Hegemony, Patriarchy and Human Rights: The Representation of Ghanaian Women in Politics

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This dissertation titled
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The research topic Hegemony, Patriarchy and Human Rights: The Representation of Women in Ghanaian Politics, evolved as a result of years of examining the Ghanaian political spectrum, especially the dynamics of political representation and participation which seemed to be skewed towards one particular gender the male. Ghana operates a Parliamentary democracy which calls for fair and equal representation. The research examines the relationship between males and females in Ghana’s political sphere, and how that could undermine equal democratic representation. The objective of the research was threefold, 1) researching into how women desiring to enter politics navigate their way into it, 2) how women already in politics navigate the environment and 3) how our Ghanaian socio-cultural context impacts these women. The research was conducted based on five research questions namely: 1) What socio-cultural factors impact women’s participation in political positions in Ghana? 2) What are the experiences of women in local and national politics? 3) What radical changes in policies have opened the way for women participation in politics? 4) What are the impediments, challenges, and successes that women in political leadership and non political leadership experience as a result of their gender? 5) What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana?
Gramsci’s theoretical concept of hegemony and the postmodernist Postcolonial Feminist theory from the perspectives of McClintock and Mohanty, combined with relevant literature on women in politics informed the study. Literature reviewed among others covered areas such as patriarchy, hegemony, global women, women in Ghana, and human rights.

The study adopted a phenomenological case study approach. Using this qualitative methodology, this study fills a gap in the literature on women and politics in Ghana in that it uniquely uses the voices of female politicians in Ghana to name their experiences in the political sphere. The experiences of these women, navigating politics within the seemingly entrenched socio-cultural framework forms the basis of this study. Twenty participants were purposively sampled for the study, aged between 28 and 68. The study was conducted through one-on-one interviews using semi-structured interviews with 15 former and current members of Parliament in Ghana as well as some significant others, a focus group interview with 5 participants, observation of parliamentary proceedings, and document analysis of Parliamentary Hansards. The analyses were based on data gathered between November 2009 - January 2010.

The research findings reveal a complex socio-cultural matrix in which Ghanaian women find themselves namely; the unequal representation, the reality of not being treated as partners, and the price women pay when they braze the odds to venture into politics. Further, it was shown that Ghanaian socialization processes place women in subordinate positions, and this mentality is carried into public sphere. This particularly
compromises the position of women operating in the Ghana’s political context. Other findings were the dysfunctional policies of government and political parties.

Conclusions drawn were indicative of phenomenal disadvantages society consciously and unconsciously places in the path of women in their quest for political self-actualization. As a way forward, suggestions such as a conscious effort by society in these contemporary times to affect and interrupt entrenched structures to suit the dictates of the times, enforcing and deepening equality among men and women, opening wider the doors to political power for females, and creating a political culture that is both male and female friendly were suggested. Implications for theory, policy, women organizations and other civil society structures as well as contributions to the literature have been discussed. Suggestions for future research have also been given.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Francis E. Godwyll
Assistant Professor of Educational Studies
Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to those three women in my life who unselfishly share me with the world, one of them especially for loving me past me and loving me in a place that no one ever has. Everyone mentioned directly and indirectly was a necessary thread woven into the fabric of my life, and for that I give the Lord great praise.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Isaac Newton is quoted as stating, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” That is certainly true of my experience researching and writing this dissertation, which would never have come to fruition without the expertise and assistance of many individuals and institutions. The research dissertation would have taken far longer to complete without the encouragement from many others. It is a delight to acknowledge those who have supported me over the last three years. Knowledge, it is usually said, lies in all. From the very formative years of my life thousands of people have in diverse ways influenced my life in very many ways.

I embarked on the second phase of my academic life by accident. A friend felt I needed to remold my life after I temporarily exited politics, and he personally facilitated the process. I owe him a debt of gratitude. Evans ‘Orogbonya’ Gawu orchestrated this process, and it is proper that I acknowledge him appropriately in this piece. The journey to undertake this dissertation has not been an easy one; the challenges have been enormous. There are many people who one way or another, have been very supportive whose names I might not be able to mention, but I still thank them with all my heart. Particular mention must be made of my advisor Dr. Francis Godwyll, who accompanied me on the journey right from 2005 to 2010. His support, prodding and suggestions were very useful in my conceptualization, design and execution of this mid-life project of a lifetime.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This study is about the participation of women in Ghanaian politics. It traces historically women’s effort in the political life of Ghana, their experiences in navigating the political realm amid the socio-cultural framework that exist in Ghana. What are the dynamics between our women and our men in Ghana’s political sphere?

Boys and girls begin by being astonishingly alike. Up to a point they go hand in hand. The first thing we know the road splits, and before one can tell what has happened, or why, or how, he is tripping down his side of it, she hers, and off they go, waving their hands for a last farewell” to that community of faculties, tastes, and interests that…alone can constitute…. equality between two people. Mature life, which develops the man, stunts the woman. He goes on. She stands still. He unfolds. She drops. …This is especially noticeable among what we call “educated” men and women. (Phelps, 1911)

The above is my favorite quotation because of its innuendos, and I have used it anytime the issue of males and females comes under the searchlight. For this study, it remains relevant to the overall theme:

Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women on equal terms with men in the political, social economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers growth of prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity. (Preamble, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW)

With the advent of the collective responsibility assigned to the United Nations in 1948, nations-states the world over unanimously agreed to abide by the
conventions this august body determines for the sake of humanity. Thus, this quotation also undergirds the study on which I have embarked.

For the purpose of this Convention, the term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (Article 1, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979)

To contextualize the study demands avoidance of any ambiguities about the issues under scrutiny. The quotation below provides the parameters within which the researcher will be going. Maathai (2006) shares her experiences with all the readers from the onset as to the issues to be dealt with in this study. If your culture makes it acceptable for you, help teach other cultures that women can also lead, if your culture does not make it acceptable give us alternatives about what it should be:

When we go through profound experiences, they change us. We risk our relationship with friends and family. They may not like the direction we have taken or may feel threatened or judged by our decisions. They may wonder what happened to the person they once thought they knew. …For a couple, this is particularly so because most people marry young and are bound to grow and change in their perception and appreciation of life. This is what happened with Mwangi and me…both well educated in America, and society expected a lot from us. We were under a lot of pressure. I was also facing the challenge of venturing into what was considered a man’s world. Nobody told me that men would be threatened by high academic achievements of women like me. But Kenyan society idolizes education and considers it a panacea for all other problems. Traditionally, society puts more value on boys than on girls: Boys are provided education before girls and boys are expected to be greater achievers than girls. Therefore, it was an unspoken problem that I and not my husband had a Ph.D. and taught in the university. That societal attitude
towards me in regard to my husband shaped Mwangi’s view of me: He saw me through the mirror given to him by society rather than through his own eyes…Even if their wives had more education or more achievements, they were expected to demonstrate that they were in control of their households and were not henpecked by and under the control of their wives. People have ways of asking a man whether he is the one “wearing the pants at home” and having to prove that he is in charge can put a lot of pressure on a man. (pp. 139-140)

If I was married to a woman who had a PhD and I did not have one, then how would I feel? I would be bragging to my friends about what a great conquest I had made. Let me stop right here. Most men may have their own way of contending with an issue like that.

**Background to the Study**

The circumstances of women are structured by family and work; for many, this means a double load, a taxing period of life during the same years which men can invest in their careers. Traditionally, the position of women has been closely tied to the family. Women have been defined through the institution of family and marriage, while men have been individualized and defined through public institutions (Janeway, 1980). Changes in the family therefore have a direct impact on the lives of women. It was while engaging in small talk with a minority female member of Ghana’s third parliament of the fourth republic that it struck me there could be some peculiar reasons why women had very little representation in the august body. Dansua was at the time a member of the largest minority party in Ghana, now the party in government, and I belonged to the ruling party that had formed the third government of the fourth republic in Ghana’s attempt at democratically governing itself. My party had been in opposition for about 30
years. Ghana became a parliamentary democracy at the dawn of independence (after several decades of British colonization). This, however, was truncated in 1966 through a military coup d’état masterminded by a foreign nation.

Two other attempts at democratic governance made in 1969 and 1979, were similarly truncated by military adventurists until the last 16 years when things seemed to have become steadier.

Mbiti (1991) quotes a Ghanaian proverb to discuss the role of women within the traditional African society. According to him, “A woman is a flower in a garden and her husband is the fence around it” (p. 59). Taking the above proverb literally, I am tempted to believe that a garden has flowers women, and the gardeners may be the men. Does it therefore mean that since men are supposed to be protecting the flowers, the flowers cannot be allowed to blossom on their own? I am only thinking aloud here. I reckon I must explore beyond this literal meaning and look deeper.

Several writers have written extensively on women in Ghana; however, the gap the literature identified is the voices of women themselves as regards the issues raised (Tsikata, 1997). My objective is to use this study to give women voices, since our socio-cultural structures do not seem to make that easy for them. Scholars like Tsikata, (1997) and most feminist writers think that the problem of women has been their “invisibility” in any serious study of history and society. Tsikata seems to be suggesting that nearly half the people of most societies have not been allowed the chance or space to express their thoughts, fears and hopes on issues that affect them.
According to Obbo (1980), who wrote several decades ago, there are arguments that trivializing the roles of women remain unacceptable in contemporary times, especially when issues concerning women are becoming more topical. Women are seen merely as assisting their men in the quest for power, and very rarely have studies of women allowed them to be heard voicing their own experiences, yet “women hold up half the sky.” When a society identifies “maleness” as the standard of thinking and behaviour for human beings in general, it follows that men will be seen as superior, preferable, and of greater value than women (Johnson, 2005).

Patriarchy is a structure of power relations which endorses male supremacy and female subordination. For the last 5000 years, the global rule of men, or patriarchy, has wreaked havoc and destructive chaos on earth and all her children. Every facet of life, the family, the economic systems and indeed political systems are real examples of well orchestrated patriarchal units serving the interests of men, and out rightly disadvantaging women (Goldberg, 1993).

Hughes (2008) postulates that women have earned many rights over the years and still advocates for a level playing field between them and men. In developed nations in particular, women several decades ago did not even have voting rights, and were not represented in the power bases of their nations, Ghana included. The oldest democracy with reference to the United States of America still has a long way to go as far as women representation in power-related positions. Gordon and Gordon (2007), however, argue that nations currently reckon the importance of the inclusion of women in all spheres of human endeavor. The role of women in politics and public office is one of the current
burning governance issues because of the perceived and acknowledged potential and contribution of women to governance processes. Although the constitution affirms the equality of both sexes in Ghana, most of the structures of the society seem to favor men and, as a result, undermine the status of women (Allah-Mensah, 2007).

Tsikata and Aryetey (1994) generally portray that Ghana’s socio-cultural set up as skewed towards the interests of the male as against the female and this seems to have permeated into all spheres of human endeavor. Statistics available indicate that the population is about evenly divided between sexes in recent times, but males seem to be benefiting more than females (U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Programs Center, and International Database). Almost all sectors of the socio-cultural and political life of Ghanaians have more men than women.

According to Paxton and Hughes (2007):

Women make up half of the population of every country in the world. But the worldwide average percentage of women in national parliaments is only 16%. Of the more than 190 countries in the world, a woman is head of government (president or prime minister) in only 7. Women are 9% of ambassadors to the United Nations, 7% of the world’s cabinet ministers, and 8% of world mayors. (p. 1)

Though women constitutes 51% of Ghana’s population, the representation and influence of women in public office does not reflect this. This under-representation of women in decision-making positions extends across all levels of Ghanaian society, from the family unit to national politics (http://www.mediafordevelopment.org.uk/). Does this lack of visible women in our political life suggest discrimination against women in Ghana?
Allah-Mensah (2005) contends that Ghanaian women reckon their social standing in terms of their husband’s social standing in society that most Ghanaian women are in a haste to take on the man’s name because it places them in a more prestigious position. Several writers on women in Ghana have mentioned how women socialize their boys and girls in a discriminatory manner and these same boys and girls grow up to assume superordinate and subordinate roles respectively in their adult lives, just as we did. Recent findings of Annin (2009) Adusah-Karikari (2008) and Dadzie (2009) have added their voices to the socialization processes in Ghana maintaining that it nourishes and sustains patriarchy. The available statistics illustrate the inequalities that exist between men and women in every sector of life. Though some women in Ghana have made efforts at breaking down the status quo, some among their lot have questioned the effort. Tsikata, Aryetey et al (1994) sum it up:

> When the dominant social culture precludes the females from enjoying full education and socializes them from birth into roles that are removed from the world of public decision making, then the pool of likely women politicians is substantially reduced. (p 25)

Chauvinism and patriarchy come in many forms and cultural negativity toward women in high political office may seem to be the norm rather than the exception (Paxton & Hughes, 2007). Observations over the last several decades seem to suggest that the structure of Ghanaian society depicts inequalities and disparities in the areas of education, politics, and the economic patterns in the country (Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Annin, 2009). In examination of the Ghanaian political spectrum over the last decade and a half, the picture emerging is the seeming subordinate position of women within our society which surely affects the progression of women, the level of female
socioeconomic development, and possibly the number of women in the legislature and cabinet (Allah-Mensah, 2005). The nation’s dominant male-oriented culture will surely affect the number of women who achieve political office. Where the dominant religion is particularly unreceptive to the advancement of women in the public sphere, it will invariably also affect the number of women elected to office (O’Baar, 1984). Although arguments for equality of all peoples regardless of sex are manifest across all major world religions, Islam in particular has been used in many countries in the Middle East to keep women out of politics (Paxton & Hughes, 2007).

Manuh (1993), Tsikata, et al. (1997), Allah-Mensah (2005) have written extensively on women in Ghana and have identified the undue patriarchal nature of the society which seems to be the culprit behind this dichotomy between men and women in Ghana. Many women remain surprisingly hesitant to engage in politics and political discussions. I have had discussions with women politicians cataloguing the numerous impediments they face, and it is common knowledge also that women usually are confronted with extraordinary impediments when they make efforts to enter the political realm, from financial and socio-cultural barriers, their integrity is most often disputed and maligned. In my experience as a member of parliament and a Secretary of State, I often heard people doubting the capabilities of women. The electorate usually is cynical about their genuineness, usually hinting at allegations of sexual impropriety, leading to discrimination and outright rejection, irrespective of the fact that the women could well be qualified. Gordon (1996) and Goldberg (1993) have mentioned the combination of patriarchal, hegemonic, human rights abuses and violations as being very prevalent in
most societies around the world. The fortunes of women have continued to decline, especially in developing nations (Gordon, 1996).

Scholars have alluded to the fact that this decline might be due to socialization and upbringing and, to a greater extent, to the educational system that was put in place during the era of colonization (Allah-Mensah, 2005). A look at how and when women talk politics, why their opinions are altered by their relationships, the importance of modeling political engagement for the next generation, and a look back at “political discussions” of the past will go a long way to elucidating the underpinnings of this dichotomy.

Allah-Mensah (2005) mentions historical exclusion of women based on philosophical and socio-biological reasoning as well as religious interpretation continues today. Though attempts have been made in the past to consciously increase women’s participation, it can safely be said that the effort has not been sustained nationally over the years. Allah-Mensah mentions a quota system (an affirmative action) introduced in 1960 to increase female participation especially at the national level. Though political parties cannot be spared the blame, in the recent past, some promising efforts have been made which it is hoped will be sustained. Allah-Mensah attributes the declining fortunes of women politically to the series of coups d’état Ghana experienced during the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Her argument is that had democracy prevailed during these times, the visibility of women would be higher than it is today. So, what is it in Ghana which has had unbroken democratic partisan politics over the last 16 years that is preventing women from being fully visible in elected and unelected positions? There may
be other reasons, since we have had this period of democratic rule and the participation of women in politics should rather be on the ascendency.

The issue of increased women’s participation remains topical and seems likely to continue into the future since Ghana decided in 1992 to govern itself through democratic means. Democracy, according to the Oxford Dictionary means the political orientation of those who favor government by the people or by their elected representatives, a political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them. The definition does not say that power should reside in only men; it says the people and the people are both men and women. Though men often urge women to march forward with them, women’s interest are often perceived to be in conflict with men’s. Women usually support men when patriarchal opinions preventing women from speaking out on issues of social, economic and political change are spiced with nationalistic sentiments (Obbo, 1980).

I must admit that I bring my own interest and experience into this research on which I am embarking. I acknowledge that everyone has multiple identities; I further believe that not only does education benefit women; the lack of education also promotes gender inequality. Through my career in politics, I have basked in a masculine world, but lately, when I began questioning the inequity that seems to prevail in all spheres of life in Ghana my motherland, and most importantly, what harm we as a nation may be doing to one half of our human capital. I have greatly benefited from the work of critical thinkers. I have become used to intellectual discipline to actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information from a variety of sources
as a guide to belief and action. Actively using this process has inspired me to seek answers to whatever problems I confront.

Why is the issue of women in politics important enough to be studied? As a researcher, a human rights advocate, and a social justice crusader, I feel that if women are to be reckoned today as equal to men, then irrespective of their physiological and biological differences, their participation in all spheres of life should be the same as that of men counterparts, because they “hold half of the sky”. I tend to reason along the line, that socio-cultural influence consciously keeps women away from the political process. The role of 51% of the people in my society has continuously engaged my thoughts, leading to questioning why such a huge resource is not fully utilized. When issues of human rights are examined, the virtually apolitical position of women also becomes an issue of concern. I have heard a few legislators asserting that women ought not to compete for political power with men because the terrain is tough. This makes a mockery of equality and principles of human rights. Is there no room enough room for all?

I made a commitment to myself in the last several months after concluding that there might be some particular impediments that may be undergirding the roles of men and women especially in the public square to move forward in getting some answers. In addition to the above, literature reviewed seem to be suggesting that increasing the levels of women’s participation in politics will first introduce fairness and equity as most nations seem to have about the same numbers in population censuses. Other arguments are to the effect that women who have brazed the odds and have ventured into politics have distinguished themselves. Most importantly, others have argued that issues
regarding women can be best served by women themselves if they actively engage in politics.

According to Paxton and Hughes (2007):

Women who reach positions of political power may not in any way desire to act for women. Not all women feel moved to devote special attention to the interests of women. …Margaret Thatcher Prime Minister of Britain 1979-1990, was famously anti-feminist and pursued policies that many deemed detrimental to the women and children of England and Scotland. (p. 13)

In June, 2000, the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), based in New York City, launched the 50/50 campaign with the objective of sensitizing the world to the importance of raising the level of women’s participation in politics and decision making around the world. WEDO cited many reasons for women’s increased participation among which were “We recognize that numbers are a necessary but not sufficient condition for women’s full, equal, active and informed participation in economic, social and political decision making. There is evidence, however, that when women enter decision making bodies in significant numbers, such issues as childcare, violence against women and unpaid labor are more likely to become priorities for policy makers” (WEDO, 2008). It is on record that more than a dozen countries including Namibia, South Africa, and Uganda have launched national 50/50 campaigns. This makes the issue of women’s participation one worth researching. My desire to investigate, to ascertain what may be impinging on the low level of participation, and to find out if societal structures account for that.
Statement of the Problem

Next year marks the fifteenth year after the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, the huge gap between policy and practice and the uneven progress in implementing the international commitments on gender equality and empowerment of women heightens the importance of creating an enabling environment, through a more coherent, integrated and multi-sectoral approach. …the Government is actively pursuing an Affirmative Action Policy which seeks to ensure 40 percent representation of women in decision-making positions. We have made gains…by the appointment of the first female Speaker of Parliament, first female Attorney General, as well as a number of female Ministers and Deputy Ministers. Also, other professional women occupy high offices. (President Mills’s Speech at the United Nations, 2009)

Though the above statement portrays a picture of worthy attempts to make women visible in public life, it does not answer the question of why they are not as visible as their men folk in public life. This is the problem. A look at the statistics below shows the feeble presence of women. Two elections later, one may assume that very sturdy growth of the numbers of women will be achieved. The following tables are a kaleidoscope of what the Ghanaian political terrain looked like about a decade or so ago, and what it is today. One may either be tickled by the illustration or totally disappointed, depending on which side of the aisle he or she could be.
The above table provides a base to examine women in politics in Ghana and the figures clearly depict a representation skewed towards men.

Table 2 depicts women’s representation in the Ghana political sphere about 20 years later, with relatively fewer numbers. The representations show that in all departments, females represent 8.7 % to 26 %, while males make more often than not above 80 %.

These figures are the same in most African and developing nations (Kelber, 1994). Apart
from Rwanda which has become the showcase of women in politics, most African
nations have the same characteristics as Ghana (Tamale, 1999). Some work has been
done on women in politics in Ghana by the University of Ghana in the form of surveys,
other research on women in education, agriculture, servitude, and other challenging
situations such as prostitution have been done in the recent past, usually not
encapsulating the voices of women. However, this study provides a way for the voices of
the women to be heard. If the high percentage of men in the political sphere is anything to
go by, a significant proportion of the population is being underutilized in the political
realm, meaning that such a valuable potential human resource is not being harnessed for
the development of the nation. Can it be that women in Ghana are being shortchanged, in
all spheres of human endeavor?

Initiating a process to find out how women are navigating the political realm, and
what they may be encountering that impinges on their political participation and
development becomes crucial. A researcher can do the above conveniently if he/she
poses carefully worded questions which will elicit the desired information from the target
group. It is envisaged that these series of questions below will help explore how women,
in contrast to men, move from the private to the political realm. These questions have
been developed to elicit significantly the experiences of women, making them
appropriate tools to be used for a deeper search into the lives of the participants.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is threefold: 1) to explore the issue of
patriarchy and how women experience it in their everyday lives especially within
Ghana’s political realm; 2) to examine the intersection of patriarchy and politics, especially the challenges women experience when navigating the political terrain; and 3) to examine the intersection of human rights as it regards political participation.

**Research Questions**

According to Van Maanen (1990), “To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being” (p. 43). Thus, when formulating a question a researcher must bear in mind the effort required to study from a phenomenological-case study perspective. Researchers do not simply ask questions, they live them. In other words, the questions asked from a phenomenological-case study perspective stem from a passion to reveal experiences through a collaborative approach between the interviewer and the interviewee. This process demands open-mindedness and a commitment to the inquiry. The main ingredients of the theory are domination and subordination, exemplified through coercion and consent as Gramsci posited. In framing the research questions, the theories informed me to examine critically whether there are manifestations of dominance or coercion in the daily lives of my would-be participants. Thus, by asking participants to share their experiences (as in research question one) while navigating the political realm possibly could reveal such acts bordering on domination and subordination. Asking their experiences navigating the various levels of the political structures in Ghana as in research question two was to ascertain these same characteristics of hegemony if any, among others. To address the purpose of the study as stated earlier, the following five research questions have been framed.
1. What socio-cultural factors impact women’s participation in political positions in Ghana?

2. What are the experiences of women in local and national politics in Ghana?

3. What changes in policies have opened the way for women’s participation in politics?

4. What role has gender played in the political leadership and non-political leadership experiences of women in Ghana?

5. What are the contributions of women in political leadership in Ghana?

**Significance of the Study**

Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that, “The researcher must show that practitioners need the information that the research will provide” (p. 33). The researcher has not seen other studies that examine the way women navigate the political arena in Ghana especially using members of Parliament and the Executive arm of government. There are studies that generally discuss issues of women politics in Ghana, but none ever comes closer to this particular study that researched practitioners within Ghana’s political framework. This makes the study unique since it interrogated the lived experiences of politicians and presented the findings as they were given by the respondents. It is imperative that the voices of women be heard on any issue that fully concerns them and their presence in the public domain.

The findings of the study will be of immense importance to Ghana as a nation governed under a democratic dispensation. It may well benefit Ghana’s numerous women’s organizations among which is the National Commission on Women and
Development (NCWD) Ghana. Another group which will benefit from this study is the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) with a mission to promote gender equity and equality in education, with emphasis on girls, in terms of access, retention and performance. FAWE’s working partners at global, continental, national and local levels in sub-Saharan Africa which are trying to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices will also benefit from this study.

The third women’s organization which will find this study beneficial is Federacion Internacionale de Abogadas FIDA-GHANA was introduced in Ghana in 1968 by a group of Ghanaian women lawyers who were individual members of the international body. FIDA-Ghana is affiliated with the International body and advocates for addressing the situation of women in Ghana as participants and beneficiaries of the development process. Any information/study that illuminates the situation of women will go a long way to providing another perspective within which new strategies could be put in place. The study will also highlight/create more awareness of women in the democratic encounters in Ghana. Though the study may not reverse the existing situation, it will create more awareness, popularize the issue significantly especially in Ghana, and possibly buttress other national attempts to shine the searchlight on the effects of the issues on women at large.

Additionally, this study seeks to increase the overall awareness and consciousness of the present patriarchal/hegemonic structure that still operates against women in society and of deleterious effects this has on women’s everyday lives. The study may heighten awareness of the negative consequences of our socio-cultural framework; especially draw
the attention of our people to the need for a change in attitude toward female in education, politics, the work environment and every sphere of human endeavor. The study will inform policymakers, political party officials and society about affecting structures that may be impinging the efforts women make entering and participating in political leadership in Ghana. The study results may elucidate the yawning gap between men and women and its effects on the nation.

In addition, the results of the study will be useful in informing and educating others interested in examining the issue further. The findings and the approach to the study could be useful for future studies in a different context.

**Delimitations of the Study**

Qualitative researchers allude to imperfections of research, Marshall and Rossman (2006) assert that, “All proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed” (p. 42). With this in mind, it is worth mentioning that my study focused on women in parliament and other unelected positions, but does not cover all women in that enclave. The numbers under study are insignificant in quantitative terms, but purposive and will provide a depth and breadth of understanding into the issues at hand. The total population of women (51%), will not be studied. The women will be selected with no consideration of their ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It is clear that those selected will not be a true representation of the whole female population in Ghana, but it can be presupposed that they share common challenges, and barriers with the rest of the population in Ghana. This study has a limited scope; therefore, I am operating within a delineated boundary (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, qualitative research does
not seek to generalize its findings to a population at large. The outcome of this research endeavor is to examine the lived experiences of a small number of women in politics in order to describe commonalities of understanding.

**Definition of Terms**

Some of the words within the study will be given operational definitions as they are used in the context and scope of the research.

**Invisibility**

Used carefully to denote the insignificant numbers of women who are or not seen in large numbers as compared to others, a large presence of one group making the other seemingly invisible.

**Hegemony**

Dominance of the society’s other classes in maintaining the socio-political *status quo*.

**Political Participation**

Taking part in politics, the general level of participation in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics, the number of active people multiplied by the amount of their action, to put it arithmetically.

**Patriarchy**

The rule of men, promoting male privilege, by being male dominated, male-identified, and male-centred. Socio-cultural factors Issues connected to the way of life of a group of people, their values, norms, philosophical underpinnings of life.

**Ashawo**

Derogatory name given to female prostitutes in Ghana, used most often to describe very hard-working women who thread male dominated terrains.
Iron Lady  Used for very tough women in politics, and women who exhibit very tough characteristics

Member of Parliament (MP) Equivalent to a congressman or congresswoman in the U.S (f MP) a former Member of Parliament

Political Tokenism Placating a group usually a minority with some positions in government usually women.

**Organization of the Study**

The need to organize the study into eight chapters arose as a result of the depth into which the research questions plunged the study. Realizing that a more meaningful flow could be established called first for an in-depth contextualization of Ghanaian women in general and secondly of Ghanaian women in the political process of Ghana. The deep centeredness of the study necessitated an approach combining themes that seemed compatible.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction of the study including background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of it and definition of operational terms. Chapter 2 deals with the relevant literature reviewed, of already existing studies about patriarchy and hegemony worldwide, patriarchy in Africa, human rights in Africa, women in global politics, and women in African politics. The section on the theoretical framework discusses the main theories undergirding the study, Hegemony by Gramsci, and Postcolonial Feminism.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used; a description of the site of the study, participant in the study, the data collection instruments, and the data analysis procedure.
Chapter 4 contextualizes women in Ghana and politics. Chapter 5 discusses the profiles of participants and research question one, while Chapter 6 discusses research questions two and three and the themes that emerged.

Chapter 7 discusses research questions four and five and the themes that emerged and finally, Chapter 8 is the summary of the study, major findings, the researcher’s suggestions, recommendations, some implications the study could have on government policies, political party manifestoes and policies, and the conclusions that has been drawn from the research at hand.
This chapter addresses two essential and fundamental issues, significant to the objectives of the study, literature and theoretical framework. The literature review section draws extensively from earlier scholarly works, references from studies of women in other parts of the world, dissertations, and academic journals which have dealt with the experiences of women in politics all over the world. This chapter will review selected topical areas linked to the experiences of women in politics globally, in Africa and Ghana especially, why education needs democracy and why democracy needs education.

It is necessary to address the issue of patriarchy since it will help contextualize the power relationship that exists in Ghana among men and women. I will examine the concept of hegemony which will establish the power relationship that exists among men and women worldwide, followed by a human rights analysis which will examine the impact of hegemonic and patriarchal ramifications on society through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks undergirding this study. Since my main focus is on women in politics, I will explore literature on the participation of women globally, then women’s participation from the African perspective, finally narrowing it down to the history and evolution of women’s participation in Ghana’s politics. Examining the history of this participation significantly informs the study, especially the historical antecedents and the impact it could have on present-day developments, and what the future could hold. To understand the experiences of women in Ghana’s politics in reference to the rest of the world becomes crucial. Although women have always been key to the survival of the
human race and have worked long hours for fulfillment of a wide gamut of responsibilities, and the world will be an entirely different place without them, their role and work are neither publicly acknowledged nor even privately applauded or acclaimed. Many experts have attributed women’s plight to cultural traditions and religious constraints which could be true, yet the participation of women seems high in sectors other than the political one, and this is seen by many as problematic. What it means is that the contributions, skills, talents and intellectual capabilities of women are not being utilized. How can we advance the welfare of the family, the society when one gender is cut off (Shehadeh, 1999)?

In 1975, the United Nations launched the Women’s Decade in Mexico which called for a new approach to issues concerning women and for a well orchestrated and concerted integration in national development. Women generally are visible in socio-cultural arenas of life, yet all over the world, when issues of power come into play, women always seem to receive the short end of the stick. Power play seems to be male-dominated, and most often women are seen in subordinate positions in the political life of many countries. It is common knowledge that the ideological state apparatuses (hegemonic, male-dominated, male-directed) function in a manner that enhances the social and structural bases for the continuation of status quo. In my opinion this perpetuates inequality between the sexes, and is unfortunately compounded by various religions most of which are male-centered and too often accepted as divinely ordained.

What these societal characteristics promote are policies and decisions which favor one particular species more than the other. When politicians’ decisions of are male-
directed and male-centered, one group is perpetually subordinated. The universally
subordinated position of women in both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies has
essentially been theorized in the context of their biological reproductive capacity and
practices (Janeway, 1980). Engels (1972) mentions that the subjugation of women as “a
historical fait accompli” which cannot be countenanced in this 21st century when the
capability and excellence of women cannot be understated. The situation of women in the
world wide, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in Australia is embroiled in issues of male
hegemony, succinctly referred to as patriarchy or the rule of men, human rights violation
in all forms, and the subordination of women (Goldberg & Johnson, 2005). Examining
these structures became paramount in this study that is attempting to find out why men
appear in politics and women remain invisible.

**Patriarchy**

According to Engels (1972):

Patriarchal societies began to emerge approximately nine thousand years ago with the development of agriculture. Besides learning how to grow crops, people came to realize how reproduction occurred, not only in plants, but also in animals and humans. This led to a move from nomadic lives in small groups to larger, permanent farming settlements, and introduced the idea of private property—which then led to the creation of social classes and inter-class exploitation. Societies slowly moved towards a patriarchal model that emphasized control. First, there was a need to control the natural environment for planting and harvesting purposes. Second, it was necessary to control the breeding of domesticated animals for labor and food. And third, men’s understanding of their part in reproduction lessened their reverence for women and instigated their desire to measure descent through—and thereby control—the male line. These factors led to a worldview that ordered the world into unequal binaries, with men holding positions of power over women. The prevalence of this inequality over the last several thousand years has led to the
coming in of measures in the last several decades to address
some of these disparities. (p. 35)

Most important among these measures is what culminated in the declaration
of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent measures all aimed at
creating a more equitable relationship between all peoples irrespective of their
gender (UN Charter). Some of the underlying reasons for the disparities have also
been traced to what is usually referred to as hegemonic tendencies between people,
where one has dominance over the other. Intellectuals have come out with theories
which help to explain why these disparities prevail, and my paper will therefore
present how all these parameters are intricately interwoven and will suggest ways to
address the challenges these issues pose to human relations.

Examining patriarchy from the historical perspective, the reality of global
patriarchy, theories used to explain patriarchy, what underlies “African patriarchy,”
patriarchy in Ghana, and the framework of human rights from a global perspective will
be the scope and trend the literature will take. Beyond that, Africa with a focus on women
in Ghana will be examined in this segment. An attempt will be made to define patriarchy,
provide historical information about it, and examine its tenets including what others
describe as the inevitability of patriarchy. We must examine patriarchy today in the 21st
century because if we do not do so, the power of patriarchal forces in our lives today will
only become more entrenched. In doing all these, I will refer to two main theories that
undergird the issues of patriarchy and human rights. Hegemony and the Postcolonial
Feminist theories will serve as the guiding theoretical framework to propel me along.
Defining Patriarchy

This section attempts to define patriarchy in a holistic manner. Patriarchy in its literal sense means the rule of the fathers. Having it roots in tribal society, it was institutionalized by post-tribal societies into more complex religious, social and legal systems and formal governmental structures such as the senate of ancient Rome and most subsequent governments. Throughout recorded history, some form of patriarchy has prevailed in most human societies, reinforced by cultural values derived from systems of male dominance. It has been so commonly and continually practiced as to appear natural rather than as humanly constructed social order that is both changing and changeable. In its present form patriarchy has become more an ideology and belief system than the explicit social and political systems of earlier times (Goldberg, 1993). This is so because it permeates every sphere of human endeavor. Seen along the same lines as capitalism and socialism, patriarchy and feminism have become bedfellows.

Even in countries where legal equality of women and men has been established, the deep psychological and cultural roots of patriarchy survive as a belief system in the minds of many women and men. A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege, by being male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centred (Johnson, 2005). By this definition, patriarchy can be viewed from a societal or structural perspective as a general organizational feature of society that was initiated by men and has men as its principal beneficiaries. The word patriarchy comes from the Latin word \textit{pater}, which means father. It most often refers to the political power and authority of males in a society. Patriarchy can also refer to the power of fathers within families.
In essence, the overall construction of patriarchy is rooted in the domination of women. Patriarchy comprises two elements, its structure and its ideology. The structural aspect of patriarchy is manifest in the hierarchical organization of institutions and social relation. The maintenance of such a hierarchical order and the continuation of the authority of the few to some extent is dependent upon its acceptance by the many. The patriarchal ideology serves to reinforce this acceptance (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Furthermore, patriarchy is understood as a social system that supports and authenticates the predominance of men, brings about a concentration of power and privilege in the hands of men, and, consequently, leads to the control and subordination of women, generating social inequality between the sexes (Women’s International Network News, 1998). In general, patriarchy is a social structure that is built on systematic oppression of women through societal and institutional conditions, norms and rules that perpetually disenfranchise women and are intrinsically linked to issues of power and control. When a society identifies “maleness” as the standard of thinking and behaviour for human beings in general, it follows that men will be seen as superior, preferable and of greater value than women (Johnson, 2005).

Patriarchy is male-dominated in that, positions of authority, be they in the political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military or domestic sphere, are generally reserved for men. Johnson (2005) poses the question as to what patriarchy is, and postulates that “A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privileged by being male dominated, male identified, and male centred. It is also organized around
an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women.” (p.3). When women find themselves in such positions of oppression; there is generally some bewilderment as people begin to ask if such women will measure up. In a patriarchy what men say tends to have greater credibility than what women say, all buttressing the privileges of men. Johnson (2005) and other scholars assert that when a society identifies a particular group, such as men, as the standard for human beings in general, it follows that men will be seen as superior leading to a situation where everything male is seen as superior.

The Inevitability of Patriarchy

Goldberg (1993) states that “Anthropologists have written at length of the areas in which women are unquestionably superior to men” (p.25). However, his arguments, point to what he describes as the “inevitability” of patriarchy. Goldberg’s definition of patriarchy underscores what he terms universality, which means that the definition he provides has universal acceptability. Using ethnographic materials to support his universal acceptability of patriarchy, Goldberg emphasizes that there is no exception to male dominance. He defines patriarchy as “any system of organization (political, economic, religious, or social) that associates authority and leadership primarily with males and in which males fill the vast majority of authority and leadership positions. According to Goldberg, despite varieties different societies have demonstrated in developing different types of political, economic, religious and social systems, there has never been a society that has failed to associate authority and leadership in these areas with men.” (p. 30) Irrespective of the fact that in some nations especially in Africa where
queen mothers have held powerful positions, the fact still remains that authority has
continued to be vested in the male.

Arguments raised by Goldberg (1993), emphatically posit male higher societal
status to than that of women, hence alluding to the universality of patriarchy. To him,
patriarchy remains an uncontested universality and our knowledge of hormonal biology
leaves little doubt that patriarchy, at least, is not only universal, but it is inevitable for
biological reasons.

**Global Perspective and History of Patriarchy**

This section attempts to provide a historical context of the genesis of patriarchy.
In early history, many Western thinkers believed that male dominance was the natural or
God-given order of society. That belief declined after the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, particularly with
the advent of the women’s rights movement. These movements promoted the political,
social, and economic equality of women. But in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, with the rise of
sentiment against feminism and the growth of religious fundamentalism, there was
resurgence in some parts of the world, including the West, of the belief that patriarchy is
the natural order of society. Patriarchy, rule by the father or a male authority (Goldberg,
1993).

A society is considered patriarchal when men establish or inherit a social order in
which they dominate positions of power and authority or when important achievements
and historical events are attributed to the actions of men. A society may also be
considered patriarchal when the heads of households or leaders of the country must
possess conventionally accepted male attributes, such as physical strength or aggressive
behavior, to gain and keep their positions. The women’s rights movement brought with it new ideas about patriarchy. Feminist thinkers believed that patriarchy signified the cultural and social domination of women by men. Feminist thinkers in the United States questioned why sexual inequality persisted even after women had won the right to vote and had achieved legal equity. They also debated whether or not patriarchy is universal to all societies throughout history (Patriarchy Encyclopedia, 2008).

Patriarchy asserts the superiority of all males to all females and arranges this fundamental inequality in a hierarchal order in which middle-aged men now hold primary power over all others, controlling economies, militaries and educational and religious institutions. Men in general are more powerful and advantaged than women. Western men have more power in the global order than men from other world regions (Position Paper, http://www.pdhre.org/patriarchy.html).

Theories of Patriarchy/Understanding Patriarchy

Understanding patriarchy means getting clear about what it is and what it means to be inside a patriarchal framework. Men and women both might have lots of input in unraveling it. Johnson (2005) postulates that patriarchy is a society in which men and women participate. Thus the perspectives of both sexes will go a long way to untying the knot and laying bare the intricacies involved.

According to Walby (1989), patriarchy as a concept has a history of usage among social scientists such as Weber who used it to refer to a system of government in which men ruled their societies through their position as heads of households, and therefore men’s domination of the households. According to Walby, this thinking has been
broadened from a concept and theory into a system which exists alongside capitalism, giving it a dualistic outlook. Walby therefore provides another dimension and posits a definition of patriarchy as representing social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

**Patriarchy, Christianity, Islam, Traditional African Religion, African Value Systems and Feminism**

**Christianity and Patriarchy**

Human beings usually submit to one religion or another, and even those who are atheists have a spiritual concept unto which they hold. People believe in the existence of God and may lean towards Christianity and Islam, or may believe in the absence of any deities. For those who believe in God and see God in the form of man, patriarchy serves very well. Their thoughts are ingrained with patriarchy which can be traced to biblical origins. Islam and Christianity are two religions based on the biblical patriarchs. Such patriarchal ideology has been practiced over many centuries in many nations, kingdoms and groupings (Bolatito, 2003).

