions between the motives of global development and feminist goals of attaining equality and social transformation.

Cornwall (2014), traces “MenEngage” – a global alliance working with men and boys for gender equality – as an off-shoot of the “invest in women and girls” campaign in which multinational corporations and philanthro-capitalists are enthralled by the business prospects that women and girls offer for investment and the obstacles that men and boys present. Therefore, while global calls to engage men in promoting gender equality seem to have the well-intended motive of increasing men’s participation in gender equality campaigns, they reconstitute men in ideal terms as liberators of women without whom gender equality cannot be achieved. Furthermore, these gender discourses covertly constitute oppression as a women’s problem and men as privileged perpetrators of this oppression which in effect, dismisses or marginalises the complex dynamics that inform the construction of masculinities (and femininities) (Clowes, 2013).

## **Theoretical and methodological approaches that critique linguistic categories and their construction of gendered subjectivities**

### **Critical Masculinity Studies**

Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS) influence my interest in developing a feminist critique of patriarchy which problematises ‘men’ and ‘women’ as binary opposites. In addition to this theoretical approach, I draw on post-structural versions of feminism, discourse theory and narrative analysis to engage critically with the complex ways in which gender and other

relational power dynamics are produced, performed and represented in the social interactions I observed in parliament and in the individual interviews I conducted with women and men.

### **Post-structuralist Versions of Feminism**

My research is strongly influenced by post-structuralist versions of feminism which highlight and deconstruct taken-for-granted gender categories and raise questions about how we produce ourselves in particular societies and social contexts as if gender (and sexuality) were natural features of ourselves. This approach opens up spaces for thinking about ‘gender’, ‘women’, ‘men’ and ‘male champions’ not as fixed and homogeneous categories rooted in nature or essential timeless values, but as fluid, discursive, relational and intersecting categories which are invoked in ways that produce, reproduce, normalize and entrench particular kinds of subjectivities and power relationships.

In particular, I draw on Butler (1988, 1990) who argues that “[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (1990: 179). Accordingly, gender is constituted continuously through performative displays of gendered characteristics (Speer, 2005). Drawing on theories of gender performativity, I show how gender is performed through everyday forms of social interaction between and among men and women parliamentarians in Uganda.

### **African Feminism(s)**

This study also draws heavily on studies by African feminist scholars and activists especially those who are engaged in researching and theorising experiences of women in access to and participation in legislative politics on the African continent. See for example Ahikire (2014), Hassim (2014), Goetz (2002), Kolawole (2002), Tamale (1999, 2006), and Nnaemeka (2004) among many others. This scholarship highlights the significance of paying attention to historical and cultural contexts that inform the everyday life experiences of women on the African

continent. In chapters 4 and 5, for instance, I show how women engage in the game of strategic negotiation of patriarchal oppression in parliamentary debates and how this resonates with Obioma Nnaemeka's (2004) concept of nego-feminism<sup>6</sup> - a strand of African feminism; while the concluding chapter highlights ways in which this study bears implications for re-thinking African feminist thought.

### **Discourse Theory, Narrative Analysis and the 'Turn to Language'**

The analytic approach foregrounds the study's interest in 'language' not as "a neutral means of exposure or a passive vehicle through which we report on events and experiences but rather as central to the construction and reproduction of gendered selves, and social structures and relations" (Speer, 2005; 7).<sup>7</sup> The idea that language is productive rather than descriptive, a resource or medium through which people construct their social worlds and their identifications and relations with others, is central to my project and informs this analytic focus. Thus, rather than taking the category 'male champions' for granted, as if it speaks for itself and reflects some essentialist attribute of masculinity, I focus on 'champions' as a discourse and ask: which institutionalized gendered relations and assumptions make this category possible? How is this category invoked and produced relationally through parliamentary debates and practices; and how does it impact on gender dynamics and power relations?

I draw on feminist appropriations of discourse theory (Butler, 1990; Walkerdine, 1990; Hollway & Jefferson, 2009) which focus on language and how certain social expectations are inscribed in discourses that produce gendered subject positions imbued with power. These approaches also

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<sup>6</sup> I engage with Obioma Nnaemeka's notion of nego-feminism later in Chapter 6 (see P 148).

<sup>7</sup> Language in this case is "used to mean not simply words or even a vocabulary and set of grammatical rules but, rather, a meaning constituting system...through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices organized and by which, accordingly, people represent and understand their world, including who they are and how they relate to others" (Scott, 1988: 34)

provide cues on how socially inscribed expectations and practices constrain and/or enable social actions. I also draw on forms of narrative analysis that pay attention to the ways people use stories to organize, interpret, report and evaluate past experience (Cortazzi, 2001: 384). In particular, I focus on the interviewees' accounts as social spaces (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002) through which they "perform different versions of masculinities and femininities" as they speak about the role of men in promoting gender equality in parliament. This approach to narratives places the emphasis on the participants as active narrators and their narrated experiences as history-in-the-making given that they unfold in relation to what has taken place in the past and what is currently being made of the past (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 33).

In chapters 4, 5 and 6, for instance, I indicate how this approach to narrative analysis departs from social realist approaches which give prominence to neutrality and objectivity (Mishler, 1986) or regard participants as mere reporters of what lies in a vessel of answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Instead, I focus on people's investment in choosing to organize their actions in particular ways (Riessman, 1993) and explore possibilities of multiple versions of truths (Musila, 2015) in participants' narrated experiences.

At the core of these theoretical resources is the focus on how gender identities are socially constructed. They offer us a blended interpretive framework through which we come to understand human agency – why people behave the way they do, such as, women's selection of men to speak to issues of gender on their behalf. They offer avenues through which we can study complex, discursive constructions, performances and re-enactment of gender and other forms of identities.

## **Research Questions**

1. How is 'gender' understood in parliamentary debates and discourses in Uganda, and what kinds of gendered subject positions are produced through these?
2. What explains the emergence of men who speak to gender issues on behalf of women in the Ugandan parliament?

3. What concerns do female and male gender activists raise about the category ‘male champions’ of gender equality as deployed in Parliament?
4. Are gender inequalities challenged or institutionalized through the use of male promoters of gender equality in the Ugandan parliament?

### **Situating qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations of parliamentary proceedings as research contexts**

In this study, I focus on research as an active ‘process’ that involves interactions between the researchers and research participants rather than as a means of simply extracting information from participants. Guided by recent feminist scholarship, I draw on methodological resources that seek to engage research participants as knowledge producers and reflect on observation of live parliamentary debates and interviews as “social encounters” in which participants – including the researcher – engage with one another, establish relationships and perform in particular ways (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; DeVault & Gross, 2012; Pattman, 2013). I elaborate more on this methodological approach in chapter 3.

### **Outline of chapters in the study**

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters which address different themes that elaborate on the ways male legislators identified as promoters of gender equality are ‘selected’ and how they relate to other men and women parliamentarians in parliamentary debates on gender issues.

#### ***Chapter 2: The gendering of parliament in Uganda and the tabling of gender sensitive motions: a recent historical overview***

Chapter 2 adopts a historical approach and critically analyses the ways in which the concept of gender is understood and invoked within parliamentary discourses by feminist scholars, activists and parliamentarians. I then assess the political implications these different approaches have for women and men as actors in gender equality campaigns. One of the strategic interventions in the question of gender equality in parliament is women legislators identifying men to speak to

gender issues on their behalf. I ask: what do we know about this strategy? Where else has it been invoked, how, and why and with what implications? To respond to these questions, I engage with work by feminist political scientists and gender activists on Ugandan and other regional and international legislative processes.

I carefully draw on African feminist scholars such as Tamale, Goetz, Ahikire, and Hassim, among others and map their conversations on women's access and participation in a male dominated parliament, particularly how they engage in promoting women's rights policy reforms in Uganda. I then trace emerging trends in which women gender activists, both within and outside parliament, began to draw on male support to promote certain motions that seek to critique gender inequalities. I argue that while the idea of women identifying and working with men to speak to gender issues on women's behalf was noted from the early 1990s in Uganda's parliament to date (Tamale, 1999; Wang, 2013; Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015), these studies hardly engage in critical ways with the discourse of male champions of gender equality. They neither question the assumptions on which the category is constituted nor assess how this category of men is lived, practiced, and constructed relationally in ways which may challenge and/or subvert gendered identifications and power relations. I address these gaps in the chapters that follow.

### **Chapter 3: *Reflections on the research process***

This chapter details the research process with an emphasis on participant-centered approaches to research, namely, qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation of parliamentary debate sessions.

I engage with interviews (and the relational dynamics thereof) as social encounters through which the data in this study was co-produced through interactions between myself (the researcher), my Research Assistant and the research participants. Drawing on recent feminist scholarship and forms of narrative analysis, the chapter highlights the significance of knowledge as co-constructed as opposed to positivist approaches to inquiry in which researchers are expected to detach and distance themselves from the 'researched'. Therefore, the chapter

privileges not only what research participants say or do, but also how they relate to researchers, the kind of relations they forge and how these relational dynamics influence what counts as data. For example, I discuss the relationship with my research assistant and the identifications we carried into the research process. I then indicate how these relations enabled us to negotiate access to participants who were in more powerful positions than ourselves.

In this chapter, I also reflect on the forms and scope of my ethnographic observations (over a period of several weeks during which I was given official permission to attend) of parliamentary sessions pertinent to my research questions.

This social constructionist approach allows for investigation on how gender identities are constructed, negotiated and reproduced in different contexts and the conceptualisation of identities as multiple, unstable and relational.

#### **Chapter 4: *Gendered performances and ethnographic observations in parliament***

Chapter 4 provides an ethnographic account of female and male MPs' everyday interactions in parliamentary debates. It focuses on informal and everyday ways through which gender power relations are played out in the interactions between and among male and female legislators rather than on the formal tabling and discussion of 'gender sensitive' motions. Drawing on both ethnography and analysis of Hansard – the official record of what transpires in parliamentary debates – the chapter critically examines everyday performances of gender and power which are often taken-for-granted, yet play a key role in constructing parliament as a gendered institution. Most importantly, I point out how women are looked down upon more often than men and how they consequently find parliament a problematic space to engage in, especially when raising contentious issues of gender equality. Through bullying, intimidation, male patronage and infantilisation, women are more likely than men to be silenced in debates and their views not taken seriously. In turn, this context warrants that women strategically mobilise some men to speak to issues of gender on their behalf.

**Chapter 5: *Women's accounts of 'recruiting' men as promoters of gender sensitive legislation.***

The chapter explores the ways in which the female participants speak of some of the men they identify and train to promote gender issues on behalf of women in parliamentary debates. In chapter 4, I reflected on how women MPs are infantilized and bullied on the floor of parliament and how, unlike their male counterparts, they are not taken seriously. In this chapter, I argue that while the idea of men speaking on behalf of women could institutionalise notions of women as Other, the women's narrative accounts demonstrate that they consciously draw on male support for strategic reasons. The findings indicate how women respond to references to 'male champions' in critical ways, often resisting attempts to idealize them in ways implied by this category while at the same time acknowledging the strategic significance of particular men promoting gender sensitive legislation in parliament. These complexities are demonstrated in the ways these women re-conceptualize 'male champions' not as a descriptive category referring to some men but rather as a discourse – a site of political struggle. The idea of 'male champions' as a discursive category opened up opportunities for women to de-center its idealization, reveal the male-centered assumptions upon which it is constituted and reimagine women's agency by centering themselves as instigators of gender equality advocacy.

The chapter also explores the rigorous ways in which women identify and train men to speak to gender issues on their behalf. Through these conscience and self-awareness processes, we not only come to know about the men tasked to represent women's rights issues, and how and why they are recruited but also about women's agency amid male dominated legislative processes.

**Chapter 6: *How do male parliamentarians 'selected' to present 'gender sensitive' motions on behalf of women identify themselves, their interests and motivations?***

In chapter 6, I present the findings from the interviews with men who were not only mentioned by some of the women I interviewed in chapter 5 and the literature on Uganda's parliamentary politics as promoters of gender issues, but were also in some instances constructed as

‘champions’ of gender equality. I am particularly interested in understanding *why* men take on the role of critiquing gender inequalities on behalf of women, and *how* they position themselves in relation to women and other men.

In the previous chapter (chapter 5), I indicated how some female respondents refused to buy into idealized constructions of males as ‘champions’ for fear of erasing women’s agency in promoting gender equality. In this chapter, however, I show how some of the male responses indicate that men are reluctant to identify as ‘male champions’ for fear of being celebrated as unusual or ‘invited’ actors in gender equality advocacy. Instead, these men talked at length about their ‘longstanding’ interest in critiquing gender inequalities in their own right and how some of the gender issues (prohibition of FGM and domestic violence in this case) also impact, in problematic ways, on their lives as men. I argue that the female and male responses in chapters 5 and 6, respectively, speak to the character of gender power relations as socially constituted, dynamic and intersecting rather than homogeneous.

### ***Chapter 7: Summary of research findings and the implications for feminism and gender equality activism***

This chapter provides a summary of key findings by highlighting themes that emerged from the analysis of my empirical data in relation to key questions that guided the study. In particular, the study critically engages with accounts on how women select men to speak to gender issues on behalf of women and whether these strategic manoeuvres challenge or institutionalise gender inequalities in parliament. Key themes that are highlighted relate to the inductive and exploratory processes of doing qualitative research and the unexpected discoveries therefrom and the implications of these for developing innovative methodologies for researching gender power relations. The chapter suggests possibilities for re-imagining African feminism in ways that critique patriarchal power, but do so in ways that do not reproduce men and women as binary opposites. This suggested re-thinking of African feminism is demonstrated through the study’s critical engagement with men and masculinities in gender equality advocacy.



## **Chapter Two: The gendering of parliament in Uganda and the tabling of gender sensitive motions: a recent historical overview**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I noted that calls to tap into men and boys to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in most cases originate from global economic development actors. I also highlighted how these top-down efforts inspire a variety of discourses, some of which entail competing agendas between neoliberal development and feminist activism. In particular, I argued that narratives underpinned by the economic prospects of 'inviting' men into gender equality work as a means to negotiate men's obstruction to women's empowerment invisibilise them. Men tend to be constituted as "the Oppressor, as custodians and perpetrators of male domination and as obstacles to equitable development" (Cornwall, 2000: 18) regardless of the varied subject positions they occupy and the different kinds of relationships they have with women.

In this chapter, I focus on the gendering<sup>8</sup> of parliament in Uganda. I critically follow up the relational construction of gender, paying attention to the ways in which the gender question emerges in the scholarly work on Uganda's Parliament. Taking a historical approach, I pay attention to how unequal engagement between women and men in legislative politics comes about; the strategies that have been sanctioned to negotiate these gendered inequalities and the political implications of these strategic maneuvers. I also draw on global and regional discourses on male involvement in gender equity policy reform, exploring how these compare with and speak to (if they do) the Ugandan legislative situation. Regionally, I reflect on South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) Women's League's selection of men for the women's policy

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<sup>8</sup> Particularly, this involves mapping out and engaging with key moments that saw women's entry and participation in a historically male dominated legislature. This is however not to presume that before women's entry, parliament was ungendered – of course it was implicitly gendered by virtue of being male dominated. Rather, foregrounding the question of women's access and participation offers me an entry point into critical debates on the gender question in parliamentary debates and discourses as well as historicise the emergence of 'male champions' of gender issues and gender activists' perception of this category.

conference in 2017 as well as the Rwandan and Kenyan parliaments' involvement of men in championing legislation on GBV in 2007 and 2006, respectively. However, this is not to foreground my study as a comparative one, as it does not offer adequate space to attend to these rich and complex debates. Rather, I use these brief insights as a springboard to foreground the ubiquity of discourses on men as promoters and in some instances, as champions (as I indicate later in the Rwandan case)<sup>9</sup> of gender equality as well as highlight the taken-for-granted assumptions on which notions of men as promoters of gender equality are constituted.

### **Tracing the 'Gender' Question in Parliamentary Politics**

Globally, the advocacy towards women's political participation is an age-old phenomenon and its "outcomes are reflected in international human rights frameworks as well as national efforts that acknowledge women's right to participate in public space" (Ahikire, Musiimenta & Mwiine, 2015: 26). Notions of inalienable human rights continue to reshape politics in both developed and developing countries and as Wyrod (2008: 799) puts it, "[w]omen's rights activists have been at the center of the revitalization of human rights, struggling to address gender inequity across cultures without lapsing into misguided essentializing". On the African continent, this has not only resulted in the institutionalization of the language of human rights in "international declarations, regional treaties, national legislation, and grassroots activism" (Wayrod, 2008: 799–800) but also in women's considerable presence in politics (Wang, 2013; Clayton, Josefsson & Wang, 2014; Ahikire *et al.*, 2015). National level statistics in selected African legislative bodies indicate that "several countries have achieved well beyond the critical mass (Rwanda 63.8%; South Africa 44.8%; Senegal 43.3%; Mozambique 39.2% and Tanzania 36%)" (Ahikire *et al.*, 2015: 26).

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<sup>9</sup> See Carlson and Randel's journal article entitled "Working with men for gender equality in Rwanda" in which they point out reasons why women in Rwanda (particularly women MPs) identified and worked with men to support gender inclusive legislation on GBV but also allude to men as champions. They argue that "engaging men, in particular male leaders who are in positions of authority and respected in the community is critical to changing gender based power dynamics that lead to GBV" (Carlson & Randell, 2013:114).

Women's right to participate in politics is the result of a long struggle by global, regional and local women's movements that questioned women's marginalization and sought to advocate for their engagement. Global efforts are recorded in conventions, charters and action plans that call for recognition of women's political rights. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN in 1979 calls on nation states "to ensure women's equal access to and equal opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote and stand for public office". Accordingly, CEDAW and other international conventions to which states across the globe committed (and continue to do so in some cases) to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment, were seen as some of the ways in which feminists aimed to get "women's rights onto the international development agenda" (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015: 396). We are alerted to the fact that bureaucrats and development actors have often merely paid lip service to the struggle for gender equality, especially on the African continent (Ahikire, 2008). However, Ahikire argues that, the fact that development actors feel obliged to pay lip service when they have the option of being completely silent "on gender relations or even negation of women, [perhaps highlights how] feminist engagement has been able to lodge a claim within the global development discourse" (2008: 28).

The manner in which the question of gender equality, particularly the idea of women's access and participation in politics manifested in the early 1970s and '80s has significant implications for the conceptualization of 'gender' in political discourses. Women were seen as politically excluded and through measures to address such exclusion, women and men were constituted into two distinct categories in opposition to one another. In effect, "this permitted [feminists] to retain the category 'woman' as a foundational organising principle for advocacy and activism" (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015: 401).

### **Gender in Parliamentary Politics in Uganda and beyond: a brief history**

In Uganda, women's struggle against androcentric political structures and systems dates back to the colonial period and activities after independence (Tripp, 1998; Tamale, 1999; Ahikire, 2007). Ahikire argues that from the colonial period onwards, public politics as a distinct state-centered

activity was constructed as a male domain with women conversely constructed as ‘the Other’ – occupiers of the private space. The studies cited above show that colonial governments often redefined appropriate gender roles through changes in laws relating to marriage, property and land use; restricting women’s engagement in politics. In the first nation-wide legislative council (LEGCO) elections in 1957 for instance, the property restrictions imposed on the franchise effectively excluded women both as candidates and as voters (Ahikire, 2007:3). Pre-colonial and colonial marginalization of women in politics did not, however, prevent women’s political engagement. Women resisted colonial oppression and collectively challenged the structure of male domination. For example, they formed the Uganda Council for Women (UCW) as far back as 1947 to fight for women’s rights (Tamale, 1999). The first African woman to enter the LEGCO – a colonial legislature – was Pumla Kisosonkole, a member of the UCW who joined British born Barbara Saben in 1957. With their 51 male counterparts in the colonial legislative council, the two women laid the foundation to challenge male domination in the institution of parliament.

Historical experiences of male-centered colonialism and its propagation of patriarchal oppression in politics is not unique to Uganda. In her work “Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest”, Anne McClintock (1995) cites examples from the African continent (and many other places) and critically engages with the project of imperialism and post-colonialism, showing how race, gender and class intersected to influence the way women and men experienced colonialism. She critiques scholarship that theorize postcolonialism in singular, monolithic and ahistorical ways that “belies both the continuities and discontinuities of power that have shaped the legacies of the formal European and British colonial empires”(McClintock, 1995: 12), labelling such “prematurely celebratory”. McClintock’s misgivings about premature celebration and obfuscation of colonialism speaks eloquently to Hannah Britton and Jennifer Fish’s (2009: 3) critique of the notion of “gender victory<sup>10</sup>” in post-apartheid South Africa. They

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<sup>10</sup> This is a view that has been central to South Africa transition from racialised and class and gender based oppressive apartheid regime. See Hannah Britton and Jennifer Fish (2009: 3) on “Engendering Civil Society in Democratic South Africa”.

argue; “[s]ince the end of apartheid, South African women have continued to redefine leadership, feminism and power on their own terms ... Yet, for every significant gain women have made in the national political arena, there remains a parallel obstacle that is often most evident outside of the formal public structures of governance” (Britton & Fish, 2009: 2). These misgivings about the nature of gender victories in post-colonial states in Africa point to how public politics, in particular parliaments in Africa are products of the oppressive colonial regimes. In chapter 4 I draw on observation of parliamentary debate sessions and highlight gender performances that exemplify the continuities of British colonial practices in the Uganda parliament and how these resonate with sexism in the contemporary British parliament.

The literature on the history of women in formal politics in Uganda (and few reflections on the African continent) cited above points to political participation as a public-centered activity, predominantly engaged in by men. While women are presented as almost exclusively ‘outside’ the realm of public politics, in particular, parliamentary politics, there are indications that they negotiated the public/private dichotomy to enter parliamentary politics, albeit in small numbers and amidst intense resistance from male-centered political systems. Aili Mari Tripp (1998) identifies women’s civil society organisations as a critical resource which enhanced women’s collective agency and framed the narrative on women’s rights. The public/private dichotomy coupled with women’s predominant role (individually and collectively) in challenging women’s subordination in politics continues to influence the meaning of gender and the place of women and men in questioning gender inequalities in politics to the extent that gender has on some occasions been conflated with women, as if it was an essence that women naturally possess.

### **Women’s entry into national politics**

Women gained increased access to the Ugandan parliament in the mid-1980s with the rise of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government (Tamale, 1999; Goetz & Hassim, 2003; Ahikire, 2017). It is argued that unlike previous regimes, the NRM government which gained

power through the barrel of the gun, used this guerilla movement to “extend the social parameters of formal participation in public affairs and engendered a politics of mobilization by drawing onto political identities such as women, youth and [Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)]” (Ahikire, 2017: 195). Mobilizing the population to participate in the guerilla movement resulted in these groups – women, youth and PWDs and later the army – being constituted as “special interest groups”<sup>11</sup> in the war zones and eventually institutionalized in the 1995 constitution after the military take over. Anne Marie Goetz (2002) alerts us to the ways in which women’s entry into Ugandan politics at this time was shaped by a small group of elite women whose demands, in the form of an affirmative action policy,<sup>12</sup> were met without any resistance (Goetz, 1998, 2002). In Goetz’s analysis, these elitist demands were not only made directly to the person of the president rather than through state institutions but were also narrow and focused exclusively on entry into existing political structures. This individualistic approach established a patron-client relationship which the president would use in the future to advance his political goals against the women’s constituency.

Uganda’s model of affirmative action which drew on the liberal feminist notion of ‘inclusion’ took the form of reserved seats for women and was institutionalized in the 1995 constitution, offering women political representation in a separate and protected arena of women-only competition (Ahikire, 2003). The constitution reads in part: “Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the State shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the

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<sup>11</sup> In terms of Article 78 (1) (b) of the constitution, special interest groups comprise of “one woman representative per district or city ... Ten (10) representatives of the Army at least 2 of whom shall be women; five youth representatives, at least 1 of whom shall be a woman, and 5 representatives of PWDs, one of whom shall be a woman” (Ahikire, 2017: 194).

<sup>12</sup> Uganda’s form of affirmative action provided for a woman representative in parliament for each district in the country. While they were elected by fellow women under electoral colleges in the first two elections (1996 and 2001), since the 2006 general elections women district representatives to parliament have been elected by adult suffrage (all women and men in the district). This implies that an increase in the number of districts in Uganda would lead to an equivalent increase in the number of women members of parliament.

purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them”<sup>13</sup>. Article 180, (2) (b) of the constitution stipulates that reserving a third of the seats at LC level is justified by Articles 32 and 33 of the constitution, which accords women full dignity and equality with men and give them the right to “Affirmative Action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom” (Republic of Uganda, 1995). The constitution further provides for what it terms “Women’s rights”, stating that “women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men”. In all these mechanisms, women are not only situated in opposition to men, but the politics of inclusion represent men as the ‘norm’, a category that women need to measure up to. Through such binaries, inclusive politics brushes off the differences amongst women and men and seeks to use masculine norms as the universal standard upon which to include and articulate women’s right to political engagement.

### **Affirmative Action and the increase in the number of women legislators**

Affirmative action policies that created reserved seats for women led to unprecedented growth in the number of women in parliament and LCs (Tamale, 1999; Goetz & Hassim, 2003. See also Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005 and Dahlerup, 2007). These policies were applauded for increasing the number of women in the legislature from one out of 126 members in 1980 (Tamale, 1999) to 33 per cent in 2016 (Madanda, 2017: 177) (see Table 1 below).

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<sup>13</sup> See the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, Articles 32 and 33.

**Table 1: Women’s entry into Parliament and the Constituent Assembly (CA) in Uganda**

| Year | No. Districts | Assembly   | AA  | Open seat | Others <sup>14</sup> | Total Women | Total MPs | % Women | % Men |
|------|---------------|------------|-----|-----------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| 1989 | 39            | NRC        | 39  | 2         | 9                    | 50          | 280       | 18      | 82    |
| 1994 | 39            | CA         | 39  | 8         | 3                    | 50          | 286       | 17.4    | 82.6  |
| 1996 | 39            | Parliament | 39  | 8         | 4                    | 51          | 276       | 19      | 81    |
| 2001 | 56            | Parliament | 56  | 13        | 6                    | 75          | 304       | 24.4    | 75.6  |
| 2006 | 79            | Parliament | 79  | 14        | 1                    | 100         | 319       | 31      | 69    |
| 2011 | 112           | Parliament | 112 | 11        | 8                    | 131         | 375       | 35      | 65    |
| 2016 | 112           | Parliament | 112 | 18        | 9                    | 139         | 289       | 33      | 67    |

**Source:** Aramanzan Madanda (2017: 177): “Key: AA = Affirmative Action, NRC = National Resistance Council, CA = Constituent Assembly” (Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015: 7) , MPs = Members of Parliament

The table shows that, in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament (2006- 2011) which is the main focus of this study, women made up 31 per cent of the 319 legislators, an increase from the previous 24.4 per cent. It also had the most women legislators (14) in directly elected seats since 1989. Of note is that during the 7<sup>th</sup> and later 8<sup>th</sup> parliament, the Ugandan parliament elected its first female Deputy Speaker (Ahikire, Musiimenta and Mwiine, 2015). The 8<sup>th</sup> parliament is also noted for women’s significant contribution to pro-women legislative policy reforms. Wang (2013) and Ahikire *et al.* (2015) list several achievements such as mobilizing for the enactment of laws such as the prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010), the prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009) and the Domestic Violence Act (2010), amendments to the Penal Code (2007), and the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission (2006), among others. Wang (2013; 116) argues that though these milestones are incremental, they were “important steps towards achieving legislation to enable the rights granted in the 1995 Constitution”.

<sup>14</sup> These include representatives of PWDs, workers, the youth and presidential nominees.

While reserved seats for women were credited with delivering an increased number of women to politics, this model of inclusion generated mixed reactions (Tamale, 1999; Goetz & Hassim, 2003; Dahlerup, 2007; Ahikire, 2017). “A range of new parliamentary and local government seats were created for women-only competition, thus separating women’s political engagement from the mainstream of political competition” (Goetz & Hassim, 2003:13). Affirmative action created “a gendered enclave for women's political participation, with electorates assuming that the reserved seats are the only legitimate spaces for women candidates” (Goetz, 1998: 250). See also Tamale (1999) and Ahikire (2003). This is specifically highlighted by the consistent sluggishness in the number of women elected on open seats. The low numbers can be read as a pointer to forms of patriarchal resistance to the transformation of mainstream politics and a reproduction of women and men as binary opposites. Indeed, it is not uncommon in Uganda for women to be labeled ‘greedy’ and accused of ‘fighting men’ when they attempt to contest mainstream seats. More recently, Oloka-Onyango and Ahikire (2017: 8) argued that:

While the reform that introduced affirmative action was initially progressive in so far as it gave these groups a voice for the first time, it actually crippled the genuine transformation and their substantive political engagement. Short-run gains by way of increased representation have been achieved at the cost of a more qualitative engagement by the special interest groups with the key actors in the state.

The inclusive approach created a category of women politicians in opposition to men, a binary that reproduced hierarchies between women and men. Clayton, Josefsson and Wang (2014: 379) “examine emerging patterns of recognition amongst women that join politics through affirmative action and those elected on open counties”. They argue that those elected to reserved seats are less recognized than those in directly elected seats<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> This finding introduces a new dynamic that seeks to move beyond women as a homogeneous category to look at difference (age, sex, social status, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and others) amongst women.

As a tool initially intended to ‘include’ women in politics, affirmative action paradoxically excluded them by conscripting them into parallel and less-powerful political enclaves (Ahikire, 2017). This was aggravated by what Ahikire terms the “politics of recognition” in which women, along with the youth and PWDs are lumped together (under the affirmative action policy) as ‘vulnerable groups’. While recognizing women and other interest groups is highly desirable in as far as political visibility and legitimacy are concerned, the very nature of their representation nurtures them as “subjects and clients of the political system as opposed to citizens” (Ahikire, 2017: 204). The author adds that the language of special interest groups covers a multiplicity of each group’s interests and also disregards their different conditions and circumstances.

### **From numbers of women to ‘women’s interests’**

Ahikire (2003:237) noted that “the relative isolation and lack of perceived legitimacy of women politicians, and the failure so far to advance any gender equity agenda in local assemblies ... suggests the need for support to women to press them to advance a gender equity agenda.” This is due to the fact that, “women cannot merely be assumed to represent women’s interests and, even if they were able to do so, women’s interests are so varied that for them to filter into the policy process, there is need for more organisation and coalescence to process those interests” (Ahikire, 2003:237). Ahikire adds that civil society, in particular women’s associations, can support women councillors<sup>16</sup> to advance a gender equity agenda in local assemblies (Ahikire, 2003:237). However, by implying that crafting, presenting, supporting and effecting a gender equity agenda ought to be done by women, this approach marginalizes both the role and gendered interests of men. While Ahikire rightly argues that women cannot merely represent women’s interests and acknowledges women’s diverse interests, she does not conceptualize men and men’s interests in the same manner. This silence on men and masculinities in gender discourse could have political implications and, in particular, could mask the complex relationships that women and men find themselves in (Cornwall, 2000), marginalizing discourses

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<sup>16</sup> Women politicians in local administrative units termed LCs in Uganda are referred to as councillors.

on masculinities as gendered and vulnerable (Clowes, 2013) and consequently perpetuating men as universal and nongendered beings.

Affirmative action thus reinforced separate spheres for women and men politicians. In the long run, such strategies that are informed by liberal individualist feminism, take male political power for granted by constituting it as a collective and men as beneficiaries of an existing gender order, essentialising them as one and the same and thus foregoing opportunities to deconstruct and denaturalize categories of men (Connell, 2007; Flood, 2007) and how they can enable subversion of gender inequalities.

As noted previously, this strategy (affirmative Action) also reproduced binaries where women are constantly and collectively constructed as ‘newcomers’, and a ‘vulnerable group’ and are often othered by their constituencies. This strategic approach does not question the practices and contexts through which women and men are constituted as political actors, or question male power and positions but rather seeks to ‘include’ women in positions that men occupy. It is for this reason that Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005) state that gender quotas are a dilemma in feminist theory especially in relation to whether or not they construct women as a group. “Do quotas construct women as a second sex and thus contribute to a reproduction of stereotyped gender roles and stigmatization of women?” (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005: 31). To answer this question, Dahlerup and Freidenvall call for empirical research that goes beyond static concepts of essentialism to explore women’s strategic choices in various contexts. Drawing on post-structural versions of feminism, this study opens up the opportunity to question and deconstruct such universal categories (women and men) and expose the complex ways in which they are discursively constructed.

### **From inclusion to evaluation: Assessing women political entrants and the reproduction of gender hierarchies**

Debates around gender and politics have evolved from questioning women’s invisibility and calls for women’s inclusion to analyzing what women do when they get into positions of

political leadership. Scholarly analysis has sought to understand the ‘difference’ that women bring to parliament (Meintjes, 2003; Goetz and Hassim, 2003). In their work on “Women in power in Uganda and South Africa”, Goetz and Hassim (2003: 1) investigate how “women managed to make their way into public life in such numbers, in societies not otherwise known for equality between the sexes”. They examine the ‘difference’ that increasing numbers of women in politics makes in terms of advancing women’s interests in legislative and policy changes as well as the character of local and national political competition. More precisely, Goetz and Hassim (2003:1) ask: “How effectively have women been able to use their increased representation to advance gender equality?” Wang (2013), Clayton, Josefsson and Wang (2014) and Ahikire *et al.* (2015) buy into the narrative on the politics of ‘difference’ when they celebrate what they characterise as a tremendous increase in legislative policy outcomes<sup>17</sup> on gender equity in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament, attributing it to the number of women legislators.

The above studies which I characterize as evaluative make assumptions about the meaning of gender, gender equality and ultimately the role of women (and men) in achieving equality. The authors’ desire to assess women’s political effectiveness, i.e., “the capacity of women politicians to mobilise support in their parties and in civil society for their policy agendas” is reflected on below:

We are particularly interested in their capacities to promote gender equality in policy making and to cultivate male allies for this, though we do not make the assumption that all women politicians have feminist interests (Goetz & Hassim, 2003: 2).

While they justify their focus on understanding women politicians’ ability to achieve change in public politics in Uganda and South Africa, such an approach not only constructs the mandate of promoting gender equality in policy making as primarily the responsibility of women, but also

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<sup>17</sup> Examples include discussions on the Marriage and Divorce Bill (2009), the passing of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and the Domestic Violence Act (2010), and the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission, among others.

carries the possibility of constructing men as non-gendered. Drawing on the critical masculinities approach, Michael Flood (2007) departs from the non-gendering of men. In his study on “Involving men in gender policy and practice”, Flood reminds us that “the agenda of engaging men is not novel then because of whom it addresses, but how. It addresses men *as men* – as gendered beings who participate in gender relations” (Flood, 2007: 9). Yet, as I have pointed out, assessment of women’s capacities as ‘new comers’ to public politics does not question men’s role and their effectiveness (or lack of it) in promoting gender equity. Goetz and Hassim acknowledge that not all women embrace feminist interests, but this diversity of gender interests is silenced amongst male politicians who seem to be homogenized as ‘politically dominant’, with no explicit interest in promoting gender equality in policy making except when they are recruited as allies. I return to the question of selecting males as allies to speak to issues of gender on behalf of women shortly.

