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'Gentlemen of the Press' and Media Gender Neutrality: A Re-Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Media gender neutrality is one of the key tenets or pillars of journalism. Such tenets include but not limited to the gender-sensitive and non-biased language of reporting. Based on the symbolic interactionism theory and drawing on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method, it is argued that the traditional greeting for journalists "gentlemen of the press", which is still in use internationally, is too gender-biased, promotes hegemonic masculinity that disproportionately disadvantages and hurts women. This article concludes that, based on current trends in gender neutrality and gender sensitivity in language, the original meaning inputted into the generic word "men" in "gentlemen" where the term "men" is applied inclusively to and refers to both "men and women" is no longer justified and tenable and recommends that the usage be stopped and be replaced with a new proposed, more gender-neutral greeting, namely: "Distinguished members of the press".

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Introduction

Human societies have tended to be patriarchal. Such societies tend to give males greater power and prominence than females, portraying women as generally physically weaker than men and unable to fulfil certain tasks as good as men. However, since the turn of the 20th century, many western societies have begun to advocate for and emphasizes equal gender opportunities in education, voting, business and even in politics [1].

Particularly, the media places great emphasis on language sensitivity. Journalists are trained to observe the protocol of using biased-free and gender-neutral language in news content. Indeed, "words matter and our language choices have consequences. If we believe that women and men deserve social equality, then we should think seriously about how to reflect that belief in our language use" [1].

However, journalists have been addressed with the phrase "gentlemen of the press" which includes both genders. Given the global trend which seeks gender equality in its entire ramification, there has been the need to revisit this phrase to interrogate whether it fits into gender-neutral and gender-fair. This article argues that the phrase falls short of gender neutrality exhibiting clear gender bias and "hegemonic masculinity", where things are defined from the prism or Weltanschauung of the male gender which discriminates the female gender and recommends a replacement.

In this article, I would begin by clarifying some concepts after which I would situate this article within two theoretical frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which gives the basis for critically reviewing the subject matter of this article and Symbolic interactionism theory, a socio-psychologically based theory which explains the rationale that justifies the need for behaviour change when necessary. Thereafter, I would use the so-called genderlisation of four languages which show that languages have masculine and feminine gender and that there was, therefore, no basis to impose the hegemonic masculinity on English use of "gentlemen" in "gentlemen of the press". I would, therefore, make a proposal, conclude and make a recommendation.

Conceptual Clarification
For a proper understanding of the discussion in this paper, the following concepts would be explained.

Gentlemen of the Press
This is the traditional greeting or phrase for journalists. It is used to refer to both genders (male and female). The exact beginning of its use is not known but it can be traced to a 1929 American film starring Walter Huston, Kay Francis Brian Donlevy. However, the copyright of the film has now expired and is now available in the public domain. It survives in a copy sold to MCA for television distribution [2].

Media
Media is generally used to refer to the plural of medium. Media refer to the communication channels through which news, movies, education, music, and promotional messages are disseminated.

Such channels include but not limited to physical and online newspapers and magazines, television, radio, billboards, telephone, the Internet, fax and billboards, etc [3].Media refers to the various ways through which people communicate in society. When such media reach a very large number of people, they are referred to as mass media.

The term "media" is used to refer to the collective noun for press or news organisation. In the computer world, however, "media" refers to the collective noun for data storage devices which include hard drives, removable drives (e.g. Zip disks), CD-R or CD-ROM discs, USB drives, flash memory, DVDs, etc [4].

Gender

In gender studies, there is a clear differentiation between sex and gender. Sex is defined as "biological make-up" or biological characteristics of an individual. This definition is, however, not the universal dividing unit of society since some individuals possess biological characteristics of both sexes. This notwithstanding, sex remains perhaps one of the biggest elements of social distinction. Gender, on the other hand, is "a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable. Gender refers to social attributes that are learned or acquired during socialization as members of a given community" [1]. For the World Health Organisation, gender refers to "the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men which it interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex" [5].

Gender Neutrality

Gender neutrality is a generic term which refers to gender-neutral language that uses non-sexist language which is both inclusive and gender-sensitive. Such a use enables the speakers of such a language to avoid word choices that be interpreted as either biased, discriminatory or demeaning and thereby implying that such a use is the norm. On the other hand, the use of a gender-neutral language that is gender-fair and inclusive enables the speakers to avoid gender stereotyping, promoting social change and contributing to achieving gender equality [6].