According to Bolatito (2003), religion has been identified as patriarchal or male dominated. Its structure tells who is in charge and who takes orders. I am arguing that many religions have a patriarchal structure, and are institutionally biased towards male supremacy in posts and decisions that largely reflect male concerns. More than this, these structures create a male culture, ways of thinking and acting that reflect male preoccupations, and they channel the spirituality of women and limit their role in deciding on forms of spirituality and belief. In the last several decades, I have been
closely examining the scriptures and have never once questioned the biblical arrangements that it offers those of us who are Christians.

However in recent years, especially since being in the university, I have been shaken about the facts that irrespective of what biblical literature says, in no way endorses patriarchal tendencies as I find them in society. Be that as it may, a close examination of patriarchy in society posits a pyramidal shape of appointments with authority stemming from the top, with others below the top as subordinates. These issues are the stark reality of what biblical teachings portend. In religion, therefore, this means hierarchy and rationalized forms of theology. It also means that where there may be feminine areas of religion, such as caring and listening, and perhaps some ritual; these are either taken over by the males into some exclusive rules, or the female aspect is narrowed, closely defined and highly regulated. In religion, according my understanding, the female is defined as subordinate, or subject, restricted in expression, and prevented from promotion within the sacred setting. For those with this belief and mindset, patriarchy cannot be dispensed with. The “Father, Son and Holy Ghost” (though I cannot put gender on the Holy Ghost), may all be leading us in one direction?

**Islam and Patriarchy**

It is interesting to note that Islam which draws from Christianity also has some proclivities to patriarchy. According to Munoz (2006) the patriarchal order prevailing in the region (Arabia) preceded the birth of Islam. He asserts further that the Quran presents an interesting paradox that endorses patriarchy in a way and at the same time establishes the position of the woman within some levels of equality. Munoz states the issue
succinctly saying that texts in the Quran establish the consent of the woman to matrimony which discourages the practice of polygamy. It also establishes the right of women to property, education, and even in the opinion of some to work, in accordance with the Hadith acquired. Munoz further postulates that “feminist” behavior of the Prophet and his wives led one of them to actively participate in politics. For other people, the relationship of superiority and inferiority that the Quran establishes consecrates discrimination, reclusion, and even alludes to the fact that God, the father and the ruler, share many characteristics in patriarchal societies (Munoz, 2006). It is established through the above that the two major monotheisms of the world to a large extent are founded on the belief that God ‘being a man’ means men invariably should have dominance over women. The argument is not to say that it has to be so here, the process of re-examining the issue of patriarchy depends to a large extent on what women are saying about it, and its ramifications remain the objective of the study.

*Traditional African Religion and Patriarchy*

“The woman is the flower and the man is the fence around it” says an African proverb. The pride and dignity of women are derived from and are dependent on men, is what the proverb connotes. According to Mbiti (1991), proverbs, mythology and even prayer present the religious wisdom of African peoples which are skewed towards male dominance. Some scholars in discussing African religion have mentioned some societies that see God as female, the Earth Goddess, “Asaaseyaa,” while other societies such as the Ga, see God as both male and female, “Ataa Naa Nyomo,” Ataa being male and Naa being female. Accordingly, the name of this Supreme Being is “Ataa-Naa Nyonmo”
Ghanaian traditional religion; it is rather the spirits which inhabit them that are venerated” (p. 37).

**Traditional African Value System**

Roughly 50% of the African population follows traditional religious practices, some 25% are Muslims, and the remaining 25% are Christians. Traditional religious activities are focused on protecting the well being of the lineage or society in issues like birth, puberty, marriage, and death through the rites of passage (Strobel, 1984, p. 25). Strobel mentions societies that did not have highly developed political structures or states, had religious authorities that performed political functions. Various religious roles
were open to women. Strobel seems to be suggesting that, the role of women in religious activities was not questioned, and that both sexes wielded virtually equal powers. However, Strobel further asserts both Christianity and Islam had profound effect on traditional African religious practices, thereby significantly changing the powers both male and female wielded before contact with missionaries and later colonial administrators. The impact of colonization on traditional African religion cannot be doubted, before that both sexes were equally represented in the religious and power-related positions. Today’s remnants of traditional African religion have gone through series of metamorphosis as a result of foreign intrusion whereby Victorian antecedents nurtured patriarchy in most colonized nations in Africa. Islam, which has strong proclivities to male domination, has done the same.

Men dominate the socio-economic and political machinery and organizations. They are regarded as natural leaders, superior to and born to rule over women. Women are considered weaker-vessels-extensions of men and secondary human beings. The pride and dignity of women derived from and are dependent on men. Hence, African societies attach more value and importance to a male child than to a female one. Ten daughters are not worth one son. No woman is regarded as complete or real until she gives birth to a male. Delivering a son gives a woman pride and a place in her husband’s home. It is said that every married woman stands with one leg in her husband’s house until she gives birth to a male child (O’Baar, 1984; Igwe, 2004).
**Feminism versus Patriarchy**

According to Nicholson (1996), “Feminism is essentially a reaction to, and product of, patriarchal culture, and one of its significant roles has been to account for women’s subordination” (p. 21).

Again, Goldberg (1993) contends that:

The view of man and woman in that society that implicitly underlies all the arguments of the feminist is this: there is nothing inherent in the nature of human beings or of society that necessitates that any role or task be associated with one sex or the other. There is no natural order of things decreeing that dyadic authority and social authority must be associated with men, nor is there any reason why it must be men who rule society. Patriarchy, matriarchy, and “equiarchy” are all equally possible and while society may invoke “the natural order of things” to justify its particular system, all the expectations we have of men and women are culturally determined and have nothing to do with any sort of basic male or female nature. (p. 51)

The basis of questioning patriarchal arrangements of society gave birth to feminism, and other derivatives of it, especially through the lenses of Postcolonial theory. A typical patriarchal culture is the way in which feminism and feminists are positioned as unpopular (Davidson, 1988).

**Education and Democracy**

This segment argues why education needs democracy and vice versa. Education remains the fulcrum of development of any society. As Malcolm X succinctly puts it:

Every country that you go to, usually the degree of progress can never be separated from the woman. If you are in a country which is progressive the woman is progressive. If you’re in a country that reflects the consciousness towards the importance of education, it is because the woman is aware of the importance of education…And I’m one person who’s for giving them all the leeway possible because they’ve made a
greater contribution than many of us men...And the man himself has no competition so he does not develop to his fullest potential. (p. 98)

There can be no democracy without women’s participation, the goals of social and cultural human rights, development and peace cannot be achieved without active participation by women at all levels of decision making. Even in old democracies, women’s participation was and still is severely limited (http://www.pdhre.org/passport-ch11.html).

Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older generation to the younger. Without this communication of ideals, hopes, expectations, standards and opinions from those members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive. A more equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men will not only provide a better quality of life for women and their daughters but will also enhance their opportunities to shape and design political practices, public policy, and expenditure so that their interests may be recognized and addressed (http://www.pdhre.org/passport-ch11.html).

Education and language, which are the most important keys to participation in society, nation-building and development, have to be promoted effectively and efficiently. Education according to Foster (1965), was valued for its cash return, and remained the only mode by which individuals could partially dissociate themselves from
traditional society and enter the few but relatively lucrative positions then open to Africans.

It my aim to provide a brief history of education in Ghana before the arrival of the colonialists in the later part of the 18th century, and then examine how both genders were affected. A historical perspective always precedes the present, for it is often said it is always better to know what was in the past to enable you chart a course for the future. Before the Europeans arrived on the coast Guinea in search of trade, there were organized as well as stateless societies. Martin (1976) provides a historical landscape of education from 1529, back before the colonial masters arrived on the shores of Ghana to 1970. By the 15th century in Ghana, there was a strong presence of European traders who traded principally along the coastal stretch of present day Ghana. As I have mentioned earlier, Ghana before colonization, was loosely knit nations like the Fantis, the Gas, the Akwamus among others.

Annin (2009) mentions that, prior to the advent of the western form of education in Ghana, and other African countries, there existed traditional/indigenous forms of education. These forms of education were based on the principles of ‘functionalism’ that sustained the practical, social and intellectual needs of the communities within which they practiced.

Education was also basically orally delivered and it formed an integral part of day to day activities of every home. This kind of education is generally described as experiential learning, which was basically learning by doing usually imitation and participation in ceremonies (Egbo, 2000). Our early lessons in history dealt with the
efforts of the European slave nations, merchants and colonial masters to introduce Western education in the coastal forts.

**Colonial Education**

As discussed earlier, the loosely knit kingdoms that existed in Ghana had their own way of preparing their youth for sustenance and rejuvenation of life long before any European contact. It came nowhere near what is commonly referred to as formal education, but it met the needs of the people of the time. According to Robertson (1977), with the advent of European-type of education, the roles of both men and women changed. Robertson asserts further that formal education during the period of the colonial masters was started around the early part of the 18th century. The first school in Accra was founded at the Danish Fort in Osu and the first effort to establish public education in the Gold Coast was the education ordinance in 1852. The provision of education was handled by missionaries for several reasons. They saw education as a means of converting the locals to Christianity and of facilitating trade too. The Wesleyans Society and the Basel Mission were the two main missionary groups that were to lay a solid foundation for education in what eventually became Ghana.

Basically it was the Wesleyans who opened schools in Central Accra. By 1900, they had 55 schools in the Gold Coast. Robertson (1977) describes how advantageous the setting up of schools in Accra was for men. Records show that it was a great advantage for the men, but the women mostly were not sent to school. According to Reiter (1975) male hierarchies were used for direct or indirect forms of colonial rule, while female hierarchies were shrunken or suppressed particularly by missionary organizations.
Colonialism did not therefore improve the condition of African women as is often claimed, since it was by itself patriarchal in structure and therefore discriminative. What it did, according to Reiter, was to help boost the hegemony of men as we will discover. The Sunday school concept was very popular during the missionary era in Accra, and it was mostly women, who had not been to regular schools who took advantage of it. The appeal of Sunday school was particularly great for the girls. Mothers were comfortable sending their girls to Sunday schools to learn how to read the bible. Sunday school provided an avenue too for boys and girls to meet outside their homes but it was uncommon to send girls to school until after World War II. The main reason for keeping girls home was their economic function, the mothers wanted their help, and this thinking has survived (Robertson, 1977).

Robertson (1977) uses her survey to illustrate the point. Among the 223 women who were 80 years old at the time that she interviewed, only 5% attended primary school, as opposed to 47% of those in their 40s and 30s. According to Robertson, none went to secondary school, and only three or four appeared to be functionally literate. To prepare for their new roles as white collar workers, boys were encouraged to persevere but girls were allowed to quit, especially if money was a problem. Girls are still encouraged less than boys to continue with schooling after middle school since girls can always become market women, and school is seen to be of dubious practical value to them. However it is also on record that between 1800-1850, girls’ education was given a boost by the Basel Mission which established a girls’ school at Akropong, an inland town. The school was
later relocated it to Aburi. Cumulatively, by 1850, a strong foundation had been laid for girls.

According to Purvis (1991):

> The influence of middle-class ideology in Victorian society helped to create and maintain gender stereotypes, thus femininity became identified with domesticity, service to others, subordination and weakness, while masculinity was associated with life in the competitive world of paid work, strength and domination. (p. 4)

It must be remembered that the colonial masters who came had their own mindset about their society and what those they were colonizing should be. It can be deduced that the disparities that prevailed, that the gap between men and women as regards education in Ghana is deeply rooted in the historical past. The quantity and quality of formal education offered made it largely irrelevant to women and their needs, and this has ultimately made their skills irrelevant to a developing economy which does not need housewives of a European type (Purvis, 1991). The impact of such ‘biases’ made formal education more beneficial for men but not to their female counterparts. The differential access to education has been the prime factor in creating today’s class differentiation where more men move up than women.

**Education after Independence**

In this segment, the issue is that the central underpinning issue after independence did not make any serious effort to alter the basic structure of gender relations which had been institutionalized by the colonial masters (Ndeda, 2006). Lack of education is one of the most serious factors hindering nation-building. When Ghana became independent in 1957, the first president realized the need to promote education in Ghana. Ghanaian
women today enjoy an equal legal right to education from primary school to university and are equally welcome in any vocational or professional training. The aftermath of independence brought the promise of new education for the people of Ghana. There was therefore a need to correct the disconnections of the legacy the colonial masters had left behind. Their earlier attempts were focused along the coast for several reasons, and the new government’s focus was to go beyond what was already in place. Ghana’s education has been considered very essential for nation-building. Even during the colonial administration, educational policies were formulated through Advisory Committees on Education to accelerate the development of the indigenous people. The first government of Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party (CPP) embarked vigorously upon the promotion of education. For the first time in the history of the country, the Central Government was to assume full responsibility for educational policies and practice. 

Educational development itself had passed the point of being just a political project. It had been both fundamental and crucial to the political economy, and was to find full expression in the Seven-Year Development Plan of 1964, the CPP’s program for ‘work and happiness” (Haizel cited in Arhin, 1991). Since the Convention People’s Party (CPP) was kicked out of office in 1966, other governments have embarked on a couple of educational reforms, notably the 1987 Education Reform by the PNDC Government and the 2007/2008 Education Reform by the NPP Government all aimed at correcting lapses in earlier policies. However, in many cases governments have only paid lip-service to education, initiated inappropriate reforms and made arbitrary changes not backed by sound reflection and preparation.
(Tsikata, 1997). Thus, education is still not ideal. I am tempted to believe that governments cannot break away entirely from the colonial legacy for effective nation-building. The reasons may not be farfetched; the same old structural bottlenecks. Most scholars agree that education, together with language, forms the all-important key to participation in society. Education is relevant to work/employment, rural development, modernization, cultural identity, ethnic identity, national identity, and citizenship, exercise of civic rights and responsibilities, and political awareness which will lead to effective nation-building.

**Human Rights**

This segment examines the ramification of human rights in the world of patriarchy. The idea that women necessarily be represented in politics has become universally accepted over the last 100 years. Women’s political rights are now seen as human rights, and statements about women’s political participation are set out in the resolutions, codes and formal conventions of most international bodies as well as in laws of many individual countries (Paxton & Hughes, 2007). Using human rights lenses in examining issues of women remains a crucial issue in a study like this. Indeed, the United Nations (UN, 1946) adopted the first of a number of resolutions dealing with women’s political rights in 1946, 63 long years ago when it mandated that member states fulfill the aims of the charter granting women the same political rights as men.

According to Baah (2000), many agree with the goals of human rights, however there seems to be some disagreements at virtually all levels of the human rights concept. Some have challenged the philosophy, especially non-western nations which believe it is
more a western dogma or western social orientation than something that meets the aims, aspirations, cultures, and traditions of these others, irrespective of the fact that the goals critically examined are of benefit to all mankind. Examining very early attempts by people like Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hume and their contributions provided the basis for the formulation of human rights. Though none of them was able to ground human rights on a solid foundation, there is no doubt at all that their work at different times in addition to classical natural theory, culminated in the formulation of a modern discourse referred to as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. How universal these rights are is still a thorny issue (Baah, 2000).

Be that as it may, most societies that have issues with human rights may be overlooking the overall enhancement of human benefits through its manifestation. Though the concerns of these nations have relevance, my objective here is to use the tenets of UDHR to re-examine the violations that prevail as a result of hegemonic, patriarchal issues which seem more prevalent in African societies and particularly in Ghana, my motherland. My hope is to separate violations from cultural issues and to present patriarchy as it manifests itself through the lenses of human rights, and to ascertain what Ghana can do to enhance the lives of its people, especially women. Cultural issues in most societies have led to abuses perpetrated consciously or unconsciously on women long before the Charter of Rights came into being and unfortunately, most of them have been perpetrated since the advent of the Charter of Rights some 60 years or so ago. While the customary procedures of many societies continue to violate the rights of human beings, governments are doing little or nothing to
ensure that the rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights are upheld. Human Rights are safeguards that have been put in place through the UN system against abuses by governments, groups or individuals. (Tomasevski, 2003). The United Nations has not provided a definition but has rather described what human rights are. The preamble:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. (Preamble)

Human rights are rights inherent to all beings, whatever the nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. Human beings are all equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the form of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups (Office of UNHCR, 1948).

I have come across several definitions in my quest to understand the subject more fully, and I can safely say that most of them have been placed in the particular contexts in which people tried to examine the original description by the UN. Be that as it may, I have never come across any definition that deviates entirely from the original objective of enhancing inherent human dignity. Despite arguments, some of which have been espoused by this researcher and others, Africa had in place measures that protect the
dignity of its people long before the advent of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The most highly orchestrated effort regarding the challenges UDHR faces, are that, the values inherent in the UDHR are all western in orientation.

According to Eze (1990) 61 years after the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and almost 20 years after the Organization of African Unity adopted its own African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the human rights situation on the African continent remains very discouraging. Indeed achieving genuine respect for human rights seems to be the greatest challenge facing Africans in the new millennium. There have most often been questions about the rational for the African Charter on Human Rights. That is not the issue being addressed here, but, several arguments are raised about the need to develop a scheme of human rights norms and principles founded on the historical traditions and values of African civilizations rather than simply reproduce and try to administer the norms and principles derived from the historical experiences of Europe and America (Eze, 1990). This thinking often leads to situations as will be seen in this essay that are accepted by segments of the society because they are predicated on values and norms within the traditional setting, which seen through the lenses of western values seem to be in conflict with the universality.

**Charter on Human Rights**

Though several arguments have been raised regarding the universality of human rights as enshrined in the UN Charter, there are strong reservations among Africans. Dean (1999), argues against the idea that human rights are alien to pre-colonial or
contemporary African societies. While others see UDHR as an imposition of western values on indigenous African cultures, Dean postulates the contrary, saying:

I claim that a more defensible approach to human rights in Africa begins with a critical re-examination of the idea of “culture” exploring how the view that there are no indigenous conceptions of human rights in Africa, and that international human rights standards run counter to African cultural values relies on a view of culture which is outmoded. (p.144)

**Cultural Relativism**

This segment examines the concept of cultural relativism. Fox and Hasci (2000) assert that cultural relativism is the view that no culture is superior to any other culture when comparing systems of morality, law, politics, etc. It is the philosophical notion that all cultural beliefs are equally valid and that truth itself is relative, depending on the cultural environment. There are people for and people against cultural relativism and depending on where one may be on the issue, the thinking and understanding remains diverse and mixed. While most argue that culture should not be become a determinant on issues of human rights, others insist that the main underlying issue of community and individuality remain crucial. Both arguments are plausible when subjected to scrutiny.

Fox (2000), raising the issue through the works of Renteln asserts that:

Relativism in no way precludes the possibility of cross cultural universals discovered through empirical research… Nor does cultural relativism entail evaluating the practices of any culture as “the ultimate moral standard for that culture … In this process, anthropologists should retain cultural relativism as an excellent antidote for over developed ethnocentrism. (p. 44)
values on the rest of the world, others stress that the universality of human rights
does not endorse globally shared values which already exists in many societies around the world,
including African society.

One other issue that often comes up is the legitimacy of human rights in Africa
and the perceived suspicion of it as neo-colonial domination. The Universalists, the group
that insists on individual rights, and the cultural relativists who stress the communal
rights of the people, have always collided. Is one group right and the other wrong? The
answer depends on which side of the aisle one may be. Some think the idea that the
African perspective devalues the individual and endorses the community serves as the
reason why issues of women are constantly treated with disdain in most African societies.
Cultural relativism will continue to be an issue for most Africans, and ethical relativism
will surely be the focus of western nations. Whether they sound right or wrong, they
come under the subject of this research, and hopefully, what constitutes a violation or an
abuse should become clearer as this essay unfolds. Having painted the depths of human
rights in Africa, I need to emphasize that for most African nations, the picture remains as
it is, and for Ghana in particular, nothing different. It must be noted that there are even
traces of disparities in western nations as asserted by Afkhami (1996) who posits that:

In the US, you have only one percent participation by women in
economic and corporate decision making and just seven percent in
political decision making. It is a dismal record considering
America’s economic development and its high over all level of
education…We are all guilty of simplifying and labeling each
other, but the more we dialogue and cooperate, the more that
tolerance, and understanding and sensitivity will grow. (p.18)
Being a pragmatist possibly could be a better stance than siding with either view, but there should be common ground where the rights of human beings will remain paramount.

**Violations of the Rights of Women**

This segment of the study examines the violations women endure through patriarchal structures in the social, economic, and political spheres in Africa, and most specifically in Ghana. The social issues of which education is crucial, socio-cultural issues and their effects on female education in Africa, and Ghana remain the significant and topical areas in this segment. The spotlight would also be focused on the role of women in the process of violation of their own inalienable rights, and suggestions to address these difficulties offered.

There seems to be near unanimity that patriarchal manifestations in Ghana and other African countries are deeply imbedded in the political and economic and social structures. Annin, (2009) and Adusah Karikari (2009), assert that patriarchal issues are linked to underdevelopment. It is these structures in society that not only shape the social environment but also hinder the advent of any new changes and adoption of rules that give women more equal rights.

According to Gordon (1996):

A partnership between men and women based on equality rather than the subordination and exploitation of women will be, in Africa as in every other region of the world, difficult to achieve. After all, many men benefit, or think they do from the privileges patriarchy permits them, and change in fundamental gender roles and identities is never an easy or quick process. (p.105)
It becomes clear that men will lose a lot of their traditional footing and upper hand in society if they relinquish their patriarchy and they realize this fully. Gender equality may mean that men may lose their stance in many areas of life, and may not be too sure what the repercussions could be. Additionally, men will be expected to share the responsibilities that they have always considered to be the domain of women, such as childrearing and housework. In short, they will give up a lot of privileges and freedoms they enjoy only on the basis of their patriarchal oppression of women. It is for these reasons that the male support of women’s equality in countries like Ghana is conditional on women limiting their agendas solely to family and community welfare tasks that do not constitute major challenges to the notion of traditional patriarchy rather than when they seek to spread their wings wider and beyond these arenas (Baah, 2000).

Not only must patriarchy and the related subtle but nonetheless present human rights abuses be addressed on a larger scale, but consciousness must be raised so that attitudes can be changed. It is only with a change in attitudes that there will be any discernible change in the social institutions that are the root cause of patriarchy in society. These root causes include the organization of work, the connection and relationship between home and work with reference to each gender, and the definition of masculinity and femininity in the general makeup. A large bulk of literature on patriarchy and society seems to suggest that the patriarchal system expresses little regard or respect for a woman’s individuality and dignity (Gordon, 1996).

Adjetey (1995) presents the argument that the African woman has an individualized personality, dignity and freedom, which must be recognized, respected and
exercised. By using examples from the traditional matrilineal Asante society, Adjetey makes the case of how certain Ghanaian women in the past had more rights in political and other spheres of society and how all this gradually changed with the advent of colonization. She eventually concludes that Africa’s present customary law is the byproduct of an evolution of African customs, common and civil law notions of an imported colonialism, and religious concepts from Islam, Christianity and a number of other traditional African religions that have resulted in the firmly rooted patriarchal systems that are seen in Ghana and other African countries.

Kaluunta-Crumpton and Agozino (2004) who write in *Pan African Issues in Crime and Justice* have alluded to the fact that patriarchy seems a more cogent explanation of the African women’s situation. The article refers to domination over a woman whereby that which is considered masculine is typically more highly valued than that which is feminine. According to Curran and Renzetti (1994), patriarchy cuts across all social systems the world over, whether developed or underdeveloped, patrilineal or matrilineal.” From the perspective of policy the consensus is that the main issue to be addressed is that of change and Adjetey (1995) contends that traditional norms and customs can and must adapt to the changing needs of society. To achieve this, Adjetey’s view is to infuse the society with a strong dose of feminist values and more specifically core western values that profess respect for the individuality of a person and I would add some traditional egalitarian values that once existed in the African culture. Citing strategies to achieve this end, a number of scholars, Manuh, (1995), Tsikata (1997) and Adjetey (1995) contend that African women can benefit greatly from the implementation
of the provisions of a number of treaties and conventions of the human right regimes. Some examples of this include the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Slavery Covenant, the Forced Labor Convention, the International Bill of Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Patriarchy had been in existence long before the advent of the conceptualization of human rights. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Most of the positive changes that have occurred in human society have been inspired by the fundamental concepts and values that inform human rights, the inherent dignity of all human beings of both sexes, all races, ages, capacities, ethnicities, religions and nationalities. However, throughout history the vast majority of human beings have not enjoyed human rights. While all human rights denials and violations are not consequences of patriarchy, many are. Indeed, patriarchy has been the template of the authoritarian, elitist forms of social organization and governance that have tolerated, sanctioned or committed such systematic and perpetual human rights violations as sexism, racism, exploitation and oppression, and other egregious insults to human dignity. Concepts of human rights have emerged in the human mind and spirit, as alternatives to human suffering and degradation (Goldberg, 1993).

My inference at this juncture is that human rights have become a code phrase for a value system, human relationships and social organization grounded in the concepts of
universal human dignity, human capacity to live together in justice, and social responsibility to strive toward societies in which justice and order are equally valued and mutually reinforcing. In sum, human rights comprise a holistic vision of a transformed society in which men, women, youth and children live together in relationships of respect that honor universal human dignity.

*Justifying Human and Educational Rights*

The UDHRs declares that:

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace of the world….and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest inspiration of the common people…human rights should be protected by law. Whereas the people of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. (Preamble: UN Charter on Human Rights)

The preamble indeed sets the stage and the environment within which human beings living in groups or communities and nations would need to conduct themselves in a way to ensure a life of dignity, freedom and social progress for all. Anything that falls short of that would constitute a breach of the rights as enshrined. The declaration churned out 30 different rights to safeguard the sanctity of the human race. According to Tarrow (1987), “Different societies define rights in terms of their own historical experience, their value systems, and the political and economic realities of modern life” (p. 4). However, the
survival of the human race depends to a large extent on a framework that will ensure the continuous existence of mankind.

**African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights**

Africanizing the Universal Charter on Human Rights was a concerted effort to encapsulate traditional core values of Africans which were not considered by the core group that put together the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Many scholars are of the opinion that the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights provides what the Charter on Human Rights failed to provide for Africans, however, others see it as a conduit for perpetrating abuses in the name of culture or tradition. It is quite right for human beings to celebrate culture, but any attempt to use culture to infringe the rights of the human being should be frowned upon. The preamble of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights generally promotes the rights of all people in Africa in all human endeavors.

Another right of the African Charter worth mentioning and relevant in this discussion is Article 19 which states, “All peoples shall be equal; they shall have the same respect and shall have the same rights. Nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another.”

**Cultural Rights and Women’s Rights**

According to Illumoka (1994), women’s human rights have not in point of fact been linked to the oppression of women as women. Inequality in the enjoyment of human rights by women throughout the world is often deeply embedded in tradition, history and culture, including religious attitudes. While respect for diversity and for diverse forms of
social and cultural expression and identity must guide all human rights principles, equally important is the recognition of the dignity and worth of women as full human beings. International human rights law has repeatedly stressed that women’s human rights cannot be violated on the grounds of cultural or religious norms. According to Illumoka, women’s rights must reveal women’s oppression as culturally, socially, and historically situated.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women requests states to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Wiredu (1990), an African philosopher who has argued extensively for the encapsulation of culture in discussing human rights in Africa, the lack of which, he says might “threaten the transmission” of culture, has been described by Dean (1999) as, “outdated views which unduly distorts political and private domains” (p.164). Culture embodies the way of life of a people, what is positive will remain positive, and what connotes negativity cannot be submerged.

**Women in Politics**

*Global*

Many governments have only recently acknowledged or recognized the voices of women within the political sphere; many others fail to recognize them as equal, respected citizens of the country. According to Karram (1998):

*Overall proportion of women in legislatures is exceedingly low. The question is why and does it matter? Why should it matter, what difference does it make*
whether women are in legislatures and other institutions of governance or not? (p. 3)

Chowdhry et al (1994) admit that:

In most cultures there is a complex matrix of political power composed of many social hierarchies, of which gender is only one component. Nonetheless, men of any group are more able to be active in politics than can the women of their group. The ubiquity of women’s secondary political status demonstrates how politics is intertwined with other aspects of life…. The secondary status in each realm is reinforced by the total pattern of men’s privileges. (p. 3)

Today, enfranchised women are making great strides in political involvement, against many odds, within their respective governments and institutions and are quickly becoming active and influential participants. Pamela and Hughes (2007) discuss Norderval (1985) who upholds the inclusion of women in politics saying that can increase the quality of political decision making, double the pool of talent and ability from which leaders can be drawn, and when they are not included, valuable human resources are wasted.

Universally, there are many more women politically active at the local base and very few at the helm of affairs at the top. Men generally will use women for their political advancement and the dump them because they think women are not cut for power sharing. The struggle for independence in Ghana had women fully participating; the story changed when power was eventually won. According to Payne and Nasser (2003), women in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have actively participated in politics, and have become leaders in all the three countries mentioned. India, known as the world’s largest democracy was ruled by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto governed
Pakistan, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was head of state in Nicaragua. The world has witnessed some levels of transformation as regards women, yet the challenges they still face are enormous. The development and full integration of women in politics remains a strong advocacy issue. The development of women is integral to the development of society and, beyond that; political and civil rights are inseparable from economic and social rights (Ginwala, 1998). I have introduced some numbers worth examining vis-à-vis what pertains in some selected parliaments all over the world, with particular attention on world-known and old democracies as shown in table 3.

**Table 3 World Ranking for Women in Parliament for Select Countries 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Inter-parliamentary Union, 2009

The above table showcases world ranking of women in parliaments. It has Scandinavian countries having fairly higher levels of women representations in their parliaments, between 37.5 % to 45 %. An African nation Rwanda however has 48.8 %. Interestingly, the world’s oldest democracy, the United States of America places 61 on the list with
only 15.2%. In the last several decades, it has become quite apparent that the topography of women’s representation has changed albeit very insignificantly. The little progress made seems to be going in the right direction, though the pace is excruciatingly slow. There might be several reasons why the status quo seems to be the order. It will be refreshing considering placements of women in selected parliaments all over the world to illustrate the point being made here. Below is a table showing women in various countries’ parliaments.

**Africa**

The literature reviewed discusses two distinct periods of the role of women in politics in Africa, pre-colonial times, postcolonial and, contemporary times. According to O’Barr (1984) “women’s political roles in pre-colonial Africa provide stimulating examples of how social systems have been organized to include positions of power for women. Preceding the penetration of the colonial masters into African lands, women had a much broader role in decision making. O’Barr asserts that even hunting and gathering societies of central and southern Africa were characterized by relative political equity between men and women. Furthermore, he posits that there was no formal political leadership and that each sex had its own sphere of activity over which its leaders exercised control. In virtually all spheres of life, O’Barr again opines that women usually had political control; mentioning areas like political institutions (usually councils) to decide how to organize their own affairs or to influence the affairs of men, and were not generally subjected to control by men (Hafkin & Bay, 1976 ). Several African communities had a dual sex system in which a woman was responsible for women’s
affairs and a man for men’s affairs. One important example is the Igbo of eastern Nigeria as discussed by Okonjo (1976). This clearly shows that long before colonialism certain areas in Africa practiced fairer and more democratic systems. It is possible that these systems were suppressed to help install the Victorian colonial mentality which kept women in the domestic sphere.

It must be noted however that across all systems, women’s prerogatives were never equal to those of men, nor were there ever as many women in leadership positions as there were men. However, African women once had considerably more power than they had in subsequent periods. A survey of contemporary Africa reveals few women in decision-making roles and an underlying tension in gender relationships which impedes the exercise of power (O’Barr, 1984).

The reason for this situation is not farfetched, African societies have gone through transformation as a result of the dynamics of colonial rule which accelerated disintegration of the earlier egalitarian African societies. While most accounts of political systems assume modern day African women have power, the reality is that they do not have the authority to exercise that power. Payne and Nasser (2003) believe that women in Africa and the Middle East are generally not as actively involved in politics as women in other developing areas, citing cultural values and the subordination of women as some of the reasons. It must be mentioned here that there is generally no data of women’s active participation in politics for every African country.

Gordon (2007) asserts that, “Although ruling Africa remains largely a male preserve, some dramatic changes are happening that promise to break men’s monopoly
on power” (p. 304). This assertion is real, especially as African women’s presence in sensitive positions in some countries seems to be crystallizing.

**Colonial Period**

To a large extent African women lost their political power through the advent of colonialism in the 19th century. Colonial officials shared a basic belief that the role of women was that of household helpmates to men and that women were outside the proper realm of politics. Among the Igbo, for example, the British made the male Obi into a salaried official, but by-passed his female counterpart the Omu, thus destroying the dual sex political system (Okonjo, 1976). According to O’Barr (1984), during the 1950s and 1960s, there was a lot evidence of African women in political roles especially during the fight for independence.

**Postcolonial Period**

Women’s roles in politics did not change significantly after independence. It was assumed the African elites who took over from the colonial masters were going to make changes in regards to the disenfranchisement of women that occurred during colonial period. According to O’Barr, (1984), “Like their colonial predecessors, contemporary governments often disregarded the contributions of women’s organizations” (p.152). However, by the late 1970s, and especially after the first World Conference on Women in 1975, and the resolution adopted in 1976, and most importantly the Beijing Conference in 1995, the fortunes of African women in politics seem to have improved considerably, yet there is still long way to go. According to O’Barr (1984), “Having generally lost that participation under colonialism and now seeking to participate in a vastly more complex
system, African women are dealing with both continuities and conflicts as they seek to regain political power” (p.155). This is the current situation of women generally in Africa and in other developed and developing nations.

**Contemporary Era**

The recognition in recent times of the underutilization of the vast potential of human resources residing in women, is gradually paving the way for a concerted effort to involve women in every sphere of human endeavor. Most African nations with a female population of 51% have made very little progress in encouraging participation by women in decision making (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

Botswana and Ghana are successful African democracies but Ghana seems to be the preserve of men only, and in Botswana women are seen as minor players in the patriarchal society. According to Leslie (2006), women were regarded as minors and so were not present in the Kgotla assemblies except when they were called to testify in some cases. In the last decade and a half, both positive and negative developments have changed the political landscape in some countries in Africa. Rwanda now tops the world rankings of women in national parliaments, with 49% of representation compared to a 15.1% world average. As Rwanda undergoes reconstruction, women are taking an active role. They not only head one in households, they have also taken many jobs that were formerly the preserves of men, such as in construction and mechanics (*Human Development Report*, 2004). The challenges of structural adjustments, and fiscal and financial policies forced on African nations including Ghana have all culminated in these difficulties.
The drive to promote women in decision-making positions worldwide gained impetus during the 1980s and in the early 1990s through a series of international conferences. Further thrust came from the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in 1995, calling for at least 30% representation by women in national governments (Allah-Mensah, 2005). At the UN Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000, world leaders pledged to “promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.” The goal of gender equality was one of eight known collectively as the Millennium Development Goals. Since then, the number of women in leadership positions has been rising (Mutume, 2004).

Whereas women had previously been seen as passive recipients of support and assistance, they were now viewed as full and equal partners with men, with equal rights to resources and opportunities. A similar transformation was taking place in the approach to development, with a shift from an earlier belief that development served to advance women, to a new consensus that development was not possible without the full participation of women (Tsikata, 1994).

Women’s participation in political affairs in their societies may not be easy since not only do men resist incursion into their domain, the acculturation of women to subordination and lack of confidence in their own capacities leaves most women reluctant to take such moves (O’Barr, 1984). Numerical representation of women is a necessary but not sufficient condition for women’s interests to be served. Female politicians have to be willing and able to represent their interests. Women have a vital role to play in the
promotion of peace in all spheres of life, in the family, the community, the nation and the world, so women must participate equally with men in the decision-making processes which helps to promote peace at all levels.

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The recognition that humans are finite creatures causes them to seek power. Human beings are the only finite creatures who know that they are finite and they are therefore tempted to protest against fate. One form this protest takes is his imperialistic ambition, an effort to overcome one’s own insignificance by subordinating other lives to one’s individual or collective will (Bradley, 2004).

The literature reviewed so far indicates that so-called male superiority dates back in history to where the physical superiority allowed men to dominate women. National characteristics were determined along that line, and some people were seen superior (Social Darwinism, Papers). This sounds quite deep and seems apt as I embark on tracing the underlying reasons and rationale for choosing the theories used in examining the. The tendency to dominate remains a natural human phenomenon.

Bradley (2004) asserts that evolutionary theory offers sufficient explanations for control or domination. To him a classic Darwinian argument suggests that, in a hostile environment where resources are scarce and survival uncertain, organisms typically satisfy their own physiological needs for food, shelter, and so on before assisting others. In times of danger or great stress, an organism usually places its own life, its survival, before that of other members of its group, herd, or tribe. Assessing this explanation, one
may want to ask, “Are men dominating women to ensure their survival?” Maybe not, but possibly to exhibit some control because their physiological make-up is different, a more visible physical strength. This seems to me the underlying element of patriarchy, otherwise referred to as the rule of men. I am inclined to revisit a Dworkin (1983) quote which I came across in my research and which gravitates towards the assertion I have just made. I believe it provides the fulcrum for this essay. According to Dworkin, “All personal, psychological, social and institutionalized domination on this earth can be traced back to its source, the phallic identities of men” (p. 55). This quotation is profound and pregnant with a lot of innuendos that aptly describes the role of men in virtually all societies.

Du Bois et al (1985) assert:

Identifying the nature and causes of women’s suppression in order to put an end to it is probably the most fundamental concern of modern feminism…Prior to the development of modern feminist scholarship, the oppression of women was understood primarily by analogy to other forms of exploitation and domination. (p. 90)

Most recently, however, understanding the state of women is no longer by analogy but increasingly through some analysis of the particular social relations that create and perpetuate women’s subordination to men. Elson (1997) suggests interesting elements why the subordination of women by men needs to be looked at from another perspective. According to Elson:

Conceptualizing the problem of inequality between women and men in terms of male bias rather than the subordination of women as gender, or of patriarchy, has some advantages because male bias is a more flexible conceptualization and can refer to both the thoughts and actions of social agents and the characteristics of
social structures...Male bias operates in all sorts of subtle ways which we shall miss if we are looking mainly for men ordering women about. (p. 155)

I needed theories that examine the public and the private, the family and the economy, since such theories may give specificity to women’s oppression and provide ways of understanding cultural and historical differences in women’s situation. I therefore did not come by chance to the decision to use post colonial feminist theory and the hegemony theory. It came about after a rather long search through the literature reviewed, and the nature of the research questions which eventually dictated the choice of these two theories. Postcolonial Feminist theory is a derivative or offshoot of the theory of hegemony. Used together, they buttress each other, and most importantly, Postcolonial Feminist theory contextualizes domination and furthermore, domination within a postcolonial setting. These two concepts explain women’s subordination, oppression and domination more appropriately than any other theory. They deal with issues of the oppressed in private, and public domains.

**The Concept of Hegemony**

According to Watson (2008):

Discussion of cultural apparatuses, the shaping of norms and values and the forging of consensus brings us to one of the most important concepts in the theory of culture and the exercise of power. For most people, life can be lived quite happily and fulfilling without their ever having the slightest idea what hegemony might mean. Yet the word and what it stands for, what it attempts to explain, is critical to the study of culture, communications, history, anthropology, sociology, politics and economics. (p. 22)
The concept of hegemony was the central, most original, idea in Gramsci’s social theory and philosophy. It metamorphosed through the work of Marxists and post Marxists who attempted to meaningfully locate his original thinking in contemporary times. The concept of hegemony which Gramsci developed meant in part that people of all non-exploiting classes should give their consent to the philosophy of praxis…not through processes of manipulation and imposition by party elite (Bucock, 1986, p. 22).