Assessing women’s ability to make a difference in patriarchal political institutions without an equivalent focus on the role of men has been described as “contradictory scrutiny” of women (Ahikire, 2009). Ahikire observes that while it is not uncommon to hear questions about the “role of women in parliament, there is little or none in the converse – the role of men in parliament”, the implication being that men are taken as the un-gendered norm (Connell, 2007; Flood, 2007). A case in point is the Daily Monitor<sup>18</sup> (a national English Newspaper in Uganda) headline: *New female MPs: What will they stand for?* without any focus on what is expected of the male MPs in the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament. A recent critical analysis of gender dimensions of inclusion and exclusion in Uganda’s parliamentary politics points out that “women *qua* women [hardly brings] on board politics of particular standards” (Madanda, 2017: 175). Madanda calls for broader understanding of the social, political and economic contexts within which women’s inclusion in political participation is articulated. Scrutinizing women’s role in promoting gender equality and silence on the role of men in gender equality parliamentary initiatives has the potential to constitute male

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<sup>18</sup> Nalugo, Mercy. *New female MPs: What will they stand for?* The Daily Monitor, Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2016. Kampala: Uganda

practices as the legislative norm. I argue that constantly drawing on such viewpoints could result in problematic discourses that reproduce and legitimise the very power inequalities and traditional assumptions that feminist scholars and activists seek to challenge.

Women-only assessment and expectations that they will deliver gender equity in politics has the potential to institutionalize ‘gender’ as synonymous with women. I have pointed to studies in which the construction of gender implicitly assumes that since women who have been historically marginalized are now entering politics, they are better placed to question gender inequalities. As the feminism of difference indicates<sup>19</sup>, such an approach aims to level out the hierarchical differences between women and men. Differences are thus not only acknowledged but valued. Men and women are seen as occupying different roles and spaces in life (Nentwich, 2006). However, Nentwich (2006: 502) cautions that “the danger in this perspective is that we might end up reinforcing gender stereotypes and therefore producing differences”. It also deprives gender equity agendas of the power to conceptualize gender in dynamic and complex rather than homogeneous ways. Women and men’s relations are not always exclusive and in opposition to one another; they are also shaped by intersecting experiences of age, seniority, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and other social markers of identity. Consequently, this approach masks opportunities for change (agency), i.e., avenues in which gendered positions are contested and negotiated by women and men as contexts change (Remlinger, 2005).

The construction of gender as ‘issues of women’ is further critiqued by Crawford and Pini (2010). In their work, “Gender equality in national politics: the views of Australian male politicians”, they argue that such framing devices “mask the many constraints which exist to marginalise women from political participation and undermine attempts to address women’s political disadvantage as political participants” (2010: 605). They thus call for studies that name and critique political men and their discourses on gender and parliamentary practices and

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<sup>19</sup> In articulating the “Equality – versus – Difference” dilemma, Joan W. Scott (1988: 38) explains that feminist debates on ‘difference’ tend to insist that appeals on behalf of women ought to be made in terms of the needs, interests and characteristics common to women as a group.

processes through new ways of thinking about gender categories which are constituted in opposition to each other<sup>20</sup>. Such research that ‘names men as men’ would generate critical and analytical work which describes and critiques men and masculinity in organisations (Crawford & Pini, 2010: 607).

Up to this point, this chapter has elaborated on the ways in which women that were previously excluded, gained entry to male dominated political structures, particularly parliament. I argued that strategies such as affirmative action constituted women and men as binary categories, with women as a foundational organising principle to mobilise for gender equality in the legislature and men as the privileged and dominant *other*. These binary categories become homogenised entities in themselves, concealing the differences amongst women and men. Most importantly, I argue that they constitute women as the exclusive principal actors in gender equity advocacy and thus position men as ‘outsiders’ in this process, providing the ground upon which some men in positions of power and influence are drawn on to promote gender issues on behalf of women. These multiple contradictory outcomes should not be read as an attempt to underplay the significance of affirmative action in affording women a presence in political structures from which they were historically excluded. Despite these encumbrances, I consider women’s numerical entry into politics as a “critical breakthrough, an initial step of breaking into a domain that was historically not theirs” (Ahikire *et al.*, 2015: 28). Viewed in this way, affirmative action is an inevitable strategy that inscribes particular conversations on women’s citizenship and their subsequent relationships with men in public political discourses despite many cases in which it is invoked as a lone strategy to address deep-rooted social forms of inequality.

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<sup>20</sup> Crawford and Pini argue that while it is important to continue to explore women politicians’ experiences, they only offer a partial view of the political world, thus missing out on male accounts to capture the relational dynamics of political institutions and expose and explore the way in which gender is played out in them.

## **Men who critique gender inequalities in legislative policy reforms on behalf of women: A brief history of this strategy in and outside Uganda**

In Uganda, the strategy of drawing on men to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates on behalf of women can be traced as far back as the 1994 Constituent Assembly<sup>21</sup> (Tamale, 1999). Coincidentally, this is the same year that the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the Egyptian city of Cairo called for specific attention to be paid to men's involvement in gender equality programmes. The ICPD action plan called for governments to include male responsibilities and participation in reproductive health. Around this time, Tamale (1999) introduced us to women MPs that had entered parliament largely through affirmative action and how they used different tactical strategies not only to speak to issues of gender inequalities in a male dominated parliament but also to ensure that these issues are heard. In her publication – “When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda” – which draws on “popular mythology that female chickens do not crow”, Tamale recounts some men's opposition to women contesting political office and raising and debating gender equity issues in parliament. She decries the ways in which African patriarchal values constrain women's speech in public politics and demonstrates how ‘compromise’, ‘concessions’ and ‘tradeoffs’ were the only plausible ways for newly elected women to make their concerns heard in parliament. One such compromise was women's identification of and working with men to speak to gender issues on their behalf. Tamale (1999) argues that this strategy was part of the game that Ugandan women legislators were forced to play to negotiate around patriarchy in parliament (Tamale, 1999: 114). She describes these actions by women legislators as markers of women's collective agency;

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<sup>21</sup> The Constituent Assembly was the second session of parliament after the military takeover by the National Resistance Army/Movement. The assembly – which was composed of 286 elected delegates (17 per cent of whom were female) (Madanda, 2017) – was primarily tasked with drawing up the country's new constitution. The 1995 Ugandan constitution is the outcome of this constitution-making process.

Acting collectively, women legislators were able to challenge patriarchy, chauvinism and powerlessness to secure a ‘women-friendly’ constitution. The strategy was to draw as many sympathetic and moderate male Constituent Assembly Delegates to their side as possible in order to augment their numbers (Tamale, 1999: 116)<sup>22</sup>.

Tamale identifies and mentions women as a category, perhaps to highlight pervasive discrimination against women in politics and enable women to gain political recognition. This approach resonates with Butler’s (1993: 234) cautious use of categories of identity to “assert political demands and determine the conditions under which that name is used”. However, it is not without risk. In the women MPs’ strategic negotiations, most men were implicated as obstacles to women in the patriarchal political system while others – constituted as ‘sympathetic’ and moderately in support of the ideas raised within the women’s parliamentary caucus – were appropriated by women legislators for numerical support. Reference is also made to strategic negotiations in which some women legislators were requested by fellow women to “tone down the language of their demands, as well as selecting a soft-spoken woman or even a man to present the women’s case in a moderate manner acceptable to most men” (Tamale, 1999: 117).

While Tamale describes such strategies as a kind of pragmatism that is necessary in any negotiations between unequal parties, she remains silent on the likely implications of such concessions for the long-term gender equality agenda. Concessions such as ‘toning down’ the language of women’s demands or presenting issues in a manner acceptable to most men could be seen as institutionalizing masculine norms and gender inequality (Flood, 2007). Also unexplored in Tamale’s work are the likely shifts in the categories ‘sympathetic’ and ‘moderate’ men and more recent categorisation of male supporters of gender equity initiatives as ‘champions’, a concept that seems to celebrate men’s role in gender activism as an unexpected favour. Drawing on discursive approaches to identity construction, it is clear that speakers’ identities are usually

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<sup>22</sup> Also see Wang, V. 2013. Women changing policy outcomes: Learning from pro-women legislation in the Ugandan Parliament. *Women’s Studies International Forum*. 41:113-121.

fluid, multiple, multi-layered, shifting and often contradictory (Butler, 1990; Baxter, 2006). Rather than being constituted as fixed essences, categories such as sympathetic, moderate or gender sensitive men are likely to shift as legislative contexts change.

In her work on “Women changing policy outcomes: Learning from pro-women legislation in the Ugandan Parliament”, Wang (2013) states that women MPs’ selection of a few male legislators to support gender debates in parliament was amongst the key reasons for the increase in pro-women legislation in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. She notes that women MPs recruited some men as associate members of the women MPs’ caucus, and that they often linked “gender issues to the home and personal sphere to muster support from male MPs” (Wang, 2013: 117). This involved relating gender issues to the women and girls in men’s lives. However, while this won the support of some male legislators who empathised with the women and girls in their lives as their mothers, sisters and daughters – though there was a loud silence on their relationships with their wives – it is not without flaws. Such an approach constitutes women and girls as mere appendages of androcentric structures rather than as human beings with rights and entitlements in their own capacity, whether or not they had relationships with males. Furthermore, it focuses on men as gender-less beings and hardly reflects on masculinities as part of complex gender relationships. As Clowes (2013: 17) alerts us, such discourses may conflate gender with women or locate oppression as a women’s problem. They may thus inadvertently reproduce the gender inequalities they seek to challenge.

### ***Constituting male supporters of gender issues as ‘champions of gender equality’***

In its 2012 strategic plan, the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) identified building support among male MPs as one of its strategies. The plan states that, “women MPs will lobby for the support of their male counterparts in the realization of the Strategic Plan [and] efforts will be stepped up to solicit male champions to promote the Women’s Agenda’ (UWOPA, 2012: 10). Labeling men who support gender equity initiatives in parliament as ‘champions’ is also recorded by Wang (2013), Ahikire and Mwiine (2015), UWONET ( 2013)

and UN Women (2015), among others. Ahikire and Mwiine (2015: 11) refer to male MPs who supported the presentation, debate and passing of the Domestic Violence Act of 2010 as male champions. The UN Women research report (2015: 28) on gender equality and political leadership in Uganda also documents what it terms “the emergence of male champions in parliament”. It states that: “Women MPs in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament understood that such bills [those that critique gender inequalities] required the backing of male MPs and went ahead to identify potential champions to lobby and created a map of influential male legislators” (UN Women, 2015: 28). Thus, the report alerts us to both the practice of selecting men to support women in advocacy for gender sensitive legislation as well as the categorisation of these supportive male legislators as champions, a concept that seems to presume men as heroic, benevolent and able to sort out women’s failed attempts to push for gender equality.

Uncritical use of the category male champion in relation to men who support gender equality advocacy is also evident in the Uganda Women’s Network’s (UWONET) (2013) publication entitled *Journey of Passion: Two Decades of Advocacy for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights*. This national advocacy and lobby network comprising of 16 national women’s organisations, institutions and 9 individuals documents how a few elite men took a bold decision to challenge public resistance to the Marriage and Divorce Bill in 2013<sup>23</sup>, before categorising them as ‘men champions’<sup>24</sup>.

Upon realising that most Ugandans were debating the the Marriage and Divorce bill from a point of ignorance and reducing it to a women’s issue, a group of men from civil society read and understood the bill in order to debate from an informed point of view. The men champions coordinated by Action Aid included Arthur Larok, Nickson Ogwal, Paul Ojumani, Warren Nyamugasira, Richard Sewakiryanga and Edward Iruura. They launched

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<sup>23</sup> The Bill which has a history that goes as far back as colonial Uganda, suggested legal reforms within the institution of marriage, including provisions on “divorce, bride price, property sharing in case of divorce, marital rape and cohabitation” (UWONET, 2013: 140).

<sup>24</sup> All the men listed in the extract were in key positions in various civil society organisations in Uganda at the time.

a campaign to support the bill and to “restore dignity, equality and justice to both parties in marriage (UWONET, 2013: 152)

This reference to men champions seems to celebrate them as unique in relation to women and other men, in that they read and understood the Bill, consequently putting themselves in a rational position to confront the general population’s “ignorance” and dismissal of the Bill as a women-only concern. The tone in which UWONET reports on these elite male supporters and labelling them as “men champions” seems to inscribe a particular discourse in which men are positioned in powerful ways (in relation to women) and celebrated for doing a favour to women activists who faced nation-wide condemnation for drafting the Bill. This represents a celebration of masculine superiority over women. Drawing on the men’s statements at the press conference where they launched the campaign to support the Bill, UWONET highlights, rather sympathetically, that these ‘men champions’ were very disappointed with the quality of public debate on the Bill and the media’s deliberate misinformation of the masses. Nonetheless, UWONET (2013: 152) indicates that these men were determined to “restore dignity, equality and justice to both parties in marriage”. The statement that, they “gave compelling reasons for urgent reforms in the Ugandan family law to reflect present-day realities” (UWONET, 2013: 153), is testimony to how highly women activists, and UWONET in particular, thought of these men.

This sudden men’s realisation of the general population’s ‘ignorance’ and trivialisation of a rather serious family relations Bill highlights UWONET’s enthusiastic celebration of the men who supported the Family Bill. Men’s sudden realisation, as UWONET reports it – *upon realising that most Ugandans were debating the Marriage and Divorce Bill from the point of ignorance, ...* - bears messianic overtones and speaks to such kind of wide distinction between men and women and more so the representation of the former as powerful and empathetic actors invited specifically to sort out that, that women could not handle.

While the above examples portray women as agents engaged in negotiating male resistance to deliver gender equity legislation, labeling men who support gender equality as champions and the uncritical use of this term despite its problematic assumptions of masculine power and influence, is of critical concern. The celebration of male supporters of gender equality is further accentuated by gender equality advocacy that pays attention to men *simply* as a means of delivering women's empowerment rather than as gendered human beings.

### **Male promoters of gender equality in policy reform in African countries**

Drawing on men to support gender equity policy reforms is becoming increasingly common among African countries. In this section, I examine three cases – Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa – where men have been drawn on by women activists to speak to issues of gender in policy making fora on women's behalf. I identify the gaps in these processes and how these form part of what I problematize in this study. As noted earlier, these experiences are in no way intended to position this study as a comparative analysis of the ways men are drawn on to support gender equity legislation in Africa. Instead, I use these brief insights to show that discourses about men who speak to issues of gender in institutional policy reforms are not a uniquely Ugandan phenomenon.

### **Legislation on prevention of gender-based violence in Rwanda and Kenya**

Globally, Rwanda is one of the countries that have posted impressive statistics on women's participation in politics and has pioneering gender equity policy reforms. Such initiatives include legislation on the prevention of GBV (Powley & Pearson, 2007). Powley and Pearson (2007) and Carlson and Randell (2013) provide detailed accounts of the inclusive lawmaking process in which women parliamentarians under their caucus – the Rwanda Women Parliamentarians Forum – worked with male legislators to draft, present, discuss and pass the law on prevention of GBV. Carlson and Randell (2013: 114) argue that engaging men in this process is crucial to challenge traditional masculinities and thus promote behavioral change amongst men to break a “generational cycle of GBV and contribute to the overall advancement of gender equality”. They

add that “the question of engaging men ... is [no longer] one of whether or not but *how*” (Carlson & Randell, 2013: 115). As noted earlier, Carlson and Randell’s (2013:114) account of how men’s authorial positions and respectable status in communities made the legislation on GBV possible, implicitly points to a subtle celebration of men’s efforts in the legislative process. They also argue that “male leaders must be engaged and continue to champion gender equality in their communities and to sustain a lasting impact [in GBV prevention]” (Carlson & Randell, 2013:115). While this could implicitly point to the narrative on men as champions given the assumptions of power and authority with which these men are identified, they also explicitly introduce the language of males as champions of gender equality.

Similar efforts to draw on male legislators to support gender equity legislation are noted in Kenya’s 2006 Sexual Offences legislative process in which Hon. Njoki S. Ndugu, a female parliamentarian, along with other female MPs and women NGOs mobilised male support across political party lines to dilute male opposition to the Bill (Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), 2007; Njoki, 2011). In a conference paper on the legislative journey of the Bill, Hon. Njoki who sponsored it, recalls how she had to broaden the definition of sexual violence to include male individuals as victims and females as perpetrators of sexual offences to negotiate male resistance to the Bill (Njoki, 2011).

While these examples attest to the increasing practice of women drawing on male support to promote gender equality, the legislative processes in Rwanda and Kenya also hint at possible dilemmas. In the case of Rwanda, there are implicit pointers of celebrating men who support gender equality as ‘champions’. The dangers of this category are articulated in detail in chapter 5. Furthermore, Powley and Pearson (2007:16) recall that women parliamentarians would encourage men “to think about the protection of their daughters and mothers, but not feel as if they were being accused of mistreating their own wives”. These authors identify silences around husband and wife relations as a tactical compromise that provided a form of political cover for law makers, some of whom were perpetrators of GBV. Nonetheless, this practice resonates with what Cornwall (2014) terms ‘gentle’ invitations to men to challenge the age-old patriarchal

oppression of women. The strategy not only ignores holding men accountable for abusive behaviour towards their wives but also constitutes women as mere extensions of masculine relations (sisters, daughters and mothers) rather than as humans in their own right. Such silences have the potential to reproduce and amplify violence between husbands and wives as ‘private’ and acceptable.

The legislative processes in Kenya also failed to engage critically with the process by which men are selected, how male supporters engage with the process, and how they positioned themselves in relation to women MPs who mobilised them. Equally important, beyond the broad inclusion of male individuals as victims and females as perpetrators in the Bill, mobilization for the Bill does not seem to have engaged with the ambiguities and complex gender dynamics on which masculinities and femininities are constituted and risks depoliticizing gender to *simply* mean “both men and women” (Ahikire, 2014: 18).

### **The ANC Women’s League selection of a few men for the women’s policy conference**

Cases in which women activists draw on men’s expertise to promote pro-women proposals in policy making fora have also been noted in South Africa. One such example is the ANC Women’s League’s (ANCWL) selection of 6 men to bolster the women’s delegation to the ruling party’s policy conference in July 2017<sup>25</sup>. News of this controversial invitation emerged in an interview with Women’s League President and Minister of Social Development at the time, Bathabile Dlamini. Qaatinah Hunter, a female journalist at South Africa’s Sunday Times quoted the ANCWL President as having said that “men were invited because sometimes we [women] lose debates because we are emotional so now we want experts to argue”. In effect, she constituted women collectively as emotionally ‘different’ from men, a quality that is negatively

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<sup>25</sup> See the Article entitled “Women's League boosts mansplaining capacity at ANC policy conference at <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/news/2017-07-01-womens-league-boosts-mansplaining-capacity-at-anc-policy-conference/> (Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2017)

perceived as a marker of weakness, irrationality, devoid of knowledge and skill. In her view, men have qualities that women leaders lack.

The ANCWL has been criticized by Shireen Hassim (2014: 11) in “ANC Women’s League: Sex, Gender, and politics” for its inattention to feminist ideals in South African politics. She argues that “[f]or much of its history, the league disavowed feminism and it was never fully able to corral gender activism under its banner”. Hassim attributes the League’s unwillingness to challenge deeply entrenched gender inequalities to its secondary status under an inherently patriarchal ANC. Thus, the overt reification of male domination exemplified in the strategy of drawing on ‘rational’ men to speak on behalf of ‘emotional’ Women’s League members was no surprise to feminists like Hassim.

In contrast to the ANCWL President’s stance, the current study shows that women gender activists in Uganda negotiate gender binaries to work with men in advocacy for gender equality. I note (in chapter 5) that female gender activists rigorously scrutinize male MPs who empathize with women’s rights advocacy in ways that do not denigrate women. I also indicate how the female participants I talked to were conscious and often critical of parliament as a patriarchal space in which women are infantilized and not taken seriously. Consequently, (sympathetic) men are selected on very instrumental grounds to argue for legislation that promotes women’s rights that would otherwise not be taken seriously.

Overall, the idea of drawing on certain men to promote gender equality issues remains a complex one given that it is invoked differently, by different actors, for various reasons and in different contexts. However, underlying these complexities of men as promoters of gender equality is the desire to negotiate patriarchal resistance to gender equality initiatives. Thus, rather than regarding male supporters of gender equality in parliament as merely about women’s pragmatism to negotiate patriarchy, we need to engage with the question of men in gender discourses with the critical attention it deserves, as a discursive category. This also calls for a critical examination of assumptions about gender and power that constitute the construction of some

men as promoters of gender equality, recruited by women to critique gender inequalities on women's behalf, and how these men perform and relate to women and other men.

The local, regional and international calls outlined earlier to engage men and boys in gender equality work speak to an apparent global challenge. The interventions are diverse and complex in terms of their geographical and disciplinary origins. The narrative on MaleEngage has produced a vast complexity of categories, such as 'male allies', 'gender advocates', 'sympathetic men', 'moderate men', 'male role models', 'male champions of change' or 'male champions of gender equality' and more collective categories such as 'male action groups'. These categories emerge in a global discourse that seeks to reconceptualise the meaning of gender in an attempt to address persistent gender inequalities although, as I argued earlier, they do not necessarily challenge gender power relationships.

Architects of this approach of engaging men and boys in the empowerment of women and girls have repeatedly pointed out that "gender issues concern men too". However, in chapter 1, I showed how some of the global practices that mobilise male support for gender equity initiatives have tended to reproduce gender inequalities (see the critique of Emma Watson's popular speech on the HeforShe campaign and the male champions of change in Australia). Watson, a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, argued "that when women's problems are solved, men will be free too"<sup>26</sup> but later divulged the depressing backlash against the "HeforShe" campaign in 2017.

The HeforShe campaign and other similar rhetoric on gender equality and women's empowerment serve both as recognition (albeit superficially) that gender issues concern men as

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<sup>26</sup> See Karen Straughan's critique on Emma Watson's promise that when women's problems are solved, men will be free too (<http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/heforshe-emma-watsons-empty-promise-that-when-womens-problems-are-solved-men-will-be-free-to-be-human-too-3288855-Mar2017/> accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018). Straughan characterizes the promise, delivered at the launch of the HeforShe campaign, as an empty one that triggered feminist backlashes. These relate to how, as a privileged, wealthy, white dabbling elitist, Emma Watson could use her substantial international clout to "presume to speak on behalf of women whose lives and struggles she could never truly understand". Further critiques relate to how gender equality initiatives (such as the HeforShe campaign) ignore men's gendered needs and interests by assuming that once "all women and girls are liberated from the shackles of gendered oppression, [men's lives] will magically improve too".

well as a formal invitation to men to support women in ending gender inequalities. What assumptions do such global initiatives hold? How have the MaleEngage programmes, policies, action plans and advocacy messages invoked this strategic focus on gender issues as a men's issue? What implications do such narratives have for challenging gender inequalities? I argue that while these global campaigns that seek to involve men in promoting gender equality have mobilised massive male support for gender equity work, they remain shallow and are inadequately conceptualised to engage with the diverse gendered experiences of women as well as men, especially when they assume that “when all of women's problems have been solved, and all women have been liberated from hardship, men will be free to be ‘vulnerable and human too’.”<sup>27</sup>

## Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that the question of women's participation in parliament in Uganda is rooted in what appears to be ‘politics’ of inclusion and the language of representation introduced by the National Resistance Movement (Ahikire, 2017). This approach that sought to include women previously excluded from public politics, mobilised women as a special interest group along with the youth, the elderly and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). In terms of the affirmative action policy, women not only entered politics in increasing numbers but were also accorded a social constituency from which to mobilise and demand equality. However, I pointed out that through the politics of inclusion, women were targeted as an essential category in opposition to men and that gender equality advocacy neglected men's explicit ‘role’ and interests in pursuit of a gender equitable political dispensation. This is the kind of identity politics that Butler (1990) is critical of – where a singular and unifying identity, ‘woman’, serves as a

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<sup>27</sup> See Karen Straughan's article, “HeForShe: Emma Watson's empty promise that when women's problems are solved, men will be free too”, at <http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/heforshe-emma-watsons-empty-promise-that-when-womens-problems-are-solved-men-will-be-free-to-be-human-too-3288855-Mar2017/> (accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

foundation for political theorizing and action. The inherent danger is that such feminist action fails to capture the varied and complex experiences of women and more so, those of men.

Furthermore, scholars that have evaluated women's effectiveness in political participation without similar scrutiny of the role of men in parliamentary debates simplified the understanding of gender in parliamentary processes as about women. Clowes (2013) alerts us to the dangers of conflating gender with women and men's evasion and resistance to the gender equality movement. In the same light, I cited studies which point to women parliamentarians' mobilization of some male legislators to speak to gender issues on their behalf in order to negotiate male domination in parliamentary debates. That men are selected by women to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates dominated by men remained a central question this study explored. In the article "Missing Men? Reflections on men, masculinities and gender in GAD", Cornwall (2000: 19) is critical of development interventions that focus exclusively on women as if women "exist as an entity that lies outside the nexus of social relations in which individual members are embedded". Cornwall argues that, this might "obscure the extent to which normative ideas about gender may simply be replicated in these contexts". This is especially true "where men are invited in as leaders to avert conflict between women or because women feel unable to manage such projects effectively alone". This study shares Cornwall's concerns and suggests a deconstructive approach to the ways in which gender in parliamentary discourses is conceptualised as well as how men come to speak to gender issues on behalf of women.

My interest does not lie in undermining feminist efforts that historically drew on a variety of strategies to make the plight of women as subjects visible and legitimate in parliament. Rather, opening up such spaces for critical reflection is, as Cornwall (2000: 20) states, "a step towards beginning to rethink our strategies" in light of gender relations that are contingent upon time and space.

## Chapter Three: Reflections on the research process

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the “process” of conducting this research, with special attention to the theoretical assumptions that inform the study and the methods employed. It discusses the selection of the research site and participants, the methods used to collect data and data management, coding and analysis. I also highlight the ethical dilemmas I encountered and how these were addressed.

I reflect on the interviews and the ethnographic work I conducted in parliament as particular research contexts and the processes through which knowledge was produced. I show how observation of parliamentary debates enabled me to understand parliament as a social context in which people interact, forge relations and position themselves based on sex, gender, seniority, political affiliation, and age, among other identifications. I indicate how some of the affective interactions that symbolize differences in gender and power relations are neither picked up during debates nor recorded in the Hansard. This is demonstrated through discussion of how I observed parliamentary debate sessions and drew on these observations in conjunction with Hansard recordings to provide insights not only on *what* was said during debates but also the forms of communication and interaction and changes in tone.

Furthermore, I reflect on interviews as social encounters through which I met, established certain kinds of relations and engaged with the study participants through the questions I asked and the manner in which they responded (Mishler, 1986; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews as social encounters depart from the common understanding of interviewing that foregrounds the need for researchers to detach and distance themselves from those they are researching. Instead, I focus on interviews as interactions within which knowledge is co-produced between the researchers and the interviewees through the questions asked, assessments, silences, and responses. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 17), interviews are ‘active’ encounters through which “interview knowledge is produced in conversational relations” where interviewers

and interviewees engage each other as they talk about their day-to-day lives. I exemplify this approach as I reflect on how my research assistant and I related to each other and the participants and how these relations enter the production of interview data. In some cases, I draw on empirical data in creative ways to critically analyse what research as a 'process' means and its implications for knowledge production and what counts as data.

I draw on recent feminist scholarship which argues that knowledge is produced in research encounters and advocates for forms of research which seek to engage research participants as knowledge producers (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; DeVault & Gross, 2012; Gannon & Davies, 2012). My interest in understanding research as a process is also influenced by the 'turn to language' in feminist theory (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Butler, 1988; Butler & Scott, 1992; Speer, 2005; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008), which has troubled the categories of 'woman' and 'man' and focused attention on how they are produced and reproduced in social texts and everyday social encounters, including those that form the basis for my research. In this context, gender is understood as something we 'do' rather than something we are (Butler, 1990; Speer, 2005) and it was performed in the everyday processes of undertaking research.

Furthermore, I draw on forms of narrative analysis that pay attention to the ways people use stories to organise, interpret, report, and evaluate past experience (Cortazzi, 2001: 384). Narratives, that is, stories through which people make their personal experiences known to others, can be analysed as a social process or performance in action, especially where they are told with the audience in mind (Cortazzi, 2001: 388). These analytical approaches – feminist scholarship and narrative analysis – are exemplified in my research as I focus on how gender and power are enacted in parliament through Hansard texts, live parliamentary debates and in the interviews I conducted with parliamentarians and participants from women's rights organisations.

## **Reflections on how my Research Assistant and I engaged with the Research Process**

Reflexivity is one of the central tenets in understanding research as a process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Pillow and Mayo (2012: 197) define reflexivity as "a tendency to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process". In this study, I use reflexivity to refer to the process of taking note of the different contexts within which knowledge is produced to avoid taking certain aspects of the research process for granted. These aspects include reflection on my position as a researcher, the role of my research assistant and the relations we developed with the participants. I also reflect on the broader social and cultural<sup>28</sup> and the immediate interview contexts participants drew on to frame their conversations (Heyl & Coffey, 2001; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). I indicate how these informed the way participants related to us and the meanings they attached to their everyday experiences.

### **Working with a female research assistant and her contribution to the research process**

In this research process, I engaged Irene Tanghaya as a research assistant. Irene and I conducted three of the 11 interviews together and she joined me in observing parliamentary debates. Irene had secured a job as court clerk a month before our interviews commenced. With the unpredictable interview schedules, it became difficult for her to conduct all the interviews with me as planned. She was, however, available for all the parliamentary debate sessions that we observed. She followed up and secured most of the interview appointments. Irene was a recent university graduate, and is a working, middle-class young woman. She undertook a three-month internship programme with the parliament of Uganda while she was still a student and her mother formerly served as both a member of parliament (MP) (2011-2016) and a minister of

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<sup>28</sup> By broad social and cultural contexts, I refer to how the participants refer to their cultures and their experiences in parliament to frame their conversations. Andrews *et al.* (2008: 65) argue that to understand such narratives, analysts need to "go beyond what narrators say in order to recognize how narrators draw on the wider culture".

state. She thus brought a wealth of experience to the research process that assisted in negotiating access to parliament and interviewing respondents as well as observing parliamentary debate sessions.

In the interviews that we conducted together, I took the lead since there were many issues I needed to connect across the interviews which Irene may have missed. Irene would then pick up on particular issues during the conversations, some of which I would have missed entirely. In the example below, I was leading the interview as we moved towards winding up our discussion with Maria, a women's rights activist working closely with parliamentarians. Irene interjects and raises a whole new debate on whether women do not want to be known as champions.

**Amon:** I get it, Thank you so much.

**Irene:** For me what I wanted to ask, don't you want to be known as a champion for the women's cause?

**Maria:** For us, we are already champions [laughter]

**Irene:** Don't you think that, leave the thing of status and what, but if women's problems have to still be solved by men, isn't a problem itself?

**Maria:** By men and women [prolonged laughter]

**Irene:** Remember you are putting a male face so that you can get the Bill passed.

**Maria:** We are looking at the number, you know at Parliament or in a political place, you look at the number. The number determines a lot of things, you are 140 women against 200 and something men, who has a bigger number and how do you move with them so that you have balance in your work? These are the issues we look at; the number is very important.

**(Interview with Maria, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016).**

Irene noticed that I was winding up the discussion yet she had picked up some issues. She raises serious issues on why the category of 'male champion' is not available to women and by doing so, questions why this category exists in the first place. She raises these concerns in ways that seek to deconstruct the category. The manner in which the two interact is also interesting. Irene, who is much younger and has less experience in women's rights advocacy than Maria, raises these concerns, which the latter responds to with subtle but dismissive laughter that Irene does not take lightly. She re-states her concern, appealing to the participant with an alternative suggestion that men speaking on behalf of women to solve women's problems might constitute a

problem in itself. When this is responded to with a 'simple' clarification [women's problems are solved] "by men and women", accompanied by prolonged laughter, Irene changes tact. She reminds the participant of her previous comments on why women work with men, that is, "putting a 'male face' so that you can get the Bill passed". It is at this point that the interviewee takes Irene's concerns seriously and engages in a longer turn-taking conversation, beyond the previous ones, to explain and piece her argument together.

As a young woman that had worked as an intern in parliament and with a mother active in politics, Irene expressed much interest in my study and there are issues that she could not take for granted. For instance, she is concerned about the idea that women should rely entirely on men as spokespersons and is critical of the assumption that women cannot be champions just because they are expected to advocate for gender equality. As it turned out, these became exciting themes in my research, which I probably would have missed had they not been picked up and followed up by my research assistant.

Reflection on our positions as researchers also highlighted significant interactive contexts through which data was co-produced between us and the interviewees. Mishler (1986) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995) argue that interviewers' presence influences the way stories are told. Mishler (1986: 82-3) warns that "while taking into account the role of the interviewer could be a difficult problem, nevertheless, it is not solved by making the interviewer invisible and inaudible, by painting her or him out of the picture". Despite these anticipated difficulties, I strive to indicate in this chapter and those that follow, how the interviewers contributed to the co-production of interview narratives with the interviewees.

### **Putting myself in the picture**

There is plenty of research that points to ways in which researcher's subject positions might influence both the design of the study and interactions between researchers and participants they work with. One question that comes to the fore then is the kind of influence my identities - as a young, male PhD student and a lecturer at a university - had on the research process. In chapter

1, I pointed out how researching male promoters of gender equality was motivated, in part, by my past experience as a male undergraduate student offering an academic subject – Gender Studies – in which males were invisibilised by constructions of the subject as feminine.

Throughout the study, I on methodologies that critique power hierarchies amongst researchers and research participants and privilege participants as co-producers of knowledge. Consequently, rather than front my subjectivity as a powerful researcher, I always endeavored to “listen” to participants – which in Marjorie DeVault’s terms (1990) goes beyond ‘giving voice’ to participants to include paying attention to what participants are saying, the unsaid and understand the context of their talk. In chapter 5, I show how I had initially conceived male champions as descriptive until it was critiqued by female participants as a problematic category that idealized men as powerful while negating women’s agency and historical role as instigators of gender equality. In the same chapter (see Pp 114) I pointed out how Janet, a former women MP alluded to cultural discourses that constitute men as intelligible speakers on sexuality issues while pathologizing women’s discussions on the same issues especially in the presence of men. Nonetheless, neither my identity (a male researcher) nor the presence of men in parliamentary debates (as the Hansard shows) deterred Janet and some other women MPs from speaking about the prohibited discussion – sexuality. Janet’s articulate discussion on sexuality issues with me placed her “outside the reach of power [and] upset the established laws” (Foucault, 1978: 6); demonstrated more of her deliberate exercise of power and hardly seemed influenced by my position as a male researcher.

I had also pointed out how Christopher greeted me for the second time, in a local language that he and I share, minutes before we began the interview and how, through this action, Christopher locates himself and me in similar tribal identity. A similar scenario happens again with Fred in the course of the interview. Fred asked me whether I was a *munyankole* (one of the tribes in Uganda that he identifies with) and when I answered in affirmative, he went ahead to share with me about Kinyankole traditional practices and how they have been changing over time. The point I am making in Christopher and Fred’s orientation towards me in the examples above is

how our common ‘tribal identity’ came into play and influenced, in some ways, the dynamics of our interview conversations.