Gender neutrality has all the more become an urgent necessity because it is passed on in language and especially because language generally reflects and influences behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions. There are many areas where gender-neutrality has become expedient and this is the traditional generic use of the masculine gender. In most grammatical gender languages the masculine gender (e.g. "man" in "mankind") in its 'inclusive' or 'generic' form includes both sexes but the feminine gender is understood as 'exclusive', namely that it refers to women only ("lady" in "chairlady"). Such a long-held traditional use of the generic form of the masculine gender is considered discriminatory against women [6].

Since the 1980s, there has been an effort to initiate a gender-neutral language that is both gender-fair and non-sexist and that ends privileges for any particular gender while seeking to end prejudices against any other gender [6].

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

The theory of symbolic interactionism actually originated through the work of George Herbert Mead and his students at the University of Chicago and other pragmatic philosophers. The term symbolic interactionism by Herbert Blumer, who publishing Mead's ideas posthumously. These ideas show the interrelationship between the individual and society. Symbolic interactionism deals with how meanings underlie social interactions, that is how meanings are created, understood and maintained [7]. Symbolic interaction deals with meanings that emerge from the reciprocal and interpersonal interaction of individuals in society focusing on what symbols and meanings emanate from such interaction. Blumer argues that individuals form reciprocally interactive meanings in two ways: (1) meaning is that which is attributed to objects, phenomenon, events, etc. and (2) meaning is also a "physical attachment" attributed to events and objects by humans [8].This interpretation of symbolic meaning includes interpretation of various definitions.

According to Blumer, there are basically three main principles that explain symbolic interaction: (1) Meaning, (2) language (because it provides the means for debating meaning) and (3) thinking. In this context, the meaning becomes the basis of human behaviour, language provides meaning to individuals in it and thinking does change the interpretation of individuals about meanings and symbols [8].

Similarly, Blumer Makes Three Propositions that are Central to Symbolic Interactionism

a) That humans develop their attitudes towards things based on the meanings those things propose to them.
b) That meanings are derived from the "interaction of one of them from its addressees".
c) That meanings can change depending on the interpretive process.

Based on the core principles and the proposal, the greetings "gentlemen of the press" was constructed by journalists to meaning to all journalists but since meanings could change from the third principle and third proposal, meanings can change with time-based on new developments in society. In this particular study, new trends on gender neutrality and gender sensitivity have made it imperative for that original meaning imposed in that greeting, which was used to communicate with journalists and accepted as normal, to be changed. This is thus the basis for which this theory best suits this study [8].

Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study work draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The terms Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Linguistics (CL) are often used simultaneously and interchangeably but many scholars seem to be more comfortable with the term CDA. Some scholars believe CDA is a further development of CDA [9]. In CL there are strong and pervasive connections that exist and can be established between linguistic structure and social structure in the form of interpretation of grammatical categories that are also potential traces of ideological mystification. CDA is a theory that has been championed [9,10].

The origin of CDA can be traced to Text Linguistics, Classical Rhetoric, and Socio-linguistics, Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics. Some of its tenets trace their roots again to the German author, Jürgen Habermas and the results of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School before the Second World War [10]. The foundation of CDA was developed by neo-Marxists and post-modernist approaches of social theorists and social linguists, such as Foucault (1972) and Pecheux (1975), who helped to clarify the interrelationship between ideology and discourse and which was then further developed by social theorists Foucault (1972), Bourdieu (1974), Saussure (1959), Schiffrin (2001) in such constructions as 'discursive formations', 'discursive practices', and 'discursive regularities' and used in relations to representations of knowledge, ideology, and power in institutions and society [10].

CDA does not concern itself so much with investigating linguistic units as such. It studies social phenomena which are usually complex and require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach. The subjects of such investigation are not necessarily negative social or political events. Indeed any social phenomenon can fall into the broader framework of CDA subject of concern.

Discourse, within the above context, concerns any policy, political strategy or narratives that are used in a restricted or broad sense of a term, text, talk, a speech, or topic-related conversations which is related to language as such. Consequently, one can relate this to notions such as racist discourse, gendered discourse, media discourse, populist discourse, etc. CDA is problem-oriented.

This approach is suited for this study because the phrase, namely the traditional greeting of journalists ("gentlemen of the press") being analysed to address the problem of gender bias in society and promotion of gender neutrality.

Gender in Languages

Many languages have gender nouns and even pronouns. These languages have been so formulated by the crafters of the languages to cater for the male and female genders as well as a gender for neutral nouns in some languages. In this light, four languages will be reviewed, namely; English, German, French and Spanish.