Cox’s (1993) historical background information on the Gramcian theory is worth examining. He alludes to the fact that Gramsci drew a lot from historical events of his time and his own personal experiences of political and social struggle in conceptualizing his concept and theory. With a constant reappraisal of thoughts at the time, he was able to contextualize them devoid of abstractions and ambiguities. According to Cox, “A concept in Gramsci’s thought, is loose and elastic and attains precision only when brought into contact with a particular situation which it helps to explain—a contact which also develops the meaning of the concept” (p. 50). In other words, at the time when Gramsci was conceptualizing his concept and theory, the context was clear, it was focused on the political struggles of the time, especially with the Soviet political framework.

Gramsci extended his concept to include the church, the educational system, the press, and all the institutions which helped to create in people certain modes of behavior and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order. This was one major metamorphosis of his initial concept led, to bridging the gap between state and civil society. According to Bucock (1986), “In Russia, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous in the West, and there was a proper relation between state
The state in the West was separate from the civil society, whereas there was no difference at all in Russia. Everybody was part of the whole. To Gramsci, the state and civil society were no longer separable entities (Cox, 1993). Using the imagery of half man half beast Cox asserts that his concept demonstrated a necessary combination of consent and coercion, the very fundamental principle of the concept of hegemony.

**Defining Hegemony**

Bucock (1986) contends that “hegemony means ‘moral and philosophical leadership’, leadership which is attained through the active consent of major groups in a society” (p. 11). Most writers shy away from defining hegemony, thus, several descriptions rather have been made. I will therefore follow the tradition by also attempting to offer a kind of definition. Although the concept of hegemony as I will use it was originally developed by Gramsci, other intellectuals have drawn from the original definition to present other versions as it usually happen with theories. Gramsci’s Theory of Hegemony was born from the basic idea that government and state cannot enforce control over any particular class or structure unless other, more intellectual methods are entailed. The reason and motive behind the concept has been noted to be the way society is structured and exists on a power and class base.

Gramsci (1972) defined the state as coercion combined with hegemony. According to him, hegemony is political power that flows from intellectual and moral leadership, authority or consensus as distinguished from armed force. Gramsci argues in his *Prison Notebooks* (written while he was incarcerated by Mussolini in Fascist Italy)
that the way society is controlled and manipulated is of direct consequence for the practice of a “false consciousness” and the creation of values and life choices that are to be followed. He argued that the system of hegemony can be classified as the “social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and of the Workers State.” Gramsci refers to this process when he tried to explain how organization of people, media and information controls thought and actions to create a state of domination through creation of dominant ideologies (Hainsworth, 2008).

According to Forgas (2000), hegemony is:

Spontaneous consent [is] given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production…. The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed. (p. 307)

Issues with hegemony appear to revolve around the term consent, or how “one defines consent” (McGowan & McGowan, 2004). Given the all-consuming day-to-day issues of life, are the subordinate classes even aware they have given their consent? In Gramsci’s view, political forces aiming at social change can only gain the upper hand if they are able to mobilize and take charge in society on their own premises (Englestad, 2003).

Hoare and Smith (1971) postulate that Gramsci regarded every hegemonic relationship as an “educational” one. That is, hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure their consent to the dominant group’s agenda.
Engagement in a war of position to transform the state similarly involves educational work throughout civil society to challenge existing relations of hegemony. Thus schools, societal norms and values, customs and traditions are all part of the process of “education” to which Gramsci alludes. In other words, our societies perpetuate hegemonic tendencies, and the protagonists or central characters are those who are able to exert influence. Of them, Gramsci maintains that “intellectuals” are key agents in this war of position, this “trench” warfare. He did not use the term “intellectual” in its elitist sense; rather, Gramsci termed intellectuals people who influence consent through their activities. They are cultural or educational workers in that they are experts in “legitimation”. Their “intellectual” activities take a variety of forms, including that of working within the state and other institutions of capitalist domination, or to use the one-time popular British phrase, working “in and against the state” and other dominant institutions (Hoare & Smith, 1971).

Ang (1996) summarizes Gramsci’s importance when he says the Gramscian concept of hegemony is mostly used to indicate the cultural leadership of the dominant classes in the production of generalized meanings, of spontaneous consent to the prevailing arrangement of social relations—a process, however, that is never finished because hegemony can never be complete, and Raymond (1977) supports this statement.

Bucock (1996) carefully identifies three models from Gramsci’s Prison notebooks. The first, according to him, dwells on cultural and moral leadership as exercised in civil society, wherein the state is the site for the coercive power of the police and the armed forces. The second model is seen as being exercised in the state as well as
in civil society, while the third, according to Bucock, lost the distinction between the state and civil society altogether because Gramsci, defined the state as “political society” plus civil society thus not demarcating clear and distinct realm. Be that as it may, what comes out of these discussions is the focus on coercion and consent as the two most important ingredients in the concept of hegemony. It is my argument that the insights, theoretical formulations and writings of Antonio Gramsci and the subsequent application of these by the neo-Gramscian scholars have provided a light on our path to understand the Gramscian concept. I keep asking myself if the original *Prison Notebook* entries would have been meaningful to me as the neo-Gramscian derivatives had done.

**Theory of Hegemony**

This sub section addresses the principles and applicability of the theory of hegemony. I have been debating whether the choice of the theory of hegemony is most appropriate, because at the end of the day, my choice should be able to help me deal adequately with my research questions and be in tune with literature and the research topic. The underlying principle of the hegemony theory is explained as the issue of coercion and consent, two contradictory elements all in a given theory.

Cuneo (n.d) identifies three dimensions of hegemony as intellectual, moral and political, where intellectual and moral refer to leadership and consent, whilst political refers to domination, subjugation force and coercion. Cuneo further discusses what he refers to as spontaneous consent by the masses to rule by the dominant social group as another dimension of the hegemonic equation while a third element is the eliminating or subordinating opposing forces and, finally, winning active or passive consent of subaltern
allies. (a person or group holding a subordinate or inferior position) allies. The principle here is that in all these parameters, the underlying factor involves both attaining consent and using force.

Scholars of hegemony argue that this force normally manifests itself as if it is based on the consent of the majority. It comes in such a subtle way that those over whom it is exercised “feel at home” with it and they usually see it as acceptable, to the point where they consciously and unconsciously deepen it. Could this then be the kind of consent exhibited in most societies in which the actions of men seem not to be questioned? Gramsci’s theory was somewhat narrow at the time of conception; its applicability today seems overwhelming, since it is relevant in any situation of superiority on one side and inferiority on the other. In international relations, it becomes very useful in examining the relationships between so-called developed nations and developing nations, and even among developed nations it is evident. Among super powers, if they still exist, it serves as a useful concept in examining their relations.

A “hegemon” like the USA operates unilaterally because it has over the years been able to use the combination of force and consent in dealing with weaker nations of the world, Iraq being a very good example. In international relations, this kind of principle is referred to as “the carrot and the stick”, a combination of rewards and punishment to induce behavior. Gramsci according to Cox (1993) intimated that “The economic life of subordinate nations is penetrated by and intertwined with the powerful nations” (p. 29).
Williams (1977) explicitly draws implications from Gramsci’s work which I find meaningful and clear, and therefore most useful for this study, because of the explicit emphasis on the pervasiveness of the hegemonic order, and its ability to produce itself as common sense. Williams contends that:

The concept of hegemony sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living—not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology,’ nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination.’ It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. (pp. 109-110)

Multiple issues come out of the above quotation, the most important elements being domination and subordination. The areas where domination and subordination are manifest typically are the political realms, economic and socio-cultural activities and indeed every sphere of human endeavor. This dichotomy usually is not questioned since as a lived experience, it manifests itself as reality. Williams (1977), who derives his concept of hegemony from Gramsci, uses it in a similar way to explain how power relations in Western societies can be maintained by consensus rather than coercion. William’s derivatives from on Gramsci’s theory are that hegemony constitutes lived
experience; hegemony exceeds ideology, lived hegemony is a process, not a system or structure; and hegemony is not necessarily total. There is a notable difference between Williams and Gramsci fundamentally the two are the same. Other scholars including Eagleton (1991) and Ang (1996) have contributed to hegemony theory. Eagleton (1991) emphasizes that domination is not simply imposed from above, but has to be won through the subordinated groups’ spontaneous consent to a cultural domination which they believe will serve their interests because it is “common sense.”

Watson (2008) posits that:

Hegemonies differ at different times and in different circumstances, but what is common to all of them is the governing influence of ideology, the public expression of what in personal terms we describe as values…From position of dominance it is impatient of competitors. It provides the conceptual ‘cement’ that upholds the structures of the powerful, defends their interests and is instrumental in helping to preserve the status quo. (p. 22)

The hegemony theory remains one of the most important theories ever churned out. Time and space have had a profound impact on how we view and use the term. Contextual trends have evolved over the last several decades, but there is a still convergence between cultures and ideologies, and again as divergence in terms of conflict over private and public. I have rather belatedly come to appreciate the nuances which form the basis of the convergence and the divergence. These have been useful in turning around the original concept, and depending on which side taken; one can draw extensively from it.

**Counter Hegemony**

This subsection serves to illustrate how the repercussions of hegemony manifest themselves and how changes can be made to address hegemonic issues.
hegemony is the reaction to hegemonic actions against an individual or a group. Any hegemonic system can be countered by anti or counter hegemonic structures. To counter hegemony is to decolonize the mind and to assert one’s own uniqueness. The uniqueness of the individual and the uniqueness and variations among the cultures of the world cannot be homogenized. Counter hegemony moves against the current intellectual trend, and is contrary to the prevailing fashion, especially in intellectual matters and the lives of people. Counter hegemony is called resistance in some circles. With resistance come movements that challenge the status quo.

Nikie (2000) mentions that “new social movements are involved in counter hegemonic struggles which challenge the relations of domination by creating alternative cultural practices and forms of organization.” (p. 360). A cursory look today at most societies show acts of counter hegemony by subordinates in some forms of power--relations, marital groups or families and indeed in any sphere where power, coercion and consent manifest themselves. Changing social economic and political relations remain the fulcrum to counteract hegemony, and could lead to a counter hegemonic challenge. In short, the task of changing world order begins with the long laborious effort of building new blocs within internal and national boundaries (Cox, 1993). If the issue of patriarchy, is a hegemonic cancer, is to be addressed, it must be through counter hegemonic actions. Acknowledging counter hegemonic tendencies, strategies, aspirations and processes, remain crucial in preparations for any study that has hegemonic characteristics.

Gramsci’s notion on hegemony and praxis; i.e. “war on position” remains in my subconscious mind, and as I traverse the research terrain, this will help generate the
strategies for addressing challenges of hegemony. Buchanan (1997) asserts that the most appropriate and effective course of action in the present conjecture is “a ideological struggle that begins on the terrain of consciousness, but to be successful requires the type of collective action engaged in be reconsidered, revitalized and ideologically informed by a counter hegemonic perspective” (p. 14). Buchanan is simply reminding us of the challenges hegemony poses to those it has consumed, and nothing else short of a well-concerted effort by those who desire to free themselves from subordination and domination will end it. It is hoped that my respondents will help by identifying their own counter hegemonic strategies when they embark on unpacking the patriarchal legacy in my country. Thus using this theory of hegemony, one can easily identify the power forces at play, making the subordinate group determine counter hegemonic lines of action to address their shortcomings. For a subordinate group the underlying factor of the hegemony theory is like having a new pair of lenses to examine issues.

Hegemony as a theory has been used in virtually all spheres of human endeavor, in all kinds of relationships that suggest inequality. Fiske (1987) asserts that hegemony is a constant struggle against a multitude of resistances to ideological domination, and any balance of forces that it achieves is always precarious, always in need of re-achievement. Hegemony’s ‘victories’ are never final, and any society will evidence numerous points where subordinate groups have resisted the total domination that is hegemony’s aim, and have withheld their consent from the system.

It is important to note Gramsci’s use of the concept differs from both the Marxist notion of ideology on one hand and Max Weber’s use of the concept of legitimacy on the
other. Bucock (1986) points out that, “It is the sheer taken-for-granted-ness of hegemony that yields its full effects—the ‘naturalness’ of a way of thinking about social, economic, political and ethical issues” (p. 8). The perpetrators give and the receivers accept hegemonic actions without question.

Bucock (1986) further points out that hegemony benefits those who exercise it, and it undermines the very existence of the recipients, that is, if they understand the dynamics. Hegemony presents itself in many forms. Between a man and a woman it is nourished by the patriarchal tendencies in most nations that can be traced to the values, norms, and religion which may have been bestowed upon them. If the issue of power relations between men and women come under scrutiny, our understanding of the principles at play will necessarily be through the lenses of hegemonic theory. Understanding the dynamics of hegemony means understanding what may be subordinating you. That realization leads to resistance, and resistance leads to breaking the hold. Areas such as the classroom, indeed all or the teaching and learning environments would benefit from using hegemonic theory in accessing the power play between the teacher and the taught.

Used as a tool, it will enable any researcher to understand the nuances of teacher centered teaching and learning, opening the way to address the interests of the students. Classrooms all over the world remain arenas where teachers have assumed that all power belongs to them and have in most cases used it ruthlessly. Learners have been socialized to accept their subordination without question, giving way to what Gramsci describes as ‘coercion and consent’. The teacher coerces, and the students or learners consent to the
actions and inactions of the teacher. However, it is known that action leads to reaction, this kind of interplay of coercion and consent usually leads to resistance or counter hegemonic tendencies.

**Post Colonial Feminist Theory**

My study, unraveling the “invisibility” of women in the political sphere to a great extent, dwelt on the use of the Postcolonial Feminist Theory (PCFT). The historical antecedents of this theory must be traced to contextualize its use. Post-colonial theory is frequently classified in relation to cultural origins in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, and the like because most nations in these areas were at one point or another, colonized by nations like Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany Spain and Portugal to mention just a few (Williams & Chrishman, 1994). It was after the scramble for independence of most of these nations that the theory of post-colonialism became extraordinarily popular. Therefore, post colonial theory is a reaction to the cultural legacy of colonialism, it is also about power.

The tendency to identify imperialism with colonialism has reverberated in history especially after the Second World War. According to Williams and Chrishman:

Colonialism, the conquest and direct control of other people’s land, is a particular phase in the history of imperialism, which is now best understood as the globalization of the capitalist mode of production, its penetration of previously non-capitalist regions of the world, and the destruction of pre or non-capitalist forms of social organization. (p. 2)
Any serious-minded person realizes that the continuation of colonization in another mold continues irrespective of colonized nations becoming sovereign nations especially around 1950s to the 1980s. Ghana’s struggle for independence was an anti-colonial resistance against British domination from the 1800s to about 1957 when independence was proclaimed. The birth of the postcolonial era was thus ushered in during this period when many colonized nations became sovereign nations.

The choice of a theory or theories to undergird a research is a very crucial issue. A theory that would get as close as possible to the issue to be researched contributes immensely to making meaning of the whole research. If care is not taken one could end up with a choice that might not be very applicable. I looked at concepts and theories like the Foucaultian concept of power which is central to both postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminist theory. Other concepts and theories registered more profoundly, yet the postcolonial feminist perspective resonated with me a postcolonial being myself, and most importantly, because it offers a broader arena and provides deeper and important insights in understanding issues of women within postcolonial settings. Ghana is a postcolonial nation with postcolonial challenges which seem to be affecting women desiring political participation, hence the choice.

Historically, according to Mills (1998):

Post colonial theory has been a rather masculinist field, it examines those texts which represent the colonial imperial context, primarily those written in the 19th century by British males. These 19th century writings are supremely masculinist, that is the ideological form of masculinity developed within the colonial context can be considered to be extreme and excessive—thus British male explorers and administrators tend to be represented as adventurous, unemotional, courageous, hardworking, patriotic and resilient. (p. 99)
This is the original form that has British antecedents, older than the more recent one
founded when colonization in Africa and other developing nations came to an end.

Postcolonial theory has to a very great extent and exclusively been devoted to charting
the line of masculinity, eventually establishing itself as a man’s subject. Though today it
is focused on studying events and developments especially after colonialism had
supposedly been brought to an end, it has undergone various metamorphoses. Now what
was seen as a “masculinist theory” has had various other derivatives to women. It seems
to have been seriously co-opted, ‘hijacked’ by the ‘other’, such formidable academics as
theory as a masculine subject and against the assumption that colonial subjectivity can be
described from a simple analysis of male subjects,” (p. 100) is in itself questionable.

According to McClintock (1994):

> The term ‘post colonial’, like the exhibit itself, is haunted by the
> very figure of linear ‘development’ that it sets out to dismantle.
> Metaphorically, the term ‘post colonial’ marks history as a series
> of stages along an epochal road from ‘the pre-colonial’, to ‘the
> colonial,’ to ‘the post colonial’—an unbidden, if disavowed,
> commitment to linear time and the idea of ‘development. (p. 292)

Despite McClintock’s assertion, the overall attributes erase that thinking, and rather
places the theory on a much stronger platform. Postcolonial, therefore, should not be
looked at only as regards Africa, since nations elsewhere also went through the clutches
of colonialism at different epochs in history. Post colonialism is not only about how
British males represented themselves in a masculinist way, while other perspectives of it
focus on how texts which were churned by the colonial masters could be used together
with texts written by subjects of those colonial masters. This was the best and most appropriate way for the subjects to identify with their own cultures and values rather than being tied to the apron strings of the former master. The colonial subjects needed a way to free themselves of the colonial mind-set. To actively resist suppression, they needed to engage in representing themselves, in telling their own stories, in regaining control over their own representation (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

McClintock (1994) submits that “post colonialism should not be understood as everything that has happened since European colonialism, but rather everything that has happened from the beginning of colonialism, which means turning back the clocks and unrolling the maps of ‘post colonialism’ to 1492, and earlier.” (p. 294). One of the references Williams and Chrisham (1994) make quoting McClintock is that “the extent to which formerly colonized countries can be considered post colonial is both variable and debatable” (p. 3). This argument crops up because there is a school of thought that the conditions that prevailed for colonization to take place are still ripe, bordering on the attitudes of some nations, coupled with their unilateralist tendencies, lead to a point where colonization is deemed to be ongoing, making the concept of post colonization paradoxical.

Juan (1998) asserts that:

Postcolonial theory is to my mind, more than a cultural or literary phenomenon limited to those who have undergone the colonial experience. The experience, a relation of conqueror and conquer, is in fact universal. (p. 2)
The postmodernist era to a very great extent challenged issues which hitherto had been taken as universal truths, and one was about the supposed superiority of the colonial masters as had been asserted by earlier explorers, anthropologists and intellectuals.

Williams and Chrisham (1994) carry the discussion further postulating that any form of “post” carries with it some duality, in other words its connectedness with something remains dominant, and thus postcolonial has a second-term relationship with colonialism. The most important significance of post colonialism is the opportunity of hindsight it offers. In the examination of power relations that existed, forms of knowledge, institutions and practices which go a long way to undergird a theoretical concept of domination that existed during the colonization period, in which presently, a terrain is provided on which colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory operate.

My first choice of theory has evolved over the last several decades with divergent variations, from the time when it was seen as a pure “macho” theory in the eyes of the British, through its “confiscation” by the “other” for the creation of their own identity. In addition, postcolonial theory shows how these oppositions are constructed and how they are an expression of power relations because one category is presented as norm and one as other. According to Kim (2007), postcolonial feminists “typically rely on a rigorously historical and dialectal approach to understand the imbrications of gender, nations, class, caste, races, culture and sexualities in the different but historically specific contexts of women’s lives” (p. 112). To understand the present, one may need to delve into the past, and the manifestation of the colonial period was a sequential domination of African
people by the colonial masters. When the colonial masters exited, African elites, who
took over mimicked them in every way.

Women and men experienced domination under the colonial masters, and women as all indicators show, are still under various forms of domination today, a situation of double jeopardy. Kim (2007) reveals that Postcolonial Feminist theory offers a gendered conceptualization of colonialism and post-colonialism. It also engages in the politics of racial relations and the struggle against injustice. Additionally, Feminists reject established patriarchal systems and challenge the supremacy of hegemonic masculine authority and power. Postcolonial and postcolonial feminist discourses center on the “other” (p. 244). Colonialism hinged on the rule of men, it exhibited structures that relegated women into the background and adulated men. The men who were adulated were the colonizers, and the rest were subordinated. When the opportunity came for the next ‘superior’ being to wield power, African men became the oppressors and the dominators. Postcolonial theory or concept discards the power of domination and thereby patriarchal tendencies. Several feminist social theories have been concerned with understanding the fundamental inequalities between women and men, with the analysis of power of men over women.

Jackson (1998) asserts that:

Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic and political arrangement specific to particular societies. This mode of theorizing derives its concepts and methods from the social sciences and focuses on the material conditions of women’s lives and the ideological processes which legitimate and help perpetuate women’s subordination. (p. 12)
There is literature indicating the fact that feminist social theory has gone through several phases as a result of the controversies surrounding it, since its target is the displacement of male domination. Scholars and academics have always confronted theories leading to revisions. The journey over the last several decades and even at present suggests that continued metamorphosis will prevail for a very long time. It is interesting to note how the postmodernism era out of which Postcolonial Feminist theory emerged seems to be questioning the basis of the Postcolonial Feminist theory. The argument according to Jackson (1998) and Jones (1998) is that:

Postmodernism shares with feminisms a skepticism about universal truth claims, an awareness of knowledge as something constructed for specific locations. Like feminism, it questions the idea of a stable, pre-social self and casts doubt on the pretentions of disembodied rationality…post modernism could be seen to threaten the intellectual project of feminism since it undermines the attempt to understand the structural inequalities, instead, the world is seen as fluid and constantly shifting so that the present inequalities of gender, class or race are erased. (p. 9)

If this is the argument, it presupposes that with time, issues that Postcolonial Feminism like all other theories will continue with its metamorphosis. It must be noted that Mills (1998) gravitates to other postcolonial writers like Dirlik (1996) and Fanon (1994) asserting that Postcolonial theory has shifted the goal post over the years thereby becoming multifaceted. It addresses other colonial-related issues in contemporary times; it is used to bring the past into the present, and is a useful tool for addressing most colonial-related issues of our time. Though there are several criticisms as regards the position of Postcolonial theory, it has brought along in its wake a lot of empowerment to people and groupings who hitherto had identity problems. Today much intellectual
impact has come about as a result of post-colonialism. In the area of African literature, African literary works, and disciplines which hitherto had been inundated with western paradigms and knowledge are progressively seeing doses of postcolonial work.

Mills (1998) mentions that, Said (1978) remains one of the pillars of Post Colonial Feminist Theory. His writing on Orientalism according to Mills, positions him as a colonial discourse theorist who analyzed the way 19th century Europe represented many cultures of the world. Mills writes that the way cultures see themselves differently today can be attributed to the works of Said and others, but maintains that there is still a lot of unfinished business as regards these cultures. The most important element is that today Post colonial feminist theory has begun to be established as a form of analysis in its own right, rather than simply being seen as a critique. It has become a conduit through which any marginalized group can champion its cause. In the succinctly put cliché it provides a voice for the voiceless. In this journey of mine, I will attempt despite all the biases that I carry as a patriarch, to permit the “voiceless,” “the other” to be heard.

Mills (1998) mentions that:

Postcolonial Feminist theory has been extremely influential in many ways, it has brought about a ‘worlding’ of mainstream feminist theory, has moved from a rather parochial concern with white, middle class English speaking women, to a focus on women in different national and cultural contexts. (p. 98)

What I see is a transition from a rather myopic view to a worldview that has gained respect and prevalence. One very basic principle of postcolonial feminist theory has been to examine the condition of postcolonial women, not only those in formerly held colonies, but women of all races and groupings. If this and other philosophical
underpinnings serve as the fulcrum for this theory, then any attempt to understand women
cannot be done without recourse to the use of this theory, since its framework, its
antecedents, all resonate with my research work on women.

As mentioned earlier, Postcolonial Feminist theory has not only lingered in
western environs where it gained currency, it has also grown roots in enclaves of women
in formerly colonized societies. As a tool it has been used to make sense of issues of
cultural identity, language, nationalism, and, most importantly, the position of women in
Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world where their position has remained very
debatable.

Life after colonialism has been fairly well fashioned along the lines of the then
colonial masters. Indeed after independence, the “local colonial masters” replicated the
same colonial mentality and deeds. According to Jackson (1998), research over the 1980s
show that patriarchal relations and the resilience of male domination was affected to
some extent. However, feminists have not relented in their quest, saying that patriarchy
dominates postcolonial life as much as it dominated colonial, everyday life. Thus, women
continue to remain in subordinate positions. Be that as it may, Post colonial Feminist
theory has come to stay, though others have never relented in their unyielding attempts to
deflate it over the last several decades. The underlying fact about Post Colonial Feminist
theory is the exposition of power dimensions and power relations which are central in its
manifestation.

According to Williams and Chrisham (1994), postmodernism may be exercising
intellectual hegemony over a postcolonial world and postcolonial cultural productions,
their divergences and intersections are not going to be over soon. The dynamics of power relations between men and women will forever remain an issue in world affairs. Postcolonial Feminist theory, though it faces some criticisms, will remain a powerful tool in addressing issues about women who are subordinated and oppressed. Women protagonists in colonized societies, have argued very strongly that continuous domination by men through the lenses of Postcolonial Feminist theory suggest that women are being doubly colonized in this day. The fact that there are many derivatives of the feminist theory suggests that the issue is very topical. The existence of the numerous versions of feminist theories all seemingly directed at offsetting male patriarchal tendencies and dominance is quite insightful and enlightening.

Some critics of Postcolonial Feminist Theory point out that even the feminists themselves have no common ground. For instance, Postcolonial Feminist Theory points out how increased feminist input into the discourse of development is in fact, mainly western feminism, where Western feminism which takes the West as the universal point of reference. Thus from a postcolonial feminist perspective, women in the third world are being oppressed by western views of women, rather than genuinely being empowered. Therefore mainstream Postcolonial Feminist Theory is colonizing the lives of Third World women by imposing their own perspective (Mohanty, 2003).

Despite controversies surrounding this theory, it remains relevant, appropriate and applicable. Women’s studies, with emphasis on feminism, seem to be the conduit through which the experiences of women can be brought into perspective. From the voices of women themselves, the world, especially men, would appreciate women. The experiences
of women can be told more concisely by women and not men, and when women articulate their own experiences, they are closing the gap or their marginalization and domination. Above all, Postcolonial Feminist Theory focuses on how we make sense of the world in dualism, the theory that the universe is explicable only as a whole composed of two distinct and mutually irreducible elements, developed and underdeveloped, tall and short, big and small man and woman. Postcolonial Feminist Theory helps us to make meaning of these binary oppositions (Howry & Wood, 2001).

It is a common cliché that “women are their own worst “enemies” since they consciously or unconsciously perpetuate their own domination and marginalization. This very common issue cuts across every part of our world. Socialization to a very great extent rests on the shoulders of women; the need for a common platform must be established to ensure that women’s objectives are uniform. I have often said that Afro-centrism may not necessarily be an answer to Euro-centrism and in the same way feminism may also not necessarily be an answer to masculinism. Be that as it may, for the sake of providing a voice to this marginalized group, I have no other choice than to relinquish my patriarchal cap. If there is any theory that seems cut for the study, it is the Postcolonial Feminist Theory.

There are schools of thought with negative aspersions made about epochs tied to the prefix “post”. McClintock (1994) mentions a snag about whatever is prefixed with ‘post’. According to McClintock (1994), “The word ‘post’ in postcolonial moreover, reduces the cultures of peoples beyond colonialism to post colonial time. The term confers on colonialism, the prestige of history proper; colonialism is the determining
marker of history.” (p. 293). Be that as it may, in the absence of any other theory, I settled for Postcolonial Feminist Theory. This gave me the opportunity to approach from an angle of people experiencing a postcolonial abnormality. The Hegemonic Theory preceded the Postcolonial Feminist Theory.

The figure below illustrates pictorially the commonalities between the Hegemony and Postcolonial Feminist theory. The Postcolonial Feminist theory, (a derivative of the Hegemony theory) and their convergence and as regards relevance to the study have been illustrated below.

**Figure 1.** Convergence of Theories Used

The application of the theoretical frameworks to the study will be discussed in chapter three in detail.
Chapter two has looked at two relevant issues that undergird this study. The literature has dealt extensively with issues that undergird the study. It has also shown, portrayed the gap that exists in studies of women in politics in Ghana specifically.

Numerous research on women in different circumstances abound in Ghana, what seems to be missing is a concerted work on specific key players as women in parliament, an important element that this study attempts to provide. The use of the Hegemony and Postcolonial Feminist theories to undergird the study was dictated by the nature of the topic and the literature reviewed in this section. One very basic principle of Postcolonial Feminist theory has been to examine the condition of postcolonial women, not only those in formerly held colonies, but women of all races and groupings. If this and other philosophical underpinnings serve as the fulcrum for this theory, then any attempt to understand women cannot be done without recourse to the use of this theory since issues of domination, subordination, coercion and consent and their underlying characteristics manifest in Ghana the site of the study.

The structures that serve as the fulcrum of both theories are the same in my country, thus the choices made. After an in-depth review of literature and an understanding of theoretical frameworks relevant to the study, it is logical to move unto the next section of the study that dealt with the methodology that propelled the study to conclusion. These two theories were the main lenses for the study; they assisted in the preparations for data collection, data analysis and presentation as shown in chapters four, five, six and seven.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter three details the qualitative approach used in this study. This chapter vividly explains the processes that were used to seek an understanding of the challenges women face as they navigate the political realm of Ghana. This section describes qualitative research methodology as a tradition, its strengths and weaknesses, two combined research designs that come out of the tradition, phenomenological case study, the relevance of the theory and research questions in determining the design used, the research sites, the participants and the data collection and data analysis procedures that were used and finally the management of the researcher’s role and other related issues.

The overall purpose of this study was to understand the representation of women in the public sphere from the perspective of women in Ghana. The dynamics of entering politics or the public sphere and becoming visible are among the numerous issues that this study sought to investigate. Patton (2002) notes that, “certain purposes, questions, problems, and situations are more consonant with qualitative methods than others.” (p. 145). Deciding on a choice of methodology remains crucial in research, and every researcher carefully determines the most appropriate methodology. The nature of the topic, the literature and most importantly, the theoretical framework, and the research questions guided the choice of qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Creswell (2007) encourages qualitative researchers to use terms like “constructivist, interpretivist, feminist methodology, postmodernist, and naturalistic
research” (p. 35). Within these world views and through these lenses are approaches to qualitative inquiry, such as narrative research, phenomenology and case studies.

Patton (2002) states that:

Qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (e.g., a group, event, program, community, relationship, or interaction). The phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by the researcher. (p. 39)

Qualitative methodology specifically analyzes events and people without the use of numerical data (Best & Kahn, 2003). This research methodology is appropriate for my study since it provides many viewpoints of a research encounter. Creswell (1998) contends that “Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or a human problem” (p.15). Patton (2002) discusses how qualitative research examines phenomena in an in-depth manner and detail without predetermined categories or hypotheses. Out of the five approaches namely narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study, this study settled on a combination of phenomenology and a case study research design.

Qualitative research examines issues in depth and detail and provides openness and credibility thus the choice. An important strength of qualitative research is producing a wealth of detailed information about small numbers of people and cases. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. Therefore, the validity of this research depends on the researchers’ competence and extensive skills, including communications, knowledge of the field, flexibility, and experiences (Patton, 2002).
The strength of qualitative research stems from its inductive approach which emphasizes particular situations, people and describes them by words rather than numbers. There are five strengths, according to Maxwell (1996), understanding the meaning of the events and situations, understanding people’s actions while exploring participants’ perspectives, such as cognition, and intentions. Realizing how events and actions are shaped by unique environments and being able to identify unanticipated phenomenon and influences makes any qualitative research encounter revealing (Maxwell, 1996).

Furthermore, Patton (2002) indicates that “flexibility, adaptability and individualization” remain crucial in any research encounter (p.154). The use of qualitative research methodology chosen for this study helped in capturing the qualitative nuances and other important elements peculiar to individuals and groups in a study like this. Qualitative research is very appropriate for studies that seek to explore, investigate, unpack, describe, and stress “the importance of context, setting, and subjects’ frame of reference (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 46). In my desire to understand women in politics in Ghana, qualitative methodology was useful in understanding the socio-cultural nuances inherent in the issue of the presence of women in politics, i.e. the context, and how women are navigating, shaping and directing it.

A thorny and topical issue with qualitative research is subjectivity and objectivity which researchers always need to grapple with. Ratner (2002) discusses this issues opining that they could make or mar a research work. However, qualitative methodology recognizes that subjectivity of the researcher underscores virtually every part of the
process, from coming up with an idea, selecting a design to use and interpreting one’s finding. Ratner encourages researchers to reflect on the values and objectives they bring to the research to forestall undermining the integrity and value of the research product.

As researchers, the possibility of providing viewpoints of the researched rather than the data itself could be dangerous because research is political.

Some scholars demean qualitative research alluding to it being non objective, because researchers using that methodology interact with the respondents. It must be noted that a methodology would have both strengths and weaknesses, however, while it is necessary to note the objections to qualitative research, the immense strengths including its ability to focus on actual practice, looking at interactions among participants, and the ability to question the conventional wisdom surrounding the research cannot be understated (Silverman, 2000).

**Research Questions and Qualitative Methodology**

The nature of the research questions lent themselves towards qualitative inquiry. For example, my first two research questions focusing on the impact of socio-cultural factors and experiences of participants in local and national politics, are served through an approach where there is flexibility to ascertain the lived experiences of humans. The last three questions seeking to identify changes in policies that have enhanced participation are better ascertained through the experiences of participants.

The theoretical frameworks undergirding the study facilitated the type of research questions. To ascertain the characteristics of hegemony, domination and subordination, would necessarily be through someone’s experiences. Thus, the research questions were
framed to find out the experiences of selected Ghanaian women within the socio-cultural and political spheres. Asking for their experiences was a way of knowing the phenomenon if any among that particular group selected. Therefore, reiterating Patton (2002) “phenomenology describes how people describe things and experience them through their senses” (p. 105).

The above is an illustration created by the researcher to showcase the conceptualization of the research design used for the study. Though it has been rendered in a vertical linear manner, it does not always follow the pattern illustrated.

**Research Design: Phenomenological Case Study**

A qualitative research approach concerned with understanding certain group behaviors from that group’s point of view is a phenomenological case study. A
A qualitative phenomenological case study was adopted for this study. Studies that try to find, to explore, to describe, understand, and stress, dig deep into the lived experiences of participants usually rely on the use of such approaches where “the importance of context, setting, and subjects’ frame of reference” come under scrutiny (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 46).

Although there are different views about the concept of phenomenology, they all “focus on exploring on how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p.104). Phenomenological studies do not just seek for the facts or the causes of certain incidents; rather, they are often aimed at understanding the lived experiences of people through the various acts of consciousness. My interest in understanding women’s political experiences cannot adequately be met by a quantitative approach. The unique characteristic of the phenomenological approach which makes it relevant to this study is its inter-subjectivity. According to Moustakas (1994) inter-subjectivity is:

The subject and object are integrated—what I see is interwoven with how I see it, with whom I see it, and with whom I am. My perception, the thing I perceive, and the experience or acts interrelate to make the objective subjective and the subjective objective. (p. 59)

Deciding on this methodology did not come easily, an earlier decision for a phenomenological study was abandoned for an approach that combines both phenomenology and case study, all qualitative approaches which deal with particular experiences of human beings in a peculiar way, yet when combined deepens, strengthens and complements each other for a deeper understanding of the issues under scrutiny. While phenomenology is a qualitative method of inquiry, a philosophy, it basically
studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity. My research was informed by the steps Miller and Salkind (2002) have provided.

They identify eight steps that outline comprehensively the concept of phenomenology, and these are reproduced below:

- Identify a central phenomenon to study (e.g. presence of women in Ghanaian politics) the common meanings ascribed by the people to the phenomenon.
- Ask central research questions that focus on capturing this meaning
- Collect data primarily through interviews, observations and study of documents, artifacts, language etc
- Analyze data by following the procedural steps such as significant statements, phrases, that capture the meaning of the phenomenon under examination
- Reduce numerous significant statements to meaning units or themes. In this process the researcher looks for overlapping and redundant significant statements , then combines them into a smaller number of meaning units or themes that describe meaning for the individual
- Analyze the context in which the individuals experienced the meaning units or themes. It is important in phenomenology to identify not only what individuals experienced, but also the context, the setting, or the situation in which they experienced it(Structural experience)
- Reflect on personal experiences you had with the phenomenon. It involves reflecting on and actively writing about your own experiences. These written passages typically involve identifying how the researcher experienced the phenomenon and the contexts in which this experience occurred.
- Write detailed analysis of the “essence” of the experience for the participants. From analysis of the significant statements, the meaning units, the analysis of what was experienced, and how it was experienced, the researcher writes a detailed analysis of the “essence” of the experience
for the individuals participating in the study. This passage can include the researcher’s experiences with the phenomenon. (p. 153)

Kupers (2009) in addition to the concept outlined above argues that phenomenology is discernible as a specific style and movement of thought. It is characterized by a flexible and vivid way of inquiry, as it takes different directions, tries out continuously new ways of reasoning. Thus, it approaches the experienced phenomena in question and its various and inexhaustible dimensions of meaning and ambiguities in perspective. Therefore, phenomenology can be seen as an attempt to understand what experience is and means, better to say a formalized account of conscious experience and its implications. Kupers (2009) further contends that:

Phenomenology is a reasoned inquiry: a method of scientific philosophy in general which tries to discover the essences of appearances which are anything which human beings can become conscious. More precisely the word *phenomenon* means *that which reveals itself.* (p. 53)

My research falls into the category where lived experiences of women in politics can be conveniently ascertained using approaches that can unearth such lived experiences. To deepen the study, I combined another type of qualitative research design, case study with phenomenology. Parliament of Ghana was my case, each participant was a unit of this case which enabled me to draw fully from them, and thus the use of case study approach in addition to phenomenology became obvious.

Case studies fall under qualitative methodology, used to explain the possible factors related to some outcome, a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole (Best & Khan, 2003). This process seeks to collect and present detailed information about a particular
participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves. The purpose is to understand the life cycle or an important part of a life cycle of the unit. Case studies are not a new form of research; naturalistic inquiry was the primary research tool until development of the scientific method. The fields of sociology and anthropology are credited with the primary shaping of the concept as we know it today. However, case study research has drawn from a number of other areas as well: the clinical methods of doctors, the casework technique being developed by social workers (Patton, 2002).

Miller and Salkind (2000) drawing extensively from Stake (1995) outline five main steps in conceptualizing and using a case study approach. These are reproduced below:

- Provide an in-depth study of a bounded system. Here the researcher must be interested in developing an in-depth discussion and analysis of a bounded system. To establish this analysis, the researcher must determine the type of case that will best yield information about an issue or whether the case is important in itself.

- Ask questions about an issue under examination or about the details of a case that is of unusual interest. The research question addresses either an issue or a problem or a case.

- Gather multiple forms of data to develop in-depth understanding. Because a hallmark of a case is an in-depth portrait of the case, the qualitative researcher gathers multiple forms of data. These might include interviews, observations, documents and audio visuals. The extent and complexity of the data mark a case study as different from many forms of qualitative research.

- Describe the case in detail and provide an analysis of issues or themes that the case presents. Data analysis involves developing a detailed description of the case. This might be presented as a chronology of events or a detailed rendering of information about people, places, and activities involved in the case. These issues add complexity to the case analysis.