Notably, while my identities – as a young, munyankole, PhD student and a lecturer at Makerere University – and my research assistant’s as well, appeared to influence the dynamics of the interviews I conducted, my identity as a male researcher, exploring ‘male champions’ was not something that arose as significant. Yet, this does not in any way downplay the importance of reflecting on researchers’ gender identities in the research process. A study by Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) points out ways in which researchers’ gender (and other) identities influenced the way the 11-14 year-old boys in London schools experienced individual and group interviews. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman’s rather exciting self-reflexive ‘discoveries’ are realised through researchers posing specific questions to boys (often at the end of discussions) on how they (young boys) felt about being interviewed by a particular researcher and whether it would make a difference had the sex of the researcher been different. It is also notable how the researchers drew on different forms of interviewing (individual, mixed-sex group interviews), in particular, follow-up interviews to compare how interviewees related with each other and the researchers as they talked about ‘being’ boys. They argue, “[t]he second interview explored repetitions, contradictions and gaps in the material from the first interview, allowed questions and offered the respondent the opportunity to reflect and comment on the process of the interview itself” (Frosh *et al.*, 2002: 8). Such follow-up discussions as Frosh and others demonstrate, and which my study hardly drew upon, avails us critical reflexive approaches that enable us to understand how researcher’s gender (and other) identities influence dynamics of the research process.

### **How I related to participants in positions of power (“studying up”)**

As a young male researcher on issues of gender in institutions (such as parliament and women's rights organisations) that symbolise power in Uganda, Irene and I conducted interviews in situations that exemplified power differences. In all the interviews we conducted, we were younger and in less powerful positions than our participants. Nonetheless, we intended to

approach interviews as encounters, where we would interact and forge democratic relations to enhance openness and curiosity (Thorne, 1993: 16) in the research process. Just like “studying down”, that is, working with participants of a lower social status than the researchers (Thorne, 1993; Wolf, 1993; Mayeza, 2016), studying people in more powerful positions required that Irene and I work to equalise these relations in order to ensure interactive and non-exploitative conversations. Thus, there were different dynamics in terms of how the participants related to us.

I remember my very first interview with Fred, which Irene arranged but did not attend because she had another engagement. I described it in my research diary as ‘difficult’ because of Fred’s dismissive and cagy conduct that characterised his unease at freely engaging in an interview. Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002: 25) speak about a similar situation in their study, indicating how power differences between adult researchers and 11-14-year-old male participants led to ‘difficult interviews’ as the researchers tried to ‘dig stuff out’ of the hesitant participants. Formerly a minister and an MP, Fred had offered to share his experiences on the legislative processes I was investigating but arrived late and was only willing to talk to me for 5-10 minutes. In the extract below I show how I negotiated these relations to hold a conversation beyond the 10 minutes he allocated.

**Fred.** You can have a seat and you interview me as long as you are willing to do that in 5 minutes,

**Amon.** [looked at him, surprised]

**Fred:** Ok, 5 to 10 minutes. Is there anything you do not really know about these legislative processes?

**Amon.** Actually, there is a lot that I do not know Honourable. That’s why I am here to learn from you.

**Fred.** I think you just want to record that amongst the people you talked to, there is a Former [‘high-profile legal official, a minister of ...] [title skipped to ensure anonymity] [prolonged laughter].

**Amon.** Hmm [smiles].

[Fred takes his seat and then asks]

**Fred.** How long have you been waiting for me?

**Amon.** One Hour so far. I had come in the morning at 11 am but was informed that you will be coming in office in the afternoon. So, I went back briefly and came at 1 PM.

**Fred.** Ok. Let's start...

**(Notes from my Research Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016).**

As seen in this extract, working around Fred's powerful position to engage in an interview in curious and interactive ways took time and negotiation. Through insistence, silence and reassuring Fred of his expertise in his everyday interactions in parliament, the interview commenced. Fred also asked how long I had been waiting for him, and I subtly reminded him that he had kept me waiting for hours. This shows how, 'waiting' for participants was perceived as signifying the researchers' investment in the study. On three different occasions, participants asked how long we had waited for them, subtly framing our waiting as a symbol of our commitment which obliged them to talk to us. By the end of the interview, it was clear that the Fred I started with was not the one with whom I ended the conversation. He became 'more willing' to share his perceptions and experiences. Our conversation went far beyond the time he had allocated and we spoke for 35 minutes. He also suggested a possible second meeting.

I compare this dynamic experience of interviewing Fred with an interview we held with Janet. Janet was a woman MP in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament and a commissioner in the ruling political party at the time of our interview. In my research diary, I reflected on the ease with which Irene and I met and held an interview with Janet compared to Fred and how my position as an academic at Makerere University could have contributed to this.

The interview was held at Hon. Janet's office on the same day Irene and I had gone to the office to request for an interview and make an appointment later. While we were visiting Janet's office for the first time to request for an interview appointment, we were also ready to conduct an interview in case she willing and ready. We (myself and the research assistant) arrived at Janet's office and requested to see her. We were told that she was not yet in office though they expected her soon so we waited and Janet appeared an hour later. We introduced ourselves and I gave her the research card that had details of the research project, requesting if she will secure some time to discuss with us on the issue. Janet connected with us easily and recalled that I had earlier interviewed her with a colleague of mine at Makerere University. As a women's rights activist, Janet had interacted more with academics from Makerere University, particularly at the School of Women and Gender Studies, an experience that made her receptive to us. **(Notes from research diary, Wednesday 17th August 2016.)**

Unlike Fred, Janet agreed to talk to us there and then with no prior conditions. It is notable that strategies such as visiting in person to make an appointment and readiness to conduct an interview at any time, worked well in Janet's case. I noted in my diary that this approach was becoming common in negotiating access to and interviewing prominent respondents such as politicians who usually have erratic schedules. It is also notable that my position as an academic in the School of Women and Gender Studies which has had connections with women's rights activists like Janet was useful in facilitating democratic engagement.

There are also cases where the participants themselves were heavily invested in equalizing power differences between themselves and us (researchers). Moments before Irene and I interviewed Christopher (a minister at the time), the latter narrowed the physical 'gap' between himself and ourselves in his expansive sitting room, by joining us and forming a small circle of three to enable us engage dialogically. Christopher found us in his sitting room, greeted us and took a seat on the other side of the room. He then greeted me again in '*Runyankole*' – a local language that he and I share. He told us that he had indeed seen my appointment request at his office but had not had time to call back since he had spent a week at a cabinet retreat. He then offered to talk to us and as we were about to start the discussion, I requested permission to audio-record our conversation. It is at this point that Christopher realized we were separated by a wide gap that could compromise audible recording. He then offered to close in as I indicate in the extract below.

"I think if we are going to discuss on a recorder [digital voice recorder], let me come closer to you". Christopher then takes a smaller movable chair and draws it next to the couch where Irene and I were seated in a manner that narrows the physical space between us the researchers and himself. This was symbolic of the narrowing of the gap between the researcher and the participant – narrowing the hierarchical power relations. (**Notes from Research Diary Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016.**)

My immediate reflection after the interview with Christopher was how easily he had offered to draw close to us during and immediately after the interview in ways that enabled us to engage in conversation free of the positional power he held. Christopher accompanied us to the gate of his

residence after the interview. It is notable that even though we featured as less powerful researchers, we enacted subtle power and investedness in this particular case. Christopher's apologetic tone – having seen the many appointment request forms I had filled at his office – acknowledges the effort we invested. He also seemed to construe our visiting his home on a Sunday afternoon in search of an appointment as extra effort and desire to learn from him. As researchers, we had exercised power in our own way by mounting a relentless search for the minister which yielded interactive conversation. Researchers such as Mayeza (2015: 78) and Pattman and Bhana (2017: 195) have elaborated on how power relations between researchers and participants can be negotiated through group arrangements such as sitting in circles where participants and researchers appear collegial and at a similar level. In this particular case, the minister's initiative to draw close, forming a 'circle of three' – the minister, Irene and I – was helpful not only in bridging the power gap and enhancing audibility for the voice recorder but also seemed to work effectively in making us feel at ease with one another.

### **Theoretical assumptions informing this methodology**

As noted in chapters 1 and 2, this study draws on versions of poststructural feminism, and critical studies of men and masculinities to raise questions on what counts as data in this chapter and those that follow. I approached men and women participants as 'experts', not in the sense of deferring to them as powerful people occupying powerful positions in parliament and women's rights organisations, but in engaging with them and their experiences and understandings of gender practices as played out in and outside parliament. My focus was to encourage them to talk about their own experiences while learning from what they said and how they positioned themselves through the stories they told. I agree with Heyl's (2001: 373) reflection on ethnographic interviewing in which she characterises interview encounters as dynamic with "every interview as an interpersonal drama with a developing plot".

I also focused on parliament as a social context and an institution in which people interacted, forged relations and positioned themselves in particular ways, or in Goffman's terms, a 'setting' that is "a stage scenery and visible equipment" (Burns, 1992: 116). Erving Goffman uses an

analogy of the world as a stage where we act out our everyday life experiences. He emphasises human behavior as performed<sup>29</sup> before others (the audience) through social interaction (Goffman, 1959). In what came to be popularly known as the dramaturgical approach to the analysis of social interaction, Goffman argued that the way we behave while we are with others (front stage) is likely to be different from our behavior when we are alone (backstage). In his analysis of front/backstage, Goffman foregrounds the importance of ‘audience’ and ‘context’ in our behavior. In this chapter, I underscore the importance of parliament as a stage upon which women and men members act out their gender, social status, age and seniority through what they choose to say or do.

I also draw on Judith Butler’s conception of gender as a performance (Butler, 1988, 1990) and Foucauldian conceptualisation of language as productive rather than descriptive (Foucault, 1978; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008) as well as on works on narrative research and analysis (Andrews *et al.*, 2008a; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008b; Musila, 2015). In her work “A death retold in truth and rumour: Kenya, Britain and the Julie Ward murder”, Grace Musila draws on media reports, court cases, rumours and books on the gruesome murder of a young female British tourist in Kenya to demonstrate how narrative work is not necessarily about discovering and consequently revealing the facts about past experiences (in her case, Julie Ward’s murder) through rational means of investigation. Indeed, she characterises her book not as a “work of investigative journalism” but rather as exploring different “versions of truth and their attendant fictions...” (Musila, 2015: 3). Musila adds that her interest in this analytic approach lies in how “narrative works as a critical intervention in understanding social reality, by not only mediating reality but also attempting to influence its meanings and interpretations” (Musila, 2015: 4). Her interest in narratives as contexts in which meanings are constituted, interpreted and represented with the particular motives of the narrators in mind, speaks to my study’s focus on how women talk about the men they identify to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates on their

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<sup>29</sup> A ‘performance’ may be defined as all activities of a participant on a given occasion which serves to influence other participants in any way (Goffman, 1959: 8)

behalf and how these men perceive and represent themselves in relation to women and other men.

The above theoretical resources are drawn from post-structural and feminist frameworks that pay close attention to language particularly on how language operates not simply as a means to describe reality but as a meaning-making process. I focus on how my research participants (women who are women's rights activists and men who identify and/or are identified as 'champions' of gender equity bills in parliament) position themselves while addressing parliament and during interview conversations. I am interested in how the positions people take up in everyday interactions are connected to the operation of gender power relations, and how masculinities and femininities are produced relationally in different kinds of contexts. I note that in parliamentary contexts, where speeches are the order of the day, it is crucial to examine how meanings are made through linguistic interactions between women and men as well as what these processes reveal about how power operates.

### **Selection of the research site and participants**

A case study qualitative research design was employed to obtain a detailed understanding of the phenomenon of male legislators who speak to gender equity issues on behalf of women in the Parliament of Uganda. The study focused on the case of the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament (2006-2011) that is credited with effectively promoting pro-women legislative policy reforms (Wang, 2013; Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015). Ahikire and Mwiine (2015) note that this parliament passed several gender-related pieces of legislation, including the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (2010), the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009; the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act, 2010; and the Equal Opportunities Act, 2010. Certain female Members of Parliament (MPs) are also on record as having engaged in mapping male MPs to identify those known as gender-sensitive and those with considerable power over parliamentary debates (Wang, 2013; Ahikire & Mwiine, 2015)

With the terrain established, I purposively selected two pieces of legislation, the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and the Domestic Violence Act (2010), which were passed in the same year to analyse 1) how and why particular men came to be selected to lead or ‘champion’ these bills, 2) what being a champion entailed, and 3) how these men related to women legislators during the legislative process. The study participants were also purposively selected (Palys, 2008) through the initial reading of the Hansard that documented parliamentary proceedings. The Hansard includes the name, sex, and geographical constituency of each person who contributes to debates. On the floor of parliament, references were also made to other organisations that were mobilizing in favour of these pieces of legislation. Most were women's rights organisations that I could easily identify. Participants were therefore considered based on their participation in the pieces of legislation that I investigated.

### **Sampling Strategies**

Before beginning my fieldwork, I generated a list of possible participants. However, during the process of interviewing, participants recalled their engagements with other legislators and people in civil society. After we spoke, some would refer me to other people, in some cases going so far as to volunteer the person's contact details. In some instances, the person was already on my list of prospective participants and in other cases, new participants, some of whom I would not have thought of, were introduced to me. In their discussion on “active Interview[ing]”, Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 74) argue that “sampling for an active interview is an on-going process; designating a group of respondents is tentative, provisional, and sometimes even spontaneous”.

Thus, a new set of respondents suggested by participants emerged from the on-going interview process. Noy (2008) refers to this as snowball sampling. I used snowball sampling to access networks of politicians and civil society workers who belonged to closely-related legislative networks. These networks offered an opportunity to explore participants' shared experiences. Furthermore, encounters from such socially connected networks enabled shared narratives to be generated and the participants complemented one another's stories which enhanced their richness. Such relational encounters made interviewing relatively easy (Noy, 2008: 330).

Snowball sampling worked well with purposive sampling because it enabled me to break into the ranks of an elite group of politicians who shared particular experiences (Noy, 2008; Palys, 2008). For example, after interviewing Janet, a female former MP and chair of the women's caucus in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament, she alerted Irene and I to several men in parliament with whom she had worked during the passing of the domestic violence and FGM laws. Janet identified these male MPs as 'champions' and volunteered their telephone numbers and physical addresses. I shared with her my fear that since one of the men she identified had been appointed a minister it might be difficult to access and secure an interview with him. She advised us on how to access high-profile politicians: "I know Hon. Minister, just send him a message on your mobile phone and say you got his contacts from me. He will attend to you. If you call, he might think you are one of the voters in his constituency who usually call". Without this advice, I would not have thought that sending a short message (SMS) on a mobile phone would be an appropriate way to approach a minister for an interview.

However, snowball sampling came with its own challenges. On several occasions, I was referred to participants based on their technical input on the content of the laws under study rather than their active involvement in mobilising support for the bill and its presentation, debate and passing into law, which is the focus of this study. A case in point is when Fred, a former minister, legislator and a participant in this study, referred me to Kiwanuka, a senior legal officer with the Uganda Law Reform Commission. This institution is responsible for undertaking background research and drafting legislative proposals on behalf of the government. Such prospective participants were not necessarily concerned with the aspect of the legislative process I was engaging with. In such cases, I did not follow up these references.

## How I conducted my research and the lessons I learned from the process

This study employed three qualitative methods of inquiry, that is, direct observation of debates in the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, analysis of parliamentary records (Hansard<sup>30</sup>), and semi-structured qualitative interviews. I drew on direct observation and semi-structured interviews to keep an open mind on what might emerge (Bryman, 2012) from what I observed in parliamentary debates and interview conversations. I broadly aimed to investigate assumptions about gender and power that constitute the construction of men as ‘champions’ of pieces of legislation that seek to challenge gender inequalities. This required that I pay attention to how men came to be constituted as champions, and how male champions relate to women and other men. I then examined the implications that this strategy has for the long-term campaign of gender equality.

Guided by feminist scholarship and the ‘turn to language’, I approached interviews as complex processes of conversation between humans who not only engage in talking but also actively constitute meanings through *what they say* and *how they speak* (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Pattman & Bhana, 2017). Pattman and Bhana (2017: 196) emphasise that it is important to focus not only on what participants say but also *how* they say it. They argue that restricting oneself to what participants say conveys nothing about how data emerges, the kinds of emotions expressed and the relational dynamics which are established in the process of conducting interviews.

Direct observation was informed by feminist ethnography which seeks to document “women’s lives and activities, which were previously largely seen as marginal and subsidiary to men’s” (Bryman, 2016: 446). See also Skeggs (2001), Bryman (2012) and Pillow and Mayo (2012) on feminist ethnography. Skeggs (2001) argues that feminist ethnography’s emphasis on participants’ experience, voice and lives fits well with the goals of feminism. This approach enabled me to pay attention to the experiences of female MPs and how they interacted with men in parliamentary debates.

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<sup>30</sup> In Uganda, Hansard (verbatim transcripts) are public documents that can be accessed by any interested party through online parliamentary archives. Printed versions are also available in the parliamentary library.

## **Negotiating access to Parliament and observation of parliamentary debate sessions**

As noted earlier, my research assistant and I also directly observed parliamentary debate sessions in the current (10<sup>th</sup>) parliament<sup>31</sup>. I sought to learn, first-hand, from the way male and female MPs interacted with one another and how these interactions were mediated by gender, age, social status, and seniority. Aware of the different kinds of ethnographic observation, I adopted one of Atkinson and Hammersley's (1994:248) categorisations, that is, that of a 'complete observer' or direct observation (Pillow & Mayo, 2012).

Our observations were guided by a semi-structured checklist (see Appendix 1) that outlined the broad aspects that we sought to follow during these debates. As part of an exploratory study, we set out to observe broad themes around the rules, norms and practices that guide legislative work, how female and male legislators expressed themselves during the debates and the issues they raised. Besides these pre-determined themes, we were also open to new themes that would emerge to enable us understand how legislators behave during debates.

We used observation of the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament (2016) to understand the context in which legislation in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament (2006-2011) might have occurred. We were aware that some changes would have occurred since the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament; thus this observation was not intended as a 'one-to-one' mapping of the two parliaments. Rather, it was used to better understand the likely continuities in institutional rules, norms and practices. Our observation began with obtaining clearance from the office of the Clerk to Parliament and the parliamentary research unit in conjunction with the office of the Sergeant at Arms and human resources. These are the gatekeepers of parliamentary business. When these offices consented, I was provided with an identity card designating me as a researcher at parliament for four months (August – November 2016). This enabled me to gain access to the parliamentary premises.

Irene and I observed a total of five parliamentary debate sessions. In each, we sat, listened and observed what legislators said and did. We jotted down brief notes and shared them after each session to reflect on emerging themes (Bryman, 2012). We identified commonalities and differences in what we observed and the meanings that reflected on what these possibly pointed to. In our first session, for example, Irene noticed that whenever a ‘point of order’ or ‘point of information’ was raised against female MPs, they would resume their seat. This was not common when a point of information was addressed to male speakers. A ‘point of order’ is a parliamentary procedure in which a member identifies that another member has transgressed acceptable behavior during the debate and seeks a ruling from the Speaker of Parliament on this conduct. On the other hand, an MP raising a ‘point of information’ seeks to furnish the floorholder with more information or clarity regarding what the latter is discussing. We concluded that this should be added to our observation checklist and monitored it during subsequent sessions. Formulating a checklist before the study commenced enabled us to situate our observations but it was open to change as we became more familiar with the research site. Furthermore, we observed emotional expressions which could not have been pre-determined on the checklist.

Some of the issues that emerged during observation of parliament were explored further in our interviews (Bryman, 2012). We would ask participants, particularly MPs, to help us to understand the meanings that are attached to these interactions in the context of parliament. In chapter 4, I present a detailed discussion on parliament as a research setting in which men position themselves in ways that identify them as distinct from women and how these polarities produced Parliament as a difficult place for women to engage and be taken seriously. I argue that these polarities enable the notion of men as champions to emerge from within parliament itself.

### **Observing strategies through which men dominate debates**

As we observed parliamentary sessions, we were keen to focus on how frequently women and men took to the floor to contribute to the debates. We would then follow up on the ease with which women and men raised and debated issues, and the way they influence legislative trends.

In a session on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016, ten ‘issues of national importance’<sup>32</sup> were raised, all by male MPs. Such issues are routinely raised in the first hour of every parliamentary sitting, which, according to the rules of procedure, is referred to as the private members’ business session. In the session that followed<sup>33</sup>, we counted the number of issues raised and took note of how the debate unfolded. We compiled a tally of the submissions by sex to ascertain the frequency with which male and female MPs raised issues and the interest such issues generated. During our period of observation, five issues were raised, one by a female MP. Other MPs and government ministers also responded to issues raised and these responses were quantified and categorised as ‘influence generated by the issues of national importance’. We noted that 13 males and seven females submitted reactions to the five issues of national importance that were raised. These included responses from the Speaker of Parliament and ministerial statements. Male MPs often dominated when it came to raising issues and holding the floor on points of ‘information’, ‘procedure’, and ‘order’ among others. A detailed discussion on these empirical findings is presented in chapter 4. I note that these kinds of interactions afford male legislators greater visibility and audibility and give a masculine face to parliamentary debates and parliament as a patriarchal institution (Tamale, 1999). However, we also noted ways in which female MPs acted in powerful ways. This was exemplified in the frequent exchanges with the female government chief whip. While men visibly dominated the debates, this did not imply that women were powerless and subservient to the vocal and disruptive men.

### **Observing emotional expressions often omitted in the Hansard**

We also observed the gendered ways in which MPs expressed themselves during debates, which go unrecorded in the Hansard. Coffey (2014:371) argues that documents [such as the Hansard] can be analyzed as ‘social artefacts’ imbued with cultural ways of meaning construction and

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<sup>32</sup> This session usually takes place within the first hour of each parliamentary sitting. Any MP with an issue that has cropped up in their constituency is free to raise it for debate and response.

<sup>33</sup> Session observed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016.

power dynamics. We noted widespread murmurs that tended to disorient a female or male MP holding the floor and compel him/her to ask the Speaker to intervene. Applause from MPs, as a way of collectively approving of a submission from their colleague(s), as well as nodding the head or stamping their feet to indicate (dis)approval, were other commonly used but unrecorded expressions. All these expressions can be symbolic ways in which gender power relations are performed during parliamentary debates, yet they are hardly captured in the verbatim Hansard that I analysed for this study.

### **‘Policing’ women’s conduct in parliament**

Attending parliamentary debate sessions enabled me to observe the multiple ways in which expressions of gender and power played out during debates. These included bullying, teasing, and heckling as a means to monitor and regulate the ways MPs, particularly women, debated. In one of the observation sessions, I twice observed female MPs rising to speak for the first time. As one did so, she pleaded with the Speaker of Parliament to protect her from what she called “interruption” because she was giving her maiden speech – her first speech as an MP. This generated much laughter and jeers especially from male MPs, as men who spoke for the first time never sought this kind of protection<sup>34</sup>. Though subtle, in these debates, women and men invoked their gender and seniority<sup>35</sup> to construct polarities and ‘police’ any kind of transgressive behavior through humour, intimidation, undermining and bullying not only new women legislators but also women in senior leadership positions. Through reflections on ‘maiden speeches’ (which I elaborate on in detail in chapter 4), I observed that male dominant and bullish behavior was pervasive in debates, yet it passed unnoticed even when it seemed to undermine other honorable colleagues. Instead, male domination was shrouded in humour as indicated in the several times the senior male MP and others in parliament laughed off new women MPs’ requests for protection from interruption, or sarcastically raised ‘maiden questions’ and ‘maiden

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<sup>34</sup> At least in the sessions that I observed.

<sup>35</sup> Senior in the sense that one had spent more than one term of office in parliament.

information'. Observing these performances enabled me to understand the context of parliament as a theatre (Goffman, 1959) in which gender power relations are performed, and as a setting whose dynamics make the notion of men as spokespersons for women on gender issues possible.

### **Lessons learned from observation of parliamentary debates**

In this section, I have shown how observation enabled us to capture the interactive context within which parliamentary debates occur. Some of the aspects observed highlighted parliament as a theatre where MPs act in relation to one another based on their age, seniority, gender, and political affiliation, among other identifications. Through these observations of day-to-day practices in parliamentary debates, I argue that there is much we can learn about 'doing' gender and power through exploring the formal and informal practices in which MPs engage. While some of these practices, most of which are micro and informal, go unnoticed, they influence the way women and men relate, and what they can or cannot do.

The contestations about female MPs giving their maiden speeches died out in humour yet they produced gendered dynamics in which women are interrupted during their first speech, limiting their ability to contribute to debates. Beyond being constituted as part of a joke, this had the effect of bullying (the women newcomers), and intimidating, trivializing and undermining them. Women and men's experiences in parliament point to the complex ways in which age and seniority intersect with gender in the patronising construction of the female politicians giving their maiden speeches. Even in parliament where one might assume that the very presence of women MPs is testament to women's capacity to participate as national leaders, women parliamentarians are 'put in their place' in ways which involve infantilisation. The implication is that parliament itself is an institution which is implicated in the production of patriarchal relations even if it is also paradoxically a space which enables gender-sensitive legislation to be tabled and debated.

Drawing on observation as empirical data, I indicate that such micro experiences help us to understand the way that parliament as an institution can be studied and analysed as a gendered

and patriarchal institution. The particular examples discussed in chapter 4 show how men in parliament may position themselves in ways that seem supportive to women and to gender issues, yet these actions implicitly (and in some ways explicitly) point to male domination. Thus, my research highlights the micro aspects within a macro institution, but it is also concerned with the invisible as well as the visible, the gendered as well as the gender neutral, as I read into certain kinds of gendered performances. In the following section, I reflect on the interviewing process that Irene and I undertook.

### **Conducting interviews with ‘powerful’ respondents**

Questions about interviewing ‘powerful’ respondents first emerged during the process of developing my research proposal and gaining ethical clearance. I was often asked about the practicalities of accessing, conducting and sustaining a conversation with parliamentarians – interviewees perceived as ‘powerful’. For example, in my doctoral committee meeting, I was questioned about the possibility of getting high-profile politicians to sit and talk to me. “Politicians are busy people; how will you access them?” I replied that some of the prospective participants were likely to be less busy and therefore accessible because while some had served in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament, they had not been re-elected to the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament – this assumption was true in some cases. Furthermore, I had previously conducted research<sup>36</sup> with a similar category of participants regarding the politics of promoting gender equity through the Domestic Violence law and the policy on Universal Primary Education. Finally, the research networks of the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University where I am a member of staff offered some entry points for me to begin negotiating access to the participants.

I take the notion of ‘powerful’ participants to refer to the senior positions the interviewees held (both in parliament and civil society) in the Ugandan community, their influence in decision-

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<sup>36</sup> See Ahikire, J. & A.A. Mwiine. (2015). ‘The politics of promoting gender equity in contemporary Uganda: Cases of the Domestic Violence Law and the policy on Universal Primary Education’, *ESID Working Paper No. 55*. Manchester.

making, their location in Uganda's social hierarchy, and the visibility they enjoy as well as the spaces in which they carry out their day-to-day work, such as cabinet, parliament, civil society organizations' boardrooms, and courtrooms, among others.

Much has been written on how to interview respondents in communities of people who may be 'subordinate' to the researcher in terms of status and resources. Such respondents may include children (Thorne, 1993; Mayeza, 2015, 2016), learners (Pattman, 2011, 2013) and people living in poverty (Mwiine & Bantebya-Kyobuhendo, 2015), among others. The literature on ethical conduct of research often assumes that researchers occupy dominant and powerful positions (Wolf, 1993; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Wolf further discusses the ethical dilemmas of "studying down". Despite these studies, I found less methodological guidance on how to interview people in dominant positions of power such as political power.

While there is a body of literature on interviewing elites, these studies not only tend to portray the process as particularly demanding due to difficulties of access, the researchers' lack of control of the agenda and the informants' tight schedules but are also based on experiences from the western world (Bygnes, 2008). Thus, my reflection on interviewing powerful participants considers how I negotiated these barriers to not only access but also to actively engage men and women interviewees in conversations about legislative processes in Uganda. I also highlight interviewing men because existing research indicates that when doing so, one ought to consider how men 'do gender' during the interview processes (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002: 203). Interviewing men cannot be taken for granted; one must consider how to deal with 'men's inclination to enact culturally dominant forms of masculinity that include the portrayal of being in control, autonomous and rational ...' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009: 237).

### **Negotiating access to interview participants**

Irene and I conducted a total of 11 interviews with women and men from within and outside parliament. Five of the 11 participants were men. Four men and one woman were legislators in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament and they played a central role in mobilising for, presenting, debating and

passing the laws on prohibition of FGM and prevention of domestic violence. One male participant was a senior judicial officer and often trains female (and at times male) MPs on aspects of gender and the law, particularly how to legislate or interpret the law from a gender perspective. Other female participants were selected from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially from women's rights advocacy institutions. In earlier sections, I noted that these participants were selected through inductive methods of purposive and snowball sampling.

Although these participants had different institutional backgrounds, most occupied senior positions in their organisations. The highest position of those in government was a ministerial one, while the participants from NGOs held authoritative positions such as executive director and programme coordinator. All the participants were drawn from the political and professional elite and all were in their thirties and above. The majority resided and worked in the capital city, Kampala, while others worked a distance from the city (**See Appendix 2 on the list of participants**). More specific details on the participants I interviewed are provided as I analyse their conversations in chapters 5 and 6.

Despite the participants' powerful and elitist positions (Bygnes, 2008), we found it relatively easy to access them. I had been alerted to the difficulties of accessing such a group and thus devoted considerable effort to negotiating such. In our planning meetings, Irene and I agreed on a few strategies to conduct fieldwork. These included making sure that we secured appointments with the participants we had already listed. Once an appointment was secured, we ensured that we arrived early for the interview since the participants' schedules could change. We also agreed to interview the participants at their chosen location. In my research diary, I indicate how arriving ahead of time for an interview appointment gave me ample time to prepare but also to attract sympathy from the participants. Below I recall two experiences (interviews with Susana and Davis) on how I negotiated access and its implications.

In an interview with Susana, I arrived at her office 20 minutes before the agreed time for the interview only to be told that she had moved out and that I needed to call her, which I did. Susana had relocated to a nearby hotel (approximately 7 kilometres from her office) to get a

quiet environment where she would concentrate on her annual programme report. The report had to be submitted that week. On calling her, Susana suggested I join her at the hotel (if I could) to hold the interview there. (**Notes from my Research Diary, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

To me this was not only about my ability to be flexible regarding the venue, but was also about honoring Susana's choice of an alternative venue where she could not only talk to me with less or no interruptions but also complete her annual report. Honouring participants' actions (Heyl, 2001; Skeggs, 2001) during the research process is one of the ways of empowering them since it minimises the chances of exploitation and domination of participants. As it turned out, the hotel offered a quiet atmosphere for us to hold discussions without interruptions by her office mates or others. Susana was also able to resume her report writing immediately after our conversation. In reflecting on her experience of interviewing professional women on issues of sexuality at night or in isolated spaces next to their workplaces, Venganai (2017: 56) asks: "what is more feminist than working with participants' schedules and preferred spaces?"

Like Susana, Davis opted to be interviewed in his office that is more than 293 kilometers from the city where most of the interviews took place. Davis is a male adult senior judicial officer of the high court. He also often trains MPs on the interpretation of the law from a gender perspective. Because he holds these positions, Irene and I were in contact with him and although he had given us opportunities to meet, he twice failed to show up. We decided not to chase after him for an interview and instead pursue others. Two weeks later, Davis called me and apologized for not picking up his calls or showing up as we had agreed. He then asked: "Are you not interested in me anymore?" After the failed attempts, not even the distance to his office was going to deter us. Despite his status in the legal hierarchy and a busy schedule, Davis was willing to talk to me a bit longer than the usual interviews I had conducted.

**Davis:** How long do you think we shall be able to talk?

**Amon:** Hmm, I think 30-45 minutes.

**Davis:** No, no, no. You cannot come all the way from Kampala and we discuss for just 30 minutes. Let's talk, we shall see. (**Notes from the Research Diary, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016**)

My suggestion of a 30-45 minute interview was based on the assumption that Davis is busy and has little time to spare. In contrast, Davis appreciated our investment in this interview – the time and commitment to travel a long way to learn from his experiences. He thus seemed willing to talk to us in a manner that seems to construct us (researchers) as ‘committed’ to the study. He reciprocates this perceived commitment with a seemingly open-ended offer – "Let's talk, we shall see". Indeed, our conversation took a bit longer than other conversations.

### **Conducting an interview at the residence of a minister and its implications for the participant’s right to privacy**

One of the interviews that were conducted amid an ethical dilemma on participants’ right to privacy was at the minister’s residence. Christopher held a ministerial position in the cabinet at the time of interview. He was the sponsor of the motion on the prohibition of FGM. Because of his experience, he was amongst the participants we targeted, but he had a relatively busy schedule. During this time, I visited the minister's office more than three times to fill the appointment request form and wait for hours only to be told to try another time. The final time, I was advised by the officer at the front desk to consider meeting the minister at his home over a weekend. I asked whether this wasn't intrusive and thus compromised his right to privacy. I was assured that the minister regularly meets people at his residence for official purposes. Murphy and Dingwall (2001) urge researchers to always respect privacy as one of the inherent rights of participants. When I shared this news with my research assistant, she affirmed that most politicians do receive people at their residences. She shared that when her mother was an MP and deputy minister, their home was often the venue for official meetings. It was useful to draw on Irene’s experience as the daughter of a former minister to decide on how to approach Christopher for an interview in the ‘privacy’ of his home.

We opted to try and meet the minister at his home on a Sunday afternoon to make an appointment since he had not responded to our telephone calls and the request forms at his office. Like his office, his home had similar official procedures for requesting an appointment. Irene and I filled the form and were later granted an interview. Thus, while an interview at a

participant's home, on a weekend can be seen as an intrusion on his right to privacy (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001), this was the only feasible option to access a participant of this status. Venganai (2017) recounts that she opted to sleep over at her participants' homes to be able to conduct interviews during the night because this was the only time these working women in her study had to be interviewed. Besides, the minister's home had an official procedure to grant permission to any visitor. It should also be noted that the benefits of listening to a male minister speaking about his experience of tabling the FGM law outweighed any potential risk of harm (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001: 340) to him as a participant. In this case, harm would have occurred had he experienced anxiety, stress, guilt or low self-esteem as a result of compromised personal privacy.

In summary, interviewing powerful participants in this study was not only a significant learning process but was a creative way of producing knowledge. Contrary to pre-determined conceptions of elite and powerful participants as always busy and inaccessible, our interview experience indicates that access to such participants is context-specific and that it is possible to negotiate accessibility. From Janet's tip on how to contact a powerful politician through SMS followed by telephone calls to participants constituting us as committed after long-distance travel for interviews and negotiating ethics on privacy, through Irene's resourceful experiences, none of these could be pre-determined as my doctoral committee had anticipated.

### **Semi-structured interviews and lessons for qualitative interviewing**

The study used semi-structured interviews (Heyl, 2001; Bryman, 2012) (**See appendix 3 on the interview guide**). Bryman (2012: 471) describes such interviews as a relatively unstructured set of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered. Our interview guide contained a few specific questions regarding the emergence of men as promoters of gender equality legislation in parliament. We focused on general themes rather than specific, pre-determined questions. These broad themes included exploring how particular men became champions; and how those who identify as champions relate to other men and women. We also explored the implications of this strategy and its potential to challenge and/ or institutionalise gender inequalities.