English: Three Genders

Basically, there seems to be no distinction between masculine and feminine English nouns but gender is sometimes shown by different forms or different words when referring to certain categories of people or animals [11].

There are three gender types of nouns in English, namely: masculine (e.g. man, boy, etc.), feminine (e.g. woman, girl, etc.), neuter (i.e. rock, table, etc.) as shown in the table below: [12,13].

Table 1: Some English Gender Noun

Masculine	Feminine	Gender-neutral
man	woman	person
father	mother	parent
boy	girl	child
uncle	aunt	
husband	wife	spouse
actor	actress	
prince	princess	
waiter	waitress	server
rooster	hen	chicken
stallion	mare	horse

Source: [11]

In general, nouns that refer to people's roles and jobs are called common nouns and are generally neutral words, e.g. friend, doctor, cousin, student, colleague, teenager, teacher [11,13]. Examples are:
i.   Mary is my *friend*. She is a *doctor*.
ii.   Peter is my *cousin*. He is a *student*.
iii. Arthur is my *colleague*. He is a *teenager*.
iv.   Jane is my *cousin*. She is a *teacher*.
However, these neutral words can be made masculine or feminine by adding the words "male" or "female" before them. Examples

of these include:
i.   Sam is a *female doctor*.
ii.   No, he is not my boyfriend, he is just a *male friend*.
iii. I have three *female cousins* and two *male cousins*.

In Some Rare Cases, Nouns That Describe Things Without Gender are Referred to with A Gendered Pronoun to Show Familiarity. It Is Also Correct to Use the Gender-Neutral Pronoun (It) for Them

I.   I love my car. *She*/*It* (the car) is my greatest passion.
II.   France is popular with *her*/*its* (France's) neighbours at the moment.
III. I travelled from England to New York on the Queen Elizabeth; *she*/*it* (the Queen Elizabeth) is a great ship.

Relatedly, English grammar students were accustomed to the use of the 'masculine rule' when referring to a hypothetical person that could be either male or female. Thus, the pronouns "he", "him" and "his" were considered appropriate for both genders. However, to make the English language less sexist, the use of "one", "he", "she" have begun to be used as more generic personal pronouns [14].

Some media organisations have started to use ubiquitous "they" as the favoured singular epicene pronoun. This, however, has been rejected by many English grammarians. The "American Copy Editors Society, the Chicago Manual of Style and the Associated Press have all updated their style guides to include the use of 'they', 'them' and 'their' to be acceptable in limited cases as a singular or gender-neutral pronoun in the absence of an appropriate alternative". Recently too, The Washington Post updated its style guides, approving "they" as a singular pronoun describing the move as "the only sensible solution to English's lack of a gender-neutral third-person singular personal pronoun" [14].

In 2014, Professor Charles Thatcher of the University of South Dakota in the USA proposed the addition of a new series of referent-inclusive third-person singular pronouns to the English language to eliminate the masculine rule [14,15]:

I.   **Ee** – to replace "he" or "she" and "they" (when "they" is used to refer to only one person of unspecified sex).
II.   **Eet** – to replace "he" or "it" when one of those pronouns is used to refer either to a person of unspecified gender or to a non-human antecedent, such as a business, a corporation or a governmental entity.
III. **Herim** – to replace the pronoun "them" when that plural pronoun is used to refer to only one person of unspecified sex.

German: Genderlisation of Nouns

The German language has a more complex syntax which has three grammatical genders, namely: male, female and neutral. The neutral is generally applied to non-humans with only a few exceptions [16].

In January 2019, the German city of Hannover mandated that all official communications via emails, fliers and official data forms, use gender-neutral nouns. Thus, instead of using the word for a male voter (wähler) and a female voter (wählerin), the municipality preferred the gender-neutral word such as a voting person (wählende). Before 2019, the federal justice ministry had in 2014 mandated all state bodies to use gender-neutral formulations in their paperwork [17].

In recent times and to shorten the spaces consumed by the use of the suffixes "r" or "rn" for men (singular and plural) e.g. wähler and wählern, and "in" or "innen" for women (singular and plural) e.g. wählerin and wählerinnen, there has been the introduction of an uppercase "I" sandwiched in compound nouns e.g. "wählerInnen" to signify the plural for both males and females at once. Also, recently an asterisk (called the "gender star") has introduced to include citizens who do not consider themselves either." However, the Association for the German Language has rejected these new introductions [17].