- In both description and issue development, situate the case within its context or setting. The researcher situates the case within its context so
that the case description and themes are related to the specific activities, or the people and places involved in the case.

- Make an interpretation of the meaning of the case analysis. In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports, suggests the lessons learned from the case. (pp. 163-164)

Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible (Best & Khan, 2003). This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through a process known as thick description, which involves in-depth description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, and the nature of the community in which it is located. Thick description also involves interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data such as cultural norms and mores, community values, ingrained attitudes, and motives. Data may be gathered by a wide variety of methods including observation, interviews, questionnaires, and recorded data from newspapers, government agencies or other sources. A few precautions of which researchers are advised to be aware include subjective biases, the danger of selecting variable relationships based on preconceived convictions and the apparent consistency of a too-limited sample of observations (Best & Khan, 2003). Glesne (2006) mentions that various methods and methodologies can be employed in case study research.

Patton (2002) asserts that, “These methods all usually focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning” (p.104). Thus, understanding deeply the political arena within which women operate called for a combination of approaches
which are complementary to each other, with one buttressing the other in every conceivable way. This combination provided the desired framework for me to examine all participants with certain peculiarities in a very strategic way. The hub of national politics remains Ghana’s parliament and the bulk of women I dealt with were members. There were a few who were former members of district assemblies and others who were in top positions in business and education. Semi-structured interview guides, prepared prior to my trip to the field were the main source of my questioning. They all sought to elicit information from three categories of women in Ghana, the elected, the nonelected, and other political participants.

According to Merrian (1988), phenomenological case study has some form of weakness, such as, “the product may be deemed too lengthy [or] too detailed”, it can be oversimplified, the situation could be exaggerated, and this can lead the reader to an incorrect conclusion. Also, there are “no guidelines in constructing the final report,” which could lead to ethical issues (p. 34). To forestall any weakness in this phenomenological case study, the researcher must keep details which explain the phenomenon under study and report data which emerged from this research that pertains to the research questions. Miller and Salkind (2002) assert that “To explain the facts of reality, scientists require an organized system of concepts” (p. 23).

**The Relevance of Hegemonic and Postcolonial Feminist Theories for the Study**

According to Miller and Salkind (2002),

Scientific investigation seeks to explain the phenomena it studies in our world of experience by establishing general principles with which to explain them, hopefully, science can predict such phenomena. The principles of science are
stated ultimately in what are known as theories. To explain the facts of reality, scientists require an organized system of concepts. (p.23)

Also, theories guide researchers’ thoughts along certain lines when considering the phenomenon at hand. Theories can be invoked as a statement explaining what school(s) of thought the author identifies with or feels close to. The approach taken could be clearly identified as relating to this particular theory, or the author’s research question could be clearly related to it (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Thus in examining the topic chosen, it became imperative to select theories that could assist in dealing effectively with my research question. Theories provide complex and comprehensive conceptual understandings of things that cannot be pinned down, how societies work, how organizations operate, why people interact in certain ways. Theories give researchers different “lenses” through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The choice of Gramsci’s hegemony framework and the Post Colonial Feminist theory were deliberate, since they deal with the issues of domination, subordination, coercion and consent, characteristics associated with experiences of people in power relationships, the main elements in my study (Raymond, 1977; Bucock, 1986).

Within this theoretical framework, I ascertained whether a basis can be established for an examination of relationship between one group and another. The basis I established is solid, the study deals with humans in the private, and the public realms of life. Within these realms are the dynamics of power and power relations. Within a society
are dominant and subordinate groupings. Usually the dominant group has power that it dispenses, and the subordinate group continues to remain at the receiving end if they do nothing to counter the forces from the dominant group. The study is all about a dominant group and subordinate group. Many scholars have conclusively stated that Ghana is a society where the subordination of women is established beyond all reasonable doubts. (Adusah Karikai, 2008, Annin, 2009, Dadzie, 2009). The study within an environment such as this needs a lens that characterizes these elements of domination and subordination. The Hegemony theory holds the key in ascertaining how women navigate the political terrain in Ghana.

The literature and research topic presented a scenario where the use of the Theory of Hegemony and the Postcolonial Feminist Theories became obvious. Other researchers who did studies with similar characteristics as this study found them useful in delving into issues affecting the private, and the public domains of life. My goal of venturing into the deeper realms of both the private and the public of this study, the dynamics of power and seeming elements of domination and subordination that the study seems to suggest necessitated the use of these two theories. Though Postcolonial Feminist Theory remains a derivative of the hegemonic theory, its use within a postcolonial setting endorses the choice. The use of Hegemonic theory assisted in understanding the relationship between a dominant group over a subordinate one in the power relationship that exists between men and women in the political arena preferably referred to in this study as the public sphere.
Using these two theories helped me to understand why and what the dynamics of patriarchy really are. Though critics have made all kinds of aspersions against them, they are very relevant as decades ago. This underscores my decision to use the frameworks in examining selected women both in and out of politics in Ghana. These theories and the literature assisted in framing my research questions, and helped determine the tradition and methodology.

Site Selection

The study was mostly done in Ghana’s parliament house and in a few selected places of the capital Accra for those participants who were not MPs. Ghana’s Parliament is located in the capital city of the nation Accra. It has been at its present location since the return of the country to constitutional rule in 1992. Before then, it had a different location known in Ghana’s history as the Old Polo Grounds where independence was proclaimed on March, 6, 1957. The site for research according to Marshall and Rossman (1995) is where there is the high probability that a rich mix of many of the processes, people, programs, and interactions. Ghana’s parliament fitted in well with my design, since my main targeted respondents were both members of the legislature and the executive were all available at this particular site.

The site became apparent because of the nature of my research questions which sought to find out the experiences of women in political positions in Ghana. The site is the hub of national politics, and was thus the venue for most of my interviews, since more than 50% of the selected participants were Members of Parliament. For other women in political and non political positions, other venues were used. Two former Members of
Parliament were interviewed in the comfort of their homes, while the focus group interview was done in the researcher’s home. Also, the choice of Parliament as the main site, provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe Members of Parliament deliberating during parliamentary proceedings. Apart from interviewing them there and the opportunity parliament provided to observe my participants, the researcher had access to parliamentary Hansards (verbatim records of statements made by members), and other parliamentary artifacts found at the location.

Below are the maps of Ghana, Accra the main site, pictures of the old and new Parliaments of Ghana.

**Figure 3** Site Selection Map of Ghana showing 10 administrative regions.
Figure 4 Map of Accra

Figure 5 Parliament of Ghana (Old Polo Ground)

Figure 6 Ghana’s Current Parliament House (1992-Present)

Figure 7 The Chamber of Ghana’s Parliament

Conducting the bulk of the interviews in the parliament house was very useful. It provided the opportunity to observe the members during their deliberations in the chamber, access the parliamentary Hansards, and interview the participants any time they were accessible. Ghana’s Parliament House offers a very congenial and pleasant environment for doing research. Though Members of Parliament are yet to have their
The physical environment of a setting can be important to what happens in that environment...how people are organized in the space available...and the interpretive reactions of participants to the physical setting can be important...A common mistake ...is to take physical environment for granted. (p. 281)

This is ample justification for the choice of parliament where most of the interviews were conducted. There were three other sites all located in the capital city of Accra where other participants in the study were interviewed. These six participants had to be interviewed in either their homes or their offices depending on which one was convenient to them at the arranged time for the interview. Five participants who constituted the focus group kindly agreed to have the interview conducted in the comfort of my home. The choice of doing the interview in my home was made as a result of the different locations of the participants and the fact that they all collectively had to be engaged in the focus group interview.
Description of Participants

This segment of the research is very crucial to the whole research process. According to Devine (1995), the ways in which a group of respondents is selected is very significant to qualitative researchers in the same way as quantitative researchers. This study examined women from different categories, thus for thematic and practical reasons and possibly for comparative purposes, my selection of respondents was very crucial, thus the reason for studying women in the legislature, the executive, former parliamentary candidates, political analyst and commentators. I anticipate those in elected positions providing perspectives other less engaged members and the executive may not shed light on, yet collectively their activities were all examined through the same theoretical framework.

The table below was constructed to provide background information about the participants selected for the study. It was necessary to provide information on their education, marital status, number of children if any, since this offers an understanding into the characteristics of women who work in the political sphere.

**Brief Profiles of selected Participants**

The participants selected were a mixture of politicians, political analysts and commentators aged between 29 and 63 years. Most of the participants had been teachers, while others were formerly in the law profession. A few were also in other vocations like the industrial and business sectors with strong political proclivities. About 50% of them were married while the remaining fifty were single. About 20% of the respondents do not
have children of their own. At least five of the members of Parliament had served for two terms, with one member doing a third term.

**Table 4** Profiles of Selected Women in Politics in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Edu.</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Former Occupation</th>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyamekye H</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Former MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kusi G</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>M.A</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boateng B.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetteh H.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Minister of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frema O.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Former Minister</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dapaah E</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>LLB</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Former Minister</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sackey E</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Cert</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agyeman E.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Dip.</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bannerman J.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Banker/Political Analyst</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fynn D.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>MSC</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Pharmacist/Political Analyst</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bannerman K.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>PGDE</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Educationist/Pol. Commentator</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana Akua</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M.A</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Political/Social Commentator</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetteh B.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Banker/ Member of NDC</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asobayire G</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Cert</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araba Lawson</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M.A</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Pol. Consultant</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamptey S.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Former Parliamentary Candidate</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Constructed from Researcher’s Data 2010

The above table shows the background of the participants selected for the study. It is interesting to note that a good number of my participants were once teachers. When the ban on party politics was eventually lifted in 1991, there were a good number of people who did not show interest in party politics. Most of those who initially joined were teachers of all categories. Thus, the first parliament of the fourth republic had a lot of
trained teachers. However, in subsequent election years, this changed, and people of other professions began to join. By 1996, people of prestigious professions made it to parliament. Four categories of participants emerged through the contacts that I made initially, and they were members of parliament, members of the executive, political analysts, party executives, and former parliamentary candidates. These categories that emerged from the contacts that I made; eventually provided perspectives for women already engaged in political activities, members of parliament, political party executives, women desiring to become political participants, women activists with interest on commenting on national political issues. Members of parliament became the largest in the sample because they were readily available and had rich experiences to share, and most importantly, I had decided in the field that the study was going to be skewed towards members in parliament. At an earlier plan to interview five Members of Parliament, five women in non political leadership positions and five in academia with strong interests in politics was altered with the choice of more than 50 % of participants from the legislature.

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was used in selecting respondents for the study. According to Merriam (1998), “Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn most” (p. 48). According to Patton (2002), “Purposeful sampling involves studying information-rich case in depth and detail to understand and illuminate important cases rather than generalizing from a sample to a population” (p. 563). I needed
politicians with a certain experiences (gone through an electoral process of selection, in the legislature, belonging to the executive arm of government) to ascertain the challenges they face navigating the political arena. Purposive sampling is also known as criterion sampling in that, the researcher needs to set criteria on the basis of which respondents will be selected. Patton (2002) identifies several different types of purposeful sampling that could be used in qualitative studies. Patton further asserts that the likelihood of a possible distortion in qualitative findings concerns how design decision affects results. According to Patton, purposeful sampling strategies provide limited number of cases for examination. He cautions researchers to be aware that design constraints may have affected the data available for analysis. My rationale for choosing this method for the study is because of different characteristics of the different interest groups involved in the issues under study. Having Patton’s caution in my subconscious mind undergirded the presentations of my findings as demonstrated in chapter eight.

Purposeful sampling illustrates characteristics of particular subgroups of interest (Patton, 2002). This study gathered data from different perspectives and different participants in politics. The purposeful sampling helped me to select specific number of respondents from different sub-groups who were related to the issue under study. My rationale for using purposeful sampling was to avoid sampling from the same group who may have similar perspectives, have broad information-rich subjects, whose input could help illuminate the research questions outlined for this study. Through sampling different groups I was able to compare the information I gathered from one group with the other.
The logic and power of using purposeful sampling for this study is derived from my quest for an in-depth understanding and appreciating more meaningfully the way women with varied background and training would unravel the issue on hand. There are currently 19 women in Ghana’s Parliament, and my objective was to interview 5 of them originally, however, I selected 7 current MPs out of the 19 MPs, and 2 former MPs. The women in parliament eventually formed the bulk of my interviews providing a very rich perspective of the issues under study. Among the MPs were those who were first timers, and those who were doing their second and third term respectively. All of the current MPs belonged to Select and Standing committees of Parliament. I also interviewed two members of the executive both are members of parliament, and two former MPs one of whom was also a former member of the executive, from 2001-2008. A current member of the Executive, and Minister of State in charge of Trade was also selected. I interviewed six other women who I will put under the category of the political analysts, party official and other women in leadership position in industry and academia. Patton discusses limitations based on selectivity in people sampled for either observations or interviews.

Data Sources and Methods of Data Collection

![Data Collection Sources Illustrated](image)

**Figure 8** Data Collection Sources Illustrated
My main data collection sources were through the official Hansards of Parliament, the one-on-one interviews I conducted, the focus group interviews, nonparticipant observation and lastly the literature that I reviewed. Members of Ghana’s executive was one source, while Parliament was another source from which the needed information could be obtained. Ghana politics takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the president of Ghana is both the head of state and head of government, within a multi-party system. The seat of government is at the Castle Osu. Executive power is exercised by the government in power, while legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Political parties are governments in waiting, and they prepare and promote their members to become members of parliaments and the executive respectively. Thus, using members of parliament, political party members and executive as sources for the data was strategic. The official Hansards are recorded statements of Members of Parliament during proceedings, a source of data used to ascertain the characteristics and contributions women made during parliamentary proceedings. Consequently, identifying them, delving into them and analyzing as part of data collection became paramount.

**Informed Consent**

Seeking Ohio University Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval was the last bit of preparation for my fieldwork. It spelled out clearly what I, as a researcher could do with the participants with whom I was to be involved. With the IRB guidelines in mind, I approached my study within the best ethical framework I could. My participants were all
given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the IRB guidelines at the beginning of every research encounter. I read excerpts that were relevant to my participants and got their consent before I interviewed them. As regards using their names in the study, they all agreed that I could do so since as public officials they do not have anything to hide.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection sources are very crucial in any research encounter and are therefore tied to the quality and the outcome of the study. I used four different data collection methods which offered me the opportunity to ascertain many issues that I needed to examine in the study. Many perspectives of data emerged through these varied methods that I used while in the field. Patton (2002) suggests that “qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open—ended interviews, written document analysis and observation” (p. 4). Though I did not consider earlier doing a focus group discussion before I went to the field, it became evident while doing the study that it could help me in a way double check on some of the issues individual participants had raised. Having planned it all prior to my departure, I used one on one interviews to glean from my respondents issues about the “invisibility of women in Ghanaian politics”.

Data collection began on the 29th of Nov 2009 immediately I arrived in Ghana with observing parliamentary proceedings whilst making contacts with members of Ghana’s parliament. My desire to understand the issues which my topic raises stretched my stay on the field beyond the original five weeks that I had anticipated. I explored virtually the necessary sources that were needed to be explored. Patton (2002) summarizes the significance of data sources in qualitative studies:
Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. The data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience. Document analysis includes studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys. (p. 4)

I present my main methods of collecting data in the next segment of this chapter.

**Gaining Entree**

My step-by-step process in data collection included the following. My current location in the United States of America placed me in an “insider/outsider” dilemma. I wore two different hats while doing my research in Ghana. My former colleagues looked at me as an insider who did not need any formal introduction to the Members of Parliament. I was also looking at myself as an outsider irrespective of the fact that I knew a good number of the parliamentarians. My problem was that my target were women those who were not in Parliament when I was there. I therefore needed somebody’s assistance which became the case. Though I anticipated some little difficulties to crop up, I got a rude shocked when all of a sudden, I had become “a stranger” to the environment which heretofore had been my base. I came to the realization that the relationship between researcher and participant cannot be predetermined; rather research status is something that participants continuously negotiate and determine locally. A researcher can be an insider in a particular local situation but an outsider in another. From my
experience in the field, I argue here that the researcher’s characteristics do not solely determine insider/outsider status. Rather this status emerges from the interaction between the researcher and the participants. It is from my experience that I am reporting that gaining entrée in research remains a crucial element which should never be taken for granted. It is even more interesting for someone who may be very familiar with a particular site, or may have been part of the researched group at one time.

As a former member of Parliament myself, I did not have to go through anybody to get into the august body. I just walked in on my first working day in Ghana. It was like going back to a former place of work where former colleagues are the people one will have to deal with, a kind of reunion. I fraternized with a good number of male colleagues with whom I had served from 2001-2005. While chatting with these male friends and former colleagues, I mentioned the reason why I was in the August House. I noticed that attendance in parliament on my first day one was rather on the low side, with just five female MPs in attendance. These women MPs were not members of the August House while I was there as an MP and therefore approaching them was a little problematic. I felt I needed someone to make introductions.

A male MP who had been in Parliament when I was there came to my rescue. An initial attempt I had made with one female MP had been a fiasco. After initially agreeing to talk to me, she gave excuses until this male told her who and what I did in the period 2001-2005. This was the way opener. Though she said she recognized the name, when I introduced myself as an Ohio University doctoral candidate researching women in Ghanaian politics, she did not identify me as a former MP and minister of state, which
explained her initial laissez-faire attitude. After I interviewed her on the third day, she apparently spread the word among her female colleagues, because it became quite easy for me to approach other MPs. They became readily available for interviews.

The public gallery is open at all times unless a closed sitting is progress. Closed sittings are done when MPS have very personal issues to discuss, most often bordering on their personal affairs, issues about salaries and allowances etc. Part of the research method of collecting data was to be done through observation of parliamentary proceedings. I was seated at the gallery from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon every day for 15 days, after which my interviews for the day were done. I decided the best approach was to allow MPs to do their parliamentary duties for the first half of the day before engaging them in an interview. Most of the women I interviewed said unwritten agreement offered them some time to be productive in Parliament.

While conducting interviews and listening to parliamentary debates in the August House, I also made contacts by telephone with women in academia and in nonpolitical leadership positions. People I needed to contact were all people I had in one way or another had some contacts with as an MP and a minister. Making contacts over the phone was normal procedure, and such people were delighted to be reconnecting with me, depending on whatever level of fraternity existed between us.

Getting in touch with officers of the Hansards Division of Parliament was also sorted out while I conducted my interviews and observed parliamentary debates. For the remaining 20 days of parliamentary sessions left by the time I arrived in the field, I used the first half of each day to observe parliamentary proceedings especially the roles of the
female speaker, female members of parliament, and female officers of state (ministers) who were present during parliamentary deliberations, either to answer questions from Members of Parliament or to present bills from the executive.

Documents that were available to analyze were parliamentary Hansards, there were several hundreds of thousands of them, however, I carefully chose a few over almost three different epochs of parliamentary life, the first republic, the second, the third and the current parliament for further scrutiny, especially to ascertain how women have fared in the august body through their interventions if any. The officer in charge who had been in this division for over 20 years was very helpful when I asked for parliamentary Hansards spanning the four republics that Ghana has chalked. A Hansards for a parliamentary session spanning a year could be very voluminous. Poring over such volumes of information will require a whole lifetime to read all that. I needed to decide therefore what I wanted and what I did not need. This was the most difficult part of my research encounter in Ghana. A room designated for keeping such Hansards virtually had no space for more recent ones to be kept, therefore the corridors had all been packed with these Hansards.

Getting access to the executive members of government was another area where I had some difficulties. When I served in government, it was then a government formed by the party that I belonged to, the New Patriotic Party. Our party lost the elections in 2008, and had become the main Minority party. I had 3 female members whom I had penciled down to interview. Prior to my journey, I was of the opinion that since these women were colleagues and Members of Parliament when I served; it was going to easy getting to
them in the field. Out of the three, I was successful in interviewing only one, the minister responsible for Trade and Industries. The second woman, the Minister responsible for Women and Children, a very crucial element in my study, was the most evasive one. The impression I had was that she did not feel very comfortable talking to me. I made appearances at her ministry, I met her in the august house since she is a Member of Parliament, and I made a colleague woman minister contact her, all to no avail. In the end I gave up hoping to get somebody to conduct the interview on my behalf, but this never materialized.

Getting my focus group too was not easy. Getting all the participants at a given time looked virtually impossible. I wanted the group to be diverse as possible and it was through quite a herculean effort that I managed with a semblance of a group diverse in form. With all these challenges I was going through, my clock was also ticking, parliament was gradually winding up its activities to bring the session to a close. The Christmas festivities were also gradually approaching and organizing interviews would not be conducive during such times. I needed to double up.

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), “Time is a major factor in the acquisition of trustworthy data. Time at research site, time spent interviewing, time to build sound relationships with respondents—all contribute to trustworthy data” (p. 146). Personally, I wish I could have spent more time in the field to get other seasoned women in the executive to interview; however, it did not happen. Fortunately, three of the Members of Parliament whom I interviewed were both MPs and members of the executive at the same time, and this compensated for what was in a way going to
be a nightmare for me. Their very informative interviews were enough to gain insight into how women navigate the corridors of power at the executive level.

**Interviews**

Interviews formed the bulk of my study, I needed to talk to women from many backgrounds and the earlier prepared semi-structured protocols were of immense benefit to me on the field. Since I was examining a phenomenon, the semi-structured interview guides kept me along a particular track which made it possible for all my respondents to go through very similar questions. Three sets of questions were used for this study and they have been placed under the appendices A, B and C.

According to Clark (2000), the use of a semi-structured format is a first step in attempting to ease some of the likely problems resulting from an interviewer-interviewee relationship. I used these semi-structured interviews to solicit responses from respondents and this seemed to have encouraged my respondents to introduce themes they on their own felt were relevant to the study. Also, I observed that because of the nature of these interviews, my respondents had the opportunity later to talk about other relevant issues the opportunity of hindsight might have offered them. This was exhibited by the iterative nature most of the interviews took. To me this was good because it brought out more interesting issues very relevant to my study. People are interviewed to go beyond their observable behaviors to enter into their perspective and how they construct meaning (Patton, 1990). Seidman (1991) asserts that “If the researcher’s goal is to understand the
meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing
people provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry”
(p. 4).

During the first week of the study, after I had made preliminary contacts
with some member of parliament my interviews began in earnest in the second
week. During the earlier contacts made, I mentioned to the female MPs who were
present in the house the objectives of the study that had brought me to parliament. I
was given all kinds of assurances by these female MPs that they were ready to talk
to me at any time. Details of my gaining entry come under another segment.

I administered the semi-structured interviews in person (appendices A, B,
C). In all the interviews, I asked all the 3 different groups to respond to the same set
of questions, intermittently probing for details, asking my respondents to elaborate
where necessary clarifications when that was necessary. The rationale here is to
offer each woman the opportunity to respond to the same set of questions so as to
have the basis for comparison (Babbie, 1995; Berg, 2001).

In semi-structured interviews, researchers must develop, adapt and generate
questions and follow-up probes appropriate to the central purpose of the study
(Rubin & Rubin, 2005). My rationale to use semi-structured interview was to
augment lapses and knotty issues whenever the need arises, and that was fully
achieved (Berg, 2001). The interview guides for parliamentarians varied slightly
from those in the unelected categories and the significant others. According to
Clark (2000), “The power dynamics of the interview situation is central…The
generation of an environment in which respondents feel relaxed and able to speak at length is therefore of fundamental importance to the qualitative interviewer” (p. 84). I had only one choice of venue for the Members of Parliament, almost all the interviews involving them were done in Parliament House. With a few obstructions because the interviews were conducted in busy lobbies of parliament, I would argue that everything went very well, and a deep understanding was later analyzed from the interview data. The interviews were all conducted in English and video and audio recorded. For every Member of Parliament that I talked to I sought her permission to record her on tape and my selected participant willingly obliged. From the tapes I subsequently did all my transcribing getting my electronic data into readable version. Reflection notes were taken immediately following interviews to document descriptive notes on the behavior, verbal and nonverbal reactions of my respondents (Merriam, 1998).

Focus-Group Interview

I conducted one focus group interview with 5 women in the group. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) discusses the composition of focus groups especially the desirable numbers (6 to 10) and how it would stimulate an interactive discussion on an issue. Composing my focus group was not an easy task, since I found it difficult to get six people, and getting them all at the same time was quite a task too. I managed though with the numbers and conducted the interview, though my numbers fall short by what Kvale (2009) suggests. This was a group of purely well educated women. Questions asked are in Appendices B, C & D. The group discussions lasted about two hours. Focus-groups
should be planned carefully to obtain perceptions of discussants in a comfortable environment (Krueger, 1997; Patton, 2002). Because of prior working relationship that I had with the women in the group, they were kind enough to have the discussions in the comfort of my home, amid good food and drinks which made them very relaxed and cooperative. Glesne (2006) noted that focus-group designing requires certain basic considerations, such as where, who, how, how long, how many, and when are necessary in guiding the process.

Since all the participants had been briefed about the objectives of the study, they were at their consenting best, not hesitating to delve deeper into their own personal lives to illustrate issues meaningfully. The group interaction according to Kvale & Brinkman (2009) creates and facilitates expression of viewpoints yet at the end of the process, transcribing the interview becomes a headache for the researcher. I had quite an experience with my respondents as the interview progressed, especially when at given moments they all simultaneously strongly felt they needed to react almost immediately to an issue. Transcribing this interaction was quite problematic. With their permission, I recorded the discussion with my recording devices assuring them that it was procedural for a researcher to use those devices that makes his/her work easy to recall. The interaction with the group was very insightful and their responses have been used in the discussion segment of the study in chapters four, five, six and seven.

As a former Member of Parliament, a former Minister of State, I took a lot of things for granted before I left the United States of America to embark on my field work.
I had an itinerary before my departure, but segments of it changed whilst on the field.

Below is the itinerary I had before going to the field.

**Week One**

Made contacts and set up interviews with Members of Parliament.

Began observing parliamentary proceedings

Contacted a couple of women in executive positions of government and others.

**Week 2**

Observation of Parliamentary proceedings continued.

Initial attempt at analyzing Parliamentary Hansards.

Continuation of interviews in Parliament House and Other Women Leaders

**Week 3/4**

Continuation of interviews in Parliament House. Final interviews Members of Parliament and the Executive (Ministers), Significant Others

**Week 5**

Final Week First and second Focus Group Interviews.

**Week 6**

Final rounding off.

I remember very vividly indicating to my committee members that having served in various capacities as a public servant; I did not anticipate any difficulties at all in my research encounter back home. I got it all wrong, and the difficulties I encountered have been reported elsewhere for the sake of the records.

**Document Analysis**

Part of my fieldwork included the examination of documents of Ghana’s Parliament. As part of the process of understanding women in politics, I needed to
research the dynamics of parliamentary debates on the floor of parliament, especially to ascertain how female parliamentarians make their contributions. The most important rationale was to ascertain whether women parliamentarians usually champion the cause of women generally, or they just part of business as usual in parliamentary proceedings. Thus, the relevant data available were the same parliamentary debates (Hansards) which were sources of other information for my research, in addition to other historical documents of Ghana’s legislature. It was my objective to analyze randomly selected Hansards of Parliament for every republic of Ghana, because of intermittent interruption of our democratic process since independence, has had four republics since 1957. Merriam (1998) suggests the verification of the authenticity and accuracy of such documents available to the researcher. Though the documents (Hansards) did not provide much information, one issue that came out clearly in those I examined was that women parliamentarians were not heard unduly championing the cause of women on the floor of the house. The findings from the Hansards will be discussed later in the study.

It must be mentioned here that the overall process of data collection (interviews, and document analysis and observation) was greatly influenced by the purpose of the study. My purpose was to ascertain through the theoretical framework of Hegemony, Postcolonial Feminist Theory whether hegemony, patriarchy and human rights have any connectedness to the seemingly low numbers of women in Ghana’s political realm. What enabled me to adequately delve into the study were the five research questions that guided me, especially through the formation and subsequent use of the 18 interview protocols. The research questions, the theoretical framework guided me in my quest to
collect the data that I needed. Patton (2002) discusses these processes of the development of the interview guide based on the theoretical framework, the initial research questions and the objectives and purpose of the research.

Observation

According to Best and Khan (2003), observation continues to characterize all research, be it experimental, descriptive or qualitative. Observation is presented as one of the earliest prevailing scientific methods of inquiry. Patton (2002) proposes five dimensions along which observations vary, but for the sake of the study, I did a nonparticipant observation of Ghana’s parliament during a 20-day period between December 2 and 21 2009, when Parliament went into recess. I was always available at 10:00 a.m. everyday to watch parliamentary proceedings for about two hours before plunging into my interview sessions. I needed to watch the women in action on the floor of the house. Though I had been in Parliament for four years and was quite familiar with the way female parliamentarians contributed, I was there this time as a researcher who wanted information; thus I needed to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange to obtain the data. I did the observation in the public gallery and made notes in my field notebook, took pictures, and at times recorded segments of the floor deliberations as proceedings went on. Unfortunately throughout the period of observation maximum of five women parliamentarians were present on the floor of the house and only one of them made a contribution on the passing of a supplementary budget for the Ministry of Trade and Industry.
Parliamentary attendance was not something to write home about. I always counted the number of women present at any given time to have a sense of female punctuality, sense of purpose and mission towards parliamentary duties. Out of a 230 member chamber, I counted fewer than 70 members in attendance every day, and at any given time members were leaving and entering into the August Chamber with careless abandon. Of the 25 women who were the reason. I was present in the gallery and observing their contributions to parliamentary debate, only five on average were present at any given time. The procedures, attendance and participation of women MPs in parliamentary debates will be discussed in chapter 5 of this study.

**Data Recording**

According to Best and Khan (2003) recording interviews on tape is preferred because tapes are convenient, inexpensive and obviate the necessity of writing during the interview which may be distracting to both interviewer and interviewee. Recorded interviews can be played later as often as necessary for complete and objective analysis. In addition, the tone of the voice and emotional impact of the response are preserved by the tapes. I used a sound recorder with the explicit permission of all my respondents. I had my field notebook at hand, and intermittently made notes for either clarification or probes when the need arose. My full field notes were taken during the field visit and sometimes additions were made to them immediately upon my return from the field visit.

My personal impressions about each person I interviewed were added to my field notes after every visit I made out there. There were times when impressions were recorded later due to circumstances which sometimes, I could not control. Other useful
ideas and issues that cropped up during the interviews were all recorded to be revisited subsequently. By my seventh interview, I began noticing particular issues that seemed to be occurring which were in tandem with my literature, and which seem to suggest a particular trend in the interviews. Depending on the mood and the environment in which I found myself, I sometimes backed audio recording with video recording or vice versa. My very first interview ran into unexpected difficulties because my universal electricity adapter refused to function, leading to rescheduling till the afternoon. My recordings were done in such a way that the particular venue, (not all MPs were interviewed in Parliament House) formed part of the interview and the name and designation of every participant was recorded.

It is crucial that, a qualitative researcher spends time in the community where the research is being conducted. Parliament House was my main research community, and between December, 1 and December 23 when Parliament went into recess, I spent quality time observing from 10:00 a.m when parliamentary proceedings begun to when my appointments with women MPs were honored. I did not go to Parliament just to interview women members of Parliament. I was there to observe how they engage in the dynamics of debate on the floor of Parliament. I was interested in knowing how often women MPs champion the cause of women in their day-to-day deliberations. I needed to know their attendance and punctuality, record vis-à-vis that of their male counterparts, and, above all, to do a comparative analysis of the flow of their contributions to debates. My observations are discussed in chapters five, six and seven of the study.
Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). It is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). All my interviews, observations, and documents, put together, became voluminous. It was important that I arrange, categorize, and reduce the data to make sense to readers. This section explains the step-by-step procedure I used to construct meaning from the data gathered for the study. I need to mention that a couple of books on dissertation creation were useful to me as I navigated the research environment, but Roberts (2004) *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation*, was highly informative regarding my data analysis and interpretation process. A five-step process was adopted to analyze the data for this study.

Analyzing data is another critical and important part of the research process. Researchers like Patton (2002) indicate that one barrier to qualitative findings stems from the suspicion that the analyst has shaped findings according to predispositions and biases. This could be a possibility, thus countering such a suspicion before it takes root is a must. One strategy is to discuss dispositions, making biases explicit, to the extent possible and engaging in mental cleansing processes. I did a lot of reflections on this issue and my disposition to the feminist agenda is something I am excited about.
I have declared who am really are right at the beginning of this study, therefore the analysis that follows in this segment are devoid of any biases so as to maintain the desired integrity needed for a study like this. I have done a fairly thorough fieldwork and have a high quality data from my participants which formed a large chunk of the study. My training as a researcher over the last several years, my philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (critical thinking skills characteristics acquired and holistic thinking) strategically positions me to ensure rigor in analyzing my data.

The analysis of qualitative data proceeds quite differently from the systematic statistical analysis that is applied to quantitative data. All qualitative data is likely to be capable of generating different interpretations. According to Clark (2000), “There is no ‘correct manner’ of organizing and analyzing data” (p. 52). It is necessary to create a format that identifies, classifies and organizes data into key thematic categories.

**Transcription and Initial Reading of Transcription**

My main sources of data were one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and non-participant observation and document analysis. In all, 15 voice-recorded interviews and one focus group interview were transcribed. My field notes were not particularly voluminous, just minor points I jotted down for one reason or another. My video recordings, backed by the audio were enough to document the interviews and even catch things that might happen out of my range of vision. From the video recordings, I was able to see the reactions of my respondents to certain questions, and whether they generally felt relaxed when they shared their stories with me. I did all the transcription myself. It was difficult and energy-sapping yet very rewarding. There were times when I felt like
seeking help from professionals, but whenever this idea cropped up, I quickly discarded it, thinking of the financial implications, and of the possibly of not getting very accurate data of what I had recorded.

Through transcription, I was able to simultaneously prioritize all the data by their quality, reflect over possible codes, and identify common trends together with emerging themes while reading the transcripts thoroughly and developing preliminary themes, patterns, and categories. Patton (2002) discusses how in qualitative research, no clear distinction exists between data collection and data analysis because patterns and themes evolve in the course of fieldwork which underscores the use of a field note book which I relied on. Recording and tracking analytical insights that occur during data collection are part of fieldwork and the beginning of qualitative analysis.

**Step One: Initial Reading of Transcriptions**

After all the 15 transcriptions have been read several times to familiarize myself thoroughly, a preliminary list of categories, themes, and patterns were made.

**Step Two: Coding and Categorization of Responses**

All the responses transcribed were coded with a different color for each the research questions, outlined in chapter 1. This was done to make data retrieval and categorization simple and less burdensome. Patton (2002) contends that unless there is some sort of classification and categorization of raw data, “there is chaos and confusion.” (p. 463). Coding, according to Merriam (1998), “is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (p. 164). Each research question was assigned a short
phrase and a color code. As I read through the responses, I highlighted important information provided by each participant with the appropriate color code and phrase. After going through all the transcripts and coding every possible response, I categorized and grouped the responses according to color. In many instances, there was a more than one color code for each research question, because several themes had emerged or were identified.

**Step Three: Organization of Patterns and Themes**

The focus here was the research questions outlined in chapter 1 and the theoretical frameworks. They were the main sources on which I relied in sorting the highlighted codes. According to Bell (1988), “a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a researcher or a reader unless they have been placed into categories, groupings, patterns and items of particular significance” (p. 137). I had no choice but to arrange them along the stated lines.

**Step Four: Final Review of All Transcripts to Validate Patterns and Themes**

At this stage, the data had been fully organized and was beginning to make sense. It was necessary that I read the transcripts several times to complete the final coding and to validate my findings. During my review, new codes, themes, and patterns were identified which were added to my findings.

**Step Five: Completion of Data Analysis and Report of Findings**

The final step in the data analysis process was presenting my findings. A final review of all the transcripts were done to finally ascertain that the main themes and patterns were consistent with the data, and finally, a comparison with the literature was
made to determine which findings were supported or not supported by the literature.

Chapter four discusses the evolution of women in Ghanaian politics as well as some organizations that promote the cause of women in the Ghanaian context. Chapters five, six, and seven showcase the discussions, and findings. These chapters examine how my data answered the research questions set forth in chapter one. A continuous comparison was made between my findings and relevant literature to ascertain which findings supported or contradicted the literature on women in politics. Chapter, five, six and seven, present the discussions of the study in detail based on the emerging themes, patterns, and categories that were derived during the data analysis process. The emerging themes were categorized based largely on the research questions for the study, while chapter eight was the summary, suggestions implications and conclusion. Because I received the consent of my participants to do so, and since nothing untoward or derogatory was discussed, I have used the names and positions of my participants bearing in mind that the researcher has no business doing anything to hurt the participants.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study, like all research, has limitations. I had the opportunity to gather in-depth information about 15 women’s experiences within the political realm in Ghana. Fifteen out of the 51 % of the total population of 12 million women may seem insignificant thus may be seen as a limitation. However, their experiences portray the trend of women’s participation generally in Ghana, since these women come from varied backgrounds spanning the whole country. However, their experiences may not be representative of women from other races, cultures, or religious faiths. Patton (2002)
states “By their nature, qualitative findings are highly context and case dependent” (p. 563).

The study largely focused on women in Parliament and other settings i.e. the educational, party political organizations, and other sectors in Ghana. Though arguments could be raised about this representation, they represent a cross section of the Ghanaian political community and thus relevant, and credible, because the qualitative approach helps in understanding experiences of people.

Another limitation of this study was the limited time frame for my fieldwork and a very limited budget. Though I could have deepened the research with follow-ups, there was not sufficient time to do so. Staying a little longer in the field would have been helpful in interacting more with participants in the district and providing more observations of women experiences in different settings. However, the time constraints, my work, and my academic schedule did not allow me to extend the period of my fieldwork. Such limited time frames are almost inevitable for graduate students conducting studies on a limited budget. As a researcher, and to address this problem, I took advantage of conditions that were favorable to probe into issues that came up in the focus-group session.

**Management of Researcher’s Role**

In this qualitative study, I served as the primary data collection instrument. In qualitative studies data are primarily gathered through interviews and observation conducted by the researcher. Initially I nursed some doubts about my capabilities since this study was the very first major research. The research experience in Ghana went well
through a disciplined approach, utmost restraint, carried through inter-subjectivity and complete neutrality.

Patton (2002) contends that:

Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report should include some information about the researcher. What experience, training, and perspective does the researcher bring to the field...What prior knowledge did the researcher bring to the research topic and study site? What personal connections does the researcher have to the people, program, or the topic selected. (p. 566)

I went into the research encounter having considered who exactly I am, my idiosyncrasies, biases etc. The above quotation is the rationale for the segment on the researcher. As a younger person, I felt in my subconscious mind that I needed to be successful in life, to have a fruitful and rewarding life, these were my main objectives. But I was not too sure of what the process could make that possible. However, when I grew up and completed high school, I knew fairly well the road that could lead me there. It was nothing but education, education and education. Since I came to that realization, I have never turned back any opportunity that came my way to have more education. If education, therefore, is to be the fulcrum of my life, then I needed every breadth to have that, and have it abundantly. I see education as not about preparation for just one part of life, (like work) but as preparation for the whole of life and the deepest aspects of living. I have already completed 3 Master degrees courses in life, the first being all but thesis, and I am now doing a fourth higher degree. I have nursed strong philosophical inkling all these years, having been groomed by my parents to see hard work as the surest way of having a rewarding and fulfilling life. I have never departed from that, and have
always made it the cornerstone of my life. I can safely say that, having come this far, I have closely kept to this, and have had no regrets at all. Working hard in life has gotten me quite close to the apogee.