Interviewees were thus asked to reflect on the above broad themes rather than to respond to specific questions with specific answers. Moving beyond the question-answer approach enabled the participants to tell stories, from which emerged new themes and ideas that we then picked up and followed on by asking probing questions (Bryman, 2012). We encouraged participants to elaborate on these, and asked what meanings they attached to the different events, ideas and trends they talked about. In the interview with Acol, the female executive director of a women's organisation, I requested her to share her experience of legislation prohibiting female FGM and domestic violence. In the extract below, she sets the agenda of our conversation in exciting ways.

**Amon:** Thank you so much and we thought you were key in this [legislative] process. You may not have been at the center of FGM but FGM and DVA are the two bills where men are being drawn on for support especially in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament. So, I wanted to learn from you what this strategy is, if it still exists ...

**Acol:** Maybe just to go back a little bit before even the strategy. I think it is important to understand the context in which we were working and assumptions that we were working with as women's rights organisations in responding to GBV specifically but violence against women generally... (**Interview with Acol on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016**)

Although my introductory question was open and broadly intended to solicit Acol's views on the FGM and domestic violence legislative processes, she requests that she share with me a brief history to provide the context for our reflections on how women's rights organisations have come to work with men on gender issues. She thus sets new parameters on where to begin and how to proceed with our conversation. She brings to the fore the significance of understanding social context (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995c; Andrews *et al.*, 2008a) in studies of this nature. This active approach to the interview allowed me to listen to her story and pick on the issues she was raising, but also to ask important questions with regard to why participants choose to respond to interview questions the way in which they do. By taking this approach, we engaged participants in active ways as they shaped the research agenda in some senses (Heyl, 2001; Skeggs, 2001).

The semi-structured interviews were flexible and offered an opportunity for participants to reflect on the events they considered as important and explain the meanings they attach to these. Feminist researchers support semi-structured interviews because they enable researchers to

engage participants in active ways, in the construction of data about their lives (Heyl, 2001: 374). This approach thus had an effect on how we related to the participants. Unlike structured interviews which separate the respondent from the context of their daily lives (Heyl, 2001) and lead researchers to assume more powerful positions in the research process, semi-structured interviews offered different relations. They offered avenues through which the interviewees were “invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics and encouraged to extend their responses” (Mishler, 1986: 69). By listening and picking up on new ideas that the participants raised, this approach enabled us to empower respondents through active participation and in raising new themes, to interpret their data through the explanations and examples they used and the meanings they attached to what they said.

### **How I used my research diary**

Research diaries have been used widely in qualitative studies, particularly those of an ethnographic nature, to record on-the-spot descriptions that are later expanded into field notes (Thorne, 1993; Mayeza, 2015; Venganai, 2017). Thorne (1993) shares how her routine scribbling of notes while she observed fourth-fifth grade learners in American schools emerged as a contentious theme as the children wondered why she was always hurriedly jotting down things in her notebook. Like Thorne, Mayeza (2015) kept a research diary, routinely recording children's behavior during play and when he conducted interviews with children and teachers. Despite the destructive potential of writing in a diary while observing or interviewing, research diaries capture on-the-spot descriptions of events during the research process that researchers build on to enrich their field notes. Such diaries are valuable in reflexive studies that pay attention to research as encounters, given that they provide a record of contexts within which the research occurs.

A research diary was one of the key resources I drew on in my study. After each interview, Irene and I set aside time to reflect on what transpired during the conversation. Each of us would write down descriptions of the setting within which the interview was conducted, for example, the physical location, the time we arrived, where we conducted the interview and how one interview

compared with the others. In our written descriptions, we also reflected on the ease or difficulty with which we felt the conversation was conducted, the relations amongst ourselves during the conversations, the language used and emotions observed, among others. We would then meet, share our write-ups and reflect on each of these. Reflection notes became an essential means of tracing emerging themes through our interviews and the basis for posing engaging questions in subsequent interviews. Guided by this reflexive approach, I embarked on preliminary analysis of the interview conversations (even before these were transcribed), often looking at the contexts (Andrews *et al.*, 2008a) in which our conversations were conducted and how these influenced what the participants said and how.

### **Transcribing the tape-recorded interview conversations**

While I had worked with a research assistant in conducting some of the interviews and ethnographic work, I transcribed all 11 interview conversations due to financial constraints. This enabled me to compare the interview conversations and identify common themes. Transcribing was a tedious but exciting exercise which I did while I was still in the field. I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim which means that I did not paraphrase or try to ‘correct’ (Mayeza, 2015; Venganai, 2017) the participants’ conversations.

The transcriptions contained turn-taking conversations indicating myself or the research assistant’s name and the name of the participant. Although the question of how detailed transcripts should be is contested (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 166), some of the transcripts have longer narratives depending on what the participants said but also how they said it (Mayeza, 2015). Focusing on how participants performed gender and power meant that I had to indicate details relating to what was said within the transcript as well as the sequence of the conversation and performances therein. Performances include emotional expressions such as laughter (sometimes indicated as ‘prolonged’), intonation, silences or hesitations (length indicated in seconds), gestures, and other body language (Pattman, 2007, 2013). All these constituted what counted as data.

## **Coding and analysis of data**

Coding involves organising the transcripts into manageable chunks (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). With all the data sets completed, I carefully read through all the transcripts, comparing them and mapping emerging themes in relation to the specific questions that guided the study. Some of these themes emerged during interviews but were identified during transcription and through reflection notes in my research diary. I coded my data in terms of its relevance (Mayeza, 2015) to my research questions. Some of the emerging codes or themes related to accounts of the emergence of the notion of male champions, detailed processes on how some men become male champions, what it meant to be a champion, men identified as allies and relational dynamics between male allies and other men and women.

I then exposed my data to the theoretical resources that inform the study. Informed by narrative theory, versions of poststructural feminism and feminist appropriations of discourse theory, I started analysing the data by posing questions on *how* and *why* participants presented themselves and organised their stories the way they did (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995a). Drawing on post-structuralism, I turned to an analysis of how the participants used language beyond mere description to constitute meanings in their everyday experiences. Post-structuralism turns to language or discourse as the primary site for analysis (Gannon & Davies, 2012) while other discourse analysts are concerned with looking at the detail of passages of discourse, however fragmented or contradictory and with what is actually said or written (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

## **Reflections on Ethical Issues**

Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Clearance (REC) Committee at Stellenbosch University and later from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology. Mayeza (2015:35) defines ethics as constituted by ethics committees that are responsible for granting ethical clearance for social science research in universities as:

Guidelines or standards that outline how researchers should engage with their (potential) participants in ways that are sensitive to their rights of voluntary participation after they have been informed of all the possible risks and benefits associated with their participation.

I sought consent at different levels from the participants and the participating institutions. With the help of my research assistant, I secured consent from the Parliament of Uganda to conduct research on the institution (see **appendix 4**). This enabled us to observe live parliamentary debates and secure access to the parliamentary Hansard. With permission from parliament, I applied for ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University's REC and received approval (see **appendix 5**), which reiterated my responsibility to obtain and document "effective informed consent using *only* the REC-approved consent documents, and to ensure that no human participants were involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent" (*ibid*: 35). This required that I obtain signed informed consent documents from all participants. However, I opted to request verbal consent (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001) since I anticipated that getting high-profile politicians to append their signatures to such forms would be difficult.

I then developed research cards (see **Appendix 6**), which I always left with the participants. The cards contained my research topic, "Promoters of Gender equality? A Study of the Social Construction of Specific male parliamentarians as 'Male champions' in Uganda" and my contact details as well as those of my research assistant, supervisors and the REC contact person at Stellenbosch University. I later realised that the research card with the details of my study was pre-emptive in itself and that at times it constrained participants from approaching our interview conversations in a broad way. For example, in one of the meetings to make an appointment with Susana, a female programmes official in a women's organisation, she offered to share her organization's publication and noted that all I needed to know about - 'male champions' - was contained therein. However, I navigated this by emphasizing the need for interviews as spaces in which meanings are co-produced. During interviews, I encouraged the participants to freely share their experiences as I picked up on the issues they raised in conversation.

### **Ethical dilemmas in maintaining anonymity and confidentiality**

Ethical conflicts (Posel & Ross, 2014) also emerged during data analysis. Posel and Ross show that researchers struggle to deal with the unanticipated complexities of the social relations between researchers and research participants in the process of doing research. Ethically, I was required to ensure that the information obtained during the course of this study is not disclosed without the participants' permission and that participants' anonymity is maintained through the use of pseudonyms, rather than their actual names in the final report and dissemination of the findings. During data analysis, I realized that in some narratives, I needed to remove the biographical features of certain participants to ensure their anonymity and maintain confidentiality. However, I noted that some of the participants drew on their job descriptions and titles to augment their subject positions. In this case, “subject” is not the sovereign precondition of action and thought but rather a “socially produced ‘agent’ and ‘deliberator’” (Butler, 2009: iii). These participants spoke emphatically about how, as ministers or judges of the high court or attorney generals, they took particular positions or behaved in particular ways because of the institutional position they held.

There were times when participants alluded to being ministers, judges, or executive directors of particular organisations. They would then emphatically add the titles and names of the organisations they worked for in ways that pointed to the powerful and influential subject positions they occupied. While I needed to maintain pseudonyms and 'mute' their titles as per ethical principles, this kind of ‘silencing’ had an impact on the eventual focus of my study, which is the analysis of power relations.

Mayeza (2015) raises similar questions about the limitation of harm through emphasising anonymity and confidentiality in research. His research participants – 6-8-year-old school children – wanted to be acknowledged and recognised in his research, especially for their drawings that Mayeza encouraged them to produce in his research on play. However, publishing the participants' names on the drawings would have violated the confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed in the consent agreement (Mayeza, 2015: 37). A comparison between the children in

Mayeza's study, who attended township primary schools in South Africa, and the high-profile Uganda politicians in my study, who include ministers, MPs, senior legal officials, judges and executive directors, raises key questions about in 'whose interests' the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality operate, especially in cases where participants would like to be credited with their ideas and words. This involves recognition that research is or ought to be inductive in the ways it engages with and takes seriously the agency of research participants.

Thus, in the process of doing research, there can be a mismatch between what is required when we complete ethical clearance forms and what actually occurs during field work. These forms themselves create ethical dilemmas since there was a discrepancy between what my interviewees wanted and what was decided in advance as to what counts as ethical research and committing to this approach. Ultimately, I decided to go along with the ethics committee and silence the powerful biographical information that would have compromised the identity of my research participants, but this was an ethically difficult decision to take.

### **Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality in more specific studies**

During data analysis, I noted that I had treated anonymity and confidentiality as a technical matter that was managed through rigorous procedures of using pseudonyms and muting the biographical information of some participants. However, this research was carried out in the single setting of parliament with a specific focus on the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament (2006-2011) and two pieces of legislation – the prohibition of FGM and the DVA. Concerns have been expressed that such an approach may not totally rule out data being attributed (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001) and thus genuinely protect participants and the ideas they share. Accordingly, "field notes and interview transcripts inevitably record sufficient detail to make participants identifiable" (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001: 341). For example, the proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament are all recorded verbatim with names of parliamentarians and are accessible to the public.

These insights raise the question: To what extent can we claim anonymity of the participants we engaged with in a specific study such as this on the behaviour of elite persons? In this case, is the

use of pseudonyms not simply lip service (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001: 340), rather than affording real protection to the research participants? These questions point to the need to rethink the contexts in which the principles of anonymity and confidentiality can be used meaningfully to protect participants or whether we might opt to empower our participants by mentioning their real names. My decision to use pseudonyms was thus more to do with respecting the promise I made to the participants rather than real protection of their identities since I discovered during data analysis that such protection was not possible in these circumstances.

In summary, the dilemmas that emerged during the course of this study point to the limitations of a constrained approach to thinking about research ethics that reduces the topic to pre-set ideals and commitments conveyed through standardised ethical clearance forms. In particular, the bureaucratic approach to 'ethics', which has as its cornerstone the ethics clearance committee, presents confidentiality as a non-negotiable ideal. This can at times go against the wishes of the participants themselves.

## **Summary**

This chapter detailed the research process followed in this study with a focus on participant-centred approaches to research, paying attention to what and how participants shared their experiences and the meanings they attach to these. I also indicated how a combination of ethnographic methods such as observation and interviews together with analysis of official records of parliament complement one another in ways that enrich the data gathered. Observing live parliamentary debates and reading Hansard often generated new themes that I followed up on during interview conversations.

Through observation, I noted that some of the aspects observed highlighted parliament as a theatre where MPs act in relation to one another based on their age, seniority, gender, and political affiliation among other identifications. Some of these performances are micro, subtle and gendered. Thus, my research highlights the micro-social aspects within a macro institution but it is also concerned with the inaudible and the intelligible speakers, invisible as well as the

visible, the gendered as well as the gender neutral, as I read into certain kinds of gendered performances. Most importantly, I showed the subtle ways in which male MPs talk about women and gender issues in empathetic ways and how they are likely to be seen as promoters of gender equality; yet, embedded in these practices is male patronage and domination. In chapter 5, I show how observing men speak about women and gender issues in parliament is one of the criteria to recruit men as champions of gender equality.

I showed how I managed to access and interview powerful respondents despite prior concerns about the difficulties associated with accessing and interviewing such participants. I elaborated on how Irene and I “studied up” by actively engaging with respondents that were more powerful than ourselves, in contrast to most research processes where researchers are in positions of power. I also described how our preparations, timeliness in arriving for interviews, flexibility and breaking into participants’ legislative networks enabled us to learn simple ways of accessing powerful politicians, for instance through use of SMS before a telephone call. For me, the fact that we managed to access and hold conversations with all the participants we targeted, without anyone opting out, demonstrated how “dependent, talk is upon context” (Frosh *et al.*, 2002: 47).

This chapter also illustrated how interviews can be used as spaces in which knowledge is co-produced in empowering ways. I demonstrated how using semi-structured interviews and encouraging women and men to talk about their personal experiences generated new ideas, themes and opinions that my research assistant and I always picked on and explored further. Some of these ideas were complex. Sometimes women and men participants took contradictory positions in their stories and at others they would position themselves in oppositional ways. Rather than perceiving some responses as right and others as wrong, I indicated how these complexities can be understood as ways through which men and women performed different versions of themselves in different contexts.

These complexities also highlight the significance of active interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995a; Heyl, 2001) in studies that focus on gender and identity construction. Such complex dynamics are illustrated in more detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6. In chapter 4, I elaborate on the

gendered performances in MPs' everyday interactions in parliament as I noted them in my ethnographic observation. I show how these often taken-for-granted micro and subtle gender performances implicate parliament in the production and normalization of patriarchal relations which constrain women's audibility, animating the need for male promoters of gender equity debates.

## Chapter Four: Gendered performances and ethnographic observations in parliament

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis of parliament as a social context. Using ethnographic observation of live parliamentary debate sessions in 2016, I focus on the informal and everyday ways that gender power relations are played out in the interactions between and among female and male legislators rather than on the formal tabling and discussion of gender-sensitive motions. This approach builds on chapter 3 where I reflected on the processes of doing research which engages with the dynamics of research encounters.

I engage with the psychoanalytic concept of Otherness (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996) to explore the mechanisms through which people are constructed as the Other in everyday life. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996: 8) argue that:

[a] key aspect of various theoretical approaches to othering ... is the observation that the notion of who and what others are (what they are like, the attributes assigned to them, the sort of lives they are supposed to lead) is intimately related to 'our' sense of who and what 'we' are. That is, 'we' *use* the other to define ourselves: 'We' understand ourselves in relation to what 'we' are not.

What emerges from this conceptualisation is the politics of representation of *self* and *the other* in hierarchical ways, dynamic power relations and the projection of fears, discomfort, desires, and anxieties onto the Other. One of the ways in which otherness is constructed in everyday life is when some people are constituted as 'speaking subjects' over others (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996). This makes the concept of the Other central to my study, especially in relation to the overall objective which is to investigate how certain men are selected to speak about or speak for

women on issues of gender in legislative debates rather than women being constituted as subjects in discourse.

This research is influenced by Tamale's (1999) study on "Gender and Parliamentary politics in Uganda", which investigates the complex ways in which gender as a social structure constrains but also empowers members of parliament in pursuit of their day today legislative duties in Uganda. Tamale draws on observation of parliamentary debates in conjunction with the reading of Hansard and qualitative interviews with parliamentarians to show how parliament offers a stage upon which gender is performed. She provides a detailed description of the scenic setting characterised by symbols of power such as the Speaker's mace, the Sergeant at Arms, the hierarchical seating arrangement and many other facets that depict power. She details the procedural guidelines on the appearance and conduct of honorable members, highlighting how men interrupt women in debate sessions and dominate legislative processes, albeit amidst women's resistance. By studying parliament in this way, Tamale foregrounds the importance of observing MPs' day-to-day ways of 'doing' gender in the context of parliament.

There is, therefore an overlap between my study and Tamale's in the sense that both focus on what might be termed, to borrow from the sociology of education, the 'hidden curriculum' of parliament, that is, how messages on gender and power are conveyed not necessarily explicitly, but through the physical configurations of space, the symbols of power that are used and the micro-interactions between and among female and male legislators. The current study thus draws on both observation of parliamentary debates and analysis of Hansard to highlight micro-sociological interactions and understand how the categories of 'men' and 'women' MPs are produced, represented and restrained within parliament.

My interest in researching parliament in this way is influenced by feminist theories of performativity and the sociology of everyday life to analyse the everyday interactions of female and male legislators in parliament (Goffman, 1959; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1988, 1990). In particular, I focus on parliament as a 'theatre' and explore what occurs in the day-to-day lives of female and male legislators during debate sessions (Goffman, 1959; Burns, 1992). I

ask: how do men and women orient towards one another? What subjective positions do they take and why? I underscore the importance of parliament as a stage upon which women and men MPs act out their gender, social status, age and seniority through what they choose to say or do.

I also draw on narrative analysis that examines how social life is organised and presented through stories (Riessman, 1993; Cortazzi, 2001; Riessman, 2001; Andrews *et al.*, 2008a; Musila, 2015). In particular, I use narrative analysis to examine the stories collaboratively told by MPs during debate sessions as they are recorded in Hansard. This departs from the social realist approach which gives prominence to objective truth, to investigate people's investedness in choosing to organise human actions in particular ways (Riessman, 1993). It offers opportunities to engage with different "versions of truths and their attendant fictions" (Musila, 2015: 3). Furthermore, narratives can be analysed as a social process or performance in action, especially where stories are told with the audience in mind (Cortazzi, 2001: 388). Conceptualising parliament as a theatre opens up space for me to interrogate how the Hansard as a record of parliamentary debates captures 'all' that transpires in such debates including non-verbal expressions.

### **Gender power dynamics in Parliamentary debates**

In this section, I draw on specific examples of what I observed in parliamentary debates and compare these with what the Hansard recorded to inform my analysis of gender power relations. I then point out what I consider as significant issues that are not picked up for discussion or recorded in Hansard and the implications for understanding the gendering of institutions such as parliament. In particular, I present and discuss certain moments in MPs' interactions in parliamentary debates to illustrate how gender power dynamics play out in their everyday lives. The examples I draw on, namely, 'maiden speech' (this is explained in the following section) and concerns raised about crossing a busy road were common phenomena that female and male legislators related to differently.

## Female MPs and the ‘maiden speech’ in parliament

A maiden speech is an MP’s first communication on the floor of the house. Under the rules of procedure of the Parliament of Uganda, maiden speeches are not supposed to be interrupted. For instance, rule 74 (e) indicates that “a maiden speech shall not be interrupted except by the Speaker or in circumstances which in the opinion of the Speaker warrant interruption” (Republic of Uganda, 2006: 50). In contrast the extract<sup>37</sup> below shows how the maiden speech by a new female MP who doubles as a minister, unfolds amid interruptions. The extract begins with the female MP giving a ministerial statement on the state of blood transfusion services in the country.

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH (PRIMARY HEALTH CARE) (Dr. Joyce Moriku):** Madam Speaker, I am here to present a comprehensive statement on Uganda Blood Transfusion Services, in regard to the concern that was raised. ...The Uganda Transfusion Services operates within the framework of the National Health Policy and a Health Strategic Plan. The Uganda Transfusion Services, through its vision and mission – Madam Speaker, this is my maiden statement and for that matter (*Laughter*) - I request that I complete the statement uninterrupted.

**THE SPEAKER:** Allow the minister to make her maiden statement first. (*Applause*)

**MS MORIKU:** Through the vision and mission, it is mandated to make available adequate quantity of safe blood and blood components for the clinical management of patients that require blood transfusion at all health facilities. That is the mandate of Uganda Blood Transfusion Services...

**MR NATHAN NANDALA MAFABI (FDC, Budadiri County West, Sironko):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am also going to ask maiden questions. (*Laughter*) The minister said she wanted protection because it was a maiden speech. What is wrong with that? [*what’s wrong with*

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<sup>37</sup> In extracts that draw on debates in parliament as recorded in the Hansard, I use the names of legislators and other biographical information included therein. I am aware that in some ways this might be read as compromising people’s confidentiality and anonymity as emphasised in research ethical conduct. However, I note that Hansard is openly accessed by the public whether on the parliamentary website or in the print form, in the parliamentary library. Besides, ‘cleaning’ such data of the names and titles of legislators would erase certain biographical information that is key in the analysis of power – a central concept in this study.

*asking a maiden question then?]* Madam Speaker, I would like to first thank the Minister of Health for coming up with a statement like that one...

**MS JACQUILINE AMONGIN:** Madam Speaker, I would like to give information because hon. Nandala mentioned that Members should develop the attitude of donating blood. I want to inform this House that not all blood you donate is useful. Therefore, that needs to be clarified –  
(*Interruption*)

**MR NANDALA-MAFABI:** Madam Speaker, you can see it has generated maiden information. Given that these are my colleagues who are beginning to speak, can I allow them to speak? I have allowed this one too. [*points to a woman MP waiting to catch the Speaker's attention*]

**THE SPEAKER:** Are you taking over my work?

**MR NANDALA-MAFABI:** Okay, she has sat down. Madam Speaker, we must be ready to donate blood... (**Hansard, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

This debate features an interactive session in which a female minister who had been requested to give a statement appeals for protection from the Speaker of Parliament a few minutes into her speech. As an observer, I noted that prior to this appeal, the female minister was interrupted by loud jeers and heckling, mainly on the part of male MPs from the opposition political parties, prompting her to ask the Speaker for protection. The jeers and cheers and the Speaker's call for an uninterrupted maiden speech generated an even more rowdy atmosphere characterised by prolonged laughter, heckling, stomping, jeers and applause.

One of the male legislators who stood out in this intimidating atmosphere is Hon. Nandala Mafabi, a senior legislator, who at the time was the secretary general of a prominent opposition political party in parliament. Mafabi positioned himself as an authority by patronising and undermining a female minister (and other new female MPs). Male disruption and derogation of women is exemplified through hilarity as indicated in the several times the senior male MP and others in parliament laugh-off the new women MP's request for protection from interruption. While 'point of order' and 'point of information' are parliamentary procedures through which MPs call others to order or furnish floor holders with information regarding the debate, respectively, there are no formal contexts where these carry the prefix 'maiden'. Thus, in both 'maiden questions' and 'maiden information', this prefix is intended to deride the new female

MP and minister for exhibiting weakness by calling for the Speaker's protection. This was seized upon as a marker of weakness which the male MP exploited to ridicule the female MP.

Furthermore, Hon. Mafabi thanked the minister for "coming up with a statement like that one" and ironically refers to some new female MPs as 'colleagues' who are just learning how to speak in parliament. He follows this with a question to the Speaker of Parliament– "can I allow them to speak?" While he frames this as a question, it is a rhetorical one which enables him to appropriate the powers of the Speaker of Parliament – that is, moderating parliamentary debate sessions. This sense of appropriation is reflected in the Speaker's reaction to his domineering character: "Are you taking over my work?" At this point, the male MP covertly ignores the Speaker's concern and goes on with his submission. It is worth noting that while the Speaker reprimanded the male MP for attempting to take over her powers, she ignored the way he derogates new female MPs.

Observable in this session are subtle performances of gender (power) relations and reactions to these, illustrating the complex and multiple gender power dynamics. The complexity of these performances is exemplified by the discursive production of men and women in different subject positions and the inherent contradictions that played out in the debate session. On the one hand, the extract shows how a new female legislator invokes a legislative procedure to contest unlawful interruption of her maiden speech which is granted by the Speaker of Parliament. On the other hand, we observe how, far from being offered protection, the new female MP is mocked and ridiculed by her male colleagues for exhibiting 'weakness' by appealing for protection.

What was notable about incidents such as these was the failure of the Hansard, the official record of parliamentary dialogue and debates, to record male intimidation and bullying of new female MPs and the expressive forms these took. These included jeers, laughter, and booing, stomping and other bullish behaviour which were at times recorded simply as 'laughter' or 'interruption' or not recorded at all. For example, part of the female minister's speech in which she appeals for protection is recorded as follows:

“The Uganda Transfusion Services, through its vision and mission – Madam Speaker, this is my maiden statement and for that matter (*Laughter*) – I request that I complete the statement uninterrupted.”

None of this alerts us to the cause of the female minister’s plea for protection. By omitting the rowdy moment (which I observed) that prompted the minister’s appeal, Hansard takes for granted the female legislator’s agential reaction to forms of bullying and intimidation. It is through these subtle ways that the male legislator in question (and other male and female MPs) enacted gender and seniority<sup>38</sup> to constitute gender borders and ‘police’ any kind of transgressive behavior through humour, intimidation, and bullying not only of new women legislators but also those in senior leadership positions.

‘Gender policing’ is a term coined by gender theorists and activists working in the field of education (Frosh *et al.*, 2002; Mayeza, 2016). It refers to the process by which gender orders and gender power relations are imperfectly produced and regulated through bullying and intimidation of those who are seen as deviating from gender norms. What I found particularly surprising and significant from my ethnographic observations of gender dynamics in parliament was how these operated in ways (intimidation, bullying, regulation, and control) which resonate with ethnographic accounts of gender interactions in primary and high schools (discussed by Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002 and Mayeza, 2016) which I elaborate on later in this chapter.

### **The gendering of maiden speech**

The actions that play out in this debate raise questions about how men and women present themselves to one another in their everyday life. Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman on dramaturgical performances, I ask: why did particular MPs choose to present themselves to others the way they did? What functions do laughter and interjections of these kinds play? What implications do they have for the manner in which parliamentary business is conducted?

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<sup>38</sup> Senior in the sense that he had spent more than one term of office in parliament.

Goffman (1959: 2) maintains that an individual may wish others “to think highly of him or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels towards them...”. Butler (1990: 2) cites Foucault's notion of juridical systems of power to remind us how subjects are "formed, defined and reproduced" through "limitation, prohibition, regulation, control and even ‘protection’". Highlighted in this structural production and representation of the subject is the discursive context in which this process takes place. The manner in which male and female MPs relate to one another is discursive and points to how they are produced by the institutional structures and systems they inhabit. Goffman and Butler’s theoretical resources are helpful in understanding why, for instance, Hon. Nandala Mafabi, a senior male MP and secretary general of an opposition political party behaved in the patronising way he did in front of others during the maiden speech, that is, constituting himself as (an important and knowledgeable) subject by constructing women in inferior ways.

It is notable that while female MPs were justified in their appeal for protection from interruption as per the parliamentary rules of procedure, no male MP in this particular session and the other sessions that I observed alerted the house to his making a maiden speech. Tamale (1999) found that women were more likely than men to be interrupted while delivering their maiden speech despite formal rules against this kind of interruption, a finding confirmed by my study.

Further, as an MP in the opposition, Mafabi’s conduct towards the female MP and minister in the ruling government could point to political rivalries that characterize opposition and ruling government in parliament of Uganda. Thus, these interactions are not only seen mediated by gender but also MPs political affiliation, highlighting ways in which identities (gender, sexuality, seniority, political affiliation, etc) intersect to influence the kind of interactions in parliament.

### **Ambivalent attitude towards female MPs’ oratory skills**

The extract shows how a male MP acknowledged, with profound surprise, a female colleague's ability and skill in delivering a speech on the floor of parliament. I note a similar pattern of

‘appreciation’ in the extract below shortly after Hon. Mafabi had thanked the female legislator for coming up with ‘a statement like that one’.

**MR THEODORE SSEKIKUBO (NRM, Lwemiyaga County, Ssembabule):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for being prepared and indeed, she has spoken off-cuff. (*Laughter*) How I wish the Prime Minister could also pick a cue from the stamina and ability of the minister - (*Interruption*).  
(**Hansard, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

In this extract (which occurs in the same sitting of parliament), Hon. Ssekikubo applauds a female legislator, who also doubled as a minister, for her exceptional oratory skills in comparison to a senior male legislator – the prime minister and leader of government business. This was after the minister had been tasked by the Speaker of Parliament to give a statement on reported animal diseases in the country. What I highlight here is recurrent male approval of female MPs’ speeches as exceptional and unprecedented.

Acknowledging women MPs in this manner is intended to characterise the female MPs’ ‘exceptional’ debating skills as transgressive and unexpected; their agency is consequently taken for granted. It could also point to how men constantly monitor and evaluate women’s performance in parliament according to masculine standards. This can be read as a defeminising maneuver – an attempt to approximate the females to the males. In Mafabi’s and Ssekikubo’s view, such ‘excellent performance’ is unexpected of a woman, especially during her first speech in an honorary space like parliament. This is a means through which men control women’s conduct. Indeed, Wilkinson and Kitzinger ( 1996: 9) argue that dominant groups tend to control others through “control over the process of their representation”. They add that this “occurs through routine ‘de-authorisation’ of how others represent themselves and ‘us’”.

Diane Leclerc (2006: 187) argues that "explicit masculine rhetoric and violent misogyny which avow women's essential emotional and intellectual incapacity is as objectifying as praising women in leadership positions since both instances have, as their motive, approximation of women towards the masculine". I thus view both male MPs’ apparent appreciation of women’s

oratory skills in parliamentary debates as a defeminising and de-authorising maneuver which raises questions on why men need to constantly appraise, approve and authorise women's ways of engaging in parliamentary debates. Consequently, both 'de-authorisation' as suggested by Wilkinson and Kitzinger and men's approval and appreciation of female MPs' ways of debating noted here, point to mechanisms of control over how women represent themselves and their relationships with men.

### **Women's resistance to men's bullying in Parliament**

In the face of male sarcasm and bullying, both the female maiden speaker and the female Speaker of Parliament engaged in ways that contested and negotiated male domination. These negotiations take the form of the female MP petitioning the Speaker for protection and the latter questioning the male MP's unwarranted conduct when she asks "Are you taking over my work?" I draw on Michel Foucault's notion of power as complex and manifested through dynamic contestations and negotiations to understand the actions of male MPs and women MPs' reactions instead of assuming that power is possessed by one group and denied to another. Rather than look at men in parliament as simply domineering and patronising and women as therefore, lacking any sense of agency, dynamic power relations can be traced through the reactions, responses, contestations and negotiations that female legislators engage in during maiden speeches.

In her work on "Gender and Parliamentary politics in Uganda", Sylvia Tamale (1999: 114) points to the pervasiveness of patriarchy as a social force that dictates much of what goes on in parliament but argues that it has been contested by women in complex ways. She notes that, these include women forming caucuses to harness collective agency against institutionalised patriarchy as well as mobilising male support on issues perceived to be of specific interest to women. Accordingly, women's agentic interaction with men in parliamentary debates demonstrates that "gender is a basically innovative affair, although it is quite clear that there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations" (Butler 1988: 531). She adds that gender is neither passively scripted on the

body nor can it be determined by, among others, the history of patriarchy. Rather, it is “what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly...”

It is, however, important to note that certain forms of men's patronising behaviour remained unquestioned. While the female Speaker of Parliament contested Hon. Mafabi's attempt to take over her role of moderating parliamentary business, she did not reprimand him for bullying women, particularly the female maiden speaker. This could have implications in terms of institutionalising such patronising behaviour (and denigration of women) as normal and acceptable conduct in parliament. In effect, normalising such gender power relations could portray parliament as a difficult space for women to express themselves and be taken seriously and possibly explains why men get to speak to particular issues on behalf of women in parliamentary debates.

### **Constructing women as Other**

The notion of female MPs' secondary status in relation to male legislators featured strongly in my observation of parliamentary debates. For example, the scenario I share below – about a male MP who helped a female colleague cross a busy road near the parliamentary building – is linked to the first example I discussed which revolved around the infantilisation of women in parliament by the majority of men. Arguably, such parliamentary debate experiences show how the institution continues to be regulated by discourses that constitute women as strangers that are not expected to perform in such political settings. Tamale (1999: 118) attributes women's regulated behavior in the legislature to the "men's club character of parliament, which often treats women as intruders". I take the male MP's submission below (as recorded in Hansard) as an illustration of normative constructions of gender in parliament which constitute men as agents in opposition to women.

**MR JOHN BAPTIST NAMBESHE (NRM, Manjiya County, Bududa):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on a matter of urgent public importance, which was partially raised yesterday on the Floor ... about the zebra crossing. However, this one is particularly on the accident-prone road called Parliament Avenue. Members who have offices in Development House face

difficulties in accessing their offices. ... This is a narrow road that has two-way traffic and our motorists and cyclists drive recklessly and have no regard for other road users. One time, a Woman Member of Parliament took almost 10 minutes to cross until I offered to help her to cross the road. (**Hansard, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

In this example, a male parliamentarian talks of how he helped a female MP cross a dangerous road adjacent to parliament after she had been stuck for a significant amount of time. This submission comes shortly after the opening of debate in a routine session called "Private Members Business", where MPs are free to raise any current issues they consider as of significance to the nation. Hon. Nambeshe thus characterises his submission as a follow-up on an issue of urgent public importance in which he draws parliament's attention to the dangers roads around parliament pose to MPs, particularly women. He evaluates and consequently categorises the traffic situation as gruesome and a health hazard. He exemplifies this by showing how, had it not been for his charitable gesture and protection of a female colleague, the latter would have found it even more difficult to cross the road.

### **Othering of women in parliamentary debates**

Rather than assume that the male MP is merely describing what really happened on Parliament Avenue, I draw on Butler (1988) Foucault (1978) and Speer (2005) and on particular forms of narrative analysis (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008) to understand how language is used in this case to constitute subject positions for men and women in the male MP's submission in parliament. In narrating his experience of 'helping', why did the male MP choose to emphasise the fact that the one he helped was a woman? Had he had 'helped' a male honourable colleague, would this have been mentioned? Could a similar story have been told had the gender of the storyteller been the same as the one helped to cross the road? Such questions provoke critical thinking about gendered identifications and the complex dynamics of power associated with them (Pattman, 2011: 411). This example of a male MP speaking about and for women in patronising ways resonates with Kitzinger and Wilkinson's (1996: 8) notion of Other, that is, "a psychological necessity for the development of human subjectivity". For a male MP in a male-dominated space like parliament, highlighting his 'help' to the female colleague becomes the

only psychological way to project his own and other men's ambivalent feelings of vulnerability and risk while crossing the road onto women. In his differentiation of forms of masculinities, Connell (2005: 78) terms this kind of othering as "the repository of whatever that is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity". Thus, the male MP's construction of himself as a subject necessitated the existence of an Other – the female MP who would act as a depository to contain masculine ambivalent feelings of weakness and helplessness.