French: A Binary Language
Like other languages, French also assigns a gender to all male and female nouns that refer to persons. Typically, the majority of words that end in "e" or "ion" except words ending in -age, -ege, -é, or -isme (these endings often indicate masculine words) are feminine. All other types of endings are typically masculine [18]. For example, the word "friend" in French is „amie"(feminine) and "ami" (masculine).

Some French feminists have tried to introduce a gender-neutral plural with the use of an asterisks(*) in such a way as to combine case endings and create a more inclusive gender-neutral plural. Thus, rather than write friend as "amies" they write instead "ami*e*s" to cater for both genders. However, in 2017 France's government banned the use of the inclusive, gender-neutral language in official documents [16].

Spanish: Two-way Gender Language
Generally, the Spanish language has feminine and masculine cases added to all nouns. Even the word for the article "the" differs if the noun is male (el) or female (la). In recent times some Spanish speakers do not adhere to this syntax, it is still the general norm of addressing people and things [16]. For example, in the United States, some speakers add "x" or "@" at the end of the noun to indicate the "gender-neutral noun of writing "Latinx" and "Latin@" instead of the binary Latino (male) and Latina (female). However, many Spanish speakers have criticised that new introduction referring to them as influences from American English speakers.

In 2019, some teenagers in Argentina took daring steps to change what they refer to a "deeply gendered culture" and replacing the masculine "o" or the feminine "a" with the gender-neutral "e" [16].

This effort in Argentina can be traced to a popular song that is usually sung by young people led by Natalia Mira, 19, at political rallies in Buenos Aires, an ode to a former Argentine president, the populist Juan Perón, and his wife, Eva but sung in front of their high school, thus: "We will fight from sun to sun. We are the youths, the soldiers of Perón." Since all nouns have a gender in Spanish, the word for soldiers is masculine: "Los soldados de Perón." (the soldiers of Peron). Thus, instead of "Los Soldados" (the Soldiers), Mira sang "Les soldades" (the Soldiers). However, many Spanish speakers have argued that her use of the "e" in both words was grammatically wrong [16].

Despite the resistance by a large portion of the 577 million Spanish speakers worldwide, some University Departments are adopting Mira "inclusive" or "gender-neutral" Spanish in schoolwork. A judge used it in a court decision after which an oversight committee of magistrates declared that it is permissible for judges to use the gender-neutral words. Some books have also used gender-neutral Spanish, including a version of the book "The Little Prince". Also, Argentina's president, Alberto Fernández, had used it in a public speech to high school students shortly before his election in 2019 [16].

Gender and Media
Since media play important and crucial roles in society, they can be an important actor in the promotion of gender equality within the working environment such as in employment and promotion of female staff at all levels and in the representation of women and men in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language [19].

Some scholars have researched and come to the conclusion that top positions (producers, executives, chief editors and publishers) in the media industry are still very male-dominated and The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reports that globally female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' subjects (e.g. family, lifestyle, fashion and arts, etc.) compared to 'hard' news such politics and the economy that are more likely to be assigned to men [20]. Similarly, female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women's needs and perspectives in their reports and stories than their male counterparts. However, not all women place a premium on gender awareness to cover women's needs and perspectives. On the hand, some male journalists cover gender issues effectively [19].

Have researched on whether men's and women's opinions and attitudes towards their jobs differ significantly based on their gender in 18 countries across the world and found out that there was no significant difference and that professional newsroom culture is maintained by both sexes. They, however, argued that the similarity in the work culture may be because female journalists are forced to adopt male values and are judged by male standards.

While the media is professionally and ethically enjoined to inculcate and promote fair gender portrayal in the media similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty many scholars argue that there is widespread unbalanced gender portrayal in the media [21].

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) researched and concluded that women are more likely to be featured as victims in news stories than men, women are more likely to be identified according to family status than men, women are far less likely to be featured in the world's news headlines than men and women are likely to be relied upon as 'spokespeople' or as 'experts' than their female counterparts.

Posit that stereotypes are prevalent in everyday media arguing that women are very often portrayed mainly as homemakers and carers of the family, women are depicted as "dependent on men" and as objects of male attention [21]. Similarly, men are typically portrayed as powerful and dominant in the media, with contempt for men involved in caring or play domestic roles. This view agrees with Wood conclusion that the media presented men as active, hard, adventurous, tough, powerful, unafraid, independent, totally in control of all emotions, and above all- "in no way feminine" and present women as "as sex objects who are usually thin, young, beautiful, passive, "dependent on men", enmeshed in relationships or housework and often incompetent and dumb."