Born 53 years ago, and being in the twilight of my academic work, I strongly believe in passing something tangible back to society; this has been my philosophical inclination. Giving something back to society is the genesis of this dissertation. I have had a very interesting and checkered life in the circles of women. My mother is a woman, my wife is a woman, my children are women, my most trusted friends are women, and the teachers whom I liked most were all women. Women have gone with me to the top, and they have also gone with me to the bottom. When women have dumped me, other women have picked me up. I have never fully understood them.

I must say that my interest in women led me into researching this topic. I have been greatly transformed and humbled by this study because of the wealth of information to which I have become privy about how women navigate this world of ours. I have been a politician who served Ghana, my nation, for about four years, first as a member of Ghana’s legislature, as a Deputy Defense Secretary and a Secretary of State in charge of the Fisheries sector. Being male and seen as a patriarch, I am aware of the discord it strikes in people who may be wondering what a male like myself would end up studying about women. My studies at Ohio University, especially the last five years, have re-shaped my thoughts about women who men all over the world tend to take for granted. I expected a western civilization like the USA to be extraordinarily different; I did not need any extraordinary or profound effort to learn how patriarchal this society is, too. I am
tempted to think that most men and, more importantly most women out there will doubt the genuineness of this effort. I wish to assure such people that this is a study done out of a profound interest that I have had as a silent crusader over the years. My decision to examine women, especially the role of women in political leadership, was a personal one and was prompted by my encounter as a PhD student with Cultural Studies as a discipline over the last four years. My humble realization is that cultural studies concern itself with the meaning and practices of everyday life. Examining the aims of cultural studies has reinforced my beliefs that our own cultural practices and their relationship to power especially in this 21st century may be doing us more harm than good.

According to Kellner (1995):

Society is conceived as a hierarchical and antagonistic set of social relations characterized by the oppression of subordinate class, gender, race, ethnic, and national strata. Building on Gramsci’s model of hegemony and counter hegemony, cultural studies analyze “hegemonic,” or ruling, social and cultural forms of domination, and seek “counter hegemonic” forces of resistance and struggle. (p. 31)

In combination with critical theory, a framework that I have extensively studied, I have come to question the basis of power relations within human societies, most importantly that of Ghana, my motherland. Cultural Studies has equipped me with some useful skills that have catapulted me into deeper levels of understanding culture in all its complex forms, moving deeper in analyzing and making meaning of the social and political context in which culture manifests. Seen therefore as both the object of study and the location of political criticism and action, I have come to appreciate and value women’s issues as phenomenal cultural studies subjects, because they are undergirded by issues of
social justice, equity, fair play, equality and peace, the main ingredients of Cultural Studies as propounded by ‘Birmingham’ the center of Cultural Studies, hence my decision.

The findings in the study will go a long way to showcase the genuineness it seeks to portray. My 15 respondents have made their voices clear on issues concerning women in their quest to actualize themselves as people who make up 51% of our population. I, Edward Akita, irrespective of who I am, has not added, diluted or embellished what my respondents had to say. I was led into this by what I have come to realize are issues bordering on social justice, equity, fairness and the quest for a more egalitarian society.

Initially, I nursed some ideas about how fully I could play this role without unduly influencing the process because of my peculiar circumstance. I am pleased to say that though it looked quite challenging out there in the field, I exercised the utmost restraint and the study was successfully carried through without any bias. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989):

Researchers who conduct qualitative studies will need to propose and develop roles that ease entry, facilitate receptivity of environments and participants, and offer rewards or benefits of some sort to motivate participants’ observation. They will need to demonstrate that they can conduct the research in such a way that neither the setting nor the people in it are harmed. (p.63)

Pershkin (1997) describes how he navigates his research environments which were part of the reminders that I had while on the field. I am a man, a patriarch, a politician, this excess baggage I carried into the study, but these idiosyncrasies were relegated into the background. There were times that some of the issues my respondents discussed struck
me as somewhat incongruous, but I was there to listen to them to provide them with a
platform to inform me about their lived experiences which I needed for my work. I was
totally neutral and nonaligned which paid off exceedingly well. My strong desire to
examine this dichotomy came about as a result of my active engagement in politics in
Ghana in the last decade and a half. While serving as a legislator, I worked with many
male parliamentarians, but fewer women parliamentarians. The numbers of women in
any sphere of the political realm leaves much to be desired, and with an almost 50-50
representation in the total population of Ghana, it leaves much more to be desired.

According to Barzun and Graff (1992):

The researcher, it is clear looks for his facts more actively than the
traveler. He must piece together the “scenery” of the past from fragments
that lie scattered in many places. This means that the researcher soon
develops a guiding idea to propel him along his route, a hypothesis ahead
of the facts, which steadily reminds him of what to look for…Bias is an
uncontrollable form of interest…In accessing bias…Does the work as a
whole exhibit the indispensable scholarly virtues, however noticeable the
bias? The researcher must bring to bear a certain sophistication of mind.
As a thoughtful scholar he recognizes the double condition of the search
for truth—it must in the end produce a form and at any point it answers
some implied or expressed interest. Next as a critical judge tracing the
way in which the historian’s interest has contributed to the form, he
asks…Was the writer fastidious or crude in selecting and marshalling his
facts? That is, was he hard upon his own hypothesis, fair-minded to his
opponents, committed to the truth first and foremost? (pp. 185-188)

These were issues of which I was constantly reminding myself. “How am I dealing with
these issues?” Women in politics remain a very interesting subject to me as a politician,
and I needed to remain unbiased as much as possible in order not to be judged harshly by
posterity. I very often checked my sentiments in the conduct of the research so as not to
contaminate the process of collecting the data, analyzing it and writing it up. Whether I
succeeded or not can be judged through the data that I present. However I realized while in the field that critical to the success of the study was my ability to gain entry to my main site, the Parliament of Ghana. This issue has been thoroughly discussed in another segment of my study.

With the wisdom of hindsight, I now realize how paramount my role was in the fieldwork. The advantage of human beings gathering data in qualitative inquiry is the ability to interact with the situation, respond to environmental cues, collect information at multiple levels simultaneously, perceive situations holistically, process data as soon as they are available, provide immediate feedback, request verification of data, and explore atypical or unexpected responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hoepfl, 1997). I must mention here how I constantly reminded myself of the need to remain alert to be devoid of any biases. I acknowledge that researchers do carry personal values, beliefs, experiences, and biases which tend to shape their perceptions and role in the data collection process. My data from the participants buttress the fact that I was on a fact finding tour, and my own personal beliefs and values were relegated into the background.

**Ethical Issues**

Ethics or the moral principles which have guided me especially since I joined the university were to be brought to bear on this study. Phenomenology acknowledges those lived experiences as a fundamental part of the interpreting process. According to Patton (2002), what ethics portends is:

> It is concerned with human conduct as distinguished with mere human behavior. Conduct implies there is a choice; people can choose one course of action or an alternative course of action. Behavior is a descriptive term referring to all human activities. (p. 6)
Thus my operation right from the start of this study was premised on ethical considerations in the pursuit of my work. In my sub conscious mind I had this as a guiding principle. Glesne (2006) mentions that:

> Aware that there is something to seek, uncover, and to understand about yourself, you are ready to be informed through the research experience. The goal is to get in touch as possible with the embodied self who takes on the role of the researcher. (p. 127)

I did not depart from this prodding that Glesne (2006) discusses, since as a researcher I have come to appreciate the essence of one conducting oneself in a manner that ensures that new learning can always take place when the researcher is positioned strategically to receive it. Some of the issues that came up during the interviews had elements of privacy in them, and those were removed from the data without demeaning the subject under discussion in anyway. Allowing oneself to be informed contributes immensely to the overall credibility of one’s research.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have described the methodology used to study women in political and non elected positions in Ghana. The study demanded a phenomenological case study approach that enabled me to deal with each of my respondents as unit of analysis within a case that needed special attention. The qualitative approach necessitated use of interviews, a focus-group discussion, observations, and the review of documents. The use of my theoretical framework, literature review and the phenomenological case study approach led to the unearthing of very deep-seated sentiments and experiences which women politicians and others had to share with me. I conducted the study in three
main settings, Parliament, offices and homes of my respondents. I have outlined in this
chapter the data collection procedure, provided a portrait of all my respondents, and the
steps used in data analysis. The experience was very informative. In the six week period,
I gained more information than in any other given situation in my life. In the next
chapter, I present in detail the findings of this study on women in the political arena in
Ghana.
CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN IN GHANA IN CONTEXT

Introduction

This segment contextualizes women in Ghanaian politics, provides various facets of historical, as well as contemporary roles of women in Ghana. Under a broad concept of the state of women in Ghana, four thematic areas were identified in the literature, and these are shown below.

- Ghanaian women in pre-colonial and colonial periods
- Ghanaian women after Independence in 1957
- Ghanaian Women Culture and Tradition

These areas provide a window through which Ghanaian women in politicians were examined. Several attempts have been made over the last 5 decades to make the participation of women in Ghanaian politics meaningful and representative, yet these attempts have been fraught with challenges and bottlenecks (Manuh, 1995). These women in the study will provide the kaleidoscope of women in Ghanaian politics, through their own experiences. Finally this chapter aims at discussing and analyzing research question one, “What socio-cultural factors support or hinder women’s participation in political positions in Ghana.

The State of Women in Ghana

When the issue of women in Ghana falls under the microscope, the picture that emerges is relatively interesting and intriguing. Manuh (1995) writes that a large chunk of the literature on women can be dated back to 1975 in the area of Women studies. After 1975 till present, works presented by NCWD on Ghanaian women, Robertson (1984),

Manuh (1995), over 15 years ago advocated for more research into women’s real decision making powers in traditional Ghanaian politics. Though some attempts have since been made, there are still gaps in the research. There have been tits and bits about women in politics in Ghana, yet this study got closer to the main political hub of the nation, most importantly it had been done through a qualitative methodology that got to the bottom of the issues at stake. The presentation of real political players in their own words as it is in this study provides legitimacy of these women’s knowledge on the challenges they face in navigating the political terrain in Ghana. Any living Ghanaian from about the period of the struggle for independence throughout Ghana’s existence since it became a nation will attest that women issues, their presence or otherwise remains an interesting one.

**Ghanaian Women in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods**

Many scholars have written immensely about women’s participation in anti-colonial struggles, yet beyond that women have virtually remained in oblivion. For those of us who are over fifty years of age, we recall with nostalgic feelings the large numbers who usually thronged political party activities to lend their support to electioneering activities. Today, we ask the question that where were the women when “the spoils” of war, positions were shared, usually among the men. Fallon (2003) posits that, the relative
absence of women in Ghana’s government has been problematic since independence in 1957. Before this period, most women around the time before colonialism had very different experiences. Robertson (1977), Okonjo (1994), all allude to the fact that in spite of the sex-segregated roles and seeming male political dominance among the various nations that existed at the time, the society was more egalitarian, which allowed women to hold positions, playing roles that were socially, economically and politically significant.

Okonjo (1994) maintains that women in indigenous states of Ghana were neither superior nor inferior to men as regards power; it was simply a shared responsibility, men and women complementing each other. With the advent of colonialism, and subsequent Western liberal parliamentary democracy before independence, the old order arrangement that existed was soon to give way to a system where women were shortchanged, based on the beliefs of the colonial masters. There existed before, communal structures which were replaced by liberal western political administrative structures, the beginning of the woes of women in the history of the evolution of western democracy in Ghana. Okonjo (1994) asserts that political decisions in communal societies are taken not on the basis of a majority vote, but on the basis of consensus. Women’s position within the political structures of the indigenous states contrasts sharply with their position in national politics which as I have alluded can be traced to the colonial experience. However, and despite this situation of women, they still played significant roles and participated in the anti-colonial struggle and boycotted policies, such as taxation, implemented by the colonial
government. At the dawn of independence, there was no woman on the podium when independence was won from the British.

The history of the non inclusiveness of women in government started very long ago. Okonjo (1994) contends that, the new elites of the nation found it convenient to as usual deny women their representation as their predecessors the colonial masters who handed power over to them had done.

_Ghanaian Women After Independence_

Allah-Mensah (2007), discusses how

Women made significant contributions to politics in the pre- and post independence era. The role of women was evident in their support of the Convention People’s Party (CPP); it is on record that women traders were keen supporters of the CPP government, which in turn offered financial and supportive services…Manu records that women were efficient organizers who could bring thousands of people together for a rally at short notice. (p. 252)

From Allah-Mensah’s account, it was an expectation of many that the women who supported the CPP at the time will be rewarded with positions within the government of the First Republic of Ghana. Five top men in the Convention Peoples Party stood on a podium when Dr. Kwame Nkrumah declared independence for Ghana, and conspicuously missing were the representatives of one gender, the female, comprising 51 % of the population.
Yet this gender’s contribution to the liberation struggle has been acknowledged by many historians. This situation of non inclusion changed by 1960, when the president of the nation saw the urgent need to open the door to women to become active participants in his government. Allah-Mensah (2007) opines that “There was an expectation that an increase in the number of women would run in tandem with the progress towards the consolidation of independence and the nurturing of democracy within a liberal environment” (p. 253).

Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah the first president, attempted during his administration to include women into his government, by way of actualizing the Representation of the People Women Members Act of 1959 (Act no. 72), which mandated the selection of eight women to parliament, and approximately 10 percent inclusion along affirmative action, clear demonstration of political tokenism. The seemingly positive action to increase women’s participation in governance received a
deadly blow by the time Nkrumah was ousted in Ghana’s first coup d’état in 1966, and since then women’s participation has remained peripheral (Pepera, 1993). In the Second Republic (1969-72), only 1 woman was an MP, and in the Third Republic (1979-81), there were only 5 women. Some historians including Okonjo (1994) and others have blamed women’s limited participation also to the frequent military interventions in the 1960s, 1970s and the late 1980s. The virtual peripheral participation of women has remained to date. Military dictatorships by their nature do not promote participation of a broader mass of people, how much more women? However, in the 1980 attempts by the then government in office, the PNDC made some attempts through the 31st December Movement to change the fortunes of women politically, yet their activities became so politicized that the fortunes of women generally were rather compromised (Okonjo; 1994, Gyeke, Tsikata, Aryeetey et. al, 1998).

Successive governments since 1992 have been more rhetorical in their promotion of women’s participation. Ghana is yet to see a more radical approach to high level participation of women in every sphere of the political life. However, Oppong and Abu (1987) who are women have discussed in-depth the historical and background information that throws light on the situation of women. According to them, women in pre-modern Ghanaian society were seen as bearers of children, retailers of fish, and farmers. Within the traditional sphere, the childbearing ability of women was explained as the means by which lineage ancestors were allowed to be reborn. They explain that, anthropologists have opined that the practice traditionally of being seen as well-to-do men was to procreate for a big labor force. According to Wiredu (1995), Africans will do
themselves a lot good if they do a lot of appraisal of what constitutes tradition. Wiredu (1995) “chides educated Africans for uncritically adhering to traditional African beliefs and practices, and warns that exhortations for Africans to uncritically preserve their traditional beliefs may be counterproductive to Africa’s progress” (p.159). I tend to agree in toto with Wiredu (1995), however this should be done with caution so as “not to throw away the baby with the bath water.” This therefore calls for a re-awakening and reexamination of what constitutes traditional practices.

**Ghanaian Women Culture and Tradition**

Traditional practices in Ghana take precedence over all other considerations when relationships between men and women come under discussions. A successful woman in the public eye is an enigma, questions that usually come are, how can she be that beautiful and brainy and capable of managing affairs of state and be a good mother too (Omanba, 2008). I have been caught several times questioning the capability of some women legislators I had the opportunity to work with. Again in patrilineal societies, dowry received from marrying off daughters was also a traditional means for fathers to accumulate additional wealth. Given the male dominance in the traditional society, some economic anthropologists have also opined that a female’s ability to reproduce was the most important means by which women ensured social and economic security for themselves, especially if they bore male children (Oppong & Abu, 1987).

With this kind of mindset of both the male and the female, every conceivable means of domination and subordination especially from the stronger of the two species was the order of the system, a situation that leads to coercion and consent, the under
girding principle of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. Though Western nations and other
developed ones have moved on through legislation and the enforcement of rights of its
entire people, these issues of domination and subordinations are still very rife in some
parts of the world, including Ghana. Any effort to change the status quo as it is needs to
be orchestrated through counter hegemonic strategies and deeds. The stories of women
are best told by women. “Until the lion learns to speak, the tales of hunting will be weak”
as the saying goes.

_Ghanaian Women in Contemporary Times_

The crux of the matter vis-à-vis the situation described above by Oppong and Abu
(1987) is this. Ghana has a population of about 22 million people. Out of this figure, 51%
is made up of women with men being 49%. In Ghana presently, there is no overt sex
discrimination as regards education. According to Dinan (1977) women enjoy an equal
legal right to education from primary school to the university and are free to avail
themselves of any type of vocational, professional or academic training. However,
differential participation rates for boys and girls are clearly evident at all levels of the
educational system with a very dramatic decrease in the rate of female participation at
each higher stage of the educational process. When women are in very subtle ways
denied education which is one of the rights enshrined in the human rights declaration,
then their rights are invariably being trampled on. This is seriously affecting the presence
of women in all spheres of human endeavor. Dinan (1977) discusses women in Ghana
further saying that there are low literacy levels compared with men, 65.8% compared
with 42.3%, of women respectively. There is gap between men and women in urban and
rural literacy rates, 69.6% and 39.8% respectively. Females are disadvantaged in rural than in urban areas as female literacy rate is 28.2% in rural areas compared with 58.9% in urban areas. The tables below give a combination of levels of literacy and other vital statistics useful in examining the challenges of women in Ghana.

**Table 5** Selected Vital Statistics by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate %</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ghana Enrollment</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>39.44</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of HIV/AIDS Infections</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s construction using Ghana Statistical Data

On all the three domains mentioned in the table above, the numbers tilt in favor of males. Such dichotomies remain bottlenecks for the female gender, since every step they take is entangled in a complicated societal matrix that seems to be everywhere. Enrollment in educational institutions have been in favor of the male the last several decades. Becoming perpetually uneducated deepens the woes of the supposed dominated group. The repercussions in all spheres of endeavor become fully entrenched. HIV AIDS has also become a debilitating factor on women in Ghana. More women than men are dying of HIV related cases because of this same coercion and consent paradox (UNAIDS, 2008). One debilitating factor leads to another and another until an action is orchestrated. In
many facets of life the female gender is negatively affected as portrayed in table 5 and figure 10.

![Figure 10: Vital Statistics of Representation: Legislative Representation of Females in Parliament of Ghana: 1960-2008](image)

Source: Researcher’s construction using Ghana Statistical Service Data

The figure above is just a graphical illustration of the growth in the number of women in Ghana’s legislature. It depicts the growth of women in the national Parliament from 1960 to recent times. The pace of growth of women representation in Ghana’s Parliament is excruciatingly slow and the reasons are not farfetched. Both participants have shared their experiences as to why it is so and these experiences corroborate the literature, and the principles of the theories of hegemony and the Postcolonial Feminist theories, that, the nation is patriarchal.

Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) asserts that:
Hmm, they said all kinds of evil things about me. This is killing our women. This is why most women don’t want to come into politics. The men are always trying to find fault with the women. ..And those are some of the things affecting us as women and we are not being accepted by the men. Why this mentality, I don’t just know.

I am not sure, because last year, when we were campaigning, I saw that, more than 100 women were trying to become parliamentarians, but in the end, we had only 3 new faces, why? We don’t even understand it, but some women will not take insults, the insults our men are giving to us and the bad things they are saying about us, the women will not even come at all. (Personal Communication, 2009)

According Tayne (2008),

Socio-cultural/traditional barriers include societal norms, laws, rules, beliefs, and practices that militate against females’ access to education. The socio/traditional environment, which is rooted in culture, creates the barriers that rob females of their human identity and social rights. A negative attitude towards women’s education, the dowry system, control of women’s lives, male privilege and time constraints as well as the multiple roles women must perform are some of the cultural barriers impeding women’s access to education. Negative attitudes toward women’s education are serious societal impediments to women. In Ghana, when a woman gives birth, it is common to hear men ask the question: “Is that a human being (boy) or an animal (girl)?” “Nepa anaa, aboa?” (Twi). (Meaning did the woman give birth to an animal or a human being.

The above quotation speaks volumes about the environment in which females operate in Ghana, and how that affects their access to education and every other sphere. The reduction of a gender to the level of an “animal” demonstrates the level a dominant group could go to debase the existence of another gender. Such utterances despite the despicable orientation they connote, shows the pervasive manifestation of the “domination-subordination” dichotomy. This kind of mindset perpetually recruits, and prepares women for subordinate positions in the society, without any prospect of getting
out of the domestic sphere. It also deepens that psyche of the younger ones and positions them for the continuity of such attitudes and deeds that undermine women’s existence. It will be therefore not surprising to see the top echelons of society males than females. Though attempts have been made to reverse this enrolment trend, successes continue to be minimal, though enrolment has improved in basic schools, yet drop out rates for females continue to be high. There seems to be a pattern across the length and breadth of the nation there will be always more males going to school than females. Accessing education in the western world comes with a different pattern too, there seems to more African American women in the school system than males, and the reasons are not farfetched.

Ghana has a large percentage of its population being women, it must have an equally large educated class of women, if the socio-cultural, economic and political milestones desired are to be made. The gender profile by sub Saharan standards may not be too bad though, but compared to other nations might be a different thing altogether. All may not be gloomy as postulated; women who have brazed the odds have won the admiration of the society. This figure is very graphical and quite self explanatory. The representation of women in the parliament of Ghana from the 1960s through to present day has been very low. These staggering figures portray the marked unequal representation of the female gender. How can a nation such as Ghana with about 51 % of its population being female have such abysmal representation of women? The figure below also showcases how the female gender in Ghana compares with sub-Saharan averages.
In the above illustration as shown by the dark lines are the Sub Saharan averages of women, while the violet color depicts the averages of Ghanaian women. In some areas, the issue of gender female performance and positionality go even beyond the averages set, whilst in other situations, especially the representation of women in government, it falls below average. Access to education presents another challenge to the female, leading to disparities in the representation of females in all spheres of human endeavor. Though the figure portrays a good showing in primary school enrolment, it is a common fact that the attrition as the female climbs the education ladder remains a thorny issue. According Gylfason (2001), secondary-school enrolment is probably the most commonly used indicator of education in empirical growth research. Of the three indicators used, education inputs, outcomes, and participation, it is the one that is most closely correlated
with economic growth. Recent governmental policies such as free lunch packages and uniforms have contributed immensely towards increases in enrolment. If increased enrolment at the basic level could transcend secondary and the tertiary levels, there is the possibility that the fortunes of women could be greatly enhanced. According to Odotei (2006):

The power and status of women in traditional governance in Africa have received considerable attention in the past few years. Out of the research and publications have emerged two theories. One is based on subordination/super-ordination where women leaders are conceptualized as being of inferior status in relation to men. The other is based on dual or separate spheres of authority, where men and women occupy leadership position that parallel and complement each other. (p. 81)

One realizes therefore that whichever way the issue is looked at, the invisibility of women in traditional structures of governance is unquestionable. The implication is that the corridors of power cannot be seen as exclusive male preserve; both perspectives are open to men and women. Why therefore are we not seeing a large presence of women? The answer may be encased in patriarchy. The Fourth Republic of Ghana is historical for many reasons. It has more women in higher public office than it has ever had, in its 51 years as an independent nation. This post highlights some of the women at the height of power. Presently in Ghana, four distinguished women are in top positions hitherto reserved for the patriarchs. The speaker of parliament, the Chief Justice, the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, the current Acting Inspector General of Police, and the current Head of Immigration are all distinguished women. It is for this reason that the interest is being garnered to find what inhibits the women from becoming more conspicuous in our society.
Women’s Organizations in Ghana

In the last two decades, especially after the Beijing Conference, there has been a proliferation of women’s groups in Ghana. Though most of them are in the area of assisting women in income generating activities, quite a handful of them specifically handle issues of political developments. There are a couple of national organizations, the 31st Dec Movement a political wing of the ruling NDC, International organizations like the Frederich Ebert Foundation and International Foundations for Electoral Systems (IFES) Association for the Advancement of Women in Africa (ASAWA) to mention a few. A detailed list of local, national and International organizations championing the interests of Women is provided in Appendix.

National Commission on Women and Development (NCWD)

The NCWD was established in 1975 to serve as the official national machinery for advising the government on all issues related to women. It collaborates with both national and international organizations on all matters relating to the status of women in Ghana. NCWD has commissioned several research projects and initiated and funded projects, thereby raising awareness about gender issues. This body set up to galvanize women in all spheres of human endeavor became unduly politicized in the 1980s and 1990s that it lost its luster. It became an appendage to a political group and eventually was subservient to the 31st Dec Movement, a political movement masquerading as a women’s movement, promoting the interests of women. There is this thinking by most scholars who have written on women that had the NCWD not been jettisoned by the PNDC/NDC governments, the fortunes of women in Ghana could have been much better.
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)

FAWE’s mission is to promote gender equity and equality in education, with emphasis on girls, in terms of access, retention and performance, by working with partners at global, continental, national and local levels in sub-Saharan Africa to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices. FAWE’s vision is that gender disparities in education will be significantly reduced and more girls will have access to school, complete their studies and perform well at all levels.

Federacion Internacionale de Abogadas FIDA GHANA was introduced to Ghana in 1968 by a group of Ghanaian women lawyers who were individual members of the international body. FIDA-Ghana was formally launched in 1974. It is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-governmental membership organization, committed to the enhancement of the status of Ghanaian women and children through legal aid, research and publications. FIDA-Ghana is affiliated to the International body. The local affiliate in Ghana advocates for addressing the situation of women in Ghana as participants and beneficiaries of the development process.

Women in Law & Development in Africa (WILDAF) Ghana

WILDAF is a pan-African, non-governmental, non-profit organization that brings together individuals and organizations to promote a culture for the exercise and respect for women’s rights in Africa through a variety of tools, including law. The network was established at a regional conference held in February 1990 in Harare, Zimbabwe whose theme was “Women, Law and Development: Networking for Empowerment in Africa.” WILDAF was the product of a year-long process of organization and inquiry, involving
NGOs and governmental projects devoted to empowering women and improving their status in Africa. A GENDER NGO, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) Ghana believes in gender equality and affirmative action. The organization has a sizeable network of organizations and individuals in over 20 countries in Africa ready to respond to urgent calls for solidarity or protest actions. “We share what we are doing right and what we are not doing right and we work together to step up the process of implementing women’s rights.” One may be tempted to gloss over the impact these organizations in Ghana have had on women, because of the tendency by the dominant group to do exactly that. Though the 31st December Women’s Movement was extraordinarily politicized, it will be not be pragmatic enough to say it did not make any meaningful impact, and that depends on which side of the aisle one may be. Strides were made, some women’s’ fortunes were politically and economically enhanced, while others assert that they were marginalized because they did not share the same objectives with the movement. Be that as it may, posterity will always be the best judge as to whether the lives of majority of women were in a way affected. The main women’s movement, whose wings were virtually clipped after 1981 was known for cultivating women more meaningfully from its inception in the 1960s until its present docile stature.

**Ministry of Women and Children**

The Ministry of Women and Children did not exist until year 2001 when the government of the New Patriotic Party thought it wise to do so. This Ministry raised the expectation of the general public that the issues of women were to be given the desired attention after all these years. The ministry exists to promote the welfare of women and
children in Ghana. It is the entity designated by government to initiate, coordinate and monitor gender responsive issues. It is to ensure equal status for women and promote rights for children. It also has the responsibility of ensuring the formulation of gender and child specific development policies, guidelines, advocacy tools strategies and plans for implementation by Ministries, District Assemblies, Private Sector Agencies, NGOs, civil Society Groups, and other Development partners.

**Decentralization and Women**

Ofei-Aboagye (2004) has written extensively on Ghana’s decentralization process and the role of women. She discusses the process and its ramifications on women in Ghana. Ghana’s effort to decentralize was ironically given a boost during the dictatorial rule of the Peoples’ National Defense Council, (PNDC) a military junta that overthrew a constitutionally elected government in 1981. It ruled by decrees, thus it has an unfettered reign during which the district assemblies were strengthened to take on more responsibilities of central government.

According to Ofei-Aboagye (2004), Ghana has gone through a number of efforts to decentralize political and administrative authority from the centre to the local level. The latest and most comprehensive effort began in 1988, when extensive powers and competencies were transferred to districts. One hundred and ten (110) district assemblies were created as legislative, executive, planning and rating authorities. The decentralization effort was undertaken with certain key aspirations in mind to provide more responsive, equitable and participatory development, to bring government and
decision-making nearer to the people and quicken the processes, and to serve as a training
ground in political activity.

The local government system consists of a Regional Coordinating Council, a four-tier Metropolitan and a three-tier Municipal/District Assemblies Structure. The District Assemblies are either Metropolitan (population over 250,000), Municipal (population over 95,000) or District (population 75,000 and over). There are 3 Metropolitan Assemblies, 4 Municipal Assemblies and 103 District Assemblies. The system of local government is as follows. District assemblies are headed by district chief executives or mayors nominated by the President of Ghana and endorsed by the assembly. The assembly is composed of representatives of the people in the districts. Two thirds of its members are elected through universal adult suffrage. The other third is appointed by the central government in consultation with traditional authorities and interest groups in the district. The appointed membership is intended to ensure representation of key interest groups and sections of the population and to infuse technical expertise (by appointing some key professionals) into the assembly (Kodobisah, 2009).

The general assembly meets three to four times in a year. In between, the assembly operates through committees. There is an executive committee responsible for general policy and development direction of the district and five mandatory sub-committees that work up to it. The assembly is free to appoint more sub-committees as the peculiar geographical, economic and social circumstances and priorities of the people require. General Assemblies are convened and managed by a presiding member, who is the custodian of the good behavior and financial propriety in the assembly. The assembly
is supported in its work by a corps of civil servants who provide administrative and technical input. These bureaucrats are managed by a senior civil servant known as the district coordinating director. Some government departments have also been decentralized to the district level and conduct business there as departments of the district assembly (Decentralization Policy Document, 1992).

Other spheres of government in Ghana are the regions and the central government. Each geographic region is made up of a number of districts and there are ten regions in Ghana. Their function is to coordinate and monitor the activities and plans of districts and to ensure that they are in consonance with national aspirations, policy and direction. The region will also undertake larger projects that benefit more than one district. There is a regional coordinating council (RCC) headed by a politically-appointed regional minister. The regional coordinating council is made up of the district chief executives, presiding members of the district assemblies under the region as well as representatives of the traditional authorities. The RCC is serviced by the regional coordinating director and a team of bureaucrats and regional heads of departments. The function of central government in all of this is to provide overall policy direction, and to coordinate, monitor and evaluate development efforts at the national level. However, two critical aspects of the decentralization process have not been achieved: fiscal decentralization and the creation of a local government service. The completion of these aspects would give the district assemblies more control over local economic development (Kodobisah, 2009).
Decentralization and participation of Ghanaian Women

Ofei-Aboagye (2004) discusses various provisions in the design of the decentralization, saying the process should have made the participation of women in public decision-making easier. These provisions include those for a non-partisan local government system, the freedom to use the local language for the business of the assembly and the discretion in creating additional sub-committees. The latter could have provided a sharper focus on responding to the concerns of various sections of the population, including women. But it did not. The initial participation of women in local government was low and has remained so. In 1994, women made up about 3% of elected members. In 1998, this proportion rose to 5%. This was very interesting given that women constitute just about half of all registered voters. In 1998, the Government of Ghana gave a directive that reserved 30% of the appointed membership of assemblies for women.

When one examines closely the trend of the proportion of appointed women over the last several years, it has always hovered around 30 %, but that according to the guidelines is supposed to be the minimum. Only 3 of the 110 Presiding Members are women (Ghana District Assembly Site). Women have been constrained from entering local level politics by the lack of finances for campaigning and time constraints needed to manage domestic responsibilities, income-generation activities and political work. The widely-held perception, that political activity is “dirty” and not for decent women is also a barrier (Ofei-Aboagye; 2004). Women have also not been voted for because politics is
often viewed as belonging to an arena which is best managed by men. Husbands and families are reluctant to have their women in the public eye.

Women lack public arena skills and some complain of intimidation by male opponents. Inside the assembly, women have yet to make their presence felt. In spite of the increases in their numbers provided for by the government directive, their performance has been muted. This has been attributed to lack of self-confidence, a limited capacity to communicate in English and a lack of understanding of assembly procedures. Other problems include being shouted at in assembly proceedings or being ignored by presiding members when they (women members) want to make interventions. The short notices for meetings and transportation costs incurred during assembly work have also been indicated as constraints for them. Women members employed in the formal sector also identify difficulties in combining assembly responsibilities with their jobs such as getting time off to attend to assembly and community business (Ofei-Aboagye, 2004).

Elected women also worry about being able to undertake development activities to justify their selection. Perhaps part of the difficulty of making women’s presence felt at the district assembly level is the general paucity of women in government administration itself, both as politically appointed heads of districts (mayors) and as administrators and civil servants. Out of 110 district chief executives, only twelve are women (10.9%). The situation is similar for women as civil servants and administrators. Women constitute 32% of the entire civil service and 24% of those in local government with most being in the secretarial and clerical classes. Only 12% of the decision-
influencing category—the administrative class—is female. In 1999, there were only 3 women amongst the 110 district coordinating directors (3.6%). This low representation is disturbing given that the district coordinating directors provide technical guidance to the assemblies. They are therefore responsible for providing inputs for planning, ensuring equity in implementation, monitoring for efficiency and effectiveness, and evaluating for impacts.

In summary, while the visibility of women in local government has increased, the numbers are still very low – both as administrators and as assembly members/counselors/representatives. The issue is not the numbers of women alone, but their self-knowledge, confidence, clarity of purpose, priorities, commitment and ability to skillfully present their perspectives. Their multiple roles as wives, mothers, daughters, community workers and income-generators severely limit their time for community interaction and mobilization.

**Promoting Gender Sensitivity in Local Governance**

Ofei-Aboagye (2004) discusses two main approaches adopted to try and make local government more responsive to women and gender concerns and to help enhance women’s participation in governance. The first category has focused on building the capacity of women to aspire to, attain and perform in local government office; and on women’s groups to engage local governments. The second has sought to encourage stakeholder institutions such as the district assemblies, training institutions, and agencies providing services and implementing development initiatives to provide appropriate support to women’s concerns by targeting, positive action, creating an enabling
environment for their participation, advocacy, education and the provision of resources. In both approaches, there has been extensive European support, materially, financial and in the form of technical assistance.

Other strategies adopted by European development organizations have aimed to mainstream gender by recognizing and providing for gender differences in the design and implementation of programs and activities. European support for activities in the first category has consisted of capacity-building for women as assembly members and economic actors as well as for women’s groups. Specific interventions in this category include the following Ofei-Aboagye (2004) said in practice, relationships between local authorities and central government ministries, departments and agencies reporting mechanisms needed to be worked out further. This level of governance looks quite promising since it has about 36 % of its members being women (Strengthening local governance structures critical for democracy).
CHAPTER FIVE: WHO IS WHO AND FACTORS IMPACTING WOMEN IN POLITICS

Profiles of Selected Participants

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the profiles of the participants and the second discusses research question one. I will use the words of the participants to showcase who they as individuals, family, context, educational attainments among others. I interviewed 15 women, 8 of whom were members or former members of Ghana’s Parliament; three were former members of the executive, one is a current member of the executive of Ghana, and six others, among whom were a former parliamentary candidate, a women organizer of a major political party, and two political analysts. I must mention at this juncture that all my participants were quite comfortable with their real names being used. Therefore, the profiles will be accompanied by actual names. The next segment showcases “voices behind portraits” of the participants in the study.

Profile of Hannah Tetteh

Hannah is the current Minister of Trade and Industries. She was divorced before entering the political arena in 2000. She was a former member of Ghana’s Parliament (Awutu-Senya Constituency) from 2001 to 2004. In Parliament she was the Minority Spokesperson on Gender & Children, and Deputy Spokesperson on the Judiciary. She was also a Member of the committees of Finance, Subsidiary Legislation, and Defense and Interior. She did not seek re-election and went back into the private sector as the administrative manager of an industrial firm in Ghana. Hannah Tetteh holds a Bachelor
of Laws Degree from the University of Ghana, Legon and also completed the professional law course at the Ghana School of Law. She obtained her advance degree in business administration with the finance option after she left Parliament in 2005. She is 43 years of age. Her parents come from Ghana and Hungary, a half caste as is usually said of people belonging to white and black origins. She is a member of the current ruling government of the National Democratic Congress.

She presents herself as very confident, intelligent and capable as this research will show. She has very interesting opinions about women in public sphere and below I reproduce some of the statements about her family background.

I don’t have any male siblings. I had 3 female siblings, so I don’t have that kind of experience. My experiences growing up were very good, because I had a father for whom it did not really matter what gender you were. He was somebody who encouraged us to be the best that we could possibly be. As I said, I grew up in Cape Coast, and I lived in a doctor’s bungalow and within the immediate vicinity, our neighbors had two daughters. I happened to grow within an environment more dominated by females than males. So I don’t have the benefit of that kind of experience. I went to a girl’s school for my secondary education, my child and young teenage life was mainly in the company of women. (Hannah Tetteh Personal Communication, 2009)

Hannah Tetteh’s experiences growing up was different from the average Ghanaian because of her mixed parenthood, she was raised differently. Her father a western trained Ghanaian doctor who had lived most of his life outside the country, and was more western oriented. Her mother the foreigner brought her up with foreign values. Between 2005 and 2009 Hannah Tetteh was the General Manager (Administration) and Company Secretary of Ghana Agro Food Company which is an integrated agricultural processing company situated in Tema, producing a variety of products for the local and international
markets. Also, Hannah did some Legal Aid Work with FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers).

Profile of Frema Osei

Frema Osei is a member of the current largest opposition party in Ghana the New Patriotic Party (NPP), MP for Ayawaso West Wuogon. She is 63 years of age and holds a BSc in Home Science and an MSC in Foods. During my interview with Frema Osei, said she was married, however, in a recently created website on parliamentarians, she is described as single. She has had a rich working experience with international organizations. She was a program coordinator with Action Aid Africa, Country Director, Deputy Minister of Manpower and Mobilization, and a member of the Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises committees of Parliament. She was the first I approached when I entered Ghana’s Parliament. After initial assurances of granting me an interview, she did not appear as promised. It was a former male colleague MP who eventually arranged the interview. She recalled parts of her life story:

I come from a polygamous family, my father had several wives. Within the household did you notice any difference between chores males did and what females did? (She rephrased the question I asked) I told you earlier that I had a very strong father figure, to the extent that the household chores the key ones were actually assigned by him. In hindsight, I realize that the females were given specific chores which in his mind were more feminine, in the sense that we swept the rooms, tidied the bathrooms. The men they set the table, they were responsible for ironing, polishing the shoes and also distribution of provisions to the various mothers. The interesting bit is that we had chores. Now on hindsight, I realize that there were certain chores that were for men. For instance, males were also washing the cars. As for the kitchen, my father never assigned anybody to the kitchen. We had a lot of domestic help. Our mothers used to complain that our father spoilt us because we were not fully utilized in the kitchen. We were more accountable to our father than to our mothers. I have had various experiences, but let me say that when you are growing in life it is
good to have role models. I have said that I had a father who championed my cause, but in secondary school, I had teachers who saw a lot in me even though I went to a purely girls school. My head mistress, the science and math teachers took such keen interest in me, because she later told me that she saw that I had a leadership potential therefore she should straighten me out. I was made the dining hall prefect because the authorities had a lot of confidence in me that I could do the job effectively. Those experiences from the teachers I have mentioned, one way or the other firmed me up and made me a good leader. In university before I finished, Mrs. Florence Sai was a lecturer, she picked me as a research assistant to handle a project on the role of women in fisheries. I had a lot of responsibilities to handle a lot of things. My encounter with women has made me realize that they had a lot of influence on me about what I could possibly become in future. I have, may have been molded and prepared for leadership position mostly by other women apart from the strong impressions my father made on me. (Frema Osei Personal Communications, 2009)

The growing up experiences of Frema Osei depicts typical characteristics of most Ghanaians who grow up in polygamous homes. Usually, children from such homes run into very challenging situations as a result of the social dynamics that prevails in such homes. There are very many mixed signal from father and the numerous wives within the setting, with the potential of creating maladjusted children. Both the father and other women had a profound effect on her. Frema Osei (MP) considers herself one of the best women politicians currently in Ghana. On two occasions, she beat men in electoral primaries of her party. She had been an activist since the Progress Party days from 1969 to 1972. According to her, she had her “apprenticeship” as a politician through her father when she was growing up. Her father was a member of Parliament during the Second Republic, the first parliament of the Second Republic. Frema Osei (MP) remembers that even as a student during the military days, her account though insignificant at the time in 1972 was frozen by the military government. She believes her father made a very strong
impression on her political thinking and lineage. In 2004, and again 2008, she fought four men during the primaries to retain her candidacy. She indicated that life as a Member of Parliament seems to be taking a heavy toll on her, and she strongly believes that at 68, she should be devoting more time to her grandchildren.