Women's otherness can also be read through the male MP's infantilising behavior towards a female MP even when they carry the same status of 'honourable colleague'. Women MPs thus become like children who need help crossing a road. He seems to enhance men's honourable status by telling stories about helping women to cross busy roads. Such a story presents men as chivalrous, which is usually considered a high-status male virtue. It also resonates with what it means to be an honourable man – a legislator on the one hand and a protective man on the other, both of which play out in parliament.

### **Parliament's response to the Zebra Crossing submission**

It was noticeable that while the male MP's concern over women was presented in a way that is patronising, the submission generated no opposition from men and women in the session. The audience's silence and inattention to the manner in which the male legislator expressed his submission, points to possibilities of acceptable ways of conduct of men and women in an institution like parliament. Given the notable absence of any concerns about the male MP's submission, I take this as an indication of a parliamentary culture in which women are routinely constructed as in need of help from men in ways which may serve to reinforce projections of weakness onto them. Notably, the submission on the zebra crossing is not part of a motion about gender which male champions have been asked to table but a concern expressed by a male MP which was not explicitly about gender or women's rights but MPs' problems, in general, in negotiating a busy road. Nevertheless, the submission provides useful insights into taken-for-granted discourses in parliament which consider men as stronger (physically and emotionally) than women.

One point I want to make here is to show how I drew on parliament as a social context in which I observed people interact, forge relations and position themselves in particular ways, or in Goffman's terms, a 'setting' (Burns, 1992: 116). I note that parliamentary debate sessions are a setting in which female and male MPs act before each other in appropriately acceptable ways, to enhance their perceived sense of self.

### **How gendering of parliament compares with sociological ways of doing gender in other institutional settings**

The manner in which gender power relations are learned and conveyed in parliament resonates with issues relating to the regulation and policing of gender which have been raised in ethnographic studies in primary schools such as those by Mayeza (2016) and Thorne (1993). While parliament might be seen as far removed from the school playground (in as far as it is constituted as an honorary space where important legislative work is done by elite politicians), Mayeza's ethnography of primary school play provides similar insights into the dynamics and performances of gender in these two different contexts. Just as male MPs dominate proceedings in parliamentary debates, so the playground in Mayeza's study is constructed as a male space (in which football is played) where girls are confined to the margins, on the periphery. In Mayeza's study, those girls who exhibit skills in what is perceived as masculine pursuits are ridiculed, mocked and laughed at. Similar patronising behavior is seen in my study through male MPs mocking female maiden speakers and not taking seriously female MPs' debating skills.

This comparison provides insights into how gender identities are produced, reproduced and enacted through everyday practices such as play in schools and legislative procedures in parliament. The examples I draw on underscore the role of institutions (in this case, parliament and school) in producing gendered subjects. That is, institutions are not merely spaces where official business is conducted as per the formal rules and regulations. Rather, they are contexts where males and females engage in complex relations characterised by different forms of domination as well as contesting and negotiating these.

## **How gender performances in Uganda Parliament reflect continuities in colonial patriarchal Oppression**

In chapter 2, I made reference to feminist scholarship that points out ways in which politics in Africa and Ugandan parliament in particular is a product of colonial encounters. I highlighted Anne McClintock's (1995) critique of premature celebration of post-coloniality as well as Tamale's (1999: 121) critical observations on what she describes as intimidating, hierarchical, alienating and masculine ambience in parliament that "retains vestiges of colonial rule, which stemmed from models synonymous with male hegemony". These reflections, particularly from Tamale's reading of the Uganda parliament almost two decades ago – which I also picked up in my ethnographic observation – reveal Parliament as an institution with a moratorium on certain forms of behaviour that regulate men and women's conduct differently.

Earlier in this chapter I showed how women MPs, unlike their male counterparts, are often ridiculed and infantilised whenever they assume the floor to speak, forcing them to plead for protection. Ironically, women MPs are also 'policed' by their male colleagues even when they perform exceptionally well in debates. I noted cases where some male MPs were often profoundly surprised by female MPs ability and oratory skills in articulating issues during debates, consequently applauding them for such unforeseen behaviour. Recurrent male evaluations and approvals of female MPs' speech acts as exceptional and unprecedented remained unacknowledged and challenged by both the Speaker of Parliament and other legislators. In effect these micro everyday experiences lend further credence to the patriarchal cultures of parliament as partly produced by this moratorium which is simultaneously gendered, in that men can indulge in such indiscipline with impunity, but women enjoy partial moratorium as the gender protocols of respectable femininity remain in place and largely neutralise this moratorium to be rowdy and playful for women.

More strikingly, gender performances that I noted during parliamentary debates, particularly bullying and intimidation practices that marginalise women MPs and produce parliament as a difficult place for them to be heard, resonate with cases of sexism in the legislature processes of

Uganda's former colonial masters - The British Parliament. In a survey by Mumsnet - a popular website for parents in the UK – about public opinion on the British Parliament, respondents, (majority of whom were female voters) characterised parliament as “sexist, masculine and out of date”<sup>39</sup>. British women's view as documented by Mumsnet resonate with Tamale's characterization of Ugandan Parliament as normatively masculine with a hegemonic culture rooted into androcentric models of colonial rule. In another recent study that compares Westminster Parliaments in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada, Cheryl Collier and Tracy Raney (2018: 432) highlight the pervasive character of sexism and sexual harassment in the political legislature. Drawing on these three examples that share a closely similar context of colonial history in as far as they all had encounters with British colonial rule, the authors show how “the shared rules, practices, and norms of these Westminster institutions perpetuate sexist cultures that produce unequal and unsafe work conditions for female politicians”.

In her work, “Governed by the Rules?: The Female Voice in Parliamentary Debates”, Sylvia Shaw (2006) examines language use, gender and power in the British House of Commons and reveals the difficulty that women MPs encounter in the debates. She talks about how most of the women MPs she interviewed “speak of a ‘terror’ of speaking within the house of commons debating chamber” (2006: 81). She notes that while male MPs probably shared similar sentiments about the constraining character of parliament, nonetheless, “they do not face the sexist barracking and negative media representations commonly directed at women MPs”. Specific examples cited by Shaw's study which construct and represent the House of Commons as ruthless and a men's club include ways in which “male MPs in the debating chamber have [often] made 'melon weighing' gestures (intended to represent a woman's breasts) while a woman MP makes a speech; [and the media characterisation of] the 1997 intake of new Labour MPs as 'Blair's babes’” (Shaw, 2006: 82). In Uganda, women MPs have experienced similar sexist

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<sup>39</sup><https://5050parliament.co.uk/parliament-is-sexist-masculine-and-out-of-date-say-british-women-guardian/> [Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018].

denigrating media representations. On the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011, the New Vision<sup>40</sup>, a national news daily run a frontpage article – *The most beautiful MP* - that shared results of an exclusively-male MPs' survey on who the most beautiful woman MP in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament was. See also Ahikire, Musiimenta and Mwiine (2015: 34) on the crippling effects of sexual pacification in Uganda Parliament. The authors define the notion of *sexual pacification* as “a term derived from the process of colonisation as a tool for conquest” (*ib id*) and draw on it to conceptualise forms of exercise of power in post-colonial Uganda parliament to disempower women through sexual objectification. Further, the Observer<sup>41</sup>, also an English Newspaper labelled female MPs from the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) Party - chaired by President Yoweri Museveni - (whose symbol is a yellow bus) as Museveni's 'Yellow Girls brigade'. Media portrayal of women MPs in the UK and Uganda Parliament reveal double standards upon which women (and men) are judged. While men are more likely to be represented with regard to core business of legislation, women MPs are subjected to double scrutiny by the media and their fellow colleagues (male MPs) on sexual standards consequently producing them as sexual symbols in masculine legislative politics. That, these forms of sexism still play out in post-colonial political legislatures demonstrates just how resistant and pervasive patriarchal oppression can be.

These comparisons between Uganda and British Parliamentary cultures underscore the patriarchal cultures in parliament, in which men freely indulge in sexist oppression of women MPs even when they both share an honorary status as members of parliament. Further, overlapping gender performances within the contemporary British and Uganda political legislatures bear hallmarks of colonial oppression that continues to perpetuate gender inequalities in post-colonial legislative processes. The fact that such misogynistic and sexist experiences continue to occur in contemporary Uganda and British Parliament as well debunks popular

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<sup>40</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201105090061.html>. [accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018]. See also

<sup>41</sup> <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/54371-wolokoso-abiriga-s-love-for-museveni-reaches-new-heights.html>. The label referred to women MPs from the ruling party who were mobilising for constitutional reforms towards the lifting of term-limits of the president from the Constitution [accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018].

notions of Uganda parliament (and by extension African Parliaments) as ‘traditional’ in relation to Western democratic and modern parliamentary institutions. See for instance critical studies by Grace Musila (2015) and Simon Gikandi (2002) that challenge binary logics about modernity and Africa.

On a whole, the examples on which I draw in this chapter, namely reactions to maiden speeches and the gendered concerns raised about crossing the busy road alert us to the explicit and implicit ways gendered messages are conveyed through what legislators say and do in parliament. They raise critical questions which are of concern to the entire research project. These are: how does parliament as a context institutionalise norms, values, and practices that make it possible for men to speak ‘about’ and/or ‘speak for’ women on issues of gender? Does the constitution of men as ‘champions’ who are able to speak on behalf of women in parliament institutionalise unequal gender power relations OR is this necessitated by the context in which women are marginalised and not taken seriously?

### **Summary**

In summary, I have demonstrated what I considered as data in this ethnographic study of parliament as a research context. I have shown that working with Hansard alone is limiting, especially for studies that pay attention not only to *what* people say but also how they say it and the emotions conveyed. This approach also pays attention to comments from the floor of the house which are constituted as ‘interruptions’ and are therefore not recorded in Hansard. For example, I illustrated the limitations in the way Hansard merely records boorish and all manner of unwelcome behaviour during debates such as protests and stomping as ‘interruption’, and prolonged laughter as just ‘laughter’. These omissions, which I was able to pick up through ethnographic observation constituted insightful data for my research on everyday performances of gender and power.

Furthermore, I showed how an ethnographic approach to studying parliament unearths and pays attention to taken for granted micro-sociological aspects of individual human interaction, which,

when repeatedly enacted, and re-enacted, become “stylized into gendered modes” (Butler, 1988: 526) and consequently acceptable ways of public conduct. These taken-for-granted aspects could include the subtlety, hilarity, and silence that the parliamentary context accords to such performances of gender and power. Ethnographic observation of parliament as a social context elaborated new ways of studying the micro and the macro, gendered and the gender neutral and gender-blind practices, and the overt and covert experiences of female and male legislators. I argue that it is the subtle and seemingly unrecognisable everyday practices of female and male legislators in parliament that come to constitute parliament as a gendered institution.

The MPs’ day-to-day interactions resonate with what Butler identifies as the “stylised repeated acts” that institutionalise gender performances as natural and acceptable ways of conduct. Repeated interactions between female and male MPs that are characterised by bullying, heckling, jeering, sarcasm and male patronage can be seen as gender policing practices which make it difficult for women who are constituted in mundane ways as weak, inaudible and in need of men's protection, to present and debate ideas, particularly on women's rights. In effect, these practices reproduce gender binaries, constituting women as intruders in parliament and men as ‘natural’ actors. It is through such gendered relational dynamics which regulate how women ought to speak, when, where and on what issues that the idea of men as spokespersons for women becomes conceivable.

The study also demonstrates how male MPs draw on patriarchal discourses that promote public politics as a masculine preserve, to enhance their status as legislators while at the same time excluding women whom they constitute in patronising ways. Female legislators are repeatedly ridiculed, bullied, infantilised and laughed at. In other cases, they are subjected to intense scrutiny characterised by both approval and dismissal of their debating capacities in ways that male legislators are hardly evaluated. Even when there are observably higher numbers of women in parliament, and pro-women legislation is debated and passed into law, these subtle and everyday practices indicate how problematic parliament is for women. It is thus hardly surprising

that there is a need to recruit men to speak to and introduce motions concerned with promoting women's rights.

Analysis of parliament as an institution has shed light on the process through which categories of 'women' and 'men' in parliament are formed, defined and produced in everyday parliamentary debate sessions. This is realised through formal and informal rules and regulations and MPs' actions and reactions to these. The manner in which these took a gendered character, with women being looked down upon more often than men and finding parliament a problematic space, has implications for my research that aims to examine how and why women recruit men as allies to speak on their behalf in such a context.

Reflections on the space of parliament have demonstrated that women and men are *effects* of institutional power dynamics, which points to the need to engage with questions of identity and representation. For instance, how do women position themselves and/or are positioned in gender equity legislative processes? How are men constituted as champions to speak to issues thought to be in women's interests? What implications do speaking on behalf of an Other have on the latter's agency? These are some of the concerns that I address in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Women's accounts of recruiting men as promoters of gender sensitive legislation**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I explored how women MPs are infantilised and bullied on the floor of parliament and how their views are not taken seriously compared to men. It could be argued that such experiences compel women activists to opt for some men to represent their views, particularly on women's rights. However, this raises concerns (as articulated more broadly by feminist writers) regarding the politics of representation and whether this institutionalises a system where men are expected to speak on behalf of women (Edwards, 1996). As noted in chapter 1, some feminist writers have raised concerns about putting men at the centre stage and in charge of feminist struggles for gender equality (Meer, 2011) which would, in effect, empty feminism of its transformative agenda (Ahikire, 2014; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015).

In this chapter, I engage with women activists in and outside parliament and explore accounts of their relationships with men as 'spokespeople' for women's rights issues in parliament and how they selected and recruited them. The six female participants I engaged with in interviews included Susana, a female programmes coordinator in a women's organisation; Acol and Rina, both of whom are executive directors of women's rights organisations and Janet, a former MP and currently a director in one of Uganda's political parties. In her time as an MP, Janet was chairperson of a women's caucus in parliament and a key actor in both the laws this study investigates. I also interviewed Maria from the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) and Dora, a programmes official on Gender Based Violence prevention in one of the United Nations agencies in Uganda. Three of these respondents (Susana, Dora, and Maria) were in their 30s, younger than the rest. Maria worked on a day-to-day basis with women MPs while Acol, Susana, Rina, and Dora engaged in advocacy around women's rights, with parliament as one their partner institutions.

All the female participants with whom I conducted qualitative interviews were purposively selected (as noted in chapter 3) based on their previous activism around mobilisation for and presentation and discussion of legislation on FGM and domestic violence. I focus on interview conversations as experience-centred narratives, that is, ways through which “individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives” (Riessman, 1993: 2). I thus pay attention to what the participants talk about in their stories but also draw on different interpretative frameworks to investigate the meanings invoked in the sequence of narrated events, and the stakes interview participants have in constituting and representing their past experiences the way they do.

This chapter is organised around three thematic areas, namely, women’s responses when I introduced the category ‘male champions’; the significance of working with men in promoting women’s rights issues; and discussions on the process through which a male MP becomes a promoter of women’s rights issues in parliament.

### **Female participants’ responses when I introduced the category ‘male champion’**

The question of whether one can, or should speak on behalf of another is always a contentious one (Edwards, 1996; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996). In the case of this study, it becomes even more contradictory when those speaking on behalf of Others occupy historically powerful and privileged positions. The danger with this kind of representation lies in taking up a position which constitutes the subject Other as a being whose agency depends on another. In this section, I draw on interview conversations to show how some of the female activists I talked to were reluctant to foreground male champions’ role in gender equality activism even when they acknowledged their necessity, a process I refer to as the ‘de-centring’ of ‘male champions’. De-centering men as champions is motivated by women’s concern not to accord men centre stage in arguing for women’s rights issues even if they are strategically recruited to table parliamentary motions on such. I draw on two interviews, one with Susana, an employee in a women’s civil society organisation and Janet, a former parliamentarian and chair of the women’s parliamentary caucus in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. In both, I look at how these women positioned themselves in

relation to the men they term as ‘champions’ of gender equality and examine the implications of these subjectivities for understanding gender power relations in parliamentary debates.

### **From discourses of ‘male champions’ to women’s agency: Re-centering women as subjects**

In this section, I draw on the conversation with Susana to reflect on how she responded to the category ‘male champion’ that I introduced at the beginning of the interview. Prior to the conversation, I approached Susana for an interview appointment at her office. After introducing my study to her, she offered me a book entitled “The Journey of passion: Two decades of advocacy for gender equality and women’s rights”. In it, her organisation documented at length historical moments, actors, trends, and negotiations in the journey of women’s rights advocacy in Uganda. In its final section, a few pages were dedicated to experiences of how women activists were working with a few male actors whom they categorized as ‘champions’ (UWONET, 2013: 152) in advancing pro-women policy agendas in parliament and local councils. In particular, the book (which Susana alerted me to read before our interview), featured male champions’ efforts to advocate for women’s rights in marriage and at its dissolution as articulated in the Marriage and Divorce Bill of 2013.

**Amon:** So, I think we will begin from there, basically if you can share with me this whole idea of ‘male champions’, who are they?

**Susana:** As an institution [women’s organization that Susana works for], we [Susana and other women activists] have focused on promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. [3] Ahhh, we have been doing this work for over 20 years now when you look at our document [the organisation’s publication she had earlier shared with me], and we draw experiences from other regional practices, legislation but also from the international community involving processes and events that do enhance promotion and realisation of gender equality.

**Amon:** Hmm.

**Susana:** So, when you look at for example, we were found in 1993 at the time when we were looking at preparations for the Beijing Conference in 1995 but also at the national level there was preparation for the Constituent Assembly to review the 1967 Constitution so that we have a new Constitution.

**Amon:** Yaa

**Susana:** So, we saw these as strategic processes that women needed to really engage in, for us to have a strong voice on what could work for the women and how women could be protected. So, that is where our gender [activism] started from ...

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Susana:** Along the way we made successes as women, as you may see in that book.

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Susana:** A lot of things were done; the constitution was really considered as a very [gender] sensitive constitution. There were certain laws that were enacted to reinforce the provisions of the constitution, the Land Act, you know, the Succession Act and the Domestic Violence Act came later alone. Trafficking in Persons Act also came later alone but all these laws were advocated for by women, championed by women to reinforce some of the gender sensitive provisions in the constitution.

**Amon:** Mmm.

**Susana:** So, much as we made a lot of strides in some of the policies and the legal framework of government, we still encounter a lot of challenges and as activists, we also realise that the pace at which we were moving was very slow ...

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Susana:** So, the women had to re-evaluate some of the approaches that they have been using to advance gender equality. (**Interview with Susana on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

In the extract, I ask Susana who ‘male champions’ were at the beginning of the interview. Susana pays little attention to the category and instead shares, at length, women’s collective efforts to promote gender equality in and outside Uganda. Her silence on ‘male champions’ becomes apparent as she gives a detailed account of what women have been doing over time, consequently putting women at the centre stage of gender advocacy in a context in which this is not recognised. The centring of women as subjects in gender equality advocacy is illustrated through Susana’s narratives on women activists’ hard-won successes such as active mobilisation of women to participate in global women’s rights conferences as well as participation in the national constitution-making process and their consequent contribution to gender sensitive legislation. She emphasised that, these milestones were *championed* by women. It is thus surprising that the first time Susana makes mention of the term ‘champion’ in relation to those who promote gender sensitive legislation, from the time I first asked about who male champions are, is not in reference to men but women.

While the question of who male champions are presumed that champions existed in a ‘real’ sense and can thus be easily listed, Susana’s response reconceptualises the notion of ‘male champions’ as a ‘discourse’ – a site of political struggle (in the Foucauldian sense). In this sense, male champion discourses are understood not as descriptions of particular men but as social constructions of gender relations which render women as victims and men as potential saviours or spokespeople of women on women’s rights issues. Although Susana does not explicitly make these symbolic connections, she appropriates the ‘champions discourse’ in ways which reconstruct women activists as champions and re-centre on them. By responding in this way, Susana produces a succinct account of resistance to the ‘male champions’ discourse which critiques women activists’ reliance on some men as champions by re-centring women as instigators and active agents in gender advocacy. She also demonstrates how the very category male champion is imbued with (patriarchal) power.

Women’s active engagement in the promulgation of the 1995 Uganda constitution that many women activists considered as ‘gender sensitive’ is noted by Tamale (1999) and Ahikire (2007). Comparing the 1995 constitution with its predecessor in 1967, Tamale (1999: 116) characterises the former as progressive in as far as it prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex and includes personal matters relating to “marriage, divorce, adoption, burial, and devolution of property on death” as subject to constitutional provisions on discrimination. Indeed, it was during this constitutional review process that Tamale first wrote about female MPs’ use of male MPs to present women’s issues in parliamentary debates.

While Susana seems aware of women’s agential practices during these strategic processes, she remains silent on the history of ‘male champions’ in ways that challenge the very category by re-centering women as champions. She seeks to critique attempts to idealise men as superior in gender equality debates by re-defining the role of promoting women’s rights as one that has historically been performed by women, and one in which men are now drawn on for strategic reasons.

The idea of ‘male champions’ is premised on the idealisation of men as supporters of women. The problem (as we see in the extracts from Susana and Janet) is that this celebrates male supporters of women’s rights legislation in ways which detract from women’s agency as instigators. In contrast, what is noticeable in Susana’s response to my question on who male champions are is the conceptualisation of ‘male champions’ as a discourse rather than a descriptive category of male MPs that exist in parliament, which enables Susana to critique, deconstruct and re-define the category itself.

The question I posed to Susana on ‘who are they [male champions]?’ presumed the existence of male promoters of gender equality from a social realist point of view. However, Susana’s response pointed to the category as not necessarily about individual men identified to support women activists in promoting gender equality but rather as a broad way of thinking and knowing about these men and their relationships with women activists. What emerges strongly in Susana’s narrative about male promoters of gender equality is the kind of subjectivities that women assume vis-à-vis the men they identify to speak to gender issues and the power dynamics inherent in these relationships. Thus, the narrative raises key questions about the stakes that women respondents had in re-centring women as key actors in gender equality as well as what they use re-centred female subjectivities to achieve in interview conversations. I argue that by framing ‘male champions’ as a discourse, Susana (and other women respondents as I indicate later in the chapter) foreground women’s agency and maintain this powerful positioning by critiquing, deconstructing and re-defining the idealisation of some men as heroic promoters of gender equality. The critique of ‘male champions’ discourse is demonstrated through the ways in which female respondents de-centre the category ‘male champions’ – by not mentioning it or giving it attention in their discussions as doing so would have accorded it legitimacy.

### **Strategic imperatives of involving male parliamentarians in advocating for gender sensitive motions**

In the previous section, I indicated how women activists from civil society organisations talked about the ‘male champions’ category in critical ways, often resisting attempts to idealise men as

promoters of gender equality (as implied by a convergence of global development discourses, neoliberal entrepreneurialism and gender equity advocacy), yet acknowledging the strategic significance of working with men to promote women's rights issues, particularly in a male dominated legislature. This re-definition of the role of particular male parliamentarians in representing women's rights and gender issues – from the popular notion of men as ideal actors in the empowerment of women to a strategic manoeuvre in which women take centre stage to negotiate patriarchal resistance – is echoed by Janet, a former woman parliamentarian. In the extract below, Janet elaborates on the strategic imperatives of drawing on male support to promote gender issues and women's rights in a patriarchal parliament.

**Amon:** We could probably begin from; who are male champions? How did this idea of male champions begin? How did you as UWOPA think about this idea of drawing on men to promote gender equality?

**Janet:** First of all, when you look at who makes the decision in Africa and Uganda in particular in all our communities where we come from, it is the father and fathers are more of [5] unless the woman is so strong that her decisions can be accepted. So even when we come to parliament as women, we realise our numbers are very few, we can't pass any [gender sensitive] Bill when we don't involve men and when we do not sensitise them and make them aware of what we intend to do. ...

**Amon.** So, it was a question of numbers?

**Janet:** Of course, if you want a Bill to pass, you need numbers.

**Amon:** Ok.

**Janet:** So, when we [referring to women MPs as a collective] looked at the gender Bills, we thought we had to involve a man and of course if you are looking at the women's issues, and if you don't involve the men, the men will not understand what you are talking about.

**Amon:** Ok.

**Janet:** ... When a man brings a gender issue up, it is okay because men will listen and then women will also listen and then men will be supportive. So, it was a strategy for us and I think it should continue being a strategy for the whole country even in other areas outside parliament.

**Amon:** ok.

**Janet:** So, we talked to the men and [2] first of all to Dr Christopher, he is a Doctor. It was also good for us because he was a doctor and understands the health issues, ahhh [2] he could also talk about FGM *and convincingly* [emphasised in high pitch]. He convinced parliament.

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Janet:** Then we had Honorable Hon. Kubeketelya ... **Interview with Janet on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016).**

Janet began by reminding me of the pervasive patriarchal discourses that inform decision making in African societies and that the Ugandan parliament was no exception. She indicated that patriarchy accounted for the limited number of women in parliament, who, without male support, cannot ensure the passing of gender sensitive legislation. She thus overtly foregrounds the need to work with numerous male MPs if women are to have any hope of legislating on women's rights issues. This is evident in her statement: "*of course* if you are looking at the women's issues, and if you don't involve the men, the men will not understand what you are talking about". Janet's obvious expectations of male support could possibly be an attempt to appreciate the parliamentary context in which women MPs work, that is, debate sessions which are often characterised by men's infantilisation of women (see chapter 4).

Janet highlights the strategic reasons for drawing on men to communicate gender issues in a context where women are not taken seriously. For example, she noted that when a man brings an issue of gender to a parliamentary debate, it gains acceptability, and is taken seriously by fellow male as well as female MPs – "men will listen and *then*, women will also listen". Without such male approval, gender issues would not be presented, debated and successfully passed into law. She thus constitutes 'male champions' as a well-thought-out strategy that has proved itself and ought to be scaled up in other aspects of gender advocacy outside parliament. Janet lists Dr Christopher and Hon. Kubeketerya (and, it would seem, many others) as male champions who worked closely with the women's caucus in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. More specifically, she highlights the usefulness of a male doctor who is knowledgeable and wields influence on the floor of the house, sponsoring the Bill on FGM. Indeed, later in the interview, Janet rated the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament – whose tenure saw several pro-women Bills passed into law with the support of male champions (See Wang, 2013) – highly in comparison to the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament (2011-2016). She noted: "For us, our strategy worked very well, even for private members' Bills. It was like, let the men move

[sponsor] the Bills and women second”<sup>42</sup>. Janet thus presents the idea of ‘male champions’ as a strategy contingent upon a patriarchal discourse that privileges male decision making and the institutionalisation of unequal power gender relations rather than men’s inherent superior qualities.

Similar complex situations are noted in Kenya where women negotiate paternalistic filial relations to cope with androcentric political systems (Were, 2017). In her work on Kenyan women in androcentric political culture, Marciana Were draws on the experiences of Julia Ouma Ojambo, a seasoned female politician, to illustrate how she consciously invoked the metaphor of “daughter of the nation” to negotiate her co-option to male dominated Kenyan politics. Were concludes:

As an archetype of the obedient “daughter of the nation,” Julia is therefore constrained by social norms and expectations to remain faithful and patriotic to the ruling party in the post-independence state. Her embodiment of the metaphor “daughter of the nation” demonstrates how political co-optation cripples female political participation while at the same time creating legitimation for supposed female empowerment. The obedient “daughter of the nation” myth, it is argued, creates an opportunity for imagining female political agency in the post-independence era of Kenya. This myth also serves to expose the remnant strains of patriarchy amid the seeming rise of female empowerment that informs the precarious nature of black African female political subjectivity (Were, 2017: 493-4).

Were reflects on the metaphor of “daughter of the nation” as a complexity that portrays not only how women’s participation in male dominated institutions is constrained and crippled by political co-option but is also a process through which women ‘become’ subjects – that is, opening up opportunities for imagining female political agency; and creating an avenue to, not

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<sup>42</sup> Seconding a proposed motion is a parliamentary procedure in which at least two MPs (in the case of the Ugandan parliament) support the mover of a motion to indicate that there is interest in the motion beyond the mover

only expose but also oppose persistent patriarchal norms and values amid seemingly successful women's empowerment initiatives. Cornwall (2016: 76) emphasizes the significance of deconstructive approaches that reveal the workings of patriarchal power. She argues that "making patriarchal values, attitudes, practices and social arrangements visible is, then, a first step in raising awareness of its costs as well as the ways in which short-term benefits it offers to men ... wreak long-term consequences". In both cases – women MPs' identification of some men to speak on their behalf in Uganda and Kenyan women's adoption of paternalistic filial relations as shown in Julia's case – demonstrate how women are forced to follow masculine norms and practices in order to change these norms.

Further strategic justifications raised by the women participants for working with specific male parliamentarians were based on the need to 1) tap into men's numerical advantage in parliament; 2) make use of men in strategic positions of power; and 3) reliance on men as intelligible speakers on issues of sexuality.

### **Tapping into men's numerical advantage in parliament**

In the extract below, I present Maria's conversation with me as she elaborates on how the association of women parliamentarians she works with moved from an exclusive female space to include male MPs as 'associate' members. The conversation begins by Maria sharing how her organisation started as a women-only advocacy space and why it later brought men on board.

**Amon:** So, this is a women caucus; exclusively women.

**Maria:** It is, that time it was only, exclusively women. It was a women caucus where the women would demand from the government on specific women's issues. [2]. ... The major issue is that, that time the women were few so they saw that if they are to achieve whatever they are demanding for, then they should try and get the men on board. It was in the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament [1986-1996] during the constitution-making process. They were trying to get support so that the issue of affirmative action is put in place and it is written in the constitution. In fact, women succeeded in this [succeeded in demanding the inclusion of an affirmative action policy in the 1995 constitution].

**Amon:** Ok.

**Maria:** So, they celebrated and they saw that if they are to be really seen working, then they should be together, they should be in a caucus.

**Amon:** Ok.

**Maria:** But it [UWOPA] now allows male MPs to be members, as associate members.

**Amon:** Associate?

**Maria:** Yes. It means they don't have voting rights when it comes to the election, when it comes to constitutional amendments, they would not vote [men do not have decision-making rights in UWOPA].

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Maria:** They are members because UWOPA saw that if they [UWOPA] are to succeed within Parliament which is male dominated, then you need to identify allies, men as allies.

**Amon:** So, which men then did you identify or why didn't you then take on all the men?

**Maria:** One is that, you realise that once you take on all the men, when you are bringing men, you must bring them really carefully because the moment you just get all of them at once then you will lose focus. You must understand men who understand women's issues.

**Amon.** Ok (**Interview with Maria, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016**).

Maria shares a complex story characterised by turns and twists in the life of the women MPs' association. She indicates that the women's caucus was primarily formed to push for the rights of women in legislative processes especially in the constitution making process of 1994. She notes that due to men's numerical advantage in parliament, women MPs opted to mobilise male MPs' support since, without them, no legislation would be passed. Maria specifically points to how female MPs mobilised male support in their demand for the inclusion of affirmative action in the 1995 constitution, which was successful. Men's support for women in the constitution review process is also noted by Tamale (1999).

Maria later shows how the women's caucus moved to include men in their advocacy agenda. She locates the entry of men to the exclusive women's caucus in parliament and the manner in which this happened, that is, men were identified by women MPs and invited into the women's advocacy space as *allies*, as *associate members*, with different rights, entitlements, and responsibilities. In the excerpt above, Maria noted "They [male MPs] are members because UWOPA saw that if they [UWOPA] are to succeed within Parliament which is male dominated, then you need to identify allies, men as allies". She justifies female MPs' alliance with some

male legislators by pointing to their realisation that if they were to succeed in a male dominated parliament they had to work with men. Maria thus highlights women's critical reading of the legislative space, its potential to resist particular issues of interest to women and the strategy that would enable them to address this. She shifts the conversation from *male champions* which was the question I put to her at the beginning of the interview, to look at supportive males as *allies* of female MPs, that is, men who do not necessarily experience the kind of disadvantage that women experience in politics but who, nevertheless, empathise with women's oppression. This conceptual shift moves the debate from 'male champion', a category that connotes masculine attributes of power, excellence, competition and domination to more collegial, empathetic, supportive and cooperative virtues that the notion of 'allies' embodies.

Maria further alerts us to the dynamics of selecting male allies and the implications this has for gender power relations. She does so as she responds to my question on why female MPs cannot work with all male MPs. On a more cautious note, Maria warns of the dangers of drawing all categories of men into women's specific agenda – that is, the possibility of losing focus, presumably because of the divergences amongst women but also men as gendered subjects. Consequently, while Maria constitutes certain male MPs as *allies* in as far as they are able to empathise with female subordination in parliament these men are still scrutinised by women MPs to ascertain their support for women's issues. Maria takes up this authoritative position as she winds up her narrative: "You must understand men who understand women's issues". She thus not only reveals why women MPs chose to draw on male MPs' support but also alerts us to the wariness that accompanies the process. This can be viewed as an attempt to avoid reproducing male domination.

### **Tapping into men in strategic positions of power**

Susana moves the debate on male inclusion from a focus on men's numerical advantage to understand the power that men hold and how this can be tapped to promote gender advocacy. She shares insights into how the organisation she works with came to shift its programmatic focus from exclusive women empowerment programmes to work with men. The extract below

begins with me asking what prompted the shift from the women-only approach to the inclusion of men as actors in gender equality advocacy.

**Amon:** Was this change in focus [from women-only programmes to involve men] as a result of the challenges that you had encountered in the struggle?

**Susana:** Yes, it was partly because of that. Partly because of the slow progress we were realising, partly because of the new generation coming on board [young women activists], partly because ahh, ahh [3]. There was also the international wave. At the international level, the concept of women's rights, the approaches, were also changing. There was the GAD, the WID approach, you know. Yaa. There was a lot of global discussion by then and that was also calling on bringing other supporters on board. ... And given the fact that men hold a lot of powers within our societies, leaving them out of our agenda was probably one of the biggest mistakes that we made or that we didn't realise earlier enough.

**Amon:** Why do you think so?

**Susana:** Because if a village chief is against inheritance then in that community, wife inheritance will not be practised because he will not sanction it. And if you have not sanctioned it, you know, it will not happen. So, we didn't recognise all these forces earlier enough.

**Amon:** Ok

**Susana:** So, we began identifying men who are in those strategic positions of leadership, those who are within Parliament, those who are in the judiciary, those who are in religion, those within the cultural institution and also those ones in local councils [political administrative units in local communities]. We wanted to really tap into their power, so that, you know, they use their power to support our agendas.

**(Interview with Susana, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016).**

Susana indicates how engaging men to speak to gender issues arose out of the difficulties that women's rights activists, encountered in the campaign for gender equality. These included the slow pace of activism, the emergence of young women activists with different needs and interests and the global push for the inclusion of men in gender equality programmes. Bringing men on board gender equality advocacy had global push with emphasis on broadening participation as well as the conceptualisation of gender equity issues as also of concern to men. Most importantly, Susana argues that conceiving of gender equality programmes without men was a regrettable mistake that her organisation did not realise until recently. Tapping into the form of power that men hold in society, as illustrated in the social-cultural sanctioning and

approval of certain practices is highlighted as the primary motive of women rights activists like Susana. As a result, a few men who occupied strategic positions of power in state institutions and communities were targeted.

### **Men as intelligible speakers on issues of sexuality**

Instances of men's power and influence in legislative debates are further noted by Janet, a former female legislator in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. Unlike Susana and Maria, both of whom are activists within civil society organisations, Janet was an MP who interacted with some of the men supporters of gender equality often labelled 'male champions'. I thus requested her to share with me specific instances in parliament that necessitated male representation. In the extract below, Janet recalls parliamentary experiences during the debates on the prohibition of FGM law, a legislative process that was sponsored by a male MP who was apparently identified by women MPs for this purpose.