Argues that among the many ways in which gender stereotyping is present in the media is the underrepresentation of women in the media [21]. posits that there are three times as many white men as women in Television programmes, males far outnumber females by a ratio of two to one in children's programming, women make up at least 16% of newscasters in newscast and

men are included in stories 10 times more often than women [22]. This underrepresentation tends to force people to believe that there are more men than women and thus use men as the cultural standard. Similarly, researched and conclude that there are only about 5% of television writers, executives, and producers who are women. Also, although two-thirds of journalism graduates are females, women make up less than 2% of those in corporate management of newspapers and only about 5% of newspaper publishers. Indeed, some media analysts argue that if there are more women in positions of authority at executive levels, the media industry would offer more positive portrayals of women.

Had posited that the media portray women as intrinsically dependent on men and the women's identity is tied to that of men. For examples, Walt Disney's award-winning animated film "The Little Mermaid" clearly embodies women's dependence on males for their identity. In the feature film, the mermaid (feminine) gave up her identity as a mermaid (female) to become acceptable to her human male lover.

The film portrayed the Smurfs, formless little beings who have no obvious sex, as dominant compared to the female smurf, called Smurfette, which had no names, and thus making her sole identity a diminutive relation to male smurfs. This male dominance/female subservience increasingly became a pattern in the media. Indeed beginning from 1991, television executives deliberately and consciously accepted a policy of having dominant male characters in all Saturday morning children's programming.

This is male-dominant portrayal is what refers to as "hegemonic masculinity" which is the process to formalise and legitimise the social ascendancy and superiority of males over females in major aspects of life [23]. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was formulated by Australian sociologist, Raewyn Connell more than three decades ago to refer to certain traits that various cultures practice to justify men's domination over women [24].

Some Current Cases of Usage of "Gentlemen of the Press"
Below are some examples of current usage of the phrase "gentlemen of the press".

**Table 2: Some Cases of Current Usage of the Phrase "Gentlemen of the Press Internationally**

S/no	Country	Texts with the phrase "gentlemen of the press (emboldened & underlined)	By Whom	Year of Use	Source
1	USA	Once upon a time in a land now far away, newspapermen — this was before they promoted themselves to "journalists... **Then the gentlemen of the press (and that included the ladies)** went uptown, called themselves "the media," and the trade hasn't been the same since.	The Washington Post	2018 (25 February)	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/25/editorial-the-gentlemen-of-the-press-melt-under-vi/
2	UK	Good day **gentlemen of the press**, and everybody here present. We note that the Senate ministerial screening and the Police/Shi'ite clash were two events that absorbed the attention of Nigerians last week, which took attention away from the resolve of the House to again reinvestigate the power sector spending...Thank you.	APC United Kingdom	2019 (4 August)	https://www.facebook.com/apcukingdom/posts/good-day-gentlemen-of-the-press-and-everybody-here-presentwe-note-that-the-senat/2344268492483430/
3	Nigeria	**Gentlemen of the press**, I welcome you all to this press conference today 6th August, 2017. The purpose of this briefing is to intimate you on the shooting incident that happened this morning....Thanks and God bless.	Nigeria Police Force **Through**: Garba Baba Umar (Commissioner Of Police Anambra State, Nigeria)	2017(6 August)	https://www.npf.gov.ng/xn/index.php/information/press-releases/item/204-press-release
4	Nigeria	**Good morning gentlemen of the press**, and thank you for honouring our invitation to this press conference, the first since I resumed duty here at the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture last week....Thank you, **gentlemen**, for your kind attention	Minister Of Information And Culture (Alhaji Lai Mohammed)	2019(26 August)	https://fmic.gov.ng/text-of-the-press-conference-addressed-by-the-minister-of-information-and-culture-alhaji-lai-mohammed-on-an-english-court-ruling-that-pid-can-seize-9-6-billion-in-nigerian-assets-over-a-botche/

Fair Gender Portrayal and Gender-Neutral Language in the Media

Fair gender portrayal is considered a professional and ethical code in media and therefore having the same weight as respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty which can importantly contribute to a more gender-balanced and inclusive society. Fair gender portrayal deals with the portrayal of females and males in the media by the elimination of stereotypes and the use of gender-fair language.

Posits that there is a disproportionate and almost a one-sided representation of females and males in the media arguing that women are heard about or read about only in about 23% of the world news. In other words, in 77% cases, the gender in the news is male asserting that "the world seen in news media remains largely a male one." thus making the large female part of our societies relatively invisible. Argues that such portrayal is not the actual reflection of the composition of the world where the population of male (50.4%) is only slightly that of females (49.6%) [25].