Profile of Gifty Kusi

Gifty Kusi is a Member of Parliament for Tarkwa Nsuaem, the deputy minority chief whip of the New Patriotic Party in Parliament, currently the largest opposition party in Ghana. Gifty Kusi is 52 years old and married. She married almost immediately after she won elections in 2000. She has been in Parliament since 2001, a three-timer who has a Masters of Arts degree and currently working part-time on PhD at the University of Ghana. Gifty Kusi has no biological children, but adopted four of her husband’s. She speaks of her family experiences.

I am the first girl born of the family; my siblings looked up to me as the mother of the house. So I was taking care of them, cooking and going to the market as well, doing everything for them when my mother was divorced. My father used to divide the chop money into two, he gave my siblings own to me, and I will cook for my siblings, make sure they go to school. I was acting like a second wife to my father. In my home now, what was happening in my mothers and my father’s home, cannot happen to me, my father was looked up to by my mother as the head, and he has to say, so everything that my father says is final, but now, my husband will sit down with me and we will discuss, and the two of us will see the wisdom in whatever the two of us is doing, and then we take a decision. He does not force his will on me, we all discuss. But during my parent’s time it was not like that. I am currently demonstrating with my life, what I am doing should be a pointer to empower other women too. I am doing that currently, assisting young girls to become what they wish for themselves. My life should exhibit what I am saying. (Personal Communication, 2009)
From the experience narrated above, one readily gets the impression about the challenges children face in polygamous environments, especially the drudgery of life that children within this setting go through. This participant’s home exhibits a more egalitarian arrangement between both gender which may not necessarily be in other homes where there may be acts of domination by one gender or the other. Gifty Kusi (MP) has done 9 nine years in Parliament. She was the deputy Majority chief whip from 2001-2008, when her party lost the elections in December 2008, she became a member of the minority, the Minority Chief Whip. Gifty strongly believes that the dichotomy that exists between women representation in parliament and that of the men needs to be abridged by whatever means possible.

Profile of Hannah Nyamekye

Hannah Nyamekye is a graduate from the University of Ghana, and was a teacher before going into politics. From 2001 to 2008, Hannah was the Member of Parliament for the Jaaman area in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana, and a deputy minister for Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology. Hannah sees herself as a single woman because of her peculiar circumstances of her marriage. Her “husband,” who feels inadequate because of the level, to which Hannah rose, prefers to be on his own. Hannah’s own words tell her story from obscurity as a teacher to a Member of Parliament, Minister of State for Agriculture, and a deputy Minister of State for Environment, Science and Technologies, two portfolios she held as a member of Ghana’s Executive from January, 2001 to January, 2009

Initially, I had shown interest in politics, but was on the sideline. I was the women organizer in my constituency for the New Patriotic Party. But
actually, I had not thought of becoming the MP because of the financial outlay. However, at a point, the people saw what I was made of; and I also showed a lot of interest in it, and some elders of the party approached me. I did not hear the women talk directly, but you know, our social set up is such that what the women say, they take from the men. We think we have advanced, even when you gather enlightened people, the ideas that will come, at least 60% will be what the women have gathered from their men.

Like I said, a wife and a husband, you think the rural woman has got the freedom to do as she pleases? No. Even those of us that claim we are enlightened, if you do that you have problems with your man, unless you don’t care. So the woman that can really come out, and express an opinion is mainly the single woman. Look at it from your own home; I don’t know what is happening in your own home… Do you think you will be comfortable with your woman going her own way whilst you are on another way? That is the problem we have, if you insist all manner of names are given to you, you don’t respect, you are arrogant, you are this, you are that. That is the nature of the society. In the rural communities, if you are a woman, a second class citizen. You are enlightened, you want to be yourself you are called names, but you could also get used to it. Some of us are used to it now. A whole lot of women will not even venture into it because their men will say no. If the man says no and you say yes, then that means a break of marriage. Choose your political career or your husband. Some even put that on the table. Fortunately for me I did not experience this. About six years. I was in the first assembly, and I had done what I was expected to do. So that catapulted me into the constituency. I got the people to talk to my husband and he agreed reluctantly initially. (Hannah Nyamekye, Personal Communication, 2009)

Hannah discusses above the realities on the ground as regards the position of women in Ghana. She alludes to the fact that despite the status a woman, the tendency of men to subordinate her remains a high probability. Her position is that a lot of women are prevented from getting into political leadership as a result of their men, who may feel insecure especially when their women become prominent than them. Though Hannah Nyamekye (fMP) remains a married woman on paper, she asserts that she does not know what exactly the state of her marriage is. Hannah ended the segment on her marital status
saying that “she cannot prescribe any remedy for women politicians having difficulties with their men” because according to her, “That is what I don’t know, because I could not handle mine.” Hannah thinks that culturally women are placed below men, though women are making a lot of noise about equal rights; she thinks we have not gotten anywhere yet as a nation. She strongly believes that she could not have gotten to the level she obtained in her personal career, had it not been for her education. To Hannah, education gives real opportunities for a better future to children born in poverty, and had she not been educated, she would have been wallowing in some misery somewhere in her remote village in the Jaaman district in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. Hannah has taken some rest from active politics after losing the primaries for re-election in 2008 and is on her own re-strategizing about what her role politically could be in the future.

Hannah’s experiences clearly demonstrate the characteristics of the rule of men usually referred to as patriarchy.

Profile of Elizabeth Agyeman

Elizabeth Agyeman is the current Member of Parliament for Oforikrom, a constituency in the Ashanti region of Ghana. She is the first of three children her father had with her mother. She comes from a polygamous home, her father had several wives. After her early childhood education and a teacher’s Certificate A, she never went to upper levels of academic education. She said husband’s trip to the US some 30 years or so ago opened the way for her to become a trained nurse in that country. Her mother’s death in 2004 was another turning point. She returned to Ghana to become a politician, contesting and winning an election against a man who was very highly educated, an
academician, and a professor who had lectured for several years in one of the universities of Ghana. She shared her life experiences further:

When I was growing up all the 22 of us were brought together in his home. My father will give birth to a child, and will not allow the children to be with their mothers elsewhere, so he will bring the child to his house, so he brought up all his children. He said if you are a man, you will have to take care of your children, all his children were raised in his own house. In fact, I can say that my father when I was growing up was a rich man, he had money so he took care of all of us, if only you will go to school he will encourage you to do that. Men are not doing it for us but we are doing it and that is what I hate it. Like I am here, my husband should be here, but he decided to stay in United States. It was he who sent me there and I had to change my profession from teaching to nursing. I don’t want …. If he had been a politician I will have followed him. That is what I am saying. I am a woman, no matter who are, you are still a woman, a woman will have to be controlled by a man, I am not the type of woman who will stand on the neck of their husbands, marriage is friendship.

It is not control per se; it happens everywhere in Ghana, if you go to Kumasi, you will realize that there are a lot of teachers….No matter who you are, once you are a woman….You still want to be under your husband. The man is supposed to be the head of the family. Because when you stand with a woman, there is the possibility of losing your candidacy if a woman contests you. And that is exactly how Dr Baffoe Bonnie saw me, and he ganged up with some boys in my constituency. They did not even know me because I have been away for a very long time, and they were making some false accusations about me, and eventually people got to know that whatever they were saying were not true. The only thing that would have affected was for them to say that I was a prostitute and God knows who I am. Yeah, they think that should never happen. And there are certain areas excuse me to say, when a woman is menstruating, they have all problems with such occurrences. If a woman uses a bucket, they will not use it. And those are some of the things affecting us as women and we are not being accepted by the men. Why this mentality, I don’t just know. (Elizabeth Agyeman, Personal Communication, 2009)

The experiences of this participant are very enlightening vis-à-vis the core issues the study sought to investigate. The dynamics of politics as portrayed by the respondent’s experiences are interesting. Here in an environment which is dominated by men yet a
preference is shown by the constituents for a female to be their representative at the national parliament. Here was a situation where the incumbent a male had very stiff competition from a woman. Though Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) had backing from her constituents, by becoming the Member of Parliament eventually, she becomes confronted with the possibility of incurring the displeasure of her husband. However, she thinks the best way to maintain her marriage because the husband refuses to come to Ghana to join her, is to visit the United States at least three times a year, because she loves him and does not want the marriage to break up. She contends that, “I wanted him to come the very first time I won the election and we were being sworn in and he said no.” The issue here is that our socialization in Ghana places more premium on men; the man must always have the best, and the woman must be at the receiving end of the largesse of the man. If the scales turn, most men feel uncomfortable thinking their position as head of the family has been undermined. This thread runs through most of the interviews with my participants.

**Profile of Esther Obeng Dapaah**

Esther Obeng Dappah is the current MP for the New Abiren constituency in the Eastern region of Ghana. She is 63 years of age, In my interview with her, she called herself a ‘village girl’ because she was born and raised in a village. In Esther’s own words this is what she said about herself:

I was born in a tiny village in Ghana, from a humble background I studied here in Ghana to the Advanced’ Level, I went to Britain and did the LLB, entered Inns of Court School of Law, and became a Barrister at Law, I was called to Bar at Lincolns Inn. I came back to Ghana, read Ghana law and was called to Ghana Bar in 1978. I worked at Attorney General’s Office as Assistant State Attorney, and later on went to the Bench as a Magistrate. I
did it for a short while and due to bereavement, I went back to Britain and worked with London. Hmm, my mother had two daughters, so I was growing up with my sister until I joined my father in Accra. That was when I started interacting with my brothers. I never saw people as boy or girl, I still don’t, for some reasons I do what I want to do, I don’t consider myself as oh, I am a girl so I should do things this way or that way. My father did not marry my mother, so I was brought up by my grandmother who encouraged me to study. The men that I talked to, tend to think that I am strict; they give me the impression that I am not feminine, that is the impression that I gather from them. I am a serious person and some men when they see a woman they think about someone they would want to relax with, a play thing. I am not a plaything, if there should be a relationship, there must be respect from each other I would say mutuality. Not just any other woman is suitable for parliament, but one with some qualities. A woman venturing into the political terrain must have some qualities. The people that we are dealing with, you should not underrate them. They are discerning, and I don’t play games. In fact that was my fear before I went to cabinet. I asked myself several questions, these people are they going to intimidate me? When I went to cabinet, I realized the president listened to everybody and showed no biases towards anybody. Before attending meetings I read thoroughly all the briefs, research on them to the minutest detail. It therefore means that to reckon fairly well with men, you must be educated, and one man commented that “I like your ability to do things in detail, I don’t miss a dot. (Personal Communications, 2009)

This is a very well educated participant who was fairly well accomplished before getting into the political sphere. Though the participant’s circumstances as a child are not different from many of my respondents, these did not stifle her development academically and professionally. She maintains that women must be very qualified educationally and possess certain qualities before venturing into the political realm. Her experiences at cabinet meetings suggests that at certain levels of operations within the political realm, gender does not mean much, but rather the capability of the individual, and this is what she stood for and had acceptance from her male colleagues.
My work as a minister and working with big companies I showed the way. They were amazed as to how I conducted myself. They could not bribe me. As a woman you will think that “I must perform” to get the recognition. As a woman, you go out of the country to negotiate you are able to bring all the good qualities in you to be successful. But other women who are not confident themselves, who have been housewives in their own little corner looking after their own husbands and their children, see you and think “oye biribi dudu, aden wongyai na wonko tra wobeebi”. (Meaning, as a woman, you are going beyond what is prescribed by the society for you, you are venturing into a man’s domain, stop and stick to what women are expected to do.) Sometimes they ask you what you are still doing there. They will judge you according to their own standards. You have to educate them. Not really, until they come here and meet women who are articulate, women who understand issues and then they think twice. Men are overwhelmed when they hear women like us articulate issues some of which they themselves might have no idea about. I have said everything, but I think when things fall apart, it is only a woman who can put things right, it is the touch of a woman who can put things right. It is about time women took the realm of affairs in this country. (Esther Obeng-Dapaah, Personal Communication, 2009)

The issue of going beyond the “gender contract” (Manuh, 1995) where our society has prescribed roles for each gender is what is at play here. Some men and women in our part of the world will usually question women who try to get into areas usually seen as man’s domain. To them women should stick to what the society has prescribed for them, that males should be focusing on productive roles while women should focus on the reproductive ones, usually within the domestic realm. However, this participant has a different opinion about what is perceived as the gender contract. Esther thinks that it is about time that the “gender contract” issue is revised especially in this contemporary world where the fallacy of female incompetence has been debunked.
Beatrice Bernice Boateng or (BB) as she is called by most Members of Parliament and her constituents, is 58 years old, an MP for New Juaben South in Ghana (Eastern Region) and a member of the largest opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). She is a single mother with four children. She became a single mother not by choice, but rather through fate. She lost her husband some 14 years ago and has since not remarried. She holds an MSc in Education after having progressively worked herself up virtually on her own from Certificate A, through Diploma at Specialist Training, through to obtaining her first degree in 1993. She tried becoming an MP on two occasions which did not work until 2008 when she kicked out the incumbent, a man, in the constituency.

Having been an Assembly woman before becoming an MP, she believes that as a nation we need to do a lot to promote women’s interests. As an MP, she belongs to two committees, Gender and Children and Education. Having risen from virtual obscurity to national-level politics, BB was in a position to tell how she navigated the road through the socio-cultural setting prevailing in Ghana. By the end of her narration, the challenges, the barriers, and deeply entrenched structures that societal evolvement has bestowed to successive generations, showed why the dichotomy between women and men does not seem to be closing fast enough despite how far the world, and indeed Ghana have traversed. Telling her story on how she struggled in life to become an educated person despite the odds against her right from infancy makes BB’s story a must hear:

I was one time asking my mother why she was not schooled, and she said there were 5 siblings, 2 who were sent one had mental problems, the other had rashes, and their conclusion at the time was that school was not good for girls. So all the other girls who were my mother’s siblings were denied
schooling. So you realize that if you are from such a home, they did not even have the intention of sending you to school, and if you have gotten to form 4 and you are not sober, that was going to be your end. But I believed I had some innate capabilities/qualities that should send me somewhere. After finishing form 4 and staying home, ostensibly to end everything, my former head mistress, she heard I was at home wasting away, so she bought training college forms for me, and I decided to enter the teachers training college. Hitherto, I had been so rough to my teachers that none of them ever thought I would ever become a teacher. I was nursing the idea of going into the armed forces, even up till today. I still cherish the military or the police. My father was a polygamist, the two wives, my mother had been divorced, the two step mothers were not happy about the turn of events, my going to training college. I could only have my training in the northern part of Ghana, because at the time allowances were only being paid to students in teacher training there, and not the south. I started teaching, and alongside I was writing my O’Levels, and eventually I did my Masters. For now, I have a Masters degree from Edinburgh University.” So, along the path of getting the O’Levels that I needed, I was teaching, I was marrying, I was making children too at the same time. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, 2009)

Combining academic pursuit with the reproductive roles of women could be quite problematic. While men are free from those trappings, it is usually the female who battles with this combination. Any attempt by women not honoring this role is frowned upon by the society. Combining the reproductive role with a productive role could be challenging, and more challenging when women venture into the political realm. Though a rugged political realm is in Ghana, she became interested in politics in Ghana, an area seen as a man’s turf. Bernice told how she dealt the knockout punch to such a political heavy weight in Koforidua.

Apart from having the leadership skills in the schools, my step father, the one who married my mother was a politician. Mr. Boateng in Koforidua; he was the first ever regional chairman for NPP. He was also a founder of our party. He also succeeded Adu Boahen’s father when he died. He is an Uncle to Adu Boahen, so he succeeded his father. So it turned out to be that because he was a politician and his involvement in the political struggle in Ghana, he was jailed about 8 times in the last several decades.
Every government that comes picks him up. He is the father who brought me up when my mother divorced. Because of the brutalities meted out to him, his real children equated politics with pain so none of them was ever interested. I was always with him; I think I might have been inspired by that. I had always wished to become a leader. I had a feel of campaigns at a fairly early age, which was crystallized whilst at the University of Cape Coast politicking as usual for the NPP. Even before this, the introduction of the District level elections was also a way opener for me. I was once appointed a district electoral officer. I was then the only woman there whilst teaching at Kibi Training College. We had to mount platforms for those who were interested in getting into district level politics. This experience gingered me on. Negatively, people have carried this mentality that a woman’s world is the kitchen, and again once you are married, they think the boss of the house is the man, the bible says it. Religion has played a key role too in this negative thinking about women. That is where the men refer us to. This is where the men are coming from, if you are a woman and you try to aspire higher, your man says no. There is an extent we can go, the bible says that the men are the heads of the house, and we are partners, helpers of them, the bible never said we should be relegated into the background so me no matter how high I go I want to still go by that, because I am not too sure that Ghana is where a woman can go and ask for the hand of a man in marriage. So far as it is the man who comes for our hand in marriage we can’t do anything about that. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, 2009)

Bernice mentions her experiences and achievements before becoming a Member of Parliament, but goes further to introduce the issue of religion which most Ghanaian women often do to illustrate their peculiar situation of being in subordinate positions as the segment that deals with religion and socialization would show. Bernice further illustrates the unique role women play.

I have said earlier on that the world is made up of men and women, and we are all peculiar in our stance, and as such we have our peculiar way of taking care of our issues. The men understand themselves, the women also understand themselves. How women really feel, men don’t know. Therefore, no matter what the men do over here, they cannot fully solve women’s problems, otherwise why will a community site a clinic on top of a hill, because at the end of it, it is the pregnant woman who will climb that hill. Increase of women’s participation will change the dynamics of
doing a lot of things. There is this proverb that, ‘Se obarima to tuo, etwere barima dem, na se oba to tuo, etwere barima dem”. Meaning (If a man buys a gun, it stays in a man’s room, but if a woman buys one it stays in a man’s room) Now, we can at least buy guns and put them in our own rooms. Some of the socio-cultural structures with time are beginning to crumble. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, 2009)

The uniqueness of women and therefore their contributions to our collective effort should not be down played. Bernice suggests that women can best take care of issues about women, than the men assuming they have all the answers to issues about women. Myers (2008) raises similar sentiments which seem to be complementing the words of “BB”.

According to Myers (2008),

Research confirms that both Republican and Democratic women are more likely than their male counterparts to initiate and fight for bills that champion social justice, protect the environment, advocate for families, and promote nonviolent conflict resolution…raise issues that others overlook, pass bills that others oppose, invest in projects that others dismiss, and seek to end abuses that others ignore.” (p. 68)

These sentiments by Myers buttress the point that women’s perspectives are necessary. During the interviews, the respondents were asked about how they viewed other women, their response was the following cliché that “women are their own enemies.” The issue of women being their own enemies as the participants explained borders on women doing things against their gender. Some of the things mentioned included female genital mutilation, supporting socio-cultural issues that impinge on their rights, like widowhood rites in our part of the world and other practices that undermines womanhood in general. Some of these issues are discussed in other segments of the study.
Profile of Mrs. Joana Bannerman

Mrs. Joana Bannerman was born in May 1966 in Ghana. She is married and has three children. She was schooled in Ghana. Her first degree was completed at the University of Science and Technology in Agricultural Economics, and a second degree from the University of Ghana, an MBA with a finance option. She worked for the United States Peace Corps for a while as a trainer before joining the Agric Development Bank where she has been employed for over 10 years. Currently, she is the Group Manager at UT bank, one of the leading private financial institutions in Ghana, and a political analyst. She describes her family culture and expectations of girls.

Well in terms of what we were doing at home, there were many things that we did not really have, like boy’s chores and girls chores. For instance, I remember that we used to have a Rota and the girls both boys and girls had a day for cleaning the house, the kitchen and doing the dishes. But when it came to actual cooking, they were not expected to play any role at all. This was the preserve of the girls. They were expected to learn how to cook, but as far as the boys were concerned, they were supposed to help in scrubbing the kitchen floor and other non cooking related chores. It was not anything that was clearly spelt out; it just came out that when it came to cooking, my mother for instance will call us the girls. I had younger brothers, she would usually ask them to go out of the kitchen saying they were crowding the place. No, I will not be really able to place them in any of those categories, because I think that in the main, they were doing what parents were supposed to be doing. They really were not so steeped into tradition as to say that in our tradition we don’t do this or that. Washing clothes was by the girls, but the boys never took part in that. I grew up knowing that there were certain things expected of me as a female, because of the things that my mother would say, like she would say that if you are a female it is important that you learn how to cook, because when you get married, you will have to look after your husband, so you needed to know how to do certain house chores. Even though nobody actually said this is a girl’s role, I grew up knowing that there are certain things that are expected of me. Mother said this and that, about how to keep a home, how to cook, how to do this or that. Currently I am the group head of commercial banking, (Joana Bannerman, Personal Communication, 2009)
Mrs. Joana Bannerman follows political events very vividly. She has political ambitions. Though she did not declare any of the political parties registered in Ghana as her choice, it was very evident in her statements that she has strong proclivities towards the minority party in government. She believes that she could be the best Mayor for Accra if she was given the opportunity to serve Ghana in that capacity. But according to her “Right now that is not my top priority” (Personal Communication, 2009).

Profile of Kate Bannerman

Kate Bannerman sees herself as a “political animal,” but has never ventured into mainstream politics because she considers it to be a very tough terrain navigated mostly by men. She was born some 53 years ago to educated parents who had 6 children. Being a female who found it more convenient to be among males, Kate became a national athlete by the age of 13 while in high school. She discusses her family, school life, and the community she lived in.

I was a national athlete at 13 years, and that took me away from our immediate environment. That is what launched me into the domain of boys. I grew up with this thinking that there are specific things for girls and specific things for boys. This is what my family, the community and the society practiced. I was in every way the odd one out, because of my desire to be with the boys every time. Yes, definitely, our parents had different training and that is what they tried to instill in us when we were young. As we grow and we learn more, we have experienced other things and we realize we can look back on the treatment we had and what it is today, and we can even foresee what might happen 20 to 30 years from now. It is quite different, it is not the same. I am the headmistress of this school, and I have been here for 29 years; I have been head of the school the last 3 years. I entered the school right after national Service, so I have been through the ranks to assume this headship. I started as an ordinary teacher; I have been a housemistress, head of department, assistant headmistress and now headmistress. The political realm is too robust for me. I don’t think I have the strength for politics. Women think politics is
so robust they think they cannot survive. (Kate Bannerman, Personal Communication, 2009)

Today, Kate Bannerman is a principal of a high school presiding over a teaching staff of 45, three quarters of whom are men. Though she has keen interest in national politics, she has not ever thought of going into it. She sees the representation of women in politics as abysmal; she thinks women should be well-represented in that segment of national life, but she would rather keep away from that terrain. Kate has two children, and is attached to a man though; he is married to another woman. “I have not had a man for myself.” she opined.

Profile Elizabeth Kwachoe Sackey

Elizabeth Kwachoe Sackey is the current MP for the North Okaikoi constituency in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. She belongs to the minority party in Parliament. She has been in the majority party, but when her party lost the last elections in 2008, she became a member of the minority. Elizabeth Sackey has not held any executive position in government, but she has had some experience in District-level governance where she represented her district at the local assembly. To her that was her real baptism in politics. Her experiences till now have been a bit checkered, characterized by periods of trouble or controversy as well as periods of success. Contemplating throwing in the towel because of unforgiving attitudes of some males in her constituency, Elizabeth thinks she has had enough of politics. She started the interview by answering my question as to whom I was speaking to by these statements:

Elizabeth Sackey is the 3rd born of 10 siblings, and she comes after a set of twins called Tawiah. Born in the northern part of the country, Tamale to be precise, but a southerner. I schooled in that part of Ghana Sakasaka
primary. I had my secondary education at Accra High school. I also had education in accounting, started work at Accountant General, attached to Rural Housing and Industry at the time. I joined Ghana Commercial Bank till 2004. I have been schooling alongside doing BSC in Business Administration at Legon too. I was trained in a Christian home, with strong beliefs in the Christian principles. And because we were 10, 8 girls and 2 boys’ daddy was very strict making sure that we all were OK. Because he was well educated too, it was his objective at the time that he positioned us well in society.

Discipline was of a high concern to him. We were trained in a manner that you needed to know four important words in life, thank you very much God Bless you, the more you blessed somebody, and the more you are blessed. He also taught how to say sorry, it should flow on our lips every time. If you wronged somebody, you should not hesitate at all to say sorry. No, daddy treated us equally. House chores for instance were shared equally. He felt that both boys and girls should have the feel of everything. Talking about politics remains a family issue, our family in a way has been closely connected to politicians, the Obetsebi Lamptey, who was a cousin of my dad, my aunties were also connected in a way to politicians, my father had a lot to do with politicians especially when we were in Tamale it was quite noticeable, especially issues surrounding the Kulungugu, bombings but he was not in main stream politics. He associated a lot with the Tedams and the Bawumias, Abavanas. I remember from that time that there was something about politics. I came to this area in the 1990s, and associated myself with the youth who I felt needed some direction. My husband agreed to the interest I showed on the youth, and that was the beginning of my close association with the community. One thing led to the other, we formed a social club, and eventually parents also got involved which eventually led to the formation of Residents Association becoming the president of the association. I championed most of the cause of the group, this led to my eventual acceptance by the community to become the Assembly Member for the community. I helped to promote the Member of Parliament for the area at the time. (Elizabeth Sackey, Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth presents above her life while growing up especially in a Christian home. She presents a seemingly egalitarian home where the male and the female are brought up without any differences. Her early baptism into politics because of her family’s association with politicians may have influenced her to become one. Concurrently,
Elizabeth continues to be the MP for her area and knowing the worth of education and what that could do to enhance her political career, she is pursuing her first degree in business management at the University of Ghana Legon, and considering an “icing on her academic achievements” with a masters degree, an MBA with admin option.

Profile of Grace Asobayire

Grace Asobayire is a woman organizer of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). She is 54 years old and single. She considers herself a seasoned politician. In addition to holding party positions which she got through elections at the party level, Grace Asobayire did not vie for any other political office. She talks of nursing parliamentary ambitions, yet she cannot find the courage to join the fray. Born to parents who have had political antecedents to the United Party (Dombo group) and from the Upper West region of Ghana, Grace had her early education in the Wa district. Her high school education was done in the Upper West region of Ghana. Grace relocated to Accra to have her university education and was part of the politics in the University of Ghana. Though she contested elections on two occasions as a result of her interest in the Treasurer’s position at one point and the secretary of the Student Representative council, she was never successful in any of the elections at the time.

According to Grace Asobayire:

There were only two women who took part in the elections for SRC positions in 1977, and my thinking was that I was going to sail through easily. I stood against four men for the position of secretary; almost everybody assured me that they were going to vote for me. I was greatly surprised at the end of the elections when the results were declared. I lost miserably to all the men. As if losing once was not enough, I tried again the following year and I placed third. I felt it was enough and that men would only deceive me saying they will vote for me and yet abandon me during the election. I left the university after completing my program and worked as a teacher for several years before deciding to be engaged once again.
again in political activities. I had parents who belonged to the UP tradition, and I had kind of liked that political party. My choice became obvious, I joined the New Patriotic party, an offshoot of the UP in 1992, when the ban on political activities in Ghana was lifted and the nation was ushered into democracy. I was an ordinary member until 1998 when I was appointed as an assistant secretary and later won elections and became a Women’s organizer of the party. Dealing with men when you are a woman does not come easy, especially in our part of the world. I have just been managing. (Grace Asobayire, Personal Communication, December 2009)

Grace developed an interest in politics while she was in the university, and like other participants in the study, she had an early baptism through her parents. She has very strong interests interest in politics at the national level, and she hopes she will eventually, in 2012, stand as the parliamentary candidate for the New Patriotic Party in her constituency in the Upper West Region of Ghana. She is currently preparing to contest re-election in the next few weeks.

**Profile of Sheila Lamptey**

Sheila Lamptey hails from the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, and is a single parent, 34 years of age. Her first stint in politics occurred at the District Assembly level when she was appointed by the government to represent teachers in her district at the district assembly level. She wondered how she could combine her teaching work with District Assembly duties. Becoming more knowledgeable in what she was expected to do in the assembly, she realized it was possible to combine the two.

I was made a government appointee in 2002 so I did not contest elections. Government was supposed to present about 30% of the assembly members through appointments, I was appointed to represent teachers in the District Assembly. I have been teaching home science in Teshie Secondary School since 1996 when I obtained a diploma from Winneba Specialist Training College. I am interested in politics, I want to obtain a first degree then I will contest for the parliamentary seat in my constituency. Going into Parliament without at a first degree will not be the best. These days most advertisements say they want people with
second degree. What can I do with just a diploma? I want to be married too, but for now, I will continue being an Assembly Member, and study at Worker’s College for my first degree. It will take about four years if I work very hard. My objective is to become an MP. I am a member of the current ruling National Democratic Congress. (Sheila Lamptey Personal Communication, 2009)

Sheila strongly believes that an Associate degree (Diploma) is not enough to enhance her prospects in the political realm. She thinks that at least a first degree will strategically position her to realize her political objectives as all my participants indicated during my interviews. In addition, she believes that both men and women have equal rights to rule the nation. According to her, though there are women in the Assembly, she prefers a 50-50 ratio than what currently exists. Sheila Lamptey lost her husband a couple of years back and she intends to remarry in 2010.

Profile of Janet Araba-Lawson

Janet Araba-Lawson is a former parliamentary candidate for the National Democratic Congress party. She was born some 35 years ago holds a Bachelor of Arts degree. Janet is married with two children. Her husband, also a member of the National Democratic Congress is a regional chairman of the party, and a businessman by profession. Janet has been a personal friend of mine for over ten years. We met at an inter-party political meeting. Araba’s presence at any gathering, and her rich baritone voice made her very noticeable. Araba granted me an interview and made herself very clear as is evident below.

I know what it is that men want from me, but I am too smart for that kind of thing. I have my own life objectives, and I am progressively working hard towards that. I have on two occasions contested elections in my constituency against not less than five men and did not make it. In my
constituency which is a farming area, our people are very traditional oriented. One question they keep asking me is “Na Araba, edien koraa na ope? Koshweshe Obarima bi na owaa wu, na dzai politis politisi owureyi.” (Meaning what at all does Araba want? Go and find a man to marry you, and stop this politics). To them I am just another woman, just something to be played with by men. (Janet Araba Lawson, Personal Communication, 2009)

As mentioned earlier in a similar statement made about one other participant, people, both men and women usually frown on women who are outspoken and who venture into the political arena. Women in our part of the world do not have it easy breaking into what is considered a male domain. However, it is clear from further statements Araba made that her upbringing was fashioned out in a way where females in her family were not discriminated against.

My father did not discriminate against any of his children. He had eight of us 5 females and 3 males. The males came after all the females, and they are much younger. Out of the eight, four of us had university education all female. I am preparing myself well within the next decade; I want to go to the top. Within these two decades, my most urgent objective is to become a Member of Parliament and move on from there. I do know that it could be quite tough, but I am prepared for all the challenges out there. I grew up knowing very well that our society sees a woman as a subordinate. But my father raised me not as a subordinate, but as a human being equal to the task. My school days were very challenging since my teachers and classmates the males found me too hot to handle. I run into difficult situations most often, but was always among the top three. My university education was equally a challenging one. The males in the class always had something against me, but I prevailed and remained at the top. I am currently at the law school and would be done at the end of this year. (Janet Araba Lawson, Personal Communication, 2009)

The impression one gets from Araba’s statements seem to suggest that to an extent, the type of upbringing one gets could impact either positively or negatively. For her, without discrimination from her father, she grew up seeing no
barriers to her objectives. Her family and the dynamics that existed within it possibly shaped Araba’s thought as a woman, giving her the necessary tools to break through societal barriers. One just needs to listen to a woman such as Araba. She wants to “go to the top,” and that portrays her objectives as a woman, irrespective of any societal impediments. Being aware of the undulating nature of the political terrain, as far as women are concerned, she is still poised to reach the apogee.

**Members of the Focus Group**

Five women participated in the focus group interview and their profiles are presented in this segment. Miss Kudiabor, Cecilia Martey, Mavis Dakura, Stella Owusu, and Grace Bimpong have various levels of education. They introduced themselves when I asked who they were.

I am Miss Kudiabor, I am a lawyer by profession and I am in private practice, and I am 36 years old and single.” “I am also called Cecilia Matey, I am 38 years old and married. I am a women activist working for a local NGO here in Accra.” “My name is Mavis Dakura, I am 55 years old, a civil servant working at the Ministry of Women and Children. “My name is Stella Owusu and I am a politician, a former parliamentary candidate for my constituency in the Ashanti region and I am working for an NGO.” “My name is Grace Bimpong, I am an Assembly Member, 48 years old and a graduate of University of Ghana. (Kudiabor, Cecilia Martey, Mavis Dakura, Stella Owusu, Grace Bimpong, Personal Communications, 2009)

One common thread that runs through this group is that they were all fairly well educated women well placed in society, who were closely connected with issues of women, and politics, gender mainstreaming, women and children issues, and knowledgeable on the
socio-cultural dynamics of the society. Their contributions to the research have all been factored into the discussions segment of the study

**The Meaning of Culture and Tradition**

Research question one “What socio-cultural factors support or hinder women’s participation in political positions in Ghana?” sought to find out the bottlenecks women in Ghana face in their quest to participate in political positions. The interviews the participants in the study granted led to the emergence of five main themes four of which they identified as hindering them as politicians or have the potential of hindering other women wanting to participate in the political dispensation in Ghana. The question and the sources from which factors that hinder their participation have been rendered diagrammatically to illustrate the themes that emerged as shown in figure 12.

![Diagram of factors supporting or hindering women's participation in political positions](image)

**Figure12.** Diagrammatic views of Research Question One and Themes Emerging

The data analyzed for research question one have been grouped under five emerging themes to help understand the experiences of women in politics. Participants indicated clearly that marriage and raising a family are two societal expectations which
they are bound to fulfill as one of the most difficult issues they had to grapple with. They indicated also that religion, into which most of them had been socialized, hinders their quest to participate in political activity. In addition to these two, they contended also that socialization and education also hinders the participation of women in participating in politics, and agreed unanimously that all the above cumulatively violate their rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The experiences these participants shared led to the emergence of social capital which positively impacts the fortunes of every one when available, but which could be taken for granted. This would be discussed later.

**Theme one- Societal Expectations: marriage and family**

**Theme two- Socialization and religion**

**Theme three- Socialization and female education**

**Theme four- Political Rights of female**

**Theme Five- Social capital**

These themes are explicated below.

**Societal Expectations: Marriage and Family**

Socio-cultural factors are large scale forces within cultures and societies that affect the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of individuals (Vann, 1977). Understanding what constitutes socio-cultural factors will go a long way to elucidate the responses of the participants and how that impinges them.

Vann (1977) maintains that:

Adults have always inculcated the ideals of the culture in their children and passed onto them the skills needed for work and adaptation to the existing political and social structure. In all
societies, some of this conscious and unconscious teaching has been done distinctively by women. (p. 205)

According to Bortei-Doku (1995), most social institutions operate on the basis of family and gender ideologies assumed to be natural which empower men to control women’s productive and reproductive rights. Ethnic values are acceptable characteristics or behaviors and they underpin ethnic identity. Traditional social values and the bonds of the extended family are important factors in Ghana as a whole, yet, they are becoming increasingly less prominent among the urban population and the professional classes.

Bortei-Doku (1995) asserts that

Cultural beliefs and practices relating to fertility, sexuality, male superordination and female subordination, gender may present significant barriers to women in Ghana. Through such traditions men have presided over the distribution of the resources that women require, to establish their independence in all spheres. (p. 39)

Breaking these down further, one identifies ethnic values, most important among them being marriage, childbearing and raising-practices, and the family structure, as some embedded segments worth considering. Marriage remains a sacred institution among all ethnic groups in Ghana. Indeed there is no single tribe that does not uphold that.

According to Takyi and Oheneba-Sakyi (1994), African societies within the whole sub-region expect men and women to marry. There are strong indications that marriage is nearly universal. Married life is so important to many Africans, including Ghanaians, because it is the basis for assigning reproductive, economic, and noneconomic roles to individuals. Voluntary celibacy is quite rare in traditional African societies.

The pro-family and pro-marriage ideology in Ghana also has implications for social relations. Among the various ethnic and linguistic groups, unmarried women are
often viewed differently from the married (Takyi & Oheneba-Sakyi, 1994). This may explain why by age 20, a significant proportion of women in Ghana are married (Cohen 1998; GSS, 1999). Kuenyehia, (1995), discusses the status of Ghanaian women antecedents, and how our socio-cultural environment had been greatly impacted by the colonial imposition of received laws and values which radically restructured the political, social and legal arrangements under which our people lived.

About 80% of my respondents alluded to the fact that our socio-cultural framework had defined the path for both sexes. While nobody cares if a man remained unmarried, women did not have that luxury. Elizabeth Agyeman’s statement on this issue quite intriguing:

You control us in a way. When we get married, we have to be at wherever you men are. Yes, because if you love your husband is moving to another area you have to accompany him, otherwise I don’t call it a marriage. Men are not doing it for us but we are doing it and that is what I hate it. Like I am here, my husband should be here, but he decided to stay in United States. It was he who sent me there and I had to change my profession from teaching to nursing. If he had been a politician I will have followed him. That is what I am saying. Tradition has been overtaken by events yet it has persisted. (Elizabeth Agyeman Personal Communication, 2009)

The sentiments rendered above by the participant set the stage for serious reflections about marriage and politics. Marriage between a man and a woman creates bondage between a man and a woman, or whichever gender may contract it. Elizabeth shares her experiences as a married woman and the situation that status got her into when she became a politician. She sounds like someone peeved because her expectation of support from her husband does not seem to be forthcoming. She insinuates that being in contemporary times does not seem to have affected tradition of her people than she had
anticipated. She expects partnership that marriage bestows on two individuals to be characterized by equality which in her case was not so.