**Amon:** Let us look at a particular case of female genital mutilation which you said was moved by Hon. Christopher?

**Janet:** Yes

**Amon:** It was seconded by [=]

**Janet:** By me.

**Amon:** By you. What was your experience? How did you see the ambience in parliament? What was unique with Christopher spearheading the process?

**Janet:** You see the uniqueness was that a man who is supposed to marry that woman has said it is bad for a woman to be circumcised [4] and he gave them the reasons why the women should not be circumcised. He told them, "You men from Kapchorwa, you very well know that, even when you come here and you marry women from this side [referring to Christopher's constituency where FGM is not practiced], you don't want to leave this place because you realise that those women [from FGM practicing communities] have a problem..."

**Amon:** Yaa.

**Janet:** So, they just needed this issue to be emphasised by a fellow man and if the woman, if I had talked about it, they would just say I am obscene, ahhh I am just talking about issues which don't concern me. Why do I want to fight over sex, sex issues? It is the man who is supposed to enjoy it. So, they will feel that ahhh Janet is obscene but at least for a man when he brought it and then I also brought it, it worked. **(Interview with Janet, Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2016).**

In the above discussion, Janet shows that the significance of working with men in promoting gender issues in parliamentary debates is premised on their capacities and authority to speak on issues of sexuality. She raises moral questions on MPs' eligibility and audibility as speakers but also what they can speak about. She thus sees the role of men in supporting sexuality issues in parliamentary debates as a strategic one, allotted by women to men in a patriarchal culture where women are not usually taken seriously. In the previous chapter, I elaborated on how women generally find parliament a difficult space to express their views. Janet's story emphasises how much more intimidating and challenging it might be for women if they were to lead discussion on topics considered culturally taboo for women – sex and sexuality. She characterises male MPs' interaction with the male and female audience in parliament and in FGM practising communities as easily conceivable because of the social expectations of men and women in heterosexual relations – “a man who is supposed to marry that woman has said it is bad for women to be circumcised”. Men easily talk about women's bodies and how they should be treated because they are supposed to marry these women. Thus, as patrons of a heterosexual framework, men can and often do determine how women's bodies ought to be handled. Consequently, the male MP was well understood (as Janet intimated) by his audience, an action which would have been perceived as *obscene* had Janet been the one at the forefront of this Bill. Janet's views point to how a certain gender becomes intelligible in a heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Comparing herself with the male MP, Janet drew on a heterosexual discourse illustrating what such a framework accepts (male sexual assertiveness and decision making) and what it pathologises (women's discussion on sexuality). Her position on men's intelligibility in issues of sexuality raises a key question on whether she is taking men's legitimacy to speak on sex for granted and thus institutionalising them as spokespersons of women on issues of sexuality or whether she is deconstructing men's legitimacy by presenting women's 'use' of it as a strategy in a patriarchal culture.

I argue that, Janet's subject position is a subversive one in which she resists cultural constraints on women's engagement in debates on sexuality. This is notable in the complexity with which Janet positions herself – as forbidden from discussing matters of sexuality, yet elaborately

articulating such issues not only in parliament (as Hansard records show) but also with me (a male researcher) in our interview conversation. Janet and other women legislators know very well that as a discourse in patriarchal contexts, heterosexuality represents men as subjects and women as objects of desire (Butler, 1990).

Janet hints at women's exclusion from discussions on sex when she argues that if she had been at the centre of mobilising for FGM (like Dr Christopher was) she would have been labelled obscene and not paid any attention. Yet, as indicated in the FGM law, even though Janet and other women are aware of such a regulated environment, they do not simply conform to the call for feminine passivity in parliamentary debates on matters of sex and sexuality. Rather, they engage in debates on sexuality in ways that subvert this exclusive male privilege by talking about sexual issues through men, that is, identifying men to carry messages that they (women) themselves are not expected to deliver, or at times speaking in support of men. Janet reiterates her significant (though secondary) role in mobilising and working with male legislators. She noted that, after Christopher tabled the motion to prohibit FGM, she *'also raised it, it worked'*, better than if she had taken the lead.

This resonates with Foucault's observation that, if women's speech on sex is repressed, that is, "condemned to prohibition, non-existence and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression" (Foucault, 1978: 6). What Janet did – making her voice audible in FGM debates in parliament – whether by talking to me (a male researcher) or 'seconding' debates publicly on the floor of parliament demonstrates her deliberate exercise of power in confronting sexual repression irrespective of the prohibitions and threats of denigrating labels – obscenity and indecency. By speaking about the forbidden subject, Janet effectively placed herself "outside the reach of power [and] upset the established laws" (Foucault, 1978: 6).

## Engaging women and men as gendered subjects

Maria, Susana and Janet's narratives enable us to put into perspective women's decision to work with men as 'spokespersons' on gender issues. Rather than reify women as subordinate to men, women's conscious and selective engagement with men and the motives for doing so are presented by the women participants in ways that foreground women's agency while attempting to subvert forms of male power in parliamentary debates. In particular, Janet's interview conversation demonstrated that, despite social silencing of women's speech on issues of sex and sexuality, women could indeed negotiate these cultural barriers and speak about sexual oppression.

However, while women justifiably talk of drawing on men as promoters of gender sensitive legislation, this is not without dilemmas. For example, there were moments in the interviews where women participants talked about men in ways that threatened to reproduce men as essentially powerful and knowledgeable and women as Other, as indicated in the excerpt below.

**Susana:** And so, I could say one of the people whom we really engage for example when we are working on marriage and divorce Bill, it is Justice Batema, you know him?

**Amon:** Okay, Ummm, I know him.

**Susan:** When we brought him on board, he really demystified the Bill from that professional and judiciary angle, such that he became actually the light of the Bill. And because you know, he looked at how Judiciary could interpret the already existing laws [from a gender perspective] even in the absence of a Bill on marriage and divorce. So, he gave it a wider interpretation and therefore that began to set a pace within the legal jurisprudence, to look into some of the contents in the Bill that we were struggling with but also being that figure, the Judge that he is and supporting really gave us that weight...

**Amon:** You said he became the light of the Bill, what do you mean? [Susana smiles as I ask this]

**Susan:** What I meant that he became the light of the Bill, hmm, is that he stood with the women, he stood with his idea, his ideology and the issues in the Bill when no male persons within the judiciary were speaking for it. And then in all these fora, the media, he was speaking for it. So, people began to question, who is this man speaking for this Bill when most people are saying that the Bill is bad, this Bill is making women powerful, the Bill is making women big headed? So, if this kind of person is speaking for it, then there is probably something good about the Bill. (Interview with Susana, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016).

In the above excerpt, Susana cites the example of a male judicial officer identified by women activists to support the women's rights articulated in the marriage and divorce Bill. She speaks of his unwavering support in providing clarity on the Bill to the extent that he became "the light to the Bill", a figure of authority, a pace-setter and the face of advocacy for the Bill in a context where women activists were struggling to understand its contents while most men were resistant to it. While this approach can be seen as a strategic move to draw men into speaking to issues of gender, it could, in the long run, lead to an idealisation of men as essentially powerful and knowledgeable.

Earlier in the interview, Susana indicated that women activists primarily targeted men's power to support a women's gender equality agenda. Accordingly, women focus on men's power as a tool to achieve a women's agenda, without necessarily focusing on men as gendered beings with particular gender needs and interests. By merely focusing on men's power (rather than critically focusing on men's needs and interests), to promote gender equality, "[g]ender relations come to be framed in terms of oppositional power relations between men-in-general and women-in-general" (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015: 401). The danger with this conceptualisation is that it leaves little room to explore relations between and amongst men as gender relations. A critical question that arises from this gender activists' instrumentalist focus on men is; what does gender equality stand to lose in the process? Arguably, focusing exclusively on men's power as an essential means through which to deliver on women's empowerment works against the very idea of masculinities and femininities as diverse, complex and intersecting identities. It is a practice that produces all men as a homogeneous oppressive category in opposition to women; and misses out on opportunities to transform gender power relations; that is critically engaging with social divisions and social differences that intersect to inform the gendering of men (and women). Recent scholarship and popular discussion on men and masculinities indicate a growing "emphasis on difference, diversity, fragmentation, fracturing and intersectionality" (Hearn, 2007:16). Critical studies on men and masculinities underscore the significance of scrutinising men in the same way that researchers have scrutinised women and femininities in feminist studies (Hearn, 2007; Shefer, Ratele, Strebler, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007).

## **The selection of male promoters of gender equality and its implications for women's agency**

In the sections above, I highlighted how women responded to the category 'male champions' which I introduced in the interview conversations as well as why and how they understand men's role in promoting gender equality. In this section, I examine how women identify and recruit some men to speak to issues of gender on their behalf, how they position themselves in relation to these men and the implications of these relations for women's agency. I draw on interview conversations with female activists and map three key steps in this process – surveillance, identification and training. I identify the markers women activists look out for in a man to recruit as a 'champion' and the significance they attach to this process.

### **Surveillance, Identification and Training men as promoters of gender equality**

Participants described the selection of male promoters of gender equality as a three-step process. This triad of surveillance, identification, and training (SIT) (which literally enables women activists to 'sit back' and monitor men that speak on their behalf) is illustrated in the extracts below.

**Susana:** ... what women [activists] did was to begin identifying some of the men who seem to be receptive to the [women's] advocacy agenda. And most of these people were easily identified within strategic positions of leadership where they had influence and where we were doing advocacy from.

**Amon:** Ok

**Susana:** If it was something we were pushing through Parliament, then we would identify some of the vocal men in Parliament and *really* [emphasis with increase in the pitch of her voice] take time to make them understand what this agenda is, you know, how it could transform the lives of men and women ...

**Amon:** Was this change of focus from working exclusively with women to include men as a result of the challenges that you had encountered in the struggle?

**Susana:** Yes, it was partly because of that ... (Interview with Susana, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016).

Susana outlines the steps by means of which certain men were selected to promote gender equality. This involved keen observation of the everyday lives of men in parliament and scrutiny of their actions, particularly with regard to support for women's rights. This kind of 'surveillance'<sup>43</sup> afforded women activists what Foucault refers to as disciplinary power – the ability to exercise control over an individual through monitoring their actions. Susana describes the kind of markers they looked out for such as men's receptiveness to the women's advocacy agenda, holding positional power (strategic leadership positions), policy influence and vocality, among others. Women activists would then take time to train those identified on issues to be presented in parliament to enable them to understand the goal of this advocacy and reassure them of the inclusive outcome – transforming the lives of men and women. It is interesting to note that Susana specifies men as well as women as beneficiaries of gender equality advocacy, a gesture that seems to re-conceptualise the role of male champions, not as a request for certain men to altruistically speak on behalf of women but rather an effort that is in the interests of both men and women.

Susana's precise yet constitutive story of how some men are selected to promote women's rights issues resonates with Maria's version of events. In the conversation below, I followed up on an issue Maria raised earlier, about the strategic identification of men as 'allies' of women.

**Amon:** You talked about identifying, you called it strategic identification [=]

**Maria:** Identification, yes [raises her voice] [=].

**Amon:** Of men who have interests in issues of gender. Where do these men get the interest or how do you see the interest of men?

**Maria:** What happens is that, one is that we monitor debates on the floor of Parliament. If they bring an issue of national importance on maybe say maternal health, you see how many men are debating on it. What are they saying? Are they in support, say, of having midwives? That is how

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault categorises 'surveillance' as a form of disciplinary power, that is, control through the monitoring and surveillance of populations. <https://revisesociology.com/2016/09/21/foucault-surveillance-crime-control/> (accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017)

we identify them. Then we approach them and say look here we have this. That is one way of identifying them on the floor of Parliament. And then in workshops ...

**Amon:** Ok.

**Maria:** You may invite 100 [participants], in there you invite 30 or 40 men and then you see how they contribute. Some will really contribute *sooo* [emphatic and prolonged] negatively and you even ask yourself why did I invite this, oh my God why did I invite this man? But you learn, you get to know them and such people once they understand the basic principle of gender equality that it is not a woman's thing, we are talking about men and women, that is when they start appreciating.

**Amon:** Ok

**Maria:** So, you identify them in workshops, at Parliament, even their contributions on issues talked about in committees [of parliament] are always put in papers. So, you look out and see what is Hon. Bahati saying, what is Hon. Odong Otto saying? Otto [laughter] Otto used to be our member.

**(Interview with Maria, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016)**

Maria's account of the identification of men ties in with Susana's, in as far as both point to the key steps in recruiting male champions. Both narratives highlight women's investment in a conscious and rigorous process of scrutinising men to ensure that only those who are powerful but supportive of women's rights are identified. Maria indicates that the 'selection process' is characterised by monitoring how men raise issues, debate and/or support gender discussions on the floor of parliament, in workshops organised by women NGOs and in parliamentary committees.

In parliament, male MPs are systematically and consistently vetted on the quality of their debate and support for gender issues. Those perceived as supportive and influential in debates are approached by women MPs to mobilise them, forge relations, and explain and convince them of the need to support specific issues of interest to women. Furthermore, male MPs are invited along with female MPs to gender training workshops or roundtable discussions on gender sensitive Bills that are before parliament. In these workshops, men's commitment is further scrutinised. All these fora are used to assess not only men's knowledge about and commitment to gender issues, but also their opposition. Maria hints at perceptions of 'gender' as synonymous

with ‘women’ as a possible source of men’s negativity on gender issues. These observations are used as a basis to equip men (and women) with knowledge and skills on gender analysis, re-crafting gender advocacy messages, and forging collaborative efforts with men to promote gender equity in legislative processes.

### **Training and learning from male trainees**

The women interviewees presented themselves as instructors and gender trainers of the men identified to speak to issues of gender on their behalf. Both Susana and Maria indicated that they worked hard to equip men (identified to support women’s rights issues in parliamentary debates) with knowledge on gender issues. They thus positioned themselves as educators and instructors of men, imparting knowledge, raising men’s awareness on issues of gender and impacting on their attitudes towards discussions on women’s rights in parliamentary debates. The positions that women assume (as trainers) question the idealisation of men as champions. Training men identified to speak to issues of gender is hardly foregrounded in the popular discourse on men as champions. Furthermore, the women’s narratives on how they educate men highlight the ways in which they use training fora to forge relations with the men they recruit and learn from the trainees’ experiences whether these were in support of or against the women’s rights agenda. For instance, Maria recalls how some male workshop participants would “contribute *sooo* [emphatic and prolonged] negatively and you even ask yourself why did I invite this, oh my God why did I invite this man? But you learn, you get to know them ...” Such training interactions afforded women activists the power to determine who to work with and how.

### **Women’s agency**

The stories recounted above tell us a lot about women’s agency particularly through the ways they select and train men to speak to women’s rights issues. The interviewees demonstrated how women activists exercise their agency in choosing which male MPs to entrust with the responsibility of speaking to issues of gender on their behalf. Participants illustrated women’s enactment of power through their careful choice of words to describe the process. From

systematic and consistent observation and monitoring of men's everyday conduct in parliament (which I read from a Foucauldian view as 'surveillance'), to identifying those in strategic positions of leadership yet receptive to women's rights, women activists position themselves in powerful ways. Women's exercise of power is also demonstrated through training and sensitisation of men on specific issues of interest to women to be discussed in parliamentary debates. Thus, through the interview conversations, we not only come to know about the men identified to promote women's rights issues and how they are recruited but also about the agency of women and the great significance they attach to this process.

### **What we can learn from the female responses on the role of male promoters of gender equality**

What we have learnt from the research process, in particular the manner in which women interviewees respond to the question of men selected to speak to women's rights issues on behalf of women, is that the category 'male champions' is constructed as a discourse rather than as a descriptive category of men in parliament. In their conversations, female interviewees did not merely describe an existing category of male promoters of gender equality but rather broadly articulated the contexts (historical gender activism, strategies, practices, actors and their relations with one another) in which certain men are drawn on to support women in speaking to issues of gender in parliament. The discursive context in which gender sensitive legislation is promoted has been demonstrated through women's critique, deconstruction and redefinition of what 'championing' gender equality entails. For example, I indicated how the interviewees highlighted women activists' on-going efforts to articulate and bring women's rights issues into parliamentary debates, as well as draw on male support to strategically negotiate patriarchal resistance to gender issues in ways that are critical of the idealisation of male promoters of gender equality.

Furthermore, this chapter revealed the ways in which the idealisation of men as 'champions' institutionalises the assumption that men are better than women, are good at public speaking and are influential in parliamentary debates and more adept as parliamentarians while women are

weak and emotional. However, by emphasising the historical role of women gender activists as instigators of gender equality advocacy, and the role of men as supporters of women, a role which women activists have allotted to men for strategic reasons in a patriarchal context where women's speech is hardly taken seriously, the female interviewees engaged in a powerful critique of the 'male champions' discourse.

### Summary

In summary, I revisit the key question this chapter engaged with: Are gender inequalities challenged or institutionalised through the use of 'male champions' in the Ugandan parliament? The findings from the conversations with women participants indicate that the very category 'male champions' which I introduced in the interviews generated responses from some of the female participants which challenged the idealisation of men as instigators of women's rights advocacy and spokespersons of women in parliamentary debates. However, the women participants pointed to certain strategic imperatives in terms of which men can and indeed are drawn on to speak to women's rights issues, particularly in patriarchal contexts where women's voices are hardly taken seriously.

The findings indicated that women were often reluctant to idealise the popular discourse on 'male champions' and instead foregrounded women's agency in gender equality activism. Women's exercise of individual and collective agency can be read through the way the interviewees drew on historical and auto-biographical resources to constitute themselves as hard-working, innovative and successful in gender equality advocacy, not *because of* men but *in spite of* men's resistance. It is through this manner of representation, characterised by a critical engagement with the category 'male champions' that the women participants constituted themselves as subjects, de-centring the category 'male champions' in the process. However, despite de-centring men, the women interviewees still emphasised the instrumental role that men play, particularly in patriarchal contexts. This complex posturing of women vis-à-vis specific men they identify as 'champions' critically redefines the globally popularised discourse on male promoters of gender equality. Accordingly, the women interviewees emphasised that the

(reconceptualised) role of ‘male champions’ was not necessarily one in which women look up to certain men to altruistically speak on their behalf but rather an inclusive approach that is in the interests of both women and men.

The chapter also mapped the rigorous ways in which women monitored, ‘identified’ and ‘trained’ certain men to promote gender equality. The interview conversations projected women in powerful ways as educators and instructors of powerful men as they imparted knowledge to them on gender issues, impacted on their attitudes towards women’s rights debates in parliament, and forged alliances but also learnt from men’s experiences, whether these were for or against women’s rights advocacy.

The participants identified key strategic imperatives to engage men in promoting gender equality. They elaborated on the contexts that warrant women activists’ option of working with men to support gender sensitive debates in parliament. Men’s numerical advantage in parliament and the privileged positions afforded them by patriarchal discourses were identified as the key contexts that prompted women to opt for male MPs to speak on their behalf. For instance, I indicated how men are constituted as intelligible speakers on issues of sexuality. However, I also noted that while women are aware of such patriarchal regulatory frameworks that delegitimise their voices, they subversively negotiated these. Women interviewees highlighted that they often placed themselves beyond the reach of such prohibitive power to speak on issues of gender and women’s rights, whether it was through working with men as allies or ‘seconding’ gender issues in parliamentary debates or even risking being labelled obscene for speaking on prohibited subjects such as issues of sexuality.

Finally, the chapter demonstrated the agential ways in which the participants drew on ‘women’ as a strategic foundation upon which to explain women’s oppression and to celebrate their central role in gender activism. I argued that despite the women interviewees’ construction of themselves and the women they talked about in ways that risked reproducing ‘women’ as an essential category, they consistently justified these positions as ‘strategic’ maneuvers to make

visible women's pervasive oppression (See Butler, 1993 and Danus, Jonsson & Spivak, 1993 on strategic essentialism). Butler (1993: 234) argues (although with cursory support) that, "it is necessary to assert political demands through recourse to identity categories, and to lay claim to the power to name oneself and determine the conditions under which that name is used".

This chapter highlighted the complexity of the 'male champions' discourse in Uganda and beyond. In chapter 1, I introduced this category and showed how it has been understood and enacted in different forms in diverse societies. One of the concerns raised was the extent to which this category deflected from women's agency and the institutionalisation of male supporters of gender equality as spokespersons for women on gender issues and how this reinforces patriarchal understandings of men as superior and women as weak and in need of assistance. In particular, I pointed out that the ANC Women's League president and Minister of Social Development in South Africa, Bathabile Dlamini invited some men to the League's policy conference in July 2017 to bolster women since, as she indicated, women tend to lose debates because they are emotional. It is through such moments that deploying men as women's allies appears to reinforce masculine agency and feminine passivity thereby undermining a meaningful challenge to gender normativity. The irony is that while it is precisely the voices of those with cultural authority that are most effective in promoting cultural change, those voices also derive their authority from these structures.

However, what was striking in the interviews I conducted with women about working with some men to support debates on women's rights issues in parliament, was their opposition to the very category of men as 'champions'. This is particularly true of Janet and Susana's interviews in which I introduced the category of 'male champions' and they responded to it in deconstructive and critical ways. In four of the six interviews with female participants, the interviewees highlighted the role of women not only in promoting gender issues but also in rigorous scrutiny, identification and training of some men to support the women's rights agenda. The manner in which women responded centred on women activists as instigators and agents in gender equality advocacy. This contrasts with the president of the ANC Women's League's position which I

referred to in chapter 1. It raises questions on the significance of male promoters of gender equality as a category in relation to how gender politics is discussed in Uganda as well as to how men who take on the role of promoting gender equality position themselves in relation to women and other men. Do they see themselves as ‘champions’ of gender equality? What does championing gender equality mean to them? Do they buy into the popular ‘male champions’ discourse which presents them as superior or as products of women’s identification and gender training? These are some of the questions I engage with, in the next chapter as I explore men’s narrative accounts of the role of men in speaking to gender issues in parliamentary debates.

## **Chapter Six: How do male parliamentarians ‘selected’ to present ‘gender sensitive’ motions on behalf of women identify themselves, their interests and motivations?**

### **Introduction**

In chapter 5, I reported on my engagements with female gender activists in and outside parliament and explored the ways in which they identified, trained and worked with certain men to present gender issues on behalf of women. Through an analysis of our interview conversations, I indicated how some of the women I spoke to critiqued, deconstructed and redefined what championing gender equality entails. Rather than idealising male supporters of gender issues in ways that would institutionalise the assumption that women are dependent upon men, it was presented as a discursive category that accommodates women’s role in promoting gender equality. Consequently, these female respondents re-centred the historical role of women activists as instigators of gender equality advocacy while acknowledging the strategic role of its male promoters in enabling women to negotiate resistance to patriarchy in parliament.

In this chapter, I pay attention to some of the male parliamentarians who are said to have been selected by women activists to present motions on the prohibition of FGM and domestic violence in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament (2006-2011) on behalf of women. I engage with the interview conversations with five men, four of whom were legislators in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament and one that trains MPs on issues of gender and the law and explore the ways in which they position themselves in relation to women (especially women activists who apparently identify them) and other male parliamentarians, as well as how are they positioned by them.

The male participants included Fred, Christopher, Seba, Kissa and Davis. As noted in chapter 3, all study participants are assigned pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity. Fred served in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament as a legislator, cabinet minister and a senior legal advisor to the government. It was under his ministry that the Domestic Violence Bill of 2009 was drafted and promoted as a government Bill. Some of the female participants I talked to identified Fred as sympathetic to

women's rights, adding that he often represented women's interests in parliamentary debates, mainly on domestic violence. By the time of our interview (August 2016), Fred had been dropped from the cabinet after losing his parliamentary seat in the February 2016 general elections. Another participant was Christopher, a medical doctor and politician. At the time of our interview, he was a deputy minister. Along with Seba and Janet (a female legislator whom I also interviewed), he co-sponsored the prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Bill of 2009 which was passed into an Act of parliament in 2010. Christopher and Seba had also worked together in a number of women's rights organisations promoting sexual and reproductive health rights before they came to parliament. I also talked to Kissa, a retired medical doctor, politician and MP who represented a constituency (Kapchorwa) where FGM was practiced and was therefore key in parliamentary debates on outlawing the practice. The fifth male respondent was Davis, a senior legal official in the high court of Uganda. Davis often trains legislators especially women MPs on the link between gender and legislative processes. He was characterised by some of the female respondents as a 'sister' in the women's rights movement and a 'light' in the controversial Domestic Relations Bill of 2003. Domestic relations which included long-pending draft legislation on marriage, divorce, separation, inheritance, and property rights, was later divided into several pieces of legislation that included the Domestic Violence Bill (Wang, 2013).

All the above participants were selected for interviews based on their participation in the legislative processes on FGM and domestic violence. Three were referred to me by female participants whom I interviewed first. Consequently, I interviewed four of the five male respondents after the female participants. My conversations with male participants reflected and built on some of the themes that were emerging from women's narrated experiences. These included reflections on whether men perceived themselves as 'champions' and whether they were identified and trained by women gender activists as the latter had indicated.

At the beginning of our interview conversations, I asked them if they were aware of the women activists' strategy of identifying and working with men to present gender issues in parliament on women's behalf. I introduced the idea of males as 'champions' of gender equality and asked if

they (male participants) perceive themselves as such, and if so, how they became ‘champions’ of gender issues, what they do to promote legislation that seeks to critique gender inequalities, and how they relate to women and other men in the process. As in the interviews with the female gender activists, I analytically focus on the relational dynamics of the interview and the co-construction of narratives and how these were shaped in conversations by the kind of questions I posed (and their responses) and the relations my interviewees and I established. Through the stories produced between myself and the male interviewees, I examine the ways in which they organise their experiences and the meanings they attach to these, particularly in relation to women respondents’ views on how they recruit men to speak to gender issues.

This chapter therefore, focuses on men’s responses on whether they perceive themselves as ‘champions’ of gender equality and if so, how they came to take up this role. Particular emphasis is placed on how male interviewees use their narratives to construct and represent themselves in relation to women and other male parliamentarians. I then assess the implications these forms of identification have for theorising gender power relations in gender equality work.

### **How I introduced the idea of ‘male champions’ and men’s responses to this**

In this section, I explore how the male participants responded to my question on whether they perceived themselves as ‘male champions’ of gender equality and if so, how they took up this role. Some respondents embrace the category and elaborate on the imperatives of involving men in gender equality advocacy while others reject not only the idea of women selecting ‘male champions’, but also the way the concept is invoked as an epitaph to some men who speak to gender issues.

### **How men sponsored ‘gender sensitive’ motions in parliament and the implications of their involvement for the understanding of ‘gender’**

In this section I draw on the extract below and highlight how Christopher – who sponsored the prohibition of FGM law – himself introduced the idea of ‘male champions’ after I asked him to elaborate on gender issues that he and other legislators promoted in parliament. He not only

constructs himself as a ‘champion’ of FGM issues but also highlights the significance of the category and how a few ‘male champions’ relate to female and other male parliamentarians.

**Christopher:** We championed many causes especially in the field of sexual and reproductive health although still there, you get pockets of dissent from other members of parliament, but generally we were few male parliamentarians who stood for the cause of women and championed that. And we continue to do so; we continue to do so.

**Amon:** Ok. So, a few men stood and championed this. How were you perceived in Parliament? How were you perceived by women members of parliament, by men, was anybody surprised that you were doing what you were doing?

**Christopher:** Yes. Some got surprised because like I said earlier on, Parliament is a summary of the Ugandan population and Ugandans still have that kind of patriarchal attitude, that kind of thinking that men have that superiority... Even in parliament, that attitude is still there. So, some few members including women would be like surprised why it could be us the men who were pushing causes which ordinarily look like causes for the women.

**Amon:** [I look at Christopher straight in the eye, with keen attention]

**Christopher:** Yes, the women. Because they are a reflection of Ugandans. That is the thinking people have. That is the way people are brought up to think that women are inferior to men or that men should not be advocating for the causes which are seen as causes for women. There are some few who have those misgivings, who had those misgivings but our duty was to sensitise them and bring them on board. We wanted to emphasise that for women to achieve their emancipation agenda, men must be on board, and actually, you need male champions to push the agenda in order for even the men to appreciate that they are part of this process. Otherwise, if you leave it to the women alone, then you will widen the divide between the women and men, and then it becomes difficult because, in platforms like parliament and other governance structures, you will definitely find men have the numerical strength. Again because of the way society has been constructed.

**Amon:** Hmm.

**Christopher:** So there, they need men to champion such causes so that you can marshal the numbers to propel that kind of idea [gender issue]. Otherwise, if you leave it to the women alone, then they will not succeed, it will be seen as a women’s thing, and the men are likely to gang up to defeat whatever the women are pushing. But if you have the male on board championing and spearheading some of these causes, then it will be seen as an issue which cuts across the gender divide. **(Interview with Christopher, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016).**

The excerpt elaborates on how Christopher embraced the idea of males as ‘champions’ and the reasons he gives for the mandatory involvement of male parliamentarians in gender equality advocacy in parliament. Indeed, he repeatedly uses the concept of ‘champion’ and provides a succinct rationale for ‘male champions’ in gender equality. It is interesting how Christopher’s identification as a ‘champion’ connects and resonates with women gender activists’ position on the strategic importance of men speaking to women’s issues even though he also speaks about men ‘championing’ such causes in an idealised manner, an issue that women activists were critical of. This is especially so when he calls for ‘male champions’ to altruistically spearhead gender equality advocacy in order for the women’s empowerment agenda to succeed.

### *Idealisation of ‘male champions’*

In the above conversation, Christopher demonstrates how the institution of parliament produces gender identifications and power relationships. In particular, this is illustrated through how he positions himself (and other male promoters of gender issues in parliament) in relation to female and other male parliamentarians. Christopher identifies himself and a few other men he worked with to speak to gender issues as ‘champions’ who are instrumental in the debates given the patriarchal character of parliament and the Ugandan population at large. His account of parliament as patriarchal connects with my ethnographic findings in chapter 4 on how women are bullied, infantilised and often not taken seriously during everyday interactions in parliamentary debates. Christopher draws on gender polarities in parliament to justify the role of men in speaking to gender issues, that is, tapping into men’s obvious numerical advantage but also their potential to bridge the divide between men and women by shifting the conversation from the perception of ‘gender’ as ‘women issues’ (‘a women’s thing’) to a broader focus on these as social issues that have implications for both women and men. I return to the problematising of ‘gender’ as synonymous with women’s issues in the following section.

Furthermore, Christopher projects himself and the ‘few’ other males he worked with to promote the law on prohibition of FGM as knowledgeable about the gender dynamics of the legislative process, sensitive and supportive of gender equality. This is in contrast to other men (and

women) parliamentarians who are not only opposed to gender equality debates, what he termed as ‘dissenting’ voices, especially during debates on sexual and reproductive health issues, but also those who undermine women as inferior to men. He argues that such patriarchal attitudes which undermine women and women’s views necessitate ‘male champions’ in parliamentary debates. Christopher thus constitutes men’s role of promoting gender issues in such a patriarchal institution as obligatory, something they must do if gender equality and women’s emancipation are to be achieved. He also constructs this as the role of a few men who have the power to present these as social issues that affect everyone, rather than gender issues. ‘Men as champions’ are linked to the idealisation of the ‘few’ men as mediators that bridge the gender divide.

Accordingly, such men are tasked to sensitise parliamentarians with misgivings about women’s capacity to present and debate gender issues in parliament and bring them on board; deconstruct perceptions of gender issues as women’s issues; and provide clarity on the role of men in achieving the women’s emancipation agenda by illustrating to fellow men that they are also part of the process of advocating for gender equality. He further pointed out that given men’s numerical strength in parliament, there is a need for “men to ‘champion’ such causes [gender sensitive motions] so that you can marshal the numbers to propel that kind of idea [gender issue]”. As pointed out by Christopher, these kinds of roles position him (and the few other males he talks about) in ideal ways as powerful mentors and instructors of male and female parliamentarians. It is through this process of role allocation that Christopher and other men re-constitute themselves as subjects in gender equality debates in parliament.

The idea of tapping into men’s numerical advantage speaks to claims of power that men hold in parliamentary debates but most importantly, how men like Christopher who are supportive of gender equality are expected to engage with a male-dominated parliament – ‘marshal the numbers’ to propel discussions on gender issues. Although Christopher does not explicitly make symbolic connections between the language he uses and masculine power, his choice of words such as *marshaling* significant numbers of male parliamentarians invokes meanings around essential masculine values of power, physical strength, bravery, and militarism among others,

and speaks to the power that ‘male champions’ are expected to have. By arguing in this way, Christopher looks at ‘male champions’ in ideal ways; as critical actors obliged to spearhead gender equality advocacy, ones without whom women would not succeed. He constructs these men as the *elite* few who have the potential power to bridge the gender divide and cajole fellow men to think in ways which are not constrained by gender binaries.

While Christopher does not use the term elite, his narrative account in the above excerpt implied the existence of an exceptional group of a few male parliamentarians with the ability to *marshal* male legislators and *spearhead* advocacy on gender issues. This implied position of a few powerful men compares with the ideal category of ‘male champions’ that the women gender activists I talked to were critical of, especially its potential to turn the historical struggle against patriarchal forms of authority and power into a celebration of men.

Indeed, as he winds up this discussion, Christopher repeatedly reminded us that if promotion of gender issues in parliamentary debates was left to women alone, this would not only fan the antagonism between women and men and therefore make debate on and passing of gender motions difficult but also compromise the inclusion of men’s issues and interests in gender equality debates. Christopher draws on a number of grammatical resources – verbs (marshal, champion, spearhead) and statements (such as men must be brought on board), that signify power and domination and frame male ‘championship’ of gender issues as mandatory. The construction of men as ‘champions’ in ideal terms resonates with global discourses on ‘male champions’ of gender equality in which men are seen as superior and as saviours of women, a perspective that the female respondents I talked to (in chapter 5) were critical of. These positionings of the self by female and male participants as well as those in powerful positions signify the performance identity.

### ***Using idealised ‘male champions’ to bridge gender polarities***

In chapter 5, I indicated how some of the women I interviewed critiqued, deconstructed and redefined the ‘male champions’ category by rejecting the idealisation of men as superior and

women as the antithesis. For some of these female participants, the rejection of ‘male champions’ represented a contest against according primacy to male supporters of gender equality over female gender activists and was about challenging the negation and erasure of women’s role in promoting such equality. In this chapter however, particularly in the section above, I have indicated how Christopher embraces the idea of men as ‘champions’, idealising them as mandatory actors if the women’s empowerment agenda is to be realised. In effect, this positions men as the antithesis of women. Yet at the same time, Christopher rallies parliament to embrace the category ‘male champions’ as a means to bridge the gender divide. While these could be read as contradictory positions, I read them as complex manifestations of gender power relationships, that is, dynamic ways through which Christopher positions himself in relation to women and other men in different contexts.