Figure 1: Population of the World
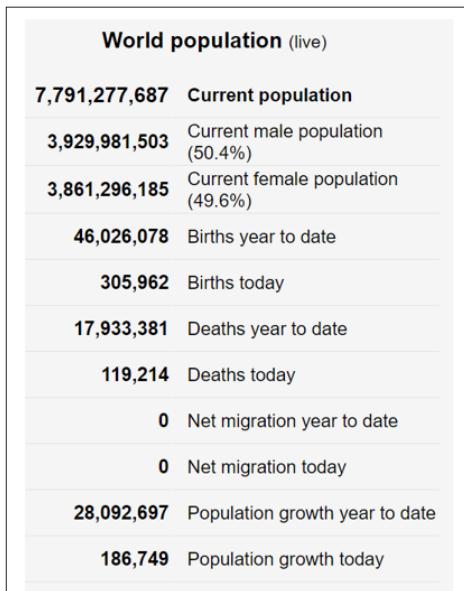
Source: countrymeters.info as of 17 April 2020.

When women do eventually make it to the news, they are hardly depicted as experts. In 2010 only approximately 19% of spokespersons and about 20% of experts were women in the news compared to 81% of spokespersons and 80% of experts in the news who were male which again portrays the world of experts/professional in the news mainly as male while women were more often portrayed as ordinary people.

Thus, the media can be perceived as male-dominated. For example, the dominance of masculine words for general references or usage of gender-dependent words such as "men" reflects an unconscious assumption about gender roles that promote the male dominance but can also influence readers' way of thinking, their imagination, belief and perception and by so doing condition the society to reason in that direction [1].

In many traditional English usage masculine nouns such as the word, "men" were used when gender was unclear or the group contained representatives of both sexes e.g. "All men are created equal" –the well-known phrase from US Declaration of Independence where "men" refers to people in general as well as "gentlemen of the press" –the well-known phrase used to refer to journalists in general (male and female). However, the word "men" in modern English writing is no more understood as the synonym of people in general. Generally, readers will imagine men when they read men in any written document. opines that such generic usage of "men" "most vividly shows inferiority of females' role and power" [1].

The media can, therefore, help societies eliminate sex-biased roles, which are entrenched in media language. This means eliminating media language that misrepresents, excludes or offends women. In other words, women and men must be seen and heard to be equal.

To avoid stereotyping gender, particularly women and promoting gender-sensitive language has listed useful tips as given below:
1. Avoid the use of "he" as a generic pronoun, unless the gender of the subject is known and is relevant to the context. The pseudo-generic use of "he" or "his", when referring to both a female and a male excludes the female. To be inclusive, use both "he" and "she", and consciously balance pronoun use by sometimes reversing their order. For example: Instead of "If a student studies hard, he will succeed", use "If a student studies hard, he or she will succeed" or "If a student studies hard, she or he will succeed" or "Students who study hard will succeed".
2. Avoid the use of "man" as a generic noun, as if men represent the whole human race. The use of the word "man" to represent both women and men excludes women, and it minimalizes women's contributions and their worth as human beings. For example, to make language more inclusive use "humanity, human beings, people" instead of "mankind" use "artificial materials", instead of "man-made materials", instead of "the best man for the job" use "the best person for the job", etc.
3. When describing a job or career that both men and women engage in, avoid using a term that specifies gender and replace gender-specific words with gender-neutral words to avoid associating men and women with certain professions. For example instead of chairman/chairwoman use chair, coordinator, moderator, presiding officer, head, chairperson; instead of businessman/businesswoman use business executive, manager, businessperson; instead of policeman/policewoman use police officer; instead of postman use postal worker, letter carrier, etc.
4. When referring to men and women, ensure they are addressed in the same manner. For example, instead of saying "Mr Smith and Mary Jones" refer to them as "John Smith and Mary Jones" (using both of their first names) or "Mr Smith and Ms Jones" (using titles, rather than names), instead of "The reading list included Jane Austen, Joyce, Proust, and Virginia Woolf", use "The reading list included Austen, Joyce, Proust, and Woolf (or Jane Austen, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf)".
5. Use general courtesy titles that promote gender equity. For example: instead of Miss, Mrs, use Ms.

Besides, opines that even though generic words such as "man" and "men" were tolerated masculine forms that were used to refer to people or humanity in general, they were no longer tolerable and discriminates and disrespects women [1]. Similarly, gender-neutral job titles that do not specify gender such be used e.g. "firefighter" instead of "fireman", "police officer" instead of "policeman". Where possible gender-sensitive such as in job titles, the specific forms should be used such as "actor/actress", "stewardess/steward" and other cases words that apply to all gender may be preferable e.g. "flight attendant". Proposed gender-neutral alternatives to

common gender-biased words that are gender-sensitive [1,26].