Mrs. Joana Bannerman, a participant who is also a political analyst expressed sentiments about marriage as an arrangement in which the man remains the prominent one and the female is less prominent especially in Ghana. The man must necessarily have a better job than the woman; he must earn a better salary than she. He must be the productive one and the woman the supportive one. She explains that aptly in her own voice:

I mean that in marriage, most women would not want to rise above their husbands or become more prominent than their husbands. Because you will be perceived to be like you are demeaning your husband. You are now playing the role of the man in the house, because you have a bigger job. There is nothing wrong with that arrangement though, however, because that becomes the perception of the people, the community in which you live, it kind of has an effect on you. Unless you have a strong man who is more modern in thinking, to make you feel alright whatever people are saying does not make a difference. Because for me thankfully, my husband is very supportive, I don’t know if I became the president of Ghana whether he will still be that. But at this point, he is very supportive and it helps to know that. But assuming that my job began to take me out of the house more often than it takes me now, and I have to be gone for longer periods, you expect men rather to be doing that kind of thing, whether if we ever got to that point, I will still be working in a bank. Yah, if I were to relocate for 5 years, it will be, it will appear as if I am putting my career ahead of my family, and my primary responsibility is first to my family, bringing up the children, keeping the home; it will be difficult. I know quite a number of women in politics whose homes have suffered by their decision. That has been their lot. For those who have survived, their husbands are also deeply involved in some political thing or other. It is either that or women whose marriages have not worked feel free enough to take up those kinds of positions. You see, it is acceptable for a man to go out there, while for the woman, there are all kinds of reservations and inhibitions. (Personal Communications, 2009)
The issues raised by Joana Bannerman resonated throughout my interviews with all the participants. Joana Bannerman appreciates fully the framework that exists in Ghana; she discusses the nuances of Ghana socio-cultural setting appropriately mentioning the ramifications of choices of women when they enter matrimony. She posits that her career will never take center stage in her life to the detriment of her marriage, and she fully understands the repercussions a woman might be faced with if her choice of a career comes into conflict with her partner indicating:

Navigating this paradox is a very tough issue, what women value is also at variance or inconsistent with the issue of politics. If this society did not place much premium on marriage and as much premium on child bearing, those two things will naturally free up women for things they would otherwise desired to do. But if today, a woman were to mount a platform to say I do not want to have children, neither do I want to get married, nobody will want to touch her from a mile away even with a long spoon, because she would be seen as “who is this person”, she does not understand why she is on this planet earth. That in the first place will make things difficult. (Joana Bannerman Personal Communication, 2009)

Navigating a paradox is like a double edge sword. This kind of a paradox is quite usual for women in Ghana, because their men usually think they should determine what their spouses ought to do. Such situations are tied to socio-cultural philosophies and values of Ghanaians, and when women are caught in between such paradoxes, decisions taken often do not augur well for the woman. Though Joana Bannerman has not been confronted with such a situation, she suggests a way out of such predicaments for women noting that society may have to revisit the issue of the premium placed on marriage and childbearing. Joana Bannerman’s forthright thoughts were reiterated by other participants as the research continued.
Hannah Nyamekye a former MP and a Deputy Minister of Agriculture, after her rise to political prominence was confronted with the difficulties some of which were raised by Joana Bannerman. She buttressed the Joana’s earlier sentiments by sharing her experiences and that of another woman all bordering on societal ‘gender contract’ that our society has in place and which seem to be negatively affecting women. Hannah identified it succinctly amid laughter she asserted this:

Like I said, a wife and a husband, you think the rural woman has got the freedom to do as she pleases? No. Even those of us that claim we are enlightened, if you do that you have problems with your man, unless you don’t care. So the woman that can really come out, and express an opinion is mainly the single woman. That is the problem we have, if you insist, all manner of names are given to you, you don’t respect, you are arrogant, you are this, you are that…, if you are a woman, a second class citizen. You are enlightened, you want to be yourself you are called names, but you could also get used to it. Some of us are used to it now. A whole lot of women will not even venture into it because their men will say no. If the man says no and you say yes, then that means a break of marriage. Choose your political career or your husband. Some even put that on the table. Fortunately for me I did not experience this. I don’t think he ever got comfortable, we came here together, (meaning to a huge mansion Hannah has built for the family in one of the plushest growing residential areas in Ghana) he has moved out. (She laughs and claps her hand) for whatever reasons I don’t know. When he says something and you question it, a man does not think he must give reasons for his actions, if you are wife and you want to find out you are in trouble. And if you look at the number of times they will accuse you of disrespect, and arrogance, you have no idea, I don’t think anybody will want to have such situations in their homes. When the woman is higher, the man is always uncomfortable around this part of our world. (Hannah Nyamekye, Personal Communication, 2009)

If women in urban settings undergo challenges bordering on their gender, the rural based woman undergoes more serious degradation from males. Hannah posits that the rural woman is least regarded and usually labors under more oppressive conditions. The issue of a man in a marital setting taking a subservient position is usually unacceptable. The
societal expectations of a man and a woman married places the man above the woman, expects the man to be the provider of the needs of the woman. The woman does not need to be out there given the impression of being productive. The Ghanaian society is changing though, because women are becoming more productive than before, but there are still some limitations.

Hannah Nyamekye shared an experience about an African woman she was in contact with while on an assignment in Nigeria. This Nigerian professor married to a professor was appointed a Minister of State, and that was enough to bring her marriage to an end. Hannah further explains.

I was in Sokoto northern Nigeria, when a woman, she was a lecturer at the university, the man was also a lecturer at the same university. The state government appointed this woman as a minister, and then the man put the cards on the table, that the wife should decline the offer, the woman accepted the offer, and that ended the marriage. The man just said “Naa Shaki” three times and the marriage ended. If you look at the Quran, especially about the ways spelt out to divorce a woman you may see it as dehumanizing. (Personal Communication, 2009)

There is no need to generalize; however, it is likely that this could be common among people in the West African sub-region. Though Hannah Nyamekye’s experiences are different, from the above experiences of this Nigerian professor, the fact still remains her marital position has been affected. She is still waiting for the return of her husband who felt threatened by Hannah’s rise to a top political position. After almost a year and a half, Hannah is still waiting for the return of her husband.

The Deputy Minority Chief Whip Gifty Kusi, one other participant, is married. She was very articulate and did not mince words. Being a three-timer in Parliament has
strengthened her resolve in many ways. I worked with Gifty from 2001 to 2005 in Ghana’s Parliament and can say unequivocally that she is knowledgeable in law-making and has a strong aversion to traditional norms that infringe on women’s rise to the top.

Sheshares her experiences below:

In my home now, what was happening in my mothers and my father’s home, cannot happen to me, my father was looked up to by my mother as the head, and he has the say, so everything that my father says is final, but now, my husband will sit down with me and we will discuss, and the two of us will see the wisdom in whatever the two of us are doing, and then we take a decision. He does not force his will on me, we all discuss. But during my parent’s time it was not like that. If you are asking about whether there is any correlation between women being single or divorced before coming to Parliament, I will say no, but let me count, (she starts counting on her fingers) 1, 2, 3, “Aah, OK, about half are not married. Your assertion is real. Yeah, you see most of the women don’t come into politics because their husbands don’t allow them. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Gifty Kusi experiences can be interpreted to mean generational changes and differences that can be attributed to rising levels of education, information and discernment. Her parents had a relationship that was dictated by her father. This was a period in Ghana where the dependence of women on men was more the norm than the exception, but this is gradually changing. Also, Gifty acknowledges that undue male hold on their women could be problematic for women to go into politics. Gifty reiterated what other respondents had alluded to earlier that Ghanaian men usually find it difficult to cope with the rising profiles of female politicians.

Kate Bannerman is a very distinguished educator. After obtaining her first degree and a post-graduate diploma in education some 30 years ago, she has been educating boys and girls in high schools. Having risen through the ranks to the level of the head of a
high school, she has strong interests in the political process in Ghana. She has two
children with a former MP in the first Parliament of the Third Republic of Ghana 1979-
1981, however, Kate Bannerman is not married. Kate is a strong yet passive adherent of
the political process in Ghana. Though not married, her views on marriage are in
consonance with all the participants in the study. She shares her experiences:

Marriage also hinders the growth of women in a particular way, for
instance, if you are well educated, you will have to consider the person
you are going to pair up with, the person need not be lower than you in
education that is the norm, because there could be an inferiority complex
naturally. The two may agree with each other if there is a situation where
the man is lower in stature, but society will frown on that, and the male
will feel very uncomfortable in the society of very well educated women.
That alone is a hindrance, so either the lady will go single all out and
assert yourself, or you have to submit to an otherwise better position. In
our society when women go beyond certain levels of stature and influence
they are seen as super natural beings and are given names like macho,
witches, Margaret Thatcher, those are the extremes, either you are too
intelligent or dumb. (Kate Bannerman, Personal Communication, 2009)

Kate Bannerman’s focus on the issue of marriage and its challenges for women took a
different perspective. Our Ghanaian society has its own way of dealing with women who
usually damn the odds and enter into the political realm. Our society denigrates women
who sacrifice family to take careers in the public sphere by calling them derogatory
names. This derogatory attitude toward women usually puts women in limbo. This
makes it difficult for women to be taken seriously as politicians let alone win respect.

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) agrees that marriage could be a real stumbling block for a
woman politician; however, she thinks a lot depends on how women handle the issue
with their men. She thinks men should be educated to accept women who get into
positions of authority, and she thinks also that she has the panacea for that. Certain
segments of her comments were rendered in the Akan language to buttress the point she wanted to make, adding another angle to the women/marriage dichotomy is presented.

My father was the best of men that gave me the idea that women should be handled with care. One thing which I remember so well about him was his saying that women are weaker vessels and that they should be handled with care. I discussed issues with him, he had been in a way been hinted by people, so he was prepared. Because we had been together in my work as an Assembly woman, people were quite conversant and close to him too, and some discussions had already gone on. He did not hesitate to give me his blessing...we still have to educate our men that when a woman is placed in a position it does not mean that she is taking the authority of a man away, which men do not want to accept.

A woman is not the head of the family; if she is made the chief executive or president it does not mean men have become subdued. But we should see ourselves at par where we can share ideas that can lead to development and empower our nation, and by so doing if the woman is capable comparatively with men, why wouldn’t the man accept that it is not that the man is being subdued, the idea society usually espouses, “Wuti ho na obaa di wu su?” (Meaning a man should not sit and allow a woman to lord it over him) which should not be the thinking. We should learn to see it as a normal thing. America has given the opportunity for a woman to compete against a man; if she had won America would have had her first woman president. This sends out a strong signal that women are also capable. Germany has a woman leader, so has Liberia. They are all performing and doing well. (Elizabeth Sackey, Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Sackey’s experiences at the lower and upper levels of politics in Ghana places her in a unique position. Being conversant with the dynamics at the two levels, especially the power play between men and women makes her think that the nation needs to grapple with issues of contemporary times. She advocates for a society with parity, equality of status between men and women, yet she still thinks that her husband must be seen as the head of the family. Elizabeth upholds the family hierarchy, yet to her the woman can rise to any position she desires to, and this should not create any inferiority complex in the
men. Elizabeth posits that, women now have the ability to take virtually any career path
and this should not create a fracture in the Ghanaian society.

According to Hammond and Jablow (1973) the public and private spheres of
women’s work:

Is bounded by the domestic framework, concerned with the familial,
private sectors of society. Roles within the public sphere are the province
of men, and the public sphere is the locus of power and prestige. In effect
whatever the nature of women’s work, or its economic value, it is never
invested with glamour, excitement, or prestige. (p. 38)

Tied to marriage are issues of childbearing, child rearing and home keeping. One hundred
percent of my respondents discussed the difficulties associated with these societal values.
For any woman to be publicly heard debasing these societal expectations meant such
women would not be welcomed easily into the public arena.

Esther Obeng Dapaah (MP) a very well educated woman, a lawyer by profession,
a former minister of state in charge of environment and industries did not mince words
when she reacted to some issues raised on marriage. Being single at an advanced age of
65, she agrees marriage and home making could be problematic for women in their quest
to balance that with politics.

To become an MP, you need money, and as a woman no one wants to
invest in you. And your family, your husband might become a stumbling
block, because the work is demanding, you will not be at home to cook,
and there will be a problem. He will not be comfortable, he will be full of
complex, the complex will come because of the circles in which I will be
navigating and he will not feel comfortable in those circles. Yes, “water
might find its level”. There is a higher probability for him to go and find a
little wife whom he can control. Don’t you know Wangari Mathai, she
lost her husband in similar circumstances. One day she returned and found
her husband gone with the kids. Her husband could not cope with societal
pressures. He was an ordinary man and his wife was a Member of
Esther Dapaah (MP) further explains:

But other women who are not confident themselves, who have been housewives in their own little corner looking after their own husbands and their children, see you and think “oye biribi dudu” (Meaning, you are doing something too much as a woman). Sometimes they ask you what you are still doing there. “aden wongyai na wonko tra wobeebi” (won’t you stop and find your levels elsewhere) they will judge you according to their own standards. You have to educate them. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Translated literally in English meaning “you are doing something too much, why don’t you just stop and go and sit at your proper place”. In other words, this is not your designated place, it is reserved for men. Esther Dapaah takes a hard look at her own gender mentioning some of the bottlenecks that they as women face from other women; giving hints on the cliché “women are their own enemies.” The inference here is that women should be supportive of other women rather than being seen to scheme against them. Such sayings often come from both men and women, and Esther does not have
kind words to women who usually say such things. These statements rendered in the Akan language have been interrogated deeply in the seventh chapter of this study.

The participants focused on the challenges the socio-cultural framework presents to them. Thus, for all my participants, they saw our typical socio-cultural framework vis-à-vis marriage as a problematic area, an anathema to them in every way. My participants gave clear indications that because marriage is a societal expectation of women, meeting those expectations becomes an objective that has to be met. However, in Ghana, most women are married at one time or another in their lives. According to Manuh (1995), by age 25-29, less than 5% of women have never been married. The median age of first marriage ranges from about 18 years for illiterate women to 22 years for women with secondary education and beyond. In this research, 50% of my participants were married, while the other 50% had been married before or were single.

What are the implications of marriage to women in politics and those wanting to enter politics? Marriage ties a woman to a man, the Bible says “and the two shall become one.” (Mark 10: 8) What makes it easy for men to navigate the corridors of power, and what makes it difficult for women to do the same? The society in which we live has defined the roles of a man and a woman who are married to each other. Marriage institutionalizes the concept of hegemony through domination and subordination, coercion and consent because society presents the man as the dominant one and the woman as the one to be subordinated. The socialization of all the major tribes in Ghana use this formula thus while the man has the right to navigate any realm and exercise his authority, the woman has restrictions and is mandated to operate in the domestic sphere.
Indeed the voices of my respondents articulated this deeply seated phenomenon more explicitly than I could have done. Do societal norms and applications run counter to universal norms and values as enshrined in the United Nations Charter to which nations including Ghana have appended their signatures? Or does cultural relativism and dictates override these universally acclaimed rights? Below is the relevant article in the Charter that deals with the issue of marriage:

Article 16 (1, 2, and 3)

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women:

Polygamous marriage contravenes a woman’s right to equality with men, and can have such serious emotional and financial consequences for her and her dependents that such marriages ought to be discouraged and prohibited.

The above clearly defines the parameters within which marriage should be contracted under the United Nations Charter. Most recent additional protocols through CEDAW indicate that the UN body continues to examine its directives to the rest of the world, and when appropriate, makes revisions, all aimed at closing the gaps between women and the entrenched structures that undercut them.
Summary

Theme one discussed the issue of marriage and family making. In all, the fifteen participants discussed very angles of marriage and family which they felt were in a way, impediments to their careers as politicians. They maintained that other women desiring to become politicians are confronted with these same barriers. While acknowledging the limitations they have as a result of being married, they lamented that men do not experience these difficulties because the society expects them to be out there. They in addition discussed the issue of male insecurity and inferiority when their female spouses occupy more superior positions than them. There was some unanimity that generational changes may be responsible for some form of acceptance of the female in political positions today than it was three or four decades ago.

The intersection of socialization and religion

A closer look at most religions leads to a phenomenon described as religious patriarchy, and opponents to the stance most religions take are calling for re-designations of images of faith to assume both male and female qualities. According to Renzetti and Curran (1999), “In addition to renaming and rediscovering, feminist reformers are restructuring religious ritual so that it becomes relevant to women as well as men” (p. 335). Until most religious dogmas alter the image and literature of God as both male and female, the signals to both genders could be mixed.

According to Bingham (1986), there is a strong tendency to describe the Bible as a “patriarchal dogma.” According to him, domination and subordination between men and women can be traced to biblical origins. He asserts that:
It is known as the traditional theology of subordination and superordination. Creation had (has) innate to it orders called hierarchical. These relate to husband and wife, parents and children, families, and structures for nations. Typified by I Cor. 11:1-16 (esp. v.3), and found in Ephes. 5:21-6:9, 1 Cor. 14:34-36, 1 Tim. 2:8-15, Titus 2:3-5. In this system there is a male leadership in the family and the church. Women are able to exercise ministry, but not to take leadership, i.e. eldership. Subordination does not mean inferiority. Husband and wife can be one in mutual complementarily, whilst having differentiation in gender. (p.1)

In another segment, Bingham (1986) asserts that:

All mankind is equal before God. Any authority system which exists is there because of the fall. Whilst it is true that husbands rule wives as part of the ‘curse’, yet that was predicted, not appointed. The Gospel reverses this. Gal. 3:28 makes it clear that distinctions of male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free no longer count. While (I Cor 1 1:3) there is “headship” yet it pertains to source oir ‘origin’, and not to authority. All have ministry, women can lead as well as men, and be part of the eldership-pastoral personnel….The term ‘submissiveness’ (huptage), and the verb ‘to submit’ (hupotasso) in its active, middle, passive and aorist forms means ‘to place under, subordinate, to be subordinated, to subordinate oneself, render obedience, be submissive. (p 1)

One needs not only to be a Christian to appreciate the above issues Bingham raises. In Ghana traditional religions and even the culture of the people have all be influenced by known religions, as Christianity or Islam, both of which emphasize male superiority. The issue drew a lot of spirited discussions between my participants. My participants all addressed religion at one point or the other, depending on the nature of the issue under discussion. Literature traces the undue male and female superiority and subordination to the Bible. This matter was deepened by the colonial masters who followed suit (Manoukian, 1950). I have indicated in chapter two the existence of egalitarian societies among some kingdoms in Ghana, such as the Ga, before the coming of the missionaries and the colonial masters, the British. So was it in some other African nations. Being an
egalitarian society does not mean there were no hierarchical arrangements. The level of autonomy and equality existing in political, economic and social dynamics of the people made the genders complementary to each other.

The coming to Ghana of the early Christian missionaries did not mark the beginning of the worship of God in that country. Indeed, talks at length about the people of southern part of Ghana worshiping God through various ways and means. The truth as we have been told is that not only did the early missionaries not acknowledge whatever kind of worship that prevailed; they even equated it with fetishism (Parker, 2000)

There is a school of thought that it was all part of a grand design to prepare the grounds for colonization. It is on record that before the missionaries’ incursion, certain kingdoms in Ghana were more egalitarian in every conceivable way than is today, and that the concept of Victorianism brought by the missionaries and the British colonial masters became a legacy foisted on the people. This became the genesis of the undue male superiority and female subordination (Robertson, 1983). While the word of God that they had come with reinforced their Victorian thinking about where women should be operating, the hitherto egalitarianism that existed among some kingdoms in Ghana was affected by the message they carried.

In a recent study, Adusah- Karikari (2008) attests to the fact that growing up in a traditional society such as Ghana, one absorbs the societal expectation, consciously or unconsciously which upholds the position of a man and denigrates that of a woman into a relatively subordinate position. Males are given preference over females; girls perform household chores and look after younger siblings, and boys progress up in the educational
ladder. Almost all the 15 participants fervently reacted to this male/female dichotomy, in their reaction to the issues we discussed on this topic

Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) asserted:

> I am a woman, no matter who you are, you are still a woman, a woman will have to be controlled by a man, I am not the type of woman who will stand on the neck of their husbands, and marriage is friendship. It is not control per se; it happens everywhere in Ghana, if you go to Kumasi, you will realize that there are a lot of teachers. No matter who you are, once you are a woman. You still want to be under your husband. The man is supposed to be the head of the family; this is what our religion tells us to do. For some of us, religion comes first. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Agyeman’s response implies that to her religion supersedes gender. Thus, she would consider the dictates of religion and draw from that. Her religious upbringing has socialized her to accept male super-ordination as Bingham (1986), discusses. Large segments of the population both male and female in Ghana operate around this thinking that places the man as superior and the woman as the subordinate. For those who are religious inclined like Elizabeth Agyeman and some of the other participants, breaking away from this stand point becomes very difficult. Women, however, should not be hindered because of religious dogmas.

Hannah Nyamekye goes beyond religion as Elizabeth Agyeman portrayed. She places the male super-ordination and female subordination on culture.

> Culturally, our culture puts the man above the woman, we are making noise that we have equal rights, but you and I know that we have not reached there yet. Those that are doing it are doing so because they are jealous or because they are suspicious and are doing it from the point of angle where you are taking over, instead of him being the head of the family, you are becoming the head of the family, and the man will not let that woman go anywhere. (Personal Communication, 2009)
Hannah’s position runs counter to Elizabeth Agyeman, however, it is common knowledge that our traditional value systems were affected by the two most prominent world religions which endorse the female’s second place position to the man.

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) spoke for most of my participants when she expressed her disgust about the supposed male super-ordination and female subordination.

In our culture, religion has a very strong presence. Even those who are not Christians but do have some form of religious dogma that places the woman below the man, this affects every thinking of ours, there is this thinking that after all the education a woman gets, she is only fit for the kitchen. So there is no need for you to even bother yourself. Society when decisions are being taken, when they sit, women are not counted. “Fa emaa asem ko etsere.” When a man in a meeting is not making any sense, they refer to him as “fam emaa asem ko etsere”. (Meaning take away woman deeds to the back) Thus the impression is women do not have the intelligence to contribute meaningfully to discussions. Women talk they say is for the kitchen and not for economic or societal development. I don’t believe it is so, I will want to go back to scripture, at a time in point it was the women that Jesus Christ worked with more, because they were able to come out exactly with what had to be done. You can see that he had a lot of interaction with the women than the men. I will say it does, we also have the problem of the cultural issues I spoke of, the traditional hierarchical arrangements we have in our traditional set up, and in all places the woman is at the bottom, and I think we need to work hard at that level if we desire to make any serious impact. That is where the issue of socialization takes off from. If we can re-conscientize our system, it will do our nation a lot of good. The queen mother does not have any powers again. She is only there in name. The men wield the power. (Personal Communication, 2009)

The discussion between the participants moved back and forth between culture and religion. Elizabeth Sackey added her voice to the religion-culture dichotomy. She upholds the effect of the Christian religion on culture. She discusses at length how religion has permeated the Ghanaian culture to the extent that some members of the
society debase the embodiment of womanhood. The blame game of the effect of religion on women continued as other participants gave their impressions and experiences on the issue.

Bernice Boateng (MP) adds her voice to the debate on religion as regards male super-ordination and female subordination. Having no doubt at all about how entrenched the socio-cultural issues are in Ghana and in other cultures, she contends that biblical admonitions simply places them in this subservient position they are constantly confronted by in society:

Negatively, people have carried this mentality that a woman’s world is the kitchen, and again once you are married, they think the boss of the house is the man, the Bible says it. Religion has played a key role too in this negative thinking about women. That is where the men refer us to. This is where the men are coming from, if you are a woman and you try to aspire higher, your man says no. There is an extent we can go, the bible says that the men are the heads of the house, and we are partners, helpers of them, the Bible never said we should be relegated into the background, to me no matter how high I go I want to still go by that, because I am not too sure that Ghana where a woman can go and ask for the hand of a man in marriage. So far as it is the man who comes for our hand in marriage we can’t do anything about that. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Bernice Boateng posits that things could be slightly different if the Ghanaian society becomes receptive to practices in other cultures where it is acceptable for women to openly express interests in men and subsequently ask for their hand in marriage. Some cultures in Asia practice this kind of system Bernice alludes to. An experience of another participant provides a different thread to the culture and religion dichotomy.

Hannah Tetteh (SS), a distinguished lawyer and former member of Ghana’s Legislature, is currently serving as Minister of State responsible for the Trade and
She added her voice to the male super-ordinate and female subordinate positions without a religious twist:

I know the female is regarded as a subordinate, typically, when I went to my constituency and I go to the village, you will see that the sitting position of the men were different from that of the women. The women were always at the back with the children, whilst the men were at the front. The two genders will always be differently seated portraying the male and female dichotomy. Here I was as a woman persuading the men that I was capable of doing the job, for me the key issue is the difference between me and the women seated there, was the fact that, I was educated, I was a professional and well educated. Again the difference between the women typically and other women in leadership positions is the same education issue, and therefore their ability to go beyond the stereotype and to take on leadership positions. (Personal Communication, 2009)

She asserts further, however, that at a certain level in society, this dichotomy is hushed or played down. Also, she thinks that despite the fact that these societal inclinations about women not being the best, some action must be taken especially in contemporary times:

Well, as an MP, I don’t think I was treated any differently by any of my male colleagues because I was a woman. As a member of government now, when we sit down and discuss things at that level, I don’t see any difference because I am a woman. I think at that level and the actual players involved, there is mutual respect. Well I know these things happen in life; sometimes it becomes very difficult when certain roles women play in society come under scrutiny. It is a very complex society that has been in existence for over several thousands of generations, but we need to change certain societal arrangements if we desire to move forward to give the woman her rightful place. (Hannah Tetteh, Personal Communication, 2009)

The issues on socialization and religion drew lots of discussion among the Members of parliament. A non MP’s opinions on religion and socialization in Ghana follow.

Kate Bannerman’s contributions toward religion were not different from the sentiments expressed by the others. She asserts that:
In most churches in Ghana today, about 80 % of the congregation is made up of women, women take a lot of consolation in religion. They have this biblical saying, I am not very good at religion “A woman should be submissive to a man”, even in marriage, when there are problems and a pastor has to come in, the pastor usually always a man, will tell the woman that you will have to be submissive, whatever your educational status might be submissive to the man. (Kate Bannerman Personal Communication, 2009)

Kate Bannerman’s remarks present religion as being a double edged sword. While seen by many of the participants as having placed them in subordinated positions, religion is also a haven for women seeking solace from the challenges of life.

Summary

Societal and religious influences on women were the core issues in this segment of the study. There appeared to a total unanimity on how the Ghanaian society had been impacted by religion, and how women seem to have been trapped by these clutches. Mbiti (1994), “The African is incurably religious.” The next segment discusses the issue of socialization and female education.

Socialization and Female Education

In 1945, the United Nations Charter came into being, and mandated all nations that were signatories to it to abide by its tenets. Ghana became a nation state in 1957, and it became mandatory for her to abide by the tenets of the UN charter. The first president’s developmental agenda may have taken this into consideration especially since it made a singular effort to make access to education free for 100 years to the people in the northern part of the country. The effect of colonial rule on women in Ghana vis-à-vis education cannot be understated here. Socio-cultural ramifications affected by the colonial legacy placed the woman in a disadvantaged position, and thus the UN Charter mandating
nations to make education a right for everybody becomes crucial here. The relevant portions are:

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Several decades after passing of the declaration, there has arisen the need to meet the dictates of contemporary times as a result of lapses and new developments that the world has seen. The coming into being of more recent protocols specifically directed towards women must be applauded by all. The convention adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly is often described as an international bill of rights for women, since it was carefully formulated to address the myriad of difficulties women face. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The aspect of the Convention relevant to this discussion is reproduced below:

The Convention defines discrimination against women as...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (Convention
The Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women buttresses the guidelines set out by the United Nations Charter, a more recent protocol aimed at widening the scope of the safeguards for women. Thirty-five years since the coming into being of this protocol, the question is how does the balance sheet of the world look like? What is Ghana’s balance sheet in the discrimination, against women in respect of their marital status, political social status?

By the dawn of independence in Ghana, most parents and educated elites valued education as a channel for occupational mobility notwithstanding its limited access (Foster, 1965; Antwi, 1990; Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Annin, 2008; Dadzie, 2009). For the colonial government, it was a tool for ensuring colonial subjugation and an efficient bureaucracy, while for the churches; it supplied ministers to pursue its triple objective of education, evangelism and enlightenment (Robertson, 1983).

In the post independence era, education’s significance as a human resource and manpower development tool was unquestioned (Foster, 1965). While males were needed in the bureaucratic machinery the colonial master put in place to enable them to exploit Ghanaians in every conceivable way, the females were relegated to the domestic sphere (Annin, 2008).

The socialization of the Ghanaian society in formal education from about the time of the colonial masters became skewed towards the male, and it is only in recent times that serious attempts have been made by successive governments to attain parity for both
male and female in educational pursuits (Robertson, 1983). It is interesting to note the relevance of how the post-modernist Postcolonial Feminist Theory seeks to curtail present day colonization of women. Though successes have been chalked up because in the last few years we have achieved 50/50 enrollment especially because of progressive policies of governments, it is undeniable that as males and females progress into higher education, attrition sets in that affects the female more. A recent study by Adusah-Karikari (2008) reveals the declining trends for females as they go up the ladder. She asserts that 66% of Ghanaians live in the rural areas and 70% of rural dwellers are women, and that this could imply that majority of women may still be facing these same challenges of being short changed when choices between male and females have to be made.

While sharing their experiences on the issue of socialization and education, my respondents corroborated this dilemma of women, especially in certain parts of the country. Women politicians, especially those who are over 50 years recalled with disdain the experiences they had while growing up among their siblings on the subject of education. Most of those from well-educated families reported equal access, while those from less fortunate families reported harrowing experiences.

Joana Bannerman, a participant and a political analyst, provided a kind of foreword to this discussion. Her words aptly summarized the challenges women face as regards the Ghanaian woman’s socialization and how that impacts her education.

We have the traditional set up which is not helping us much, because you grow up in a traditional setting as a woman/girl, you are already stereotyped by the society, your role and progression has been defined for you, you will have to fight hard to move away from that role, and it is only
education which can assist you break away from that circle. If you are educated, there is the tendency for you to tow that line. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Frema Osei (MP) shares her experiences growing up in a home where there was a very strong father figure who was a polygamist with a difference. Though Frema Osei (MP) maintains that things were different for girls in the community that she lived, it was different in her home. Her testimony is reproduced here in her own words:

No, it was not the same, in most places females were not being pushed forward in education and general socialization. I saw that there was more investment in the male child. Your father was the one who by example motivated leading Ashanti men to invest in their female child. I am referring to the general population around us. It was so characteristic and obvious to people and did what he did to change their mindset about their females. (Personal Communication, 2009)

The experience of Frema Osei, especially her father’s zeal and enthusiasm to educate the female presents another thread to the discussion. Just around the same period in the history of Ghana where males were preferred to female when children’s education became paramount, there were families who were demonstrating equality and fairness to both gender. Frema Osei’s experiences depict families at the time that placed premium on not only the male gender but the female as well. Another participant, a former Member of Parliament and a Minister of State shares her experiences with some historical antecedents.

Hannah Nyamekye (MP) did not elaborate on the issue of how our socio-cultural framework and the legacies of both colonial and early postcolonial operations are, however, she offered this information that, these epochs in the history of Ghana had a major impact on girls-education. She was quite emphatic
that the situation of devalued female education has improved positively over the
last two or three decades. She did say that, “Of course, these days, as for school
for every gender, we have overcome that somehow, people allow their daughters
as well to go to school.”

Gifty Kusi (MP) addressed the legacy of the colonial masters on issues
affecting women when they seek formal education. According to her, colonization
eventually influenced our traditional societies, by which schools were seen as
places fit for the male and not the female, and whatever was needed to intimidate
females who brazened those odds came in very many ways. She discussed class
room dynamics which often intimidates the female in a variety of ways. To her,
classrooms that are taught by both males and females still had the female learners
intimidated because of the socialization process which seeks to devalue female
education. She mentioned how her mates referred to her as a witch because she
was so smart they could not match her up.

Yes. A woman who is smart in class is given names by the boys. When I
was in primary school, I remember one day going to school and I got to
the market place and there was a woman pointing fingers at me saying I
was a witch, something my class mates may have carried from the class
into the community. When women in positions of authority conform to
traditional female stereotypes, they are often perceived as “too soft” to be
effective, and when they defy these norms, they are considered “too
tough” unnaturally masculine. Dammed if they do, dammed if they don’t,
it is very rare to come by women who have both. (Personal
Communication, 2009)

I pushed Gifty Kusi to elaborate on her above statement, and she intimated that both the
male and female teachers have been socialized within a framework that devalues the
female, thus they all perpetuate those societal inclinations in their classrooms thereby continuing the cycle of super-ordination and subordination.

Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) shared her experiences from another perspective describing what she went through growing up in the early 1960s:

My father did everything he felt he was capable of doing for us. So he felt there was nothing wrong with any sex doing anything. He did not, he believed that every child should be in school and should be capable, learn exactly what you desire to learn. He never put pressure on you as to what he would want you to do. Where necessary, based on your performance and interest, my father could tell what profession could be suitable for you. He did tell us that whatever a boy can do a girl can equally do too. He said anything that one wishes to do can be done through determination. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Commenting on what is happening in most of our society vis-à-vis downgrading of female education, Elizabeth Agyeman sees it as a cultural thing deeply rooted in our past. To buttress Gifty Kusi’s comments, another participant, Stella Lamptey, a failed parliamentary candidate expressed similar sentiments.

The boys were made to play their part in the house. They sometimes did house chores. Everybody had a role to play. Our own father never hesitated to do house work if he felt like, when the children were not available. My father did everything he felt he was capable of doing for us. He was however very strict on us. He made sure that you felt his presence anytime he was around. He encouraged everyone to study hard since he believed education could make people successful in future. He did tell us that whatever a boy can do a girl can equally do too. (Personal Communication, 2009)

The issues Stella Lamptey raises are similar to other participants, an observation that it was not uncommon for some families to educate both sexes. In other words no preference was made for any particular gender despite the fact that it was quite a common phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s. The issue of the male being preferred than the
female remains a topical issue in Ghana. Comparatively, especially in the last two decades, there has been a marked improvement (Annin, 2009).

Esther Obeng Dapaah’s (MP) opinion about socialization and education is given another twist. According to her experiences, the particular location of a female
determines whether she goes to school or not:

You see this is according to wherever that girl child is, if you were born in
the northern part of Ghana, the tendency is you might not get education as
a woman because of their culture. I know there is a breakthrough for some
of them though, but looking back women were usually denied education in
that area. Volta region, women were also usually not educated, with the
north, you see all these “kayayee” are all on the streets as porters. In the
Volta region, kids are sent to the river areas to dive under the waters to
retrieve or untangle nets hooked unto tree stumps, and some as maids. In
the Eastern region, my constituency, the girls are not given out yet they go
to school, class 1- 6 and then they get pregnant. So the parental care, I said
my grandmother will never go to bed unless I am home. (Esther Dapaah,
Personal Communication, December 2009)

Apart from the issue of the concept of societal degradation of the woman as regards to
education which is deeply ingrained in the socialization process, Esther Obeng (MP)
introduced another perspective. Lack of parental care especially by men breaks the family
apart with young children going onto the streets to eke a living. “Kayayee” are female
porters in Ghana making a living on the streets of the regional capitals of Ghana, where
they carry loads of shoppers on their heads for a fee. These are girls who have been
denied education, forced out of the school system because of some of the choices made
by parents which may have patriarchal undertones.

Bernice Boateng (MP) grew up at a time when the preference for males to females
as regards formal education was quite prevalent. She was born to illiterate parents who
did not value education in any way. Her particular circumstances as a naughty child
compounded her situation because she was given up as a good for nothing at an early age. It was only by dint of hard work, perseverance and most importantly, luck that she pulled through her journey of obscurity into political stardom. Her long story was told with a sense of nostalgia, intermittently punctuated with emotion, especially about the loss of her only husband. They had had four children within a short period and her hands were full as a mother, a wife, and a student, quite a balancing act. The following were her exact words:

Yes, especially if your parents were illiterates. For me specifically, I was one time asking my mother why she was not schooled, and she said there were 5 siblings, 2 who were sent to school, one had mental problems, the other had rashes, and their conclusion at the time was that school was not good for girls. So all the other girls who were my mother’s siblings were denied schooling. So you realize that if you are from such a home, they did not even have the intention of sending you to school, and if you have gotten to form 4 and you are not sober, that was going to be your end. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, December 2009)

Considering the reasons Bernice Boateng discusses about why her mother did not have education takes the discussion to another level. Formal education in Ghana as the literature presents favored the male, thus the slightest discord within family circles that was good enough reason to deny the female her due in education was utilized. For a growing up girl, any acts of insubordination to the parents could have easily landed her in the category of the illiterate. However, Bernice by dint of luck escaped. She contends further saying:

But I believed I had some innate capabilities or qualities that should send me somewhere. After finishing form 4 and staying home, ostensibly to end everything, my former head mistress who is now dead, she heard I was at home wasting away, so she bought training college forms for me, and I decided to enter the teachers training college. Hitherto, I had been so
rough to my teachers that none of them ever thought I would ever become a teacher. I was nursing the idea of going into the armed forces, even up till today. I still cherish the military or the police. My father was a polygamist, the two wives, my mother had been divorced, the two step mothers were not happy about the turn of events, my going to training college. I could only have my training in the northern part of Ghana, because at the time allowances were only being given there, and not the south. I started teaching, and alongside I was writing my O’Levels, and eventually I did my Masters. For now, I have a Masters degree from Edinburgh University. In middle school, I did not normally want to be in the company of girls, I was always with the boys because my upbringing, I did not have decent clothes and the like that would match that of the girls, so I was always better off with the boys. And as such, I had to learn from their taste. I was class prefect most often in middle school. I acted very often in other capacities, at a point I became the assistant school prefect. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, December 2009)

The trials, hardships that the experiences of Bernice Boateng connotes in her quest to become educated clearly depicts socialization and the impact it’s on female education. When a female combines education and marriage and family as Bernice did, it becomes a double jeopardy. She further elaborates:

I married in 1974 because my principal told us that if you go out try and marry quickly, because if you don’t do that you will get the sugar daddies coming, but they will not marry you. So along the path of getting the O’Levels that I needed, I was teaching, I was marrying, I was making children too at the same time. Thus from 1974 to 1980 before I had all the grades I needed and went to Winneba Specialist Training College for a Diploma in Education. Whilst there, I was the class prefect as usual, and I was always with the boys. The truth was that, my step mothers even though they will not care for me, even though they will not want to make me feel good, they never ever stopped saying that “you will not get anywhere and you will be pregnant”, so it was like a curse, and I knew that if I really was not careful, I could become pregnant. But I realized from my primary school days that when you are free with the boys, it gets to a time they see you as part of them, so approaching you for sex was completely out. Another reason was that I never felt good in female clothing and other things and I was better off with boys. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, 2009)
Bernice Boateng like most women was able to brazen the odds females go through getting education, they are able to satisfy societal expectation of women and even break into what is considered male domains within our society, still become confronted with challenges. Though Bernice thinks that the issue of socialization and education in Ghana is gradually being interrupted and affected, she thinks we have a long way ahead of us. It must be mentioned that, the sentiments and experiences shared by all my participants were unanimous in their assertion that times have changed, they also are of the opinion that as a nation we have a very long way to go especially in these contemporary times.

Another participant draws the curtain on socialization and female education.

Hannah Tetteh (fMP) the lawyer turned politician discusses the socio-cultural framework and its ramifications on female education from a purely economic point of view. She posits that families in the past and even in contemporary times could decide against giving the female access to education based on the size of the family income, especially in rural settings. According to her, “As a former MP for a predominantly rural constituency, it was very clear that in the rural setting, again when families have resource challenges, the tendency is to educate males rather than their females.” Pushed further to elaborate, Hannah asserts that:

I think that as a generalization, when families are challenged economically they would always make the choice of their males, but I also think that when the opportunity is available and it does not cost them then they will like to send both sexes to school. I also think that as far as Ghana is concerned we have made considerable progress, and that there has been a lot at creating public awareness on sending girls to school. And it is accepted that women can have leadership positions too. But before you get to that position, you must certainly justify your being appointed. You
Hannah’s assertion that the message on education for all has caught on with many Ghanaians; therefore, equality of both genders has been fairly well accepted in the society. However, she opines that a woman must be qualified in every conceivable way because of the proof of burden women usually carry. Literature corroborates this assertion and likens the situation of women in Ghana to other women in developed nations According to Conway et al (2004):

> Few women had the opportunity to obtain an education. Because society believed women to be frail, frivolous, and less mentally capable than men, an education in academic subjects was considered neither socially appropriate nor within women’s intellectual capabilities…well into the century most private schools that existed for women taught the social graces and household management skills. (p. 10)

The choice of males over females in Ghana remains a deep seated societal phenomenon. The literature corroborates this mentality, and suggests that it cuts across the whole of the African continent and other developing countries. (Tamale, 1999; Manuh, 1993).