### **Men’s ‘longstanding’ critique of gender inequality**

In the section above, I indicated how Christopher embraced the category ‘male champions’ and how, in part, his account of the relevance of such ‘champions’ resonates with women’s views on the imperatives of selecting men to speak to gender issues on behalf of women. Nevertheless, in some instances, Christopher and other interviewees (especially Seba and Fred) were reluctant to identify as ‘products’ of women gender activists’ selection and training. Instead, they highlighted their ‘longstanding’ interest in critiquing gender inequalities. I draw on Fred’s narrative account to show how he rejected the ways in which the category ‘male champions’ was invoked, as an epitaph and a celebration of men who speak to issues of gender. Instead, Fred perceived his role in promoting gender issues in parliamentary debates as his duty (as a minister and legislator) and as one that merited no accolades. In the sections that follow, I show how Christopher, Seba and Fred represent themselves as longstanding opponents of gender inequality in their own right rather than as merely being selected to speak to gender issues on behalf of women.

After Christopher had himself raised the idea of ‘male champions’, I asked him if anyone had selected him to speak to particular gender issues, especially the sponsorship of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Bill. It should be noted that my conversation with Christopher took

place after female interviewees had talked about how they identified and worked with some men to promote Bills on FGM and domestic violence.

**Amon:** Did anyone identify you to champion the FGM legislative process?

**Christopher:** Me? Nobody identified me.

**Amon:** But a number of women activists I interviewed talked about identifying men to speak about FGM issues on their behalf.

**Christopher:** Nobody

**Amon:** Nobody!

**Christopher:** Because even up to now I continue to push issues of gender. So, I don't think it is to identify you to do that.

**Amon:** Ok.

**Christopher:** Maybe they could say we 'worked with', maybe. Because if you don't have the passion even if somebody identified you, you will not do it. If I am not persuaded and convinced that I should champion a cause like gender issues or such related issues, I don't think anybody can identify me, and then I push it with passion, no, no, no. You must have the motivation and passion for something.

**Amon:** Ok.

**Christopher:** So, for me I had that passion for it [FGM law] and that is why I even continued to push issues of maternal health during legislation but also when we are looking at budgeting, when we are looking at raising the issues in Parliament because I am passionate about them; because I don't believe in that gender divide, that kind of gender divide which is disavouring the women. When you look and see maternal mortality – women who die – they are dying simply because of those imbalances, they die of preventable causes, and yet if we did all we could, we could lessen that burden. We could save mothers from dying. So, I just have that passion; I am just convinced about that.

**Irene:** Because you are a doctor?

**Christopher:** Not as a doctor but as an individual being. Yes, of course being a doctor also helps me understand issues much better but from my upbringing, from my appreciation of how society looks at these issues, really I just developed that passion. (**Interview with Christopher, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016**)

In this excerpt, Christopher explicitly rejects the idea of women activists recruiting certain men to promote gender issues on their behalf. He points out that, as an individual, he was not approached by women requesting him to speak to FGM issues. He indicates how such an approach (of identifying men) presupposes that women are the only ones that are committed, and

that men have to be persuaded to promote gender equality. Christopher adds that assumptions that men are *just* identified and tasked to speak to issues of gender on behalf of women implies that men are not convinced, motivated or have no personal interest in promoting gender equality. He further argued, somewhat implicitly, that unless men are individually concerned about gender inequalities, they may not continuously push for it, something he exemplified through advocating for the passing of anti-FGM law as well as its implementation.

Earlier in the interview, he shared with Irene (my research assistant) and I how, before he entered parliament; he was passionate about promoting women's reproductive health rights. He added that his position as a medical doctor coupled with his early childhood experiences of being critical of sexism – in particular girls who were killed for falling pregnant before marriage – developed his passion for gender equality. Accordingly, Christopher argues that without personal conviction about gender equality – one which is taken for granted by women gender activists' view of selecting some men to represent gender issues on behalf of women – one might not be able to consistently speak to gender issues. His objection to mere selection of men to present some issues on behalf of women is strongly emphasised here:

If you don't have the passion even if somebody identified you, you will not do it. If I am not persuaded and convinced that I should champion a cause like gender issues or such related issues, I don't think anybody can identify me, and then I push it with passion, no, no, no (interview with Christopher, Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

Notions of men as longstanding opponents of sexism are shared by Kissa and Seba. Kissa, a retired legislator and medical doctor who hails from FGM practicing communities noted: "I was a male champion even before going to parliament because I was mobilising people locally and I was against FGM, and I was teaching them about the dangers of the practice, which I also did in Parliament". Earlier, Kissa shared with me how he resisted cultural pressure and married an uncircumcised woman and also opted not to allow her two daughters to undergo the practice. Seba comes from the same region as Kissa and co-sponsored the Bill on prohibition of FGM in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. In the extract below, he outlines his motivation for doing so.

**Amon:** How did you become part of the legislation process on FGM?

**Seba:** I came to Parliament with a background that FGM was a harmful practice that should not continue. So, when there was an opportunity... I kept presenting that. You know in Parliament there are committees.

**Amon:** Yes.

**Seba:** Whenever the committee of Gender [Sessional committee on gender and social development] would sit, we would go there and say, but there is this issue of female genital mutilation. We also had civil society organisations that were pushing this to be legislated like Law Uganda [a women's rights NGO]. ... whenever there was an opportunity like in workshops... we would talk about issues of domestic violence, human rights abuses and specifically female genital mutilation. So, at every point, I would bring this to the attention of the members.

**Amon:** Ok

**Seba:** Yaa. We were very passionate with reproductive health issues. The three of us and many others anyway, were very concerned about reproductive health issues; we even were like a champion in Parliament on reproductive health issues. So, whenever there was an issue of reproductive health, we were there and many of my friends like Hon. Winnie, Hon. Rwakimali from Ntungamo then. So, these are the people we worked together with on issues that affected women's rights. **(Interview with Seba on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2016).**

Unlike the conversation with Christopher where I raised the question of 'male champions', I did not do so with Seba but merely enquired how he came to promote the law on FGM. However, Seba reflects on his past experiences of supporting advocacy campaigns against FGM long before he came to parliament. It is also notable that he was actively involved in sexual and reproductive health networks that worked towards eradicating FGM. Once in parliament, Seba and his colleagues pleaded with members of the parliamentary committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development to include FGM on the committee's legislative agenda. At one point in the interview, Seba informed us that that, along with Christopher and a female legislator (Janet), he resolved to sponsor the legislation on FGM as a private members' Bill after failed attempts to call on the government to take up the issue.

The conversation also brings to the fore an interesting perspective where Seba introduces the idea of 'champion' and uses it in a way that suggests taking on board and highlighting the role of both male and female parliamentarians and possibly implying that gender issues are a common

concern for men and women. Yet, at the same time, he speaks of ‘championing’ issues relating to women’s rights as opposed to gender rights.

Furthermore, Seba’s story implicitly demonstrates how, far from being selected (by women gender activists) to push the FGM legislative agenda, he and his colleagues promoted the FGM law out of personal motivation. It is notable that Kissa, Seba and Christopher are hesitant to acknowledge being ‘selected’ by women gender activists to speak to FGM issues on their behalf. However, a closer analysis of their narrated experiences within and outside parliament points to several interactive engagements that women activists and male legislators shared. Men constructed as ‘champions’ talked of how they were once employees of women’s rights organisations, and how they met in gender training workshops, roundtable discussions, and on parliamentary committees, among others. For example, Christopher talked of his work with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA-Uganda) as a gender officer way before he came to parliament. Seba elaborates on how he, along with Christopher worked in alliance with the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association and parliament’s Gender and Social Development Committee to raise sexual and reproductive health issues on the floor. These are some of the avenues that the women interviewees pointed to as critical spaces through which they identified, trained and forged relations with the men they worked with. It is thus notable that in their gender equality advocacy, women consciously engaged with and monitored men’s ways of dealing with gender issues – how they presented, debated and picked up on gender issues in parliament, and their support (or lack of it) for women’s rights issues – all of which are part of the learning for women but also a training ground for men with whom they hope to work.

### **“For me, I was doing my work”: Fred’s reluctance to identify as a ‘male champion’ of gender equality**

Below, I draw on a conversation with Fred, a former MP and cabinet minister. As noted previously, it was under his ministry that the Domestic Violence Bill was drafted and promoted as a government Bill. In the extract, Fred responds to my assertion that women MPs identified him as a ‘male champion’ of gender equality.

**Amon:** Thank you so much for accepting to talk to us. As I shared with you earlier, I am looking at the strategy of drawing on men to promote gender equality in parliament and when I follow a number of actors from civil society and Uganda Women Parliamentary Association members, they indicated that you were actually one of the men they identified as ‘male champions’ of gender equality.

**Fred:** Hmm.

**Amon:** So, I wanted to learn from you what it is that took them to describe you as a ‘male champion’ of gender equality.

**Fred:** I don’t know, you go and ask them [2]. Now is that a question to ask me or you should ask them?

**Amon:** Yaa. I want to see whether you perceive yourself in the same way they think about you [=]

**Fred:** I don’t know why they thought so. For me I was doing my work.

**Amon:** Hmm.

**Fred:** [laughter]. I was doing my work. Yes, as a legislator, a member of Parliament and as Deputy legal advisor of government, a deputy minister and later a full legal advisor of government.

**Amon:** OK.

**Fred:** Yes.

**Amon:** So, you feel anybody who would have been in that position would have been described as a promoter of gender equality?

**Fred:** I don’t know [5]

**Amon:** You don’t know!

**Fred:** I don’t know [5]. Now let me give you the practical historical fact [prolonged silence]. Up to 1981, my father passed on ... **(Data from interview with Fred on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016).**

In this conversation, Fred’s immediate response to the discussion I introduced (on women selecting some men to represent women’s rights issues) is characterised by mixed emotions. He expressed a sense of frustration at my having asked him whether he perceived himself in similar ways as women activists do and instead retorted “I don’t know, you go and ask them [2]. Is that now a question to ask me or you should ask them?” It is interesting that while I identify Fred as a close associate of women activists, he is uncomfortable with this association, perhaps not only because of the assertion that women ‘select’ ‘male champions’ (an issue that Christopher and

Seba also disagreed with) but more so because of the ways in which the title ‘male champion’ was being used as an accolade or a celebration of someone for an extraordinary task – promoting gender equality – which may have accentuated assumptions that men like him are not expected to raise and promote gender issues on their own initiative. Instead, Fred argues that whatever gender issues he supported in parliamentary debates, he was doing his work as an MP and a minister.

What I find interesting is how Fred’s reluctance to identify as a ‘male champion’ – which in effect is critical of the category ‘champion’ – resonates with some of the women interviewees’ critique of the idealisation of males as ‘champions’ in chapter 5. Asked who the ‘male champions’ of gender equality are and how they relate to them, some of these interviewees refused to engage with the concept of males as ‘champions’ for fear of idealising men and denying the role women played in the history of gender equality advocacy. The question itself created opportunities for women to speak about the role that women play in developing gender sensitive legislation.

Fred’s reluctance to identify as ‘male champion’ implicitly questions the assumptions that underlie this category, for example the idea that promoting gender issues is women’s responsibility and that males who critique gender issues are not only thought to have been ‘selected’ and motivated by women but are also worth celebrating. By doing this, he plays down the ‘celebration’ of men who promote gender equality. Rather, he, as well as other male participants talked of their longstanding interest in critiquing sexism and also spoke of gender issues as common concerns for women and men and men as gendered. As seen in the excerpt below, Fred argues that gender equality ought not to be regarded as exclusively about women’s interests but rather, as inclusive of men’s needs and interests.

**Fred:** Now let me give you the practical historical fact [prolonged silence 13 seconds]. Up to 1981, my father passed on. Before he passed on, he sold our property [land] where we were staying without the knowledge of the spouse and all the children, only to be told that we were to

look for another place to go to. ... Now you can imagine if a person of that background, you were faced with a law that before you sell family land you should seek the consent of your spouse, you think I would not be the first person to put up my hand? [laughs] I would.

**Amon.** Yaa.

**Fred:** I would, and indeed it is interesting that [20] when we debated the amendments to the Land Act in 2004 [5], we reached a stalemate on family land rights. Parliament decided to form a select committee and who was to chair that select committee! It was me. That was way back before I became a Minister. I was just a backbencher.

**Amon:** OK. (Data from interview with Fred on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016).

To support his views that he was personally motivated to critique gender inequality, Fred cited his experiences as a youth that marked the genesis of his interest in supporting women's rights. He presents his identification and sympathy with his mother in relation to his father's actions – selling the family land without his mother's (and other children's) knowledge – as the reason for his interest in critiquing gender inequality. Later in the interview, Fred argued that his experience showed that men can also find themselves in vulnerable situations, implicitly pointing to gender issues as of common interest to women and men.

*Was Fred's reluctance also about power relations between him and the women gender activists?*

As we concluded the interview, Fred shared with me how, despite denying being identified and working with women to speak to issues of gender equality, he would at times be under pressure from the female Speaker of Parliament to respond to specific gender concerns raised during debates on the domestic violence law.

**Fred:** ... more often than not, I was also under pressure because Hon. Kadaga [female Speaker of Parliament] is also a very serious gender activist. She has got Masters in women matters I think, she is a serious advocate, so whenever a gender sensitive like domestic violence would arise on the floor of parliament when she was in the chair, she would say Fred I want my law tomorrow [raises the tone], I want it here, here [laughter] tomorrow, and if by tomorrow you would not bring that Bill, there would be a problem [prolonged laughter].

**Amon:** Hmm [smiled],

**Fred:** Yaa... Very good, it was a pleasure to chat with you.

**Amon:** Thank you so much. **(Data from interview with Fred on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016).**

Fred's concluding recollections contrast with his rejection of the notion of men who are identified and tasked by women's rights activists to promote gender issues in parliamentary debates most especially the idea of labeling these as 'champions', as we see at the beginning of our conversation. He recalls instances where the female Speaker tasked him with expediting the drafting and presentation of the Domestic Violence Bill. Fred's acknowledgement of the power of the female Speaker and women's rights activist is demonstrated in the way he described her, as *a very serious gender activist* who trained in women's rights issues. Fred also alerts us, though wittily, that failure to respond to the Speaker's requests would have dire consequences. I argue that Fred's repeated use of humour with regard to the female Speaker's directives could be read as a patronising tact through which he laughs off her instructions in order to present himself as powerful and minimize the Speaker's powerful influence over him. In his work on humour in oral history interviews, Norrick (2006: 85-6), concurs that humour affects the construction of narrative identity, especially when "participants deploy conversational joking to negotiate their relationship [with others] in the course of the interview". Thus, Fred's repeated humorous performances could have been intended to project the female Speaker's public reprimand to a male of Fred's stature as unintelligible. He seems to be opposed to the epitaph of 'male champion' rather than denying that he works with women gender activists and shares interests with them.

Fred's conversation is by no means a straightforward account of how he and other men related to women activists in promoting gender issues in parliament. Rather, it is, as Riessman (1993: 4-5) argues, "constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions and interpretive". Fred's story reveals the complexities that characterise narratives which accommodate contextual shifts and reflexivity (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995b). Rather than consider some of his responses as more 'appropriate' than others, I focus on them as shifting positions that emerge in different

contexts. I argue that Fred's hesitation to conceive of himself as a male identified, trained and tasked to speak to issues of gender on behalf of women was perhaps an attempt to avoid ceding certain aspects of power to women activists, who, after all, occupied less powerful political positions than he did. This is in addition to Fred's critique of the way the category 'male champions' is invoked (by women activists and reinforced by myself as a researcher) that presumes 'champions' as an epitaph, or an accolade and a celebration of men's unusual involvement in supporting gender issues.

### **How the male interviewees' responses on 'male champions' compare**

It is notable that men take key outstanding positions as they narrate their experiences of promoting gender issues in parliamentary debates as 'male champions'. For example, I have shown how Christopher embraces the category 'male champions' in complex ways. Through idealising himself and a few other male legislators, he constructs them as superior and influential, upon whom the women's emancipation agenda needs to rely. Yet at the same time he pointed out, in similar ways as some of the women interviewees I talked to, the significance of 'male champions' in a patriarchal parliament. I also indicated how male respondents emphasised their longstanding critique of gender inequalities rather than being perceived (by women gender activists) as merely 'selected' to speak on women's behalf. In this, they argued that gender issues are also of concern to men. This idea of gender issues as a concern of both women and men points to a view that men are gendered beings (see critical studies on men and masculinities (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003; Kimmel *et al.*, 2005; Shefer *et al.*, 2007)) but also has the potential to downplay the significance of gender as a category (Dvorsky & Hughes, 2008). The approach to men as gendered in this case is opposed to discourses on men's rights that are constituted as the antithesis of women's rights. Rather, it resonates with critical studies on men and masculinities which acknowledge as their key guideline, "account of feminist, gay, and other critical gender scholarship" (Kimmel *et al.*, 2005: 3). I explore these perceptions of gender issues as a common interest of men and women in the following section.

***Sexism: An issue that also concerns men***

One of the key issues that emerge from men's reflections on how they mobilised support for the domestic violence and FGM Bills is how gender in parliamentary debates is at times perceived as synonymous with womanhood. Yet, Fred talked of the possibility of men's vulnerability while Christopher, Seba and Kissa shared how the issue of FGM which seemed to many, to be specific to women's rights had broader implications for the whole society. Kissa stated that he was often barred from attending certain cultural functions with his male agemates (such as the circumcision of their sons) because his wife and daughters had not gone through FGM. As an adult male household head Kissa was culturally judged and restrained from socializing with fellow men for failure to live by hegemonic masculine demands, in this case, ensuring that his wife and daughters undergo female genital cutting. In effect, though viewed as a women's specific issue, the practice of FGM defined men and masculinities. Kissa was viewed as negating men's cultural control over women's sexuality, projecting complicit forms of behaviour that leaned towards promoting women's rights and thus no longer 'man enough'. Indeed his rather supportive views to the bill are reflected in the final FGM Act, 2010. The Prohibition of female Genital Mutilation Act 2010, section 12 is about "protection of persons whose wives, daughters or relatives have not undergone female genital mutilation" (RoU, 2010: 5).

Below, I draw further on Seba's conversation to highlight how he perceived FGM as an issue that cuts across gender lines, that is, how men's interests and concerns may be tied up with women's and girls' interests.

**Amon:** Was it ever surprising ...that you are a man talking about issues of FGM?

**Seba:** As we move on, it becomes much more easier [sic], women issues become more of a concern of men. Like in my perspective, I had experienced sufferings from ladies that had undergone FGM, and I was therefore not shy about it. I needed to protect, you know I am a parent, I have girls, I have relatives, even if they are not mine, but they are the community. So, we needed to legislate to protect these.

**Amon:** Hmm.

**Seba:** Because incidentally also when a lady gets circumcised, that lady qualifies to be a woman so even at the age of 12 as long as someone has undergone circumcision then that one is a woman. So, there is then controversy that our youth bracket age is 18 years and above but somebody has been circumcised and qualified to be a woman. For us in the traditional setting, a woman is an adult. This means then; this person can be married off, can be, that means this circumcision promotes defilement [engaging sexually with a person below the age of 18], promotes early marriage, promotes a number of issues. These are social bearings that we don't want to occur in the communities where we come from.

**Amon:** OK.

**Seba:** Yaa.

Seba explains how his experience of promoting the law to prohibit FGM enabled him to gradually appreciate the interrelatedness of women and men's interests as gendered concerns. This is indicated in the ways he constitutes gender (exemplified in FGM practice) as an issue that goes beyond women to men and the entire community. Seba's identification with females on the grounds of kinship could be contested for constituting women as mere extensions of men – as daughters, mothers and sisters rather than as human beings in their own right. However, he empathetically digs deep into the implications of FGM, listing its undesirable social consequences for women and the broader society. Earlier, I noted how Christopher's sponsorship of the bill often amazed men and women parliamentarians – “some few members, including women would be like surprised why it could be us the men who were pushing causes that ordinarily look like causes for women”. Astonishment at a male MP taking the lead to present a private member's Bill that raised issues (of FGM) closely associated with women provides clues on how the notion of gender in parliament could have been constituted as about women pushing for women's specific needs and interests.

Consequently, the fact that Fred, Kissa, Seba and Christopher took the lead in presenting and debating seemingly female-specific issues, could be read as a critique of the ways in which the promotion of gender equality is presumed to be an exclusive concern of women. In particular, Christopher reminded us of the risk that comes with constituting promotion of gender issues as a women's responsibility; that is, producing women and men as essential binary categories and

widening the gender gap. Joan W. Scott (1988: 37) argues that binaries create categories as fixed entities, as timeless – thus naturalising what is essentially social. She reminds us that when we constitute women and men as fixed oppositions, such binaries “conceal the extent to which things presented as oppositional are, in fact, interdependent – that is, they derive their meaning from a particularly established contrast rather than from some inherent or pure antithesis”.

### **What we learn from men and women’s identifications in relation to the category ‘male champions’**

In this chapter and chapter 5, I indicated how the category ‘male champions’ is at times constructed in ideal ways as an epitaph to men who promote gender issues which in effect, negates and represses women’s historical role in promoting gender equality. However, I pointed to ways in which the category is critiqued by some of the women and men I interviewed. In chapter 5 for example, I noted that some female respondents refused to buy into idealised constructions of males as ‘champions’ for fear of erasing women’s agency in promoting gender equality and reproducing men as influential and powerful, upon whom women ought to rely to push gender equality agendas. On the other hand, some of the male responses in this chapter indicate that they are reluctant to identify as ‘male champions’ for fear of being celebrated as unusual or ‘invited’ actors in gender equality advocacy. Furthermore, some of the men’s hesitation was used to oppose the view that ‘male champions’ are ‘identified’ and ‘trained’ by women gender activists to support gender issues on behalf of women. Instead, these men talked at length about how they had ‘longstanding’ interest in critiquing gender inequality in their own right and how some of the gender issues (prohibition of FGM and domestic violence in this case) were also of concern to men. For example, Fred repeatedly pointed out that promoting gender issues in parliamentary debates was part of his routine responsibilities and thus warranted no accolades and celebration that the title ‘male champions’ presumes. These findings underscore ‘male champions’ as a significant discursive category but one that, nevertheless, is rejected by some and embraced by others in certain circumstances for specific reasons.

I also pointed out how male interviewees highlighted the construction of gender issues as of concern to both women and men. In explicit and implicit ways, men's narratives emphasised that their involvement in promoting gender issues is motivated by their personal interest in critiquing gender inequality rather than merely being 'selected' by women gender activists, a view that constituted questioning gender inequality as synonymous with womanhood. However, men's approach of constituting gender issues as of concern to the whole of society regardless of their gendered positions raises key questions: What constitutes gender issues that are of specific interest to women and those that cut across gender lines? Are men's responses on 'longstanding' opposition to gender inequality about deconstructing gender in positive ways which seek to problematise men's positions and masculinities in gender scholarship as Kopano Ratele (2016) and Kimmel *et al.* (2005) suggest OR, are they merely denying the gender power relationships and differences that exist among men and women parliamentarians? Is men's construction of gender issues as a concern for everyone, a call for a genderless parliament? If so, how feasible is it to wish away gender as a category of analysis in the context of a parliament where women are hardly taken seriously, as I elaborate in chapter 4? These and possibly other questions demonstrate the complexities involved in engaging with the question of male champions of gender equality in parliamentary debates in Uganda. Drawing on theoretical and analytic resources from poststructural forms of feminism and critical studies of men and masculinities, I engage with the thin line between the two positions set out above by proposing the reading of male interviewees' responses in two ways. Firstly, I read them as a call to gender equality activism to problematise the position of men and masculinities in gender equality advocacy and secondly, as a move towards postgenderism. I elaborate on these two positions below.

### **Problematizing the position of men and masculinities in gender equality advocacy**

As stated above, I read men's responses as a critique of how gender has been constituted in parliamentary discourses – as synonymous with womanhood and the view that promoting gender equality is the responsibility of women. I look at men's claims of responsibility and passion for gender equality as an attempt to constitute men as gendered and highlight men's varied needs,

interests, experiences and responsibilities as part of gender equality advocacy. Kopano Ratele (2016: 138) lists a number of discursive cross currents that constrain men's engagement in gender equality advocacy. Among these, he points to "a gender discourse that remains skeptical about men as subjects of feminist interventions or, at best is largely indifferent to men, except in connection to violence against women". Citing bell hooks' 2004 work, "The will to change: men, masculinity and love", Ratele concurs that there are instances in which some forms of feminism or individual women feminists are indifferent to men and men's needs and interests. He thus calls on "feminist women and pro-feminist men [to] face up to arguments made by or on behalf of black males to enable the transformation of dominant forms of black masculinity". Similarly, in her work on "Limits of Discourse: masculinity as vulnerability", Lindsay Clowes (2013) points out that discourses that conflate gender with women might result in the complexities in gender power relationships being dismissed or marginalised. Men's view of constructing themselves as gendered resonates with the positions held by critical studies of men and masculinities. In their broad social science approach to men and masculinities, Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (Kimmel *et al.*, 2005: 3) argue for "recognizing men and masculinities as *explicitly gendered* rather than nongendered [and] ... understanding men and masculinities as *socially constructed, produced, and reproduced* rather than as somehow just 'naturally' one way or another". In her critical analysis of patriarchy, privilege and power, Cornwall (2016: 77) hints on the social construction of masculinity when she calls for 'denaturalizing' "the associations that are often made between men, masculinity and power [in order to] bring into clearer view what is going on in terms of power".

### **Towards Postgenderism?: men's call to move beyond gender binaries**

Secondly, there seems to be a thin line between men's genuine claims of 'longstanding' commitment to gender equality and the possibility of denying gender power relations and differences, especially when one analyses *what* male interviewees said but also the manner in which they frame their experiences. In some instances, men's responses seem to use the view of their 'longstanding' opposition to gender inequality to wish away gender as a significant

category of analysis in parliamentary debates. This can be inferred from Fred's insistence that for him, promoting gender issues in parliament was his routine responsibility as a minister and legislator. He thus constitutes promoting gender issues as an expectation and a duty. However, in chapter 4, I pointed out that women maiden legislators experienced a rough time, especially from senior male colleagues and that none of the legislators (whether ministers or the Speaker) acknowledged these micro-subtle interruptions of women legislators as gendered concerns.

Such disregard of gender as a significant category of analysis is what Dvorsky and Hughes (2008) term as postgenderism. In their paper on *Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary*, Dvorsky and Hughes define postgenderism as the erosion of the biological, psychological and social role of gender as a measure to liberate humanity from the constraints of gender binaries. Postgenderists argue that gender is an arbitrary and unnecessary limitation on human potential and thus call for the de-emphasis of gender roles where individuals would be able to identify as a gender if they decided to, but this would not be mandatory, and gender roles would have little bearing on how people actually act or are treated in society.

The danger in calling for a non-gendered approach to legislation, especially in the context of parliament (a patriarchal institution; see chapter 4), is the way it takes for granted micro-sociological everyday interactions between and amongst men and women parliamentarians through which gender (and gender inequality) is inscribed. Vincent's (2008) critique of post-apartheid South Africa's political measures to forge national unity and mutual respect irrespective of race notes that they take for granted everyday ways in which race and racism is reproduced and how this is embedded in institutional culture. As noted in chapter 4 through the ethnographic observations of parliamentary debate sessions, parliament is a highly patriarchal institution in which women are repeatedly bullied and infantilised; yet these experiences are hardly recognised. In chapter 5, I highlighted that the women respondents argue that gender inequalities are systematically experienced by women in a male-dominated parliament. It is for this reason they have to use some men strategically in order to put forward particular women's

concerns. Calling for genderless parliamentary debates risks undercutting the very idea of equality it seeks to achieve and may result in a version of gender which is critical of feminism.

### **Conceptualising gender power relationships**

Furthermore, I have shown how women's reflections on the role of men as 'champions' of gender equality (in chapter 5) and men's responses to these (in this chapter) revealed the nature of the gender power relations that parliamentary debates play upon – productive, fluid and often contradictory. They demonstrate the gender power relationships that underlie debates on motions that seek to critique gender inequality. It became apparent that it is not sufficient to inquire into how women activists speak about the ways in which they 'select', train and task some men to speak to issues of gender on behalf of women in parliamentary debates. It is also crucial that we understand how women's views on male promoters of gender equality were responded to by men, that is, how men reacted to women's claims and how they, in turn, positioned themselves in relation to women gender activists and other male legislators. As Foucault (1982: 780) states, "in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations". The manner in which women gender activists positioned themselves portrays their exercise of power to which male participants reacted in diverse ways. Thus, these two chapters brought to the fore the nature of power (in the Foucauldian and Butlerian sense) as 'productive', as a relational force which influences people's thoughts, feelings and actions.

It is also clear that these gender power relationships may not be so much about confrontations between individual women gender activists and the men they apparently identify, train and task to promote gender issues on their behalf, but are rather "a question of 'government' – a way in which conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed" (Foucault, 1982: 790). It is a question of who should "structure the possible field of action of other people" as far as gender equality debates in parliament are concerned. Furthermore, focusing on some of the women and men's critique of 'male champions' opens up analytical possibilities of exposing as well as

opposing universal construction of this category as an epitaph and a celebration of men as extraordinary actors in promoting gender equality.

### **Interview narratives as ‘contact zones’**

I borrow Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of ‘contact zones’ (1992). In her work, “Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation”, Pratt (1992: 4) defines zones of contact as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination”. This idea is further drawn upon by Musila’s (2015) narrative text “A death retold in truth and rumour”, in which she discusses and makes sense of the tensions between modernity and Africa. Although Pratt and Musila use the idea of zones of contact to engage with more macro tensions colonial histories (a clash of two or more cultures e.g. Western modernity and Africa), I find this concept’s focus on critical exchanges between unequal power relationships useful in the analysis of micro social interactions between and amongst women and men in our interview conversations. Indeed, women and men used these interviews as a space where they voiced competing agendas with regard to the position of men in gender equality debates in parliament. For instance, while some of the women foregrounded their agency in promoting gender equality in ways that play upon and use men’s influence strategically, men were often striving to avoid being celebrated as champions of gender equality in ways that would implicate them as complicit in women’s oppression. Men also presented themselves as opponents of gender inequality in their own right. Most importantly, these interviews provided a space for *women and men’s views to meet, clash and grapple with each other*, often opening up spaces to critique universal patriarchal notions of women as victims of male domination and men as powerful and influential to the level of speaking to gender issues in parliamentary debates on behalf of women.

### **Men’s anxieties about being instrumentalised by women**

The contestations between women and men as reflected in chapter 5 and 6 respectively unravel different forms of anxieties amongst women and men as each of them try to position themselves

as the original source of authority in relation to the Other. As one of my examiners highlighted, “the male respondents’ framing of their support as stemming from an understanding of gender issues as social issues performs the double role of rejecting the possibility of doing women’s bidding and equally rejecting the possibility of being invested in women’s matters per se, as something evidently not hegemonically celebrated”. This alternative reading into men’s reactions towards women interviewees’ responses reveals how the category male champion seems to bristle for the male participants to the extent that it suggests doing the women’s bidding; hence their inclination to motivate their support with personal examples of vulnerability and female relatives’ vulnerability, as the impetus for their support, rather than activist empathy with women specifically, at their invitation. Ultimately, even as they claim a longstanding concern with gender inequality, men interview participants in the same breath betray unease with this concern, hence the need to frame it in ways that deflect attention from the women as agentic experts at whose service the men are mobilised. At a theoretical level, these tensions speak to the complex manifestations of gender (power) relations beyond simple binaries and reaffirm Goffman’s (1959: 2) sociological idea of performativity, i.e. that an individual may wish others “to think highly of him or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels towards them ...”

Further, this contestation of authority and negotiations, particularly the women’s approach — which appears to have been very subtly presented, to the extent of convincing the men that it was their initiative — speaks eloquently to Obioma Nnaemeka’s concept of nego-feminism. In her work, “Nego-feminism: Theorising, Practicing, and Pruning Africa’s Way”, Nnaemeka (2004: 377) introduces nego-feminism as an emerging brand of African characterised by negotiation and negation of ego. She argues:

First, *nego-feminism* is the feminism of negotiation; second, *nego-feminism* stands for “no ego” feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of “give and take/exchange” and “cope with successfully/go around.” African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through

negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts.

Nnaemeka's critical observation of feminist activists and scholars in Africa, particularly on how these 'do' feminism through carefully crafted strategic maneuvers against patriarchal forms of oppression resonates with Sylvia Tamale's<sup>44</sup> (1999) critical remarks about women's negotiation of patriarchal norms in the Ugandan parliament and what this study has found out. In chapters 4, 5 and 6, I draw on ethnography of parliament and interviews with women and men and show complex contestations of authority with regard to who is expected to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates. These negotiations and contestations that my study reveals demonstrate the need for feminist activists to explore different stakes that women and men have in promoting gender equality and more importantly, how African feminism(s) stands to benefit from critically engaging with the question of men and masculinities.

## Summary

Overall, I have shown how meanings and categories are discursively constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed, exemplified in the ways in which the women and men I talked to (dis)identify themselves with the category 'male champions'. While these accounts may present divergent and sometimes contradictory views on how male promoters of gender equality come about (at least through what is said), the multiple subject positions constructed and/or adopted by the participants and the ways in which they frame their stories about themselves and the other men and women they talk about, are crucial in understanding the diversity that accompanies categories such as 'women', 'men' and 'champion'.

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<sup>44</sup> In chapter 2, I showed how, through her research on the Uganda Parliament, Tamale (1999: 118) noted; "[s]ometimes, for strategic reasons, female delegates [in parliament] chose to compromise with patriarchy rather than confront it"

I have also shown how, through constitutive discourses, men sought to subvert the binarism embedded in the conception of gender in day-to-day parliamentary work. Some of the male participants noted that ‘gender’, otherwise perceived as ‘women issues’ in parliamentary discourses, also concerns men. In this way, male interviewees sought to problematise the position of men and men’s interests, needs, and patterns of practice as gendered. At the same time, I noted that male interviewees’ perceptions of gender issues as common interests that cut across gender lines could be problematic especially if they take for granted the micro and subtle gendered experiences identified in chapter 4, which could, in effect, reproduce gender inequality.

In summary, the complexities exemplified in women and men’s responses in chapter 5 and 6, respectively, speak to the nature of gender power relations in parliamentary debates. They demonstrate the different forms of power given the possibilities of reactions that follow from the actions of others upon whom power is exercised. Foucault notes that, “forms of power are multiple; superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another” (Foucault, 1982: 793). Thus, rather than conceiving of power as held by women gender activists and denied to the men they construct as ‘champions’ or vice versa, power relations are complex, and this complexity is articulated in the overlapping, fluid and sometimes contradictory positions that women and men take up as they share their experiences of ‘male champions’. While this chapter and the preceding chapters have revealed the complexities involved in the constitution of the category ‘male champions’ and alerted us to the complex positions women and men take up in their conversations, we also need to ask: What political implications does the discursive category ‘male champions’ have for feminist research, theory and practice? What is the future of ‘male champions’ in gender equality advocacy? I engage with these questions in the next chapter as I sum up the debates on how certain male parliamentarians are constructed as ‘champions’ of gender equality legislation.

## **Chapter 7: Summary of research findings and the implications for feminism and gender equality activism**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings by highlighting the themes that emerged from the analysis of my empirical data in relation to the main research questions that guided the study. The questions centred on how women ‘select’ men to speak to gender issues on behalf of women and whether these strategic manoeuvres challenge or institutionalise gender inequalities in parliament. These reflections pick up and engage with central themes that include unexpected discoveries in the research process such as critique of the male champions’ discourse, and developing innovative methodologies to research gender power relations. The chapter also critically engages with questions such as: What are the political implications of reflecting on gender as a relational construction? What theoretical and methodological implications arise from my research for promoting gender equality in institutions such as parliament and how does my research contribute more generally to African feminist theory?