Table 2: Some Gender-biased words and their gender-neutral alternatives

S/no	Gender-biased words	Gender-neutral alternatives
1.	Forefathers	Ancestors, forebears
2.	Man-made	Artificial, manufactured
3.	Brotherhood	Solidarity, human fellowship, human kinship
4.	Manpower	Human resources
5.	Founding fathers	Founders
6.	Dear Sir	Dear Sir or Madam; Dear Editor; Dear Service Representative; Dear Officer; To whom it may concern
7.	Mr, Mrs	Ms. (unless the woman herself prefers the courtesy title Mrs. or Miss).
8.	Fatherland	Native land
9.	Mother tongue	Native tongue
10.	Mankind	Humanity, human beings, people
11.	Congressman, congresswoman	Member of Congress
12.	Spokesman	Spokesperson
13.	Salesman, saleswoman	Sales clerk; salesperson; sales representative
14.	Stewardess, waitress	Flight attendant, waiter, server

Source: [1,26]

Discussion
Based on the different perspectives of gender-sensitive language, we can, therefore, argue why the use of the heavily male-dominated and gender-biased noun "gentlemen" in the media phrase "gentlemen of the press" is no longer tenable in the contemporary era and needs a gender-neutral replacement.

(i) Argument from Generic Noun of "Gentlemen"
Although in written and oral communications, generics nouns such as "fatherland", "mankind", "men" are intended to be used for both women and men but they are unarguably "male-dominated" and invoke male images in the minds of readers and listeners. had argued that the generic usage of the word "men" depicts the inferiority of females' role and power [1].

The generic noun "gentlemen" was initially intended to apply to both male and female journalists but based on the positions of both United Nations Development Programme as well as scholarly works of and the noun generic noun "gentlemen" unnecessarily depicts images of the male gender and becomes insensitive to women and should, therefore, be discarded for a gender-neutral alternative [1, 26].

(ii) Argument from Gender Specificity in Major Languages
Many of the world's languages have tried to avoid gender-biased nouns and instead have alternatives that are gender-inclusive. The English language has three genders of nouns, namely: masculine (i.e. man, boy, etc.), feminine (i.e. woman, girl, etc.) and neuter (i.e. person, etc.) as reflected in the works of [12,13]. The Spanish language has the binary nouns with masculine nouns ending with "o" and the feminine nouns ending with "a". There is an unsuccessful attempt to introduce inclusive neutral nouns by

adding "e" instead of the binary "o" and "a". Like the Spanish, the German language has three genders. The German language has a more complex syntax which has three grammatical genders, namely: male, female and neutral. Male gender uses the suffixes "r" or "rn" for men (singular and plural) e.g. wähler and wählern, and the female gender uses the suffixes "in" or "innen" for women (singular and plural) e.g. wählerin and wählerinnen. The neutral gender is generally used for non-humans with a few exceptions as opines [16]. Efforts to introduce a capital "I" or asterisk (*) sandwiched in between the male and female plurals to indicate an all-inclusive but that effort have not been successful as states [17]. Also, the French language has male and female nouns which refer to persons. Typically, the majority of words that end in "e" or "ion" with some exceptions are feminine. All other types of endings are typically masculine as opines [18].

Based on the forgoing in which the above major languages apart from English, it can be observed that most languages have specific nouns for the male and female gender both in the singular and plural forms. Since "men" in "gentlemen" is the exclusive plural form of the singular "man", a male noun, that is no longer considered a synonym of people in general, its adoption for a greeting that includes both male and female gender is offensive to the women members of the media. It will be like a man accepting to be addressed as Mrs John Peter. It is probably unthinkable. For this reason and to be gender-sensitive and neutral, the long-held "gentlemen" in "gentlemen of the press" needs to be discarded and replaced.

(iii) Argument from Almost Equal Population
The world's population of over 7.8 billion, both gender share an almost equal number of people. The male population is 50.4% while the female population is 49.6%. The difference is insignificant. It is therefore insensitive to subdue the female plural noun into that of the male plural and force it down the throat of all-female media practitioners as referring to both sexes. This may play into the male-dominant ideology that is present in many media culture. This has to be discarded and a more inclusive noun introduced.

(iv) Argument from the "Hegemonic Masculinity" in the Media Culture
The media culture has continued to have a male-dominant appearance. Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reports that globally while male journalists are more likely to be assigned "hard" news such as politics and economy, female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' news such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts. Also have argued that female journalists are forced to adopt male values and are judged by male standards. also argues that males outnumber females by two to one in children's programming and that women make up 16% of newscasters in newscast and men are included in stories 10 times more often than women [27,22]. Also, Women in Media state that while there are two-thirds of journalism graduates being women, they make up less than 2% of those in corporate management of newspapers and only about 5% of newspaper publishers.

The above point to the fact that media have a structural form that promote the male dominance in what has termed "hegemonic masculinity", a term which entrenches the ideology that the male gender is superior to the female even in the media. In the age of gender equality, such structure is no longer tenable. The term "gentlemen" in the "gentlemen of the press" furthers that same idea of male dominance [23]. This kind of "hegemonic masculinity" which is embedded in the "gentlemen" needs to be discarded and

replaced with a gender-neutral and all-inclusive term.

(v) Argument from the Requiremento of a Gender-Neutral Language in the Media

Media, as the fourth estate of the realm, serves the society. This society is made up of male and female. The media ought to portray both genders fairly. Fair gender portrayal deals with the portrayal of women and men in the media by eliminating stereotypes and the using of gender-fair language researched and concludes that in 77% cases, the gender in the news is male while it is only 23% cases that the gender in the news is female. Also, in 2010 81% of spokespersons and 80% of experts found in the news were males while females made up only 19% of spokespersons and 20% of experts. This gives the impression that professionals/experts are predominantly male and depicting women as ordinary people. As a result, the media ethics which requires fairness in portraying both genders would be lost if the term "gentlemen" continues to be used to refer to both male and female journalists. It should, therefore, be discarded and replaced with a gender-neutral term.

Replacing the "Gentlemen" in "Gentlemen of the Press"

From the different arguments above, it is obvious that the use of the term "gentlemen" in the traditional greeting of journalists: "gentlemen of the press" is offensive to the female gender, not gender-neutral, promotes a "hegemonic masculinity" ideology in the media, forces a male standard on the female journalists and is statistically unfair to the use a term for 49.6% of the world's population that excludes them.

There is consequently a need for a replacement or alternative to gentlemen of the press. Thus, the following alternatives are hereby proposed as follows: Distinguished members of the press.

I have refrained from endorsing the now-common use of "ladies and gentlemen of the press" for two reasons. First, it will commit the error of feminisation wherein feminine correspondents of masculine terms are introduced to "compensate" for the long-existing male-dominant forms. Such kinds of compensatory "introductions" are still not inclusive enough [6]. They would sound more like "afterthoughts". Secondly, there is a trend or move towards more inclusive neutral words that are more gender-neutral rather than just the application of the binary gender forms of he/she, him/her, host/hostess, etc. On the long run, that approach will continue to commit the error of feminisation or the order of arranging the binary becomes problematic: should it be "he/she" or "she/he"? To prevent this whole scenario, a more inclusive word that is completely gender-neutral, not feminised and that is gender fair would, in my opinion, eradicate that complexity and thus my proposal: "distinguished members of the press."

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the foregoing, the use of the term "gentlemen" in "gentlemen of the press" has been argued as obsolete, not gender-neutral, not neutral sensitive and promotes a "hegemonic masculinity" that tends to promote the male gender far and above the female gender. Examples from three countries, namely the USA, UK and Nigeria show that the phrase is still in still in use at recently as 2019. Arguments made from the five different perspectives justify the urgent need to discard the popular use and replace it with an alternative, namely; argument from generic noun of "gentlemen", argument from gender specificity in major languages, argument from an almost equal population, argument from the "hegemonic masculinity" in the media culture, argument from the requirement of a gender-neutral language in the media. The arguments support the claim that the decade-long use of the term "gentlemen" has no

place in the modern era in which gender equality has increasingly become an acceptable yardstick for measuring fairness in all aspects of society. This led to the need for a replacement for which a proposal has been made in three forms [28-30].

Based on the Foregoing the Following is Recommended

1. Journalists should discard the use of gentlemen of the press to refer to themselves as this is not gender-neutral and heavily gender-biased. It offends the female gender.
2. Spokespersons of institutions and government organisations and all others who deal with journalists in different capacities should desist from referring to journalists as "gentlemen of the press" for the reasons given above and instead adopt the proposed alternatives.
3. Further researches should be done to interrogate journalists' acceptance or rejections of this proposal.
4. Further researches should be carried out to investigate new proposals.

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