### **Unexpected discoveries in the study**

#### **Elite politicians in parliament who behaved like ‘children’**

In this study, I approached research as an inductive and exploratory process in which I set out to learn from the ways women gender activists identify and work with men to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates. I focused on parliament as a high-status institution with powerful, elite politicians who are guided by formal rules of procedure that underscore the democratic virtue of respect for one another. However, I was surprised to observe difficult moments in which gender mattered so much in terms of who speaks and who is heard in parliamentary debates, which is problematic. Common scenes such as senior male legislators heckling, and bullying female maiden speakers while others infantilised and laughed at women colleagues brought to mind Mayeza’s (2014, 2016) ethnographic study with primary school children. Mayeza shows how boys used football to dominate the playground, often keeping

others (girls and some boys who did not play football) at the margins of the play area. I noted similar patterns of gender performance such as male domination of mixed sex interactions and infantilisation of females, e.g. mocking and ridiculing those who exhibited skills viewed as masculine.

While parliament as an institution can be seen as far removed from the school playground in as far as it is constructed as an honorary space, with elite adult politicians, the manner in which legislators interacted and related to one another reproduced male and female MPs as school children and parliament as a ‘playground’ in which males dominate through particular performative rituals. These were unusual and unexpected experiences which highlight the inductive and exploratory nature of the study. Furthermore, these findings (Mayeza and I) point to the significant role of social institutions in producing gendered subjects regardless of the institution’s status.

### **Critique of the ‘male champions’ of gender equality discourse**

One of the emerging issues that impacted on the course of the study was how I initially conceived male champions of gender equality as a descriptive category (see chapter 5). This influenced the way I framed my inquiry with research questions repeatedly using the term ‘champion’ in ways that took for granted rather than making this very category a topic of research and enquiry. The initial research questions sought to establish who male champions are and how certain men become ‘champions’ without opening up the category for debate and discussion. It was during the interviews I conducted with women and some men that I became aware of how politically charged the category ‘male champion’ was.

The idea of men as champions of gender equality which I introduced in my interviews with women gender activists and men who were recruited to table motions in parliament on behalf of women was challenged by the women and some of the men. This was manifested in reluctance to identify with or speak about the category in the way I had conceived it. Women interviewees steered the conversation on male champions in ways which re-focused on women activists and

their role in highlighting gender inequalities. Through analysis of the interview conversations and the literature on male support for gender equality initiatives in Uganda, I noted (as indicated in chapter 1) a distinction between the *practice* of men who promote gender equality and the *labelling* of some of them as ‘champions’ of such equality. ‘Listening’ to some of the respondents’ critique of the male champions discourse, I had to rethink and re-write my research questions (as they are currently reflected in chapter 1). I also began to critically engage with the category in ways that would not reproduce what women were critical of – male domination and the negation of women’s agency in gender equality activism. This inductive and exploratory approach is tied in with my theoretical and analytic methods that privilege knowledge as context-specific – as produced through interactions between researchers and research participants in particular social encounters.

### **Women’s critique of the discourse on ‘male champions’**

How did the women respondents critique the ‘male champions’ discourse and with what implications? In chapter 5, I drew on interview conversations with women participants and indicated how some were reluctant to respond when I introduced the question of who male champions are, and how and why such men were selected by women gender activists to speak to gender issues on their behalf. Women interviewees were reluctant to foreground the role of men as ‘champions’ even when they acknowledged men’s strategic significance in enabling them to negotiate resistance to patriarchal practices in parliamentary debates. Instead, they highlighted their historical role in mobilising for ‘gender sensitive’ legislation long before they thought of bringing men on board.

This form of deconstruction questions the use of the term male champion as a descriptive category applied to particular men, and offers a sociological understanding of champions as a discourse imbued with gender power relationships. Reconceptualising male champions opens up the opportunity to historicise the category rather than invoke it as ahistorical and in reference to fixed male characteristics. In turn, this opens up alternative possibilities of imagining various

actors in promoting gender equality; that is, highlighting the role of men and women without necessarily privileging one and negating the other.

In addition to re-centering themselves as instigators and active agents in gender equality activism, the women I interviewed talked of how they engaged in rigorous ways to surveil, identify and train some men to speak to issues of gender in a male dominated parliament where women's views are hardly taken seriously. Through these well-thought-out narratives, women present themselves as agents (in a patriarchal parliament) especially as they talked about how they select, train and forge alliances with men in positional power to speak to women's rights issues. It is also interesting to note how some of the women parliamentarians (for instance, the maiden speakers I refer to in chapter 4) reconfigure their vulnerability in a bullish and an infantilising androcentric legislature by appealing to the speaker of the house for protection. Furthermore, it is fascinating how women in such a patriarchal institution re-package their critique of male domination. All these actions point to women's consciousness of the complexities that surround gender equality legislation and demonstrate their ability to negotiate these barriers.

### **The 'Mr Muscle Ad': an example of a 'male champion' in action?**

In one of our supervision meetings in which we were reflecting on women's critique of the male champions discourse, my supervisor, thanks to his generosity, drew my attention to a commercial advertisement called 'Mr Muscle'<sup>45</sup>. This Ad could be read as embracing a kind of heroic masculinity through the idealisation of a cartoon caricature, 'Mr Muscle', a 'male champion' who deploys and demonstrates his power and strength in service of women by transforming their messy kitchens. The Ad, which is framed on masculine characteristics given its prefix 'Mr' and its muscular references, features a female who is frustrated by a blocked kitchen sink helplessly

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<sup>45</sup>Mr Muscle Sink and Drain Gel is one of the many gels used in plumbing to clean and unblock congested water pipes in kitchens and bathrooms, among others. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdMOcJcmU-s> (accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

decrying how hard it is to deal with such blockages that interfere with her daily chores in the kitchen. The visual Ad then introduces us to ‘Mr Muscle’ whom the seemingly male voiceover in the Ad introduces as a ‘super scientist’. Suddenly, Mr Muscle, dressed in Superman attire magically flies into the kitchen from the top with a gel in his hand, to the surprise of the female, who nonetheless is glad to at last receive help. In an authoritative voice, Mr Muscle explains how the gel works, pouring it into the sink and clearing the blockage instantly. Leaving the woman still marvelled at how effortlessly Mr Muscle dealt with her problem, the Ad ends with Mr Muscle flying out in response to the helpless calls of countless women in other kitchens.

As noted in chapter 1, the ‘male champion’ discourse is located in the context of promoting gender equality and encouraging men to develop empathy with certain forms of women’s oppression. However, the very category ‘male champion’ seems to resonate with and institutionalise patriarchal assumptions of male power and privilege, especially when harnessed in ways which render men as heroic figures helping weak women. The spectre of Mr Muscle heroically helping women illustrates this (see for example, Connell (2005) on how forms of hegemonic masculinity may be displayed through the subordination of women and some men) and resonates with the problematics of constructing males as champions as articulated, especially by women activists I interviewed.

## **What we learn from the unexpected discoveries in the study**

### **Deconstruction of taken-for-granted patriarchal power**

Given the way the discourse on male champions has been widely used in global campaigns around gender equality, I did not expect critical conversations about male promoters of gender equality, some of whom are sometimes labelled as ‘champions’. Examples cited in chapter 1 include the HeforShe campaign and the male champions of change movements. Nonetheless, women’s and men’s responses – characterised by contradictions, overlaps and negotiations – expose the taken-for-granted discourses around gender equality advocacy and their implications for the attainment of advocacy goals.

By deconstructing and reconceptualising the category male champion, women respondents provide a discursive framework through which we can analyse global development narratives on gender equality. These could include the male involvement strategy that seem to idealise men and boys as powerful and influential and therefore well suited to empower women and girls (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; de Vries, 2015). See, for instance, Anne de Vries' (2015: 22) critique of "the 'business case' approach" – "where it is assumed [executive heads of global business companies] will champion gender change in the same way as any other business issue" – especially its inattention to gender power relationships. It also enables us to call into question the notion of *empowerment* and how it comes about. I argue that discourses which idealise male supporters of gender equality ordinarily exhibit patterns of meaning that may undercut the very ends that these strategies seek to achieve – gender equality.

Furthermore, critiques of the champions discourse offer us a conceptual mapping of different forms of power and how power relations play out, and are contested and negotiated in certain discursive contexts. As respondents narrate their experiences, they claim certain positions of power and present themselves in agential ways while at the same time generating resistance and reactions in the process. Through these complex narratives from men and women interviewees, the study contributes to ways of thinking about power (in particular, gender power relationships) and how it operates in complex ways.

### **Theorizing men and masculinities in gender equality advocacy**

The views of some male respondents on the need to recognize and acknowledge men as gendered – with needs and interests in gender equality debates – is a positive step towards questioning the construction of gender in essentialist ways, as about femininity. It also offers opportunities to conceptualise common interests and concerns across gender lines which move beyond binary understanding of gender power relationships. In particular, men's representation of themselves as longstanding opponents of gender inequalities in their own right – as opposed to being selected by women activists to speak on their behalf – reveals and also critiques discourses that silence men's 'role' and interests in gender equality activism. Consequently, these debates

reiterate critical masculinity studies' call to feminist and other critical studies to pay attention to masculinities (and femininities) as socially constituted, varied and complex rather than assume that they are effects of nature.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the social construction of masculinities is not for the sake of “merely observing that men's genders are culturally constructed, multiple, changeable and historically contingent” (Ratele, 2016: 137). Rather, it is to work to transform masculinities towards gender equity. This is reiterated by African feminist scholar, Sylvia Tamale (2014: 8) who argues that “engaging with men’s organizations is not merely advocating for the problematic ‘menstreaming’<sup>46</sup> approach which is the latest World Bank ‘fad’, but [rather about] engaging more seriously in overhauling gender politics” with the aim of transforming organisations and institutions that reproduce gender and other inequalities.

### **Developing ‘innovative’ qualitative methodologies and the implications for researching gender power relations**

One of the findings that stood out in this study relates to knowledge as co-constructed. The idea of knowledge as co-produced is demonstrated through creative methods, namely, focusing on interviews and ethnography of parliament as social encounters and settings in which I explored how gender was enacted and produced in everyday interactions between and among men and women parliamentarians.

#### **Interviews as social encounters**

I focus on interviews not as tools used to ‘extract’ data (as if knowledge pre-exists outside discourse) but as social encounters – as conversations through which knowledge is co-constructed between researchers and participants. This innovative approach is demonstrated

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<sup>46</sup> The main problem with the World Bank approach is that it is predicated on the neo-liberal discourse that is based on masculinist values of knowledge, practices and belief systems (e.g. heteronormativity, etc.) <http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/o.,contentMDK:21101519menuPK:336874pagePK> [last accessed 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014].

through the long extracts of interviews I draw upon to analyse different subject positions that I and interviewees take in the process of knowledge production. In chapter 3, for instance, I point out how some of the women I interviewed were reluctant to respond to certain questions (e.g. about male champions) and instead set new parameters on how to proceed with the interview conversation. I also highlight a case in which a woman respondent talked of how much easier it was for men (than women) to mobilise for and speak about issues such as sex and sexuality and how women who did so would be constituted as indecent and obscene (See chapter 5 on men as intelligible speakers on issues of sexuality). Yet, despite women's constrained speech, I draw on interview conversations and show that some of the women spoke articulately about sexuality issues, deliberately transgressing cultural prohibitions in ways that have implications for understanding complex gender power relations.

Experiences such as these – hesitations, silences, contradictions, prolonged laughter and other forms of emotional expression – in interviews bring to the fore the significance of understanding social contexts in knowledge production. Furthermore, approaching interviews as social encounters enabled me to draw on what has come to be referred to as the 'turn to language' – the idea that language is not descriptive of reality but is rather constructive. I looked at how people positioned themselves in certain ways in our conversations and the kinds of relationships they create which are mediated by their sex, gender, age, and seniority, among others. Thinking about language along these lines enabled me to critically engage with the notion of gender performativity which is a central theme in my study and to foreground an analytic focus not just on *what* respondents said but also *how* they draw on language to position themselves, the emotions conveyed and the meanings they attach to these.

### **Doing an ethnography of Parliament**

Most studies on gender and parliamentary politics, particularly on the African continent that I have come across tend to focus on macro-approaches such as the sex ratio in parliament, access, participation and the effectiveness of legislators based on particular legislative outcomes. As noted in chapter 2, these are important debates. However, what is unusual about this study is that

it subjects the macro institution of parliament to critical ethnographic observation that takes into account the micro, everyday ways of ‘doing’ gender and power, picking up on issues that are often overlooked or taken for granted.

### ***How I did critical observation and its implications for the analytic focus***

My observations were guided by a semi-structured set of theoretical assumptions from feminist ethnography (Skeggs, 2001), narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) and Erving Goffman’s (1959) micro-sociological theory of everyday life. These theoretical resources influenced my observation lens and analytic focus. Thus, the ethnographic experiences I observed, interpreted and discussed in the study are mediated by the theoretical positions I took and my own positionality as a non-parliamentarian and an adult male scholar in gender studies. As an outsider observing live parliamentary debates, I was able to see, first-hand, how gender power relations subtly play out through taken-for-granted ways, e.g. heckling, jokes, laughter and all manner of physical and emotional expression. In particular, chapter 4 shows how more female than male MPs are often infantilised, heckled, bullied and laughed at by their male colleagues and how their appeal for protection against such interruptions through formal parliamentary rules of procedure was used by men to constitute women as weak.

I also point out how these experiences which I observed on the floor of parliament are rarely observed, whether by the Speaker, other MPs or the Hansard which records ‘all’ that transpires in parliamentary debates. In analysing Hansard recordings of the debate sessions I observed, I pointed out how the Hansard captured boorish and all manner of unwelcome behaviour amongst legislators during debates merely as “interruptions” or recorded rowdy protests, stomping, and prolonged laughter *simply* as “laughter”. These omissions, which I was able to pick up through ethnographic observations constituted insightful ways of analysing everyday performances of gender power relationships in parliament. In doing this ethnographic work, the study unearthed and paid attention to taken-for-granted micro-sociological aspects of individual human interactions, which, when repeatedly enacted and re-enacted, become “stylized into gendered modes” (Butler, 1988: 526) and consequently acceptable public conduct in parliament.

This creative methodological focus on the sociology of everyday life has implications for thinking about gender power relationships in macro-institutional structures like parliament. As I argue in chapter 4 and reiterate here for purposes of emphasis, it is the subtle and seemingly unrecognisable everyday practices of female and male legislators in parliament that constitute parliament as a gendered institution. This focus on the context of parliament opens up ways to re-think feminist studies that often seek to evaluate the effectiveness of numbers of women legislators in transforming institutional structures regardless of the institutional settings they operate in.

The study also points to the importance of addressing gender inequalities in parliament not only by focusing on the content or formal gender specific motions presented, but also, perhaps more fundamentally, on everyday legislative interactions amongst male and female MPs. Importantly, the methodological approach turns our attention to what Michalinos Zembylas (2018) terms the “ordinariness” of oppression – micro, everyday experiences of suffering and oppression – rather than thinking about oppression only as a macro-structural issue. The idea of reading gender inequalities in ordinary circumstances, as demonstrated through critical analysis of taken-for-granted everyday ways of interaction amongst men and women parliamentarians has important implications for thinking about the normativity of gender inequalities in the parliamentary institutional culture. That is, where gender-based inequalities are viewed as ‘natural’ and normal, consequently producing and sustaining oppressive regimes at the macro-political level.

### **Implications of my research for promoting gender equality in Parliament**

This approach – of studying micro and macro; gendered and gender neutral and gender blind practices as well as overt and covert experiences of female and male legislators, which are often taken for granted – serves two purposes. Firstly, it helps to reveal and consequently provide opportunities to “oppose the remnant strains of patriarchy amid the seeming rise of female empowerment” (Were, 2017: 494). Secondary, it alerts us to the manifestations of gender power relations, not only in the tabling and debating of seemingly gender-specific motions (e.g.

prohibition of FGM and Domestic Violence) but also in everyday social interactions between and amongst men and women parliamentarians.

The point I am making is that in institutions (such as the Parliament of Uganda) with historically entrenched gender inequalities, it is *not only* the macro-political structures and processes we need to worry about. For example, whether MPs will come up with bills that critique gender inequalities; increasing the number of women legislators commensurate to men or whether a higher number of women are making a difference in legislative outcomes. Rather, a detailed understanding of gender power relations in such institutional settings also calls for attention to a multitude of seemingly innocuous performances of gender as manifested in men's and women's everyday interactions in parliamentary debates. Importantly, researching parliament as a social context requires an assessment of the impact micro, subtle gender performances have in producing, reproducing and entrenching gendered institutional cultures.

### **Implications of deconstructing everyday experiences of gender for sexism and racial marginalisation**

This study's emphasis on studying gender power relations through everyday encounters highlights limitations with versions of liberal feminism that advocate for increased numbers of women in male dominated institutions to remedy sexism. My critical observation of institutional cultures in Uganda's parliament suggests that increasing women representation on its own hardly undermines the institutional cultures of parliament as a masculine space and the gender inequalities these cultures produce. Similar critiques are raised by writers such as Louise Vincent (2008) in the context of transformation debates in South African universities. Vincent critiques the inter-racial hypothesis – the notion of addressing sexism and racism by increasing opportunities for men and women to work with each other across racial lines in universities. This assumes that integrating black students in historically white universities would facilitate transformation of racial inequalities. Vincent (2008: 1427-8) argues that “[race] continues to have an often unacknowledged and unseen power to determine perceptions, experiences and relationships” irrespective of inter-racial contact. She attributes this to inadequate attention to the

everyday ways in which race (and racism) is reproduced and how this is embedded in institutional cultures.

I find Vincent's argument on the unconscious ways in which racism is reproduced in universities' institutional cultures useful in my analysis of men and women MPs' everyday interactions in debate sessions. The micro-gendered experiences I discovered during my observation are not only taken for granted, but occur within a context of unequal power relations, consequently reproducing and institutionalising unequal gender power relationships in parliament. These gender-based interruptions and sexism (see chapter 4) continue to permeate parliamentary debates in pervasive ways even when the institution is registering higher numbers of women (especially through Affirmative Action reforms) and 'gender sensitive' bills are being passed into law with support from women and men alike.

### **Towards a new wave of African Feminism**

In a brief article on African feminism, Sylvia Tamale (2006) critically reflects on the African women's movement journey in promoting women's rights, pointing to its challenges and weaknesses and suggesting ways in which the movement could change. She decries depoliticization of the struggle for women's rights through constraints such as careerism<sup>47</sup>, ever-growing "gap between feminist theory and praxis" and feminists' "reluctance to engage with political structures, systems and institutions" (Tamale, 2006: 40). Tamale strongly argues that as African feminists, "[w]e need to change the way we 'do' feminism" (Tamale, 2006: 38). Almost a decade later, similar calls to re-energise and re-affirm African feminism in its "multiple dimensions" are raised by Ahikire (2014: 7). Ahikire reiterates the challenges of depoliticization of African feminism and critiques scholarship that constitutes this strand of feminism in *simple* essentialist ways as an antithesis of western feminisms.

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<sup>47</sup> Tamale (2006: 39) describes careerism as about donor-driven non-governmental women's rights organisations whose strategies are not so much focused on "how to genuinely transform society but on how [their] positions will benefit [them] financially". These organisations are involved in what Tamale terms "the business of women's rights".

Ahikire and Tamale agree on the challenges confronting African feminism and call for a revamp. This study contributes, in part, to consistent feminist calls for a new kind of African feminism that would confront the contemporary challenges facing the movement. One such example that this study highlights is the question of engaging men in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. bell hooks' critique of certain forms of feminism's refusal to 'know' men in patriarchal societies asks why "women who advocate feminist politics have had so little to say about men and masculinity" (2004: xii). In a keynote speech<sup>48</sup> at a 2014 International Women's Day celebration in Uganda, Tamale (2014: 8) hinted at the urgency with which African feminism ought to engage with the emerging trend of men and men's organisations for gender equality on the African continent. She argued that "[w]hile we, African feminists, should be cautious in ensuring that our cause is not thrown off the trolley, it is not very useful for us to disengage or adopt cynical skepticism towards the nascent men's movement". Inadequate investigation of men and masculinities in feminist scholarship is also noted by Robert Wayrod (2008), Shamim Meer (2011) and Ahikire (2014). Robert Wayrod (2008: 800) argues that while there is salient research on "women's rights in Africa, there is surprisingly little research on how African *men* have understood these developments, and how African masculinities are implicated in such changes". Further, Ahikire (2014: 14) point out how African feminists are "compelled to deal with the question of masculinities in crisis, as men wrestle with new realities where femininity is no longer synonymous with dependency and subordination".

As noted in chapter 1, one of this study's aims was to develop a theoretical critique of patriarchal oppression in social institutions such as parliament. In doing so, I sought to engage with patriarchy in ways that do not reproduce men and women as binary opposites – men as

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<sup>48</sup> Keynote address entitled *Feminist Response to the new Men's movement in Africa* delivered at Makerere University, School of Women and Gender Studies in commemoration of International Women's Day in 2014. While the 2014 International Women's Day theme was "Inspiring Change", Uganda celebrated under the theme "*In partnership with men and boys for empowerment of women and girls in Uganda*". (Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018 <https://www.dsw.org/en/2014/03/in-partnership-with-men-and-boys-for-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-in-uganda/?print=print>).

perpetrators and women as victims in relation to patriarchal power. This is demonstrated in the ways I draw not only on African feminist scholarship that critiques patriarchal oppression in political institutions (Tamale, 1999, 2006; Ahikire, 2014; Hassim, 2014) but also on critical theories of gender developed outside Africa. The study drew on western notions of gender performativity (Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1988, 1990) and feminist appropriations of discourse (Hollway, 1984; Butler, 1990; Walkerdine, 1990; Pattman & Bhana, 2017) to suggest ways in which to explore gender power dynamics in political institutions in Africa. I also drew on critical masculinity studies, particularly those from the South (Shefer *et al.*, 2007; Clowes, 2013; Ratele, 2016) and explored the ways in which the institution of parliament (the Ugandan parliament in particular) plays out as a platform upon which complex gender power relationships are enacted through male and female MPs' everyday interactions.

Through these multi-disciplinary theoretical and methodological resources, the study highlighted the urgent need to critically engage with the question of men, their behaviors and practices in gender equality debates as a way of “opening up space [in African feminist scholarship] for reflection on taken-for-granted assumptions about women and men, gender relations and indeed the concept of gender itself” (Cornwall, 2000: 18).

Notably, the study offered an innovative and rich theoretical and methodological approach that could possibly re-invigorate African feminist theorising. This is especially so because it provides an opportunity to engage with the notion of gender as a relational concept and in turn, opens up ways to critically investigate the position of men and masculinities in gender equality. Engaging with men and masculinities in gender equality debates offers a critical deconstructive approach that reveals complex relationships amongst men and women rather than constituting them as homogeneous groups. It presents an effective way to imagine the role of men in feminist activism and social transformation but also the possibility of theorising masculine vulnerabilities and how these can be responded to by the feminist struggle for equality and social justice. The study thus offers opportunities to re-energize African feminist theory and practice, especially given nascent global calls for male involvement in gender equality and women's empowerment.

## Summary

As I wind up, I return to some of the key questions that guided this study. These include accounts of the emergence of men who speak to gender issues on behalf of women as well as an inquiry into whether gender inequalities are challenged or institutionalized through the use of male promoters of gender equality in the Ugandan parliament. Overall, this study enables us to recognize the politically insightful ways in which women and men talk about themselves and one another and the kind of tensions, overlaps and negotiations that are embedded in narratives about men who promote gender issues on behalf of women. These complexities underscore critical issues of power, identity construction and representation. In particular, far from being thought of as merely reproducing male domination, the study noted male representation of women's voices as a strategic manoeuvre. It is thus a form of exercising power in which women contest and negotiate male-centered bullying, interruptions, and infantilisation among other forms of masculine patronising behaviours which render women's speech (especially on gender issues) unintelligible.

In themselves, women's actions of resisting regulative discourses in parliamentary debates to ensure that gender issues are raised and debated – whether through male MPs or women MPs seconding them – demonstrate agency. Women's actions would be perceived in the Foucauldian sense as exercising “the ability to place themselves out of the reach of power and upset the established laws” (1978: 6). However, the study also noted the ways in which drawing on men to represent women's voices could entrench the ‘male face’ of legislative processes. For example, some of the male respondents who identify as ‘champions’ of gender equality positioned themselves in ideal ways as indispensable actors in gender equality if the women's empowerment agenda is to be achieved.

As noted earlier (see chapter 6), some male respondents called for a gender-less parliament – moving beyond gender as a category of analysis. However, given the character of the parliament in this study – male domination – wishing away gender as a category of analysis would inadvertently reproduce and entrench gender inequalities. As de Vries (2015: 33) noted, there

could be inherent contradictions in the strategy of drawing on men to promote gender equality especially the increase in “seeking out privileged men to champion gendered change, when they have been beneficiaries of the status quo”. To what extent are such men willing to challenge their masculine privilege? Such strategies may also backfire, especially when “men exercise choice in their engagement with this role” (de Vries, 2015: 33) – deciding what gender issues to promote and what not to. In her analysis of the de-politicisation of African feminism, Ahikire (2014: 18) cites the “phenomenon of male champions and men’s organisations for gender equality” as one of the contemporary debates that bears the hallmarks of vagueness that is likely to “animate minimalist gender agendas”.

### **Limitations of the study and areas for further research**

In terms of methodology, this study considered a small sample to provide detailed insights into how women gender activists ‘select’ men to speak to gender issues in parliamentary debates and the implications of these strategic manoeuvres for gender equality legislation. Consequently, these findings may not be generalised to ‘gender sensitive’ legislative processes in parliament. Furthermore, because I investigated bills (FGM and DVA) passed way back in time (2006-2011), my ethnography of parliament could only investigate parliament as a social context and a stage upon which these debates took place rather than observing the live debates in which these bills were tabled, discussed and passed into law. However, I did not talk to the men and women interviewees about the experiences I observed in parliament. This is something that I could have explored further, perhaps with some of the men and women MPs, especially the hidden gender performances that pointed to institutional dynamics (heckling, bullying and infantilising women MPs) that are likely to constitute parliament as a difficult space for women. Future ethnographic studies could investigate particular bills that are critical of gender inequalities while they are still in legislative processes. The researchers would then complement observations with interviews in which they would talk to MPs about taken-for-granted practices they noted, the meanings they make of these and the implications for transforming unequal gender power relations in legislative processes.

Furthermore, while this study picked up on men's motivations and investment in critiquing gender inequalities, this was limited to parliamentary debates on prohibition of FGM and Domestic Violence. Thus, future research could explore the kinds of gender issues men are likely to promote or not support given that some gender concerns are more likely than others to be contentious and challenge patriarchal power relationships. Such studies would also explore in detail, the resources that men (whether in or outside parliament) draw on and the costs they incur to promote gender equality in patriarchal societies.

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## Appendices:

### Appendix 1: Semi-structured Observation checklist



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#### SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

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##### **Introduction**

The nature of this research is inductive and exploratory<sup>49</sup>. The study observation will therefore be guided by a set of thematic areas rather than specific and detailed items to observe since other themes might emerge in the process.

##### **Observing live parliamentary debate sessions:**

Aspects to observe include (but are not limited to):

- a. The etiquette of parliament as a gendered space – the rules, norms and practices that guide legislative work. How do women and men interact in this space?
- b. How men and women members of parliament (MPs) enact gender through linguistic expressions, holding the floor and other speaking strategies (euphemisms, intertextual references, silence, body language, interruptions, etc.).

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<sup>49</sup> I explore how ‘male champions’ construct their positions in relation to women and other men (what underlies the strategy, how they experienced being ‘champions’, how it subverts and/or reproduces gender identifications and power relations).

- c. Different forms of power (covert and overt) manifestations in men and women MPs interaction (e.g. invoking parliamentary rules of procedure and/ or flouting rules, etc.).

**Observing Interview process and dealing with interviews as social encounters:**

- Interviewer/interviewee relationships
- How participants conduct themselves in interviews, the way they respond to questions (or questions they choose not to respond to).
- Participants emotional expressions e.g. laughter, prolonged laughter, silences, hesitations, interruptions,
- Intonation in speech.
- How the interviewees tell the story of their experiences – (strategies they use to construct the narratives, resources they draw on, inter-textual references, prefacing, emotions, structuring of events and actions)
- Language use – metaphors, symbolic, productive use of language, constituting gendered identities, etc.
- Observe and reflect on the settings within which interviews are done.

This will enable me to analyse ways in which parliament and interviews feature as a ‘theatre’, a stage upon which gender power relations are enacted and produced and what these performances possibly convey about the legislation on issues that critique gender inequalities.

## Appendix 2: Profile of Interview Participants

|    | <b>Participants (Pseudonyms<sup>50</sup>)</b>   | <b>Date of Interview</b>             |
|----|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Hon Fred <sup>51</sup> , Minister, legislator and senior legal personnel in government, thought to have contributed significantly to the passing of Domestic Violence Act (2010). | Tuesday 2 August, 2016               |
| 2. | Ms. Susana, Programme coordinator, Women's leadership and democratic governance in a women's rights organisation.   | Thursday 11 August 2016.             |
| 3. | Hon. Janet, former woman MP and chairperson of the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association.  | Wednesday 17 August 2016             |
| 4. | Ms. Maria, Communications and Advocacy Officer, Uganda Women Parliamentary Association.   | Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> August 2016. |
| 5. | Ms. Acol, Executive Director of a Women's rights organisation that mobilised for legislation on FGM and DVA.  | Monday 22 August 2016                |
| 6. | Hon. Seba, male MP in the 8 <sup>th</sup> Parliament. Secunder of one of the bills in the study   | Tuesday 23 August 2016.              |
| 7  | Ms. Rina, Executive Director, of a Women's rights organisation that focuses on prevention of Gender Based Violence.   | Tuesday 6 Sept. 2016                 |
| 8  | Hon. Dr. Christopher, male MP, Minister. Influential in FGM legislation.  | Sunday 11 Sept. 2016                 |
| 9  | Hon. Dr. Kissa, male MP in the 8 <sup>th</sup> Parliament. Influential in legislative processes on the prohibition of FGM.  | Sat 22 Oct, 2016                     |
| 10 | Justice Davis, Judge of high court, occasionally works as a trainer of MPs (especially women) on gender and the law.  | Friday 28 Oct. 2016                  |
| 11 | Ms. Dora, Programmes officer on Gender Based Violence prevention, in a United Nations Agency in Uganda.   | Wed, 23 Nov. 2016                    |

---

<sup>50</sup> I use pseudonyms instead of participants' actual names to keep their identities anonymous as much as I can. However, I acknowledge the challenge of ensuring anonymity of participants in a study that investigates specific institutions and processes like I do. I highlight this challenge in chapter 3 as I reflect on the ethical dilemmas of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

<sup>51</sup> Fred was a cabinet minister and a member of parliament for 10 consecutive years (2006-2016). He contested and lost the February 2016 parliamentary election and was later dropped from cabinet in May 2016, approximately two months before our interview.

## Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Guide



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### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

---

#### **Introduction**

The nature of the research is exploratory<sup>52</sup>. The study INTERVIEWS will therefore be guided by a set of thematic areas rather than specific questions. The interviewer will introduce these themes during conversations and endeavour to pick up on aspects raised within the discussion with the participants.

#### **Preliminary reflections on the respondent's background.**

Tell me about yourself, your experience as a member of CSO/Parliament:

**Probes: CSO/Parliament focus, Role(s), for how long have you been here?**

#### **Part A: Exploring the notion of 'male champions'**

**Tell me about this notion of 'male champions' with regard to parliamentary work (legislation)**

- i. Have you heard about it? What is 'male champion'? (strategy/tactic)? When was it invoked, how, why?
  - How did this notion come about? Any global/transnational influences on engaging men as 'champions' of gender equality?

---

<sup>52</sup> I explore how 'male champions' construct their positions in relation to women and other men (what underlies the strategy, how they experienced being 'champions', how it subverts and/or reproduces gender identifications and power relations).

- How do men 'become' champions (recruited/trained, voluntary?). Influences from Civil society? Role of Uganda women parliamentary association (UWOPA)

**ii. Underlying assumptions? What it aims to achieve.**

- Why male champions?
  - o How are they engaged – specific roles and expectations?
  - o Cases of legislation 'championed' by men. (probe for men's involvement in DVA and FGM Acts of 2010 in particular).
  - o How committed are the male champions to the issues they advocate for (are there any personal benefits they derive (or expect) from the process?) What motivates them?
  - o How did you experience being 'Champions'? (interaction with women, and men who do not identify themselves as champions? [Labelled as effeminate? Ridiculed? Glorified? feminized?])

**B: Constructions of Gender**

**i. Is the idea of men as promoters of gender equality (in any way) linked to the way gender is understood?**

- The understanding of 'gender' at the moment (within the CSOs, Parliament, communities of operation)?
- Any shifts in the way people understand gender (across time, in politics, legislation, work related strategies?)

**Part C: Implications of the strategy**

- i. What do you think about the strategy? What is your experience of it - achieving its objectives? Does it have limitations?
- ii. What do you envisage in future as far as this strategy is concerned? Where do you see 'male champions' in future?
- iii. Views about sexual differences? Does it matter whether one is man/woman to be able to talk about issues of gender?

## Appendix 4: Permission letter to research in the Uganda Parliament



# PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

## OFFICE OF THE CLERK TO PARLIAMENT

Parliament House, P.O. Box 7178, Kampala Uganda.  
Telephone: 0414-377000/377150/377152 Facsimile: 0414-346826 E-mail: Clerk@parliament.go.ug  
Plot Nos. 16 - 18 Parliament Avenue.

In any correspondence on  
this subject please quote No.....**AN 210/210/01**

6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015

Mr. Mwiine Amon Ashaba  
PhD Student (20618034)  
Department of Social Anthropology  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY, SOUTH AFRICA**

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA  
(JULY – NOVEMBER, 2016)**

Reference is made to your letter on the above subject matter, dated **10<sup>th</sup> March, 2016**, requesting to carry out research in the Parliament of Uganda.

I wish to inform you that, your request has been granted and you should report to the Director, Research Services for further guidance and any assistance while conducting your research.

Yours Sincerely,



Jane L. Kibirige (Mrs)  
**CLERK TO PARLIAMENT**

c.c. Director, Research Services

## Appendix 5: Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee (REC) Approval Notice



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### Approval Notice New Application

27-Jul-2016  
Mwiine, Amon AA

**Proposal#:** SU-HSD-002973

**Title:** Promoters of Gender Equality? A Study of the Social Construction of Specific Male Parliamentarians as "male Champions" in Uganda

Dear Mr Amon Mwiine,

Your **New Application** received on **01-Jul-2016**, was reviewed.  
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **22-Jul-2016 -21-Jul-2019**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (SU-HSD-002973) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

**Included Documents:**

REC: Humanities New Application

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham  
REC Coordinator  
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

# Investigator Responsibilities

## Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

## Appendix 6: A sample of a Research Card



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**TOPIC: Promoters of Gender Equality? A Study on the Social Construction of Specific Male Parliamentarians as "Male Champions" in Uganda**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Supervisor(s): Prof. Rob Pattman**  
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**REC:** Ms. Clarissa Graham  
Research Ethics Committee (Humanities)  
Stellenbosch University  
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