Tayne (2008), argued that traditional barriers which militate against females’ access to education in contemporary times are societal norms, beliefs, and practices. The socio/traditional environment, which is rooted in culture, creates the barriers that rob females of their human identity and social rights.

**Women and Social Capital**

This segment deals with social capital, characteristics which came out as part of the socio-cultural framework that positively enhances the fortunes of women, especially
when patriarchal barriers usually against women have been circumvented. Social capital does not hinder the participation of women in Ghanaian politics, it rather enhances the opportunities women have. Social capital especially in Africa, and Ghana specifically, epitomizes the African communal phenomenon which is usually rendered through this saying “I am because we are, and we are because I am.” However, it is usually taken for granted by people who get them. The tendency of taking for granted assistance offered within a communal setting by other people who may not be reckoned was one interesting issue that cropped up in the study. Africans usually are most often described as people who value communality, while developed nations generally are seen as individualistic (Wiredu, 1995). These extended families with communal characteristics dwell on the proverbial African saying, “I am because we are and we are because I am” to live a life of interdependency.

Widner and Mundt (1998) discuss social capital indicating that it depicts social relations that can be relied on to improve the efficiency of society by facilitating harmonized actions. Woldemariam (2009) examines further social capital within the African context:

Social capital is defined as a resource which comes about as a result of socialization and interactions among individuals and groups in a society…ways in which social capital is created and accumulated in the context of Africa differs from those of the advanced societies. Most of what we call trust and cooperation or generally, social capital is formed as a sequence of informal institutions such as family, ethnicity, and religion. (p. 46)

Ghanaian communality and interdependence characteristics, being each other’s keeper culminates collectively into what Widner and Mundt (1998) are alluding to.
Worldemariam (2009) explains further social capital as an intangible resource or asset that emerges as a result of interactions between people and it is seen as something which reduces costs and eventually promotes mutual cooperation and collective actions. Social capital comes in many forms and could be multi-dimensional, thus there is the tendency for many not to observe it in action. The social capital phenomenon from my perspective is a derivative of our socio cultural framework and therefore should have been identified by my respondents’ at least as a positive element.

Though 100% of the respondents asserted that they had all kinds of assistance from members of their constituency, they did not associate it with the socio-cultural framework. To them all their woes in their attempt to seek political power were as a result of the socio-cultural framework as I have outlined in the segment that deals with the intersection of socialization and politics. Some examples of my respondents’ opinions which buttress the issue of social capital granted them are reproduced below.

Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) reacted and acknowledged the assistance from the constituency while campaigning to become an MP:

I went to school there, from class one to form four. So you could find all my class mates and school mates there, and that helped me. Oh “wei ye Elizabeth Agyeman, ye nim nu, na neni yedin”. [This is Elizabeth Agyeman, we know her]. This gave me the footing that I needed to make a breakthrough in the constituency. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Agyeman therefore benefited from the same framework which she said puts impediments in her way. Thus, in one breath something must be wrong, while in next according to her “This gave me the footing that I needed to make a breakthrough in the constituency.”
Hannah Nyamekye (fMP) also commented on the assistance the societal arrangement prevailing in her constituency that was helpful:

However, at a point, the people saw what I was made of, and I also showed a lot of interest in it, and some elders of the party approached me. I come from a very large family. The luck I had was every village in the constituency that I went to, I went into a place I could call my home. The party executives in all those places that I went to were all wonderful. They found a place for me to pass the night, fed me, and even at that time they started giving me rams and other things. (Hannah Nyamekye, Personal Communication, December 2009)

The key element in these extensions of support to people usually comes out of the spirit of “voluntarism” which propels people to participate meaningfully in other people’s objectives or causes. Elizabeth Sackey shares her social capital gains below. She was very emphatic about where her social capital emanated from:

There were more men than women. My support was from men the more. Before then, some women met with me saying “You don’t have to bother yourself, a woman tried it and she did not win, and it has been the trend. I was quite resolute telling them that I would win. They warned me about the insults that could come with my attempt, so I could still go and try. They made me feel very proud, they said it was a perfect one, and just after serving for two years as an assembly woman, they suggested very strongly that I vied for the position of the MP for the area which I did and won. (Elizabeth Sackey, Personal Communication, December 2009)

Identifying social capital could be problematic for many because as Widner and Mundt (1998) further explain, the form social capital might take could vary cross-nationally and cross-culturally. Many of the participants talked about it without identifying it as coming out of the socio-cultural framework that exists among many people in Ghana.

Bernice Boateng (MP) presents how extensive the social networks are which come in handy as we all navigate the undulating terrain of this world which calls for interdependency of all in our everyday human endeavors. According to Bernice Boateng,
“After finishing Form 4 and staying home, ostensibly to end everything, my former head
mistress, who is now dead, heard I was at home wasting away, so she bought training
college forms for me, and I decided to enter the teachers training college” (Personal
Communication, 2009).

Dadzie (2009) in a very recent study on Ghana’s educational system
acknowledged the use of social capital and social networking as two common sources
used by students pursuing higher education in Ghana. His findings were very explicit,
that social capital and social networking remain very common sources for Ghanaians in
their quest to meet their socio-cultural economic and political aspirations.

**Summary**

This chapter had two main objectives, introducing women in Ghanaian politics
through an attempt at contextualizing women in Ghanaian politics, examining the profiles
of the entire 15 women politicians and political pundits, and it also discussed and
analyzed research question one which sought to know “What socio-cultural factors
support or hinder women’s participation in Ghanaian politics?” Almost 100 % of the
participants agree that, though Ghana has come a long way as some of the participants
indicated while they shared their experiences, the mindset of denying and stifling female
access to education still prevails. It is true today that enrollment has reached a fifty-fifty
parity between boys and girls, but it is equally true that as both sexes progress the
educational ladder, attrition sets in that affects the female the more, because of some of
the underlying issues raised by the participants and corroborated by literature. The
participants alluded to a host of societal issues that impede their participation, some of
which were the roles expected of a woman in regards to marriage and child bearing and raising though desired by all the participants, they agreed that these were also impediments they as women faced in their quest to participate in politics, while asserting too that men do not face that difficulty. They identified religion for those who were believers in one form of religion or the other, that their beliefs present them as subordinates and they are confronted with these beliefs in all spheres they navigate. They are therefore shortchanged because structures within the society place them in disadvantaged positions all the time. Though all the participants were all well educated people, they contend that they are all treated in the same way as other women, irrespective of their social and educational standing. None of the participants ever used the word hegemony, patriarchy or postcolonial feminism; however, it is easy to read in between the lines that these are the issues these participants were discussing while they shared their experience.

The experiences of the participants are manifestations of the theories of Hegemony and Postcolonial Feminism. Indeed the experiences expressed by the participants are consistent with the literature, the underlying principles of Hegemony and the Postcolonial Feminist theories. The participants collectively discussed the challenges of women’s education, the preference of males over females, male privilege as well as the multiple roles women must perform as part of the barriers they are faced with in their lives, are some of the cultural barriers impeding women’s access to education. I have lived and experienced other cultures, and it may not be far from the truth that most cultures herald the arrival of male children than the female. The above experiences of the
participants corroborate what the literature on women’s access to education is all about. That societal expectations impinge on the navigation of women in the public sphere is real, that religion has permeated all facets of the society, and is seen by many as a factor that impinges female development is also real, and that the political turf could be more female friendly when these structures are affected.

Despite all these challenges the experiences of these selected women portray them as success stories worthy of emulation by other Ghanaian women. These women are trail blazers, setting the pace for other women. Examining women within the public sphere, within the political structures in Ghana forms the next segment of the study.
CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS WITHIN EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter discusses two research questions, the experiences of women within the local and national political structures in Ghana, and the examination of policies which have opened or hindered women’s participation in politics. Putting together these two research questions to be analyzed under one chapter became necessary as a result of the connectedness to each other because they both have one common denominator, societal expectations, and border on the experiences of women within the political milieu.

Research question three had one theme emerging, the violation of the political rights of women.

Figure 13 Diagrammatic view of research question two
The figure above shows the breakdown of political structures in Ghana which are constitutionally mandated to provide levels at which political power can be dispensed. From the lowest level which is the municipal assemblies which are area based, through to the district assemblies which oversee a population of over 10,000 people, the regional administrations and finally the national government which has the presidency, the judiciary, and the legislature. Looking at these structures became necessary, because they are central to exercising the political rights of the citizenry in Ghana. The characteristics of these structures directly affect the experiences of Ghanaian women in the society.

**Political Structures**

Ghana is in its 18th year as a democracy following several attempts and failures from the dawn of independence. There are three main political structures where electoral mechanisms determine who eventually exercises the mandate to rule the nation. These are the presidency, Parliament and the district and municipal assemblies. The Ghanaian government is also divided into three different branches, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. The seat of government is at Osu Castle, with the Parliament having only one legislative chamber (Ghana Home Page).

**National Political Structures**

Political parties compete in elections for the Executive, and the legislature, and the Judiciary. For the national structures, elections are held for the executive, the legislature and within the district and municipal assemblies. The dynamics at the Judiciary are entirely different from the executive and the legislature. While who has power is determined through elections every four years according to the constitution, the
Judiciary to a large extent uses service and meritorious duty for the progression of its members, however, the Constitution mandates the Executive to appoint the Chief Justice and those who serve at the Supreme Court (Ghana Home Page)

**Judiciary**

The judiciary is the branch of government given authority to interpret, apply and enforce the laws of Ghana. In furtherance of the principle of independence of the Judiciary, the administration of the Judiciary is independent of executive control. The Judiciary is made up of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, High Court and Regional Tribunals and such lower courts and tribunals as Parliament may establish. The Chief Justice is the head, appointed by the Executive and responsible for administration and supervision (Ghana Home Page).

**The Legislature**

The Constitution of Ghana spells out the qualifications of members of Parliament. The legislative power of Ghana shall be vested in Parliament and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution. Subject to the provisions of this article, a person shall not be qualified to be a member of Parliament unless he/she is a citizen of Ghana, has attained the age of 21 years and is a registered voter; is resident in the constituency for which he stands as a candidate for election to Parliament or has resided there for a total period of not less than five years out of the ten years immediately preceding the election for which he stands, or he hails from that constituency (Ghana’s Constitution, 1992, Ghana Home page).
The spirit and letter of the Constitution spell the equality of all sexes; therefore it does not have any room for barriers and impediments to be placed before any gender. The Constitution takes care that no personalities of citizens shall dwarf any other citizen. But the legislature comes into being through the activities of the citizenry who are constantly operating within a socio-cultural framework that has its own dynamics which unfortunately short changes one gender, women. The dictates of the framework determine whether a particular gender is being muscled out for particular reasons or is being accommodated to meaningfully participate. One main area of participation for women in parliament is the select committees in parliament. The representations of women on such committees are shown below.

Table 6 2001-2004 Selected Select and Standing Committees of Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lands and Forestry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads and Transport</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense and Interior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and Children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Accounts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privileges</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table depicts a picture within the legislature where laws are made demonstrates the “maleness” of the existing structures. In all the committees of parliament, men dominate because of their large numbers in parliament.
District Assemblies

It was not until the latter part of the 1980s that the district assembly structures were given a boost to meet the developmental needs of the people of Ghana at the district level. Prior to this time the system had been heavily over-centralized in Accra. This devolution of power from the seat of government in Accra served as a fillip for the development and growth of the hinterlands of the nation where the bulk of the people live. There now are 110 district assemblies in Ghana, they remain a focus of competitive politics.

The district assemblies were created as the pivot of administrative and developmental decision-making in the district and the basic unit of government administration, and assigned with deliberative, legislative as well as executive functions. In addition they were established as a monolithic structure to which is assigned the responsibility of the totality of government to bring about integration of political, administrative and development support needed to achieve a more equitable allocation of power, wealth, and geographically dispersed development in Ghana. The local government system consists of a Regional Coordinating Council, a four-tier Metropolitan and a three-tier Municipal/District Assemblies Structure. The District Assemblies are either Metropolitan (population over 250,000), Municipal (population over 95,000) or District (population 75,000 and over). There are 3 Metropolitan Assemblies, 4 Municipal Assemblies and 103 District Assemblies (Ghana web).

The district assemblies are the highest political authority in each district. Elections for the district Assemblies take place two years before the main national elections, and
though they are supposed to be nonpartisan, they are seriously fought for by political parties, because gaining a foothold at the districts impacts very positively on the fortunes of a political party. The same socio-cultural influences are brought to bear on district assembly elections that affect the national elections. The mindsets of men who think and operate along the lines of “the rule of men”, operate within the district assemblies with that mindset. The experiences of women at the district level politics are couched within the same framework. Women are as usual shortchanged in their quest to participate at this level of power sharing.

According to Beiping (2009), a survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union revealed that prejudice and cultural perception about the role of women together with a lack of financial resources frequently hinder women’s access to political life. Beiping (2009) continues that researchers interviewed nearly 300 parliamentarians in 110 countries in every region of the world, with most women respondents citing domestic responsibilities as the single most important deterrent to entering a life in politics, an obstacle rated much lower among male respondents. Most of my participants also mentioned that domestic responsibilities were the same bottlenecks they faced and continue to face. All the participants who were engaged in this study alluded to the fact that the hurdles women need to clear before going into politics are so gargantuan and herculean because of their peculiar circumstances as women. After breaking these barriers, they continue to face all kinds of difficulties because of the way society perceives them.
Violations of Political Rights of Women

The above emerged as the most outstanding theme from research question two, “What are the experiences of women in the local and national politics in Ghana”. In all, 100% of my respondents gave distressing and harrowing details of their experiences in local and national politics. Though Ghana has seen the participation of women in very large numbers particularly during the struggle for independence and in political party campaigning and electioneering, power is seldom shared with them equitably. Most existing research has lauded the role of women in the liberation struggles, and very little has since been said about their role in local and national politics (Manuh, 1995). The affirmative action by Nkrumah in 1960 was the closest the nation ever came at lessoning the challenges of women in political activities in Ghana. In the 1980s, especially during the administration of Jerry Rawlings, the role of women in politics took a different turn. His wife Nana Konadu Agyeman succeeded in entrenching a women’s movement which was affiliated to the unconstitutional regime that ruled Ghana for over a decade. Women who were not in favor of that regime were in limbo and could not join any political party for fear of persecution, thus there was never an enabling environment in which women could be political in any meaningful way. Other views on this movement are positive, a lot of women received financial support to set up gari making businesses.

The fact still remains that when the women began telling their experiences, most of the stories bordered on the kind of treatment meted out to them in an unfriendly political arena. The implications for women who wanted to exercise themselves politically were grave, compounding the already uneven political environment for
women. In the interviews I had with my 15 respondents, they had different reactions some which were positive, and others negative. About 50% of my respondent MPs indicated that their gaining entrée into the political realm was to a great degree, through sheer luck, but not necessarily through a process whereby their political parties had intentionally groomed them. While men seldom needed the consent of their wives to seek political office, my participants often had to make difficult choices.

Elizabeth Agyeman (MP) went back to 2008 during the campaign to share her experiences about national politics for the legislature:

I am not sure, because last year, when we were campaigning, I saw that more than 100 women were trying to become parliamentarians, but in the end, we had only 3 new faces, why? We don’t even understand it, but some women will not take insults, the insults our men are giving to us and the bad things they are saying about us, the women will not even come at all. (Personal Communications, 2009)

Ghana has a population 23 million people, almost half of this number is made up of women, and it is out of 12 million women that the 100 emerged to contest for places in Ghana’s legislature. Elizabeth Agyeman concludes her statement that only three new women succeeded in winning seats in Ghana’s parliament in the 2008 elections. She goes on further to say that there is the possibility of a male losing to a female when they go through party primaries, and men being aware of this possibility will go great lengths to make sure that does not happen:

We had primaries, and I contested against four men, Dr. Baffoe Bonnie and three others. Of course, Dr Bonnie was the closest, he had 33 votes and I had 64. Last year, too, (2008) elections, three other men contested against me. And I beat them all. (Personal Communications, 2009)
Elizabeth Agyeman discusses the party political structure within her constituency, shying away from describing them as male. However, her experiences within the legislature about the dynamics of the job of an MP are what she shares next.

We are not joking in this Parliament. At least whatever goes on in this august house is not done in our local languages, it is done in English, and so if you want to become an MP, you must be educated. (Personal Communications, 2009)

One of the identified political structures in Ghana is the District Assembly. The dynamics of power sharing and its ramifications on women at this level of politics and beyond are explained by Hanna Nyamekye who had operated at both levels.

Hannah Nyamekye, the two terms former MP and a former deputy minister had experiences which were no different. The interrelatedness and complexities of the issues facing women cannot be overemphasized here. They border on the existing phenomenon women usually face in whatever endeavor they are in. Hannah also had experience in local or district level politics.

It was a difficult terrain, a rural community, without access roads, and an unfriendly political environment. But thank God, if I say anybody ever attacked me I will be telling a lie. Because I was an assembly woman there in the district and I had performed, it paved the way for me. For about six years. I was in the first assembly woman in the area, and I had done what I was expected to do. So that catapulted me into the constituency. Oh, some of the men like us, and they think we are doing alright….but some also, because of the cultural attitude, they don’t think we are doing anything. (Hannah Nyamekye, Personal Communication, 2009)

Hannah’s experiences at the district level were devoid of the extreme difficulties women have as they seek higher political office. The district assemblies’ positions are usually not hotly contested for as that of the legislature. Thus, women who
contest for those positions usually do not face stiffer opposition from men as is the case for legislative positions. It is not a paid position, making it less attractive to men. It is has been used as a spring board lately for people nursing ambitions into the legislature, making it to become fraught with the usual impediments women are confronted with within our socio-cultural framework.

Gifty Kusi (MP) shares her experiences in national politics with disdain and outright disdain. To her, though her third stint in Parliament has toughened her, when it comes to dealing with men, she cries foul to the activities of her leaders in the august house. Women are increasingly finding their way into rooms that had been previously closed to them, and men must take note. This was the way Gifty started this session on her experiences as the first female Deputy Majority Chief Whip and now Deputy Minority Chief Whip. Whether Gifty harbors ill feelings against her colleagues who are also leaders of the minority is solely left to her. But her demeanor and the way her voice broke as she shared the information with me tells it all.

Even though I am supposed to be a leader of this my party, most of the time, because I am a woman, there are certain decisions when they are taking they don’t call me. Because of the chauvinist attitude of men, they feel I am a woman. You know men are such that they don’t see anything good from their women. Yeah, they don’t think women match up men in so many issues. Yeah, they don’t think women match up men in so many issues (she reiterated) Most decisions are taken, they don’t call me. The four men meet together and then they decide, it is only when I am privileged then they call me. They feel they are OK without me. They are supposed to, every decision that concerns the party in Parliament. I am supposed to be part of it. I don’t question, I have questioned and questioned and questioned and quarreled. Oh, most times we forget, oh sorry, and next time they continue. I don’t care, you know I am somebody who would not become unduly worried, you see you are with a group of people who decide to ignore you, and if you don’t take care, you will be quarrelling with them every day. Where I feel I am being cheated, I tell
them about my piece of mind. I have been fighting all over the place, you see there is nobody there to complain to, and there is no cane to whip anybody. As a woman MP, I see the party as male-minded. Women are only given positions because they need women organizers to organize the large numbers of women for them to get votes, and after that when they are taking important decisions, you don’t matter. And it is everywhere, when they were amending the constitution of the party, we told them, that women are so fragile that, we know is democracy, and in democracies they are protected. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Gifty Kusi (MP) discusses the nature of the structures within parliament in her own way. Parties represented in parliament exhibit characteristics of the larger society, where the mindset of the male, places the female in subordinate positions. Though parliament is deemed as a body that makes laws bordering on equity and fairness, Gifty bemoans the subtle characteristics and ways her male colleagues dealt with her, either consciously or unconsciously. Thus, her portrayal of the dynamics of power play within the law making body is a mirror image of the Ghanaian society that debases the value of women. If the parameters set out by parliamentary Standing Orders, in addition to party guidelines on the roles of leaders of parties in parliament cannot be safeguarded to ensure equal participation, then it could be quite problematic for other women in parliament.

The culture of the country, in Ghana, among many tribes, women are not regarded as equal to men. Yeah, they grow up with that mentality. It is still happening, they say women are weak, hey this place women don’t come here, meaning Parliament. People have formed this opinion and they are coming here with that opinion. And it is very difficult to change, but we are getting somewhere gradually. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Though Gifty Kusi thinks her choice to become MP was divinely ordained, she shares difficult moments, too, when she encountered an abusive situation on the job:
Men have made my work difficult by making passes at me, but I don’t care. In this office a man came and held my breast, that he wants to have sex with me, this man I told him to get out, but he came again on another occasion, so I reported him to my husband who went to his office to scold him. Men need them in other corners, but not in leadership. Majority of the men don’t think women should be where they are. Majority of men have a negative impression of women. We have a small minority of men who cherish women. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Gifty Kusi’s experience as regards attempts by males in parliament to sexually abuse her pushes the discussion of the nature of political structures onto another level. Though this was just an isolated case this participant shared, it goes a long way undermine the political structures in Ghana.

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) presents the two sides of her experiences at the district and the national levels. Today, those on whose backs she rode have all turned against her. She sees her chances at winning the next primaries in 2012 as very slim. A strong competitor, a Harvard trained scholar, has started beating the war drums, and Elizabeth hates the tune being played. She sees herself as a very strong woman because; according to her “she has slugged it out with several men in competitive elections.” Hear her:

Yeah, I see myself as a strong woman, because in the first place I have always contested men and have beaten them to it, by using knowledge and wisdom. You also need to be strong to make statements that will make you tough. I use proverbs and adages to communicate with people, and these present me in a certain light to the person as somebody who is strong in mind and thoughts. Also I believe in taking bold decisions, when faced with very difficult situation, if it is wrong it is wrong, if it is right it is right. Once when confronted by my people I drew their attention to the fact that they voted for me to take good decisions on their behalf, and that is what I will always do no matter how painful it may be. I believe my communication skills have also positioned me well too. I get to their individual levels of understanding in my dealings with them. (Elizabeth Sackey Personal Communication, 2009)
Elizabeth Sackey (MP) wishes that the political field has no mine fields because the affirmative action concept should be upheld for women, especially in areas where the party feels it has a safe seat, because that is the surest way of keeping women in Parliament and even increasing their numbers progressively. She does not take kindly to the skirmishes being made by three men who are doing preliminary work in her constituency to establish themselves and whose tactics, according Elizabeth Sackey are unorthodox and nonconformist.

I am not worried by the challenges on the job, I am worried by a general trend that when one serves once or twice he/she should give way to another, “Wako mienu, nti wonko na obi ba’. (Meaning, you have gone to parliament two times, go and let some else go too) This has become the language of the delegates. It is those you have supported one way or the other who are positioned to push you down. In reality, I wish I could continue even it could take me the rest of my life, but looking at what is happening on the grounds, it is unfortunate that the delegate conference is not deciding on looking at experiences or capabilities, but irrelevant issues? How shallow their understanding of politics of these delegates. But then, the few disgruntled people who are going to vote for you have taken a stand, no matter what you do, they have made up their minds. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Her experiences at the district level were recalled with nostalgia, while her experiences as a second-term MP were fraught with anger and acrimony. It was her exploits at the district level that catapulted her into fame strong enough to beat an incumbent who was a lawyer and an astute politician in 2004. The year 2004 was used by the party in government at the time to increase the numbers of women in Ghana’s legislature. The attempt which had insignificant rewards (women members of parliament for NPP increased from 11 to 14) and was fraught with acrimony and divisions in the party thereby lessoning the fortunes of the party in the next elections in 2008. Elizabeth Sackey
was one such beneficiary who rode on the back of that “affirmative action” instituted by the party.

In contrast to Elizabeth Sackey’s role as an MP, which is fraught with difficulties, her role at the district level was to her very rewarding and fruitful, eventually leading to the point where she ended up with it as “icing on the cake.” The road to Parliament became clearly defined for her in 2004. She stood for re-election in 2008 against four men and won. She has her doubts about 2012; she tells it all in her own voice:

I think they really applauded when I won and started working. I was able to institute a lot of changes as I had done with the youth. I became very influential helping in problem solving within my area of jurisdiction. They made me feel very proud, they said it was a perfect one, and just after serving for two years as an Assembly woman, they suggested very strongly that I vied for the position of the Member of Parliament for the area which I did and won. Yes, from all indications, my good work and interpersonal relationship were crucial. I quite remember in my District Assembly meetings, whenever I spoke, my colleagues would refer to me as Junior MP. I had a lot of talking invitations from several electoral areas, and these helped exceedingly. At a point they asked, can’t you contest for the position of the MP? No, that did not come that early; I was concentrating as an assembly woman? Yes, I did, many challenges came, one because you are a woman, they realize that you are now opening up and there is the danger of you taking up another position. There were fears and the MP at the time was also worried. I remember that whenever I organized a program, and invited the MP at the time, people passed comments that they felt I articulated issues better than the MP. I heard such remarks most often and his followers were then not happy.

(Elizabeth Sackey, Personal Communication, 2009)

The conspiracy by men against women seeking or involved in local and national politics are real, reminiscent of what the Hegemony theory posits. During the administration of the New Patriotic Party (2001-2009), the current Speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Banford-Addo who was the most senior person in the Judiciary at the time, was sidelined by the
then government in favor of a male Justice Kingley Nyinah, which led to the resignation of Mrs. Banford Addo as a form of protest. Though appointing officers of the Judiciary is the prerogative of the Executive, decency and fairness and equity should undergird the appointment, especially when a woman meets all the requirements.

Many researchers Tamale (1999) Myers (2009) Tsikata (1999) Manuh (1995) have given many reasons why men usually desire to muscle out women from having political power. About 100% of my participants intimated that, by passing women when they are qualified and suitable for positions and appointing men instead exhibits ‘unofficial’ discrimination and this buttresses the assertion that women are still the “other” or marginal even when capable and efficient. According to Hannah Tetteh:

Your government is culpable, in 2002 thereof; it disregarded one very capable female Mrs. Banford-Ford Addo very senior in the Judiciary at the time, and appointed Justice Nyinah as the Chief Justice, because she was perceived as a sympathizer of the NDC party. But, I must also add that the first female Chief Justice of Ghana, Chief Justice Mrs. Georgina Theodora Wood, Chief Justice (since June 2007), third in command was appointed by your government. You see, sometimes our male dominated system gives the impression that there are no qualified women in this country. Because men want to continue their dominance, they tend to always give us the “short end of the stick. (Personal communication, 2009)

The structures within our political system in Ghana were inherited from the colonial masters who had operated within a particular mindset “Victorianism”, which had no room for the women in the public sphere. They had instituted an educational system which virtually undermined the female, because they were not needed in the machinery that they set up. African elites and most importantly Ghanaians at the dawn of independence continued with the policies of the colonial masters. Early attempts by the
The first Ghanaian administration can be described as tokenism, because the rule of men had become endemic at the time, and every cogent reason could be deduced to justify this thinking at the time.

The process of discrimination against the female as regards participation within the structures discussed above are tantamount to the violation of the rights of women.

The United Nation Charter and CEDAW mandate every nation to abide by the operational guidelines in the charter. The preamble summarizes what must be done:

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace of the world….and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest inspiration of the common people…human rights should be protected by law. Whereas the people of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. (Preamble: UN Charter on Human Rights)

Any nation that does not operate within this framework is infringing on the rights of its people, especially women. None of the participants gave any contrary expectation to what the UN Charter mandates. Hegemony begets counter hegemony, the women are registering their abhorrence to the structures in the society that remains “male-faced”, and are calling for new structures that recognize that colonialism ended several decades ago, and that as women, they cannot be doubly colonized.
Policies of Government and Political Parties

Examining policies of government and political parties through participants experiences unraveled many pertinent issues which affect women in politics or desiring to do so which was the focus of research question three. Four main themes worth examining came out of the interview segment on what kind of changes in policies have occurred that might have opened the way for women’s participation in politics in Ghana. There were mixed reactions from participants indicating that government policies existed on paper though, but these were described in many ways by these participants. Another element was that political parties which are also governments in waiting have policies too, but these were again described in many ways when the participants shared their experiences. However, despite these mixed experiences, what cumulatively emerged as the substantive themes were the following:

- Dysfunctional Government policies
- Political Party Policies and Manifestoes

Juxtaposing the above two main issues on the dynamics of the society led to the emergence of two other themes, societal values and expectations, and a seeming Ghanaian political culture. These elements looked at diagrammatically created a political culture matrix as shown below.
The above diagram presents four main areas of interest. The overall themes, societal values and expectations, dysfunctional government policies, dysfunctional political party policies, and Ghanaian political culture are been shown, and will be discussed one after the other in this segment.

The following themes, societal values and expectation, dysfunctional government policies, dysfunctional political parties’ manifestoes and political culture emerged from the study. The political climate and environment favor one particular gender, the male. The thinking is that the frequent changes in governments in the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s created a political culture that was fully run by men. Tsikata (1999) contends that, “The low political activity of women’s front was a reflection of the state of paralysis that characterized mass political activity during 1966-1981 periods” (pp. 161-162). Military coup d’états and adventurism have as one of their by-products being exclusionary. Exclusionism in para-military governments is usually all male because of the dictatorial
tendencies and characteristics they take. Ghana embarked on the path of democracy in 1992, but before that, the political culture had been exclusionist. Yet despite Ghana’s present day democratic credentials, the legacies of those military and dictatorial regimes are still festering in our society. There are still certain dysfunctional policies both in governments and political parties, in addition to societal values and norms which have been greatly influenced by these legacies.

These developments deepened the situation for women in the country, leading to a political culture that doubts the integrity and capability of women. In an already mired environment where women have been socialized to be second fiddle, one step above children, the political structure was and still is very male. Kleinbaum (1977) demonstrates the thinking of some males in our society asserting that:

> Women are intellectually inferior to men, and inherently emotional, and incapable of contributing to the political process or to the great works of civilization, that their sexuality is dangerous, and that they are deceitful and treacherous—these are very old ideas. (p. 219)

Such absolute statements about women as Kleinbaum indicates have been rejected as a result of better discernment of who women were and who they are today. The fact still remains that there are many who still cling to these arguably putatively flawed fundamental masculine notions. These notions according to the participants are the lenses used by governments and political parties when issues of policies for enhancing the fortunes of women come under scrutiny. These underlying fears according to Gordon (2005) are:

A partnership between men and women based on equality rather than the subordination and exploitation of women will be, in Africa as in every
other region of the world, difficult to achieve. After all, many men benefit, or think they do from the privileges patriarchy permits them, and change in fundamental gender roles and identities is never an easy or quick process. (p.105)

It may seem that there could be some difficulties as Gordon puts it, however, it could be done when the dominant and the subordinate group work together, especially realizing the large female potential and resources going to waste. These kinds of thinking by some men through societal mechanisms in place have led to what Figure 14 depicts.

Scholars such as Allah-Mensah (2007), Tsikata (1997), Manuh (1993) have discussed dysfunctional policies of governments and political parties. Agreeing that policies are basically intentions and directions which are often derived from legislation and sometimes constitutions of nations, they opine that these usually are not implemented because of the absence of political will. There is no doubt today that the involvement of women in political decision-making and especially in the legislature could have a significant impact on the governing of Ghana.

The trend of almost all male participation cuts across the political spectrum. In almost all the presidential elections in Ghana, political parties have not found it prudent to balance the equation of presenting female candidates even as running mates. The first attempt was made in 1996; even there it was an insignificant party which did not have any chances at all of winning an election. None of the two most significant parties has ever tried balancing gender in any elections in Ghana so far. The table below shows the most recent parade of presidential candidates in the 2008 elections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Presidential Candidate</th>
<th>Running Mate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention Peoples Party</td>
<td>Dr Paa Kwesi Ndoom</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Patriotic Party</td>
<td>Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
<td>Prof. Evans Atta-Mills</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Patriotic Party</td>
<td>Kwabena Adjei</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s National Convention</td>
<td>Edward Mahama</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Freedom Party</td>
<td>Emmanuel Ansah-Antwi</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic People’s Party</td>
<td>Thomas Ward Brew</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ghana’s Electoral Commission

The above table is a mirror image of what Ghana’s political society is made of. Patriarchal images and representation from all angles, even among political parties that purport to have the interests of women at heart, yet, do not find it fit to field women candidates in presidential elections.

**Dysfunctional Policies Government**

All my respondents expressed their knowledge of one form or another of specific policies that successive governments tried to put in place for increased female participation. They yearned for the re-introduction and enforcement of such policies. The lawyers among them, Hannah Tetteh current minister of trade and Esther Dapaah (MP), were quite vocal and voluble in expressing at length how such policies could have a better impact. My respondents suggested various levels at which such policies could be
instituted to positively help women in their quest to participate in political decision making. There were suggestions as to how government policies could become more useful especially if they were incorporated into the national constitution. According to about 50% of these respondents, various political parties which are also governments in waiting should also make their policies more women friendly and that they should not be political rhetoric, but rather be doable and achievable.

According to the NDC 2004 manifesto:

An NDC government will aim at strengthening the position of women in senior government post, improving the conditions of poor women and actively promoting gender equity. There will be emphasis on women’s rights and participation indecision making processes at all levels and ensures that public and in-house records are in gender sensitive language. We shall introduce major policy and legislative reforms, aiming at 40 % representation of women …government and public service. (Chapter 4, p. 55)

The policy as stated above is clear, at least 40 % representation of women at all levels will be effected. This was the promise the NDC party made while it was in opposition. Currently, the National Democratic Congress is in government, and it is doing 11 %, far from the 40 % representation it promised the people of Ghana. One needs to examine the leadership of the NDC before imbibing a promise like the one made above. The patriarch has a very subtle way of making the subordinate “consent” to its bidding. The hegemony concept uses “coercion and consent” as the main tools in its operation. When one examines the leadership of all the parties in Ghana, one realizes that even there, women are not visible. How can a structure (party) whose leadership does not give enough room to women within political party leadership be taken seriously as it seems to be saying above?
The New Patriotic Party (NPP) served as government from 2001-2008. Their manifesto devoted four paragraphs to their intentions at the time about enhancing the political fortunes of women if they were retained by the electorate.

The NPP Government has in the past few years in office demonstrated its commitment to improving gender equality and equity through diverse actions and policies: the establishment, for the first time in the history of this country, a Women and Children's Ministry to address issues of gender parity and empowerment the appointment, in our first term in office, of a Minister in charge of Girl-Child Education to address in a more focused way the elimination of disparities in education between sexes. We are proud to say that the gap between girls’ and boys' education has been narrowed significantly the introduction of micro-credit financing that has helped to improve the economic position of women. The Women Development Fund has disbursed GH¢ 11.3 million to 168,800 women countrywide since 2002. The beneficiaries are now able to contribute to household income and meet the education and health needs of their families. With an average household size of four people, 675,200 lives have been improved through the program the appointment, for the first time, of women to head key public service institutions such as the Judiciary, and Immigration Service the passage of the Domestic Violence Act and the Human Traffic Act to protect the vulnerable members of our society including women and children from abuse the provision of free maternity health care to all pregnant women. (New Patriotic Party Manifesto, Chap 2, para. 1, 22)

The manifesto of the NPP was more elaborate than the NDC’s; however, the NPP lost the election. With such nice sentiments and promises made for the advancement of women in the political dispensation of Ghana, it was intrinsically necessary again to peep into the leadership of this political party to ascertain the makeup of its leadership. Being a member, I have on many occasions questioned the genuineness of the pronouncements and actual deeds of the party. It is not different from the NDC as far as the patriarchal nature of its structures. The question then is “Whither are we drifting.” One characteristic of hegemony, and indeed patriarchy is “tokenism.” Political tokenism is making
concessions to a group, for one reason or the other takes many forms, The participants indicated in many ways that political tokenism prevails in their respective parties. Gifty Kusi asserts that:

Women are only given positions because they need women organizers to organize the large numbers of women for them to get votes, and after that when they are taking important decisions, you don’t matter. (Personal Communication, 2009)

As Gifty Kusi’s experience indicates, such maneuvers, or actions that are undertaken especially when they have devious connotations that “we are ensuring that men and women stand side by side as equal partners” (NDC Manifesto, 2004 Chapter 4 p.55), that demonstrates political tokenism vividly. Such actions are unfair because such tokenism through public statements, political party manifestos and government’s pronouncements imply they take genuine gender issues far less seriously than they should. These acts are not only unfair, but indicative of a larger conspiracy by the dominant group to deepen the democratic disengagement of women in Ghana’s political dispensation. Such carefully and well orchestrated acts will continue to impact women’s participation politically, robbing the nation of the contributions of the female gender.

All the respondents emphasized that women bring to the table issues men may shy away from. There were very strong indications that when women are in charge, they make different choices than men, investing in projects that directly affect their particular needs which men generally gloss over. About 80 % of the participants mentioned how time and time again, affirmative action is discussed by a few concerned civil society
groups and the Ministry for Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC), and then fizzles away. According to Allah-Mensah (2007):

Perhaps the most visible adherence to statements of enhancing the fortunes of women was the establishment of the women and Children Ministry…Contrary to all this, women’s representation in the party hierarchy sends a different signal. In an eighteen member national executive, body, only two members are women. (p. 264)

Despite the laudable reasons behind the creation of this Ministry, the fortunes of women in Ghana do not seem to have been impacted, after almost a decade. Turning to the nation’s constitution for answers brings generalized information, meaning the framers of the constitution did not reckon equal representation especially between men and women to be crucial to the development of Ghana.

Ghana has had four different constitutions over the last six decades. The most recent and current is the 1992 Constitution. As clearly stated in Articles 17 sub-section 21 (3), there shall be non-discrimination, and yet realizes that it does not seem to be pushing in any extraordinary way to promote and enhance the situation of women who though form the majority of the population are still marginalized in terms of political representation. The first president of the nation as mentioned found that closing the gap between the disadvantaged northern part of the country and the privileged south, instituted pragmatic policies in the 1960s which has considerably minimized the yawning gap between the north of the country and the south, however since his overthrow in a military coup d’état in 1966, successive governments have maintained the policy of closing the gap between the north and the south. Scholars and other contemporary
feminist thinkers blame successive governments who allowed what was instituted by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to be thrown into the dustbin of history.

Since then, very feeble attempts have been made without the necessary political will to institutionalize them. I do remember in 1998, the government of the National Democratic Congress came out with a government White Paper on Affirmative Action which stated that there would be 40% representation of women in decision-making. Because this was not a policy, the government and political parties have not been held accountable to institutionalize it. Thus a laudable attempt did not see the light of day.

Esther Obeng Dapaah (MP), a constitutional lawyer and a former minister (2004-2008), laments how governments failed to heed calls by women for a better deal in regards to their representation:

There is no legal framework, maybe policies, yes. Hajia Alima former Minister in charge of the Women and Children Ministry was pushing a paper to government, for government to be committed to a policy of instituting an affirmative action for women. You see our national policies on women have not been pursued with the dexterity and genuineness such issues require. You know men seem to be only toying with the issue of desiring increased participation of women, but they treat such issues with kid gloves. After independence, there were attempts to meet some of the pressing social and economic needs of women. While there were some strides made to close the gap in education between men and women, the nation failed to deal with critical aspects of lives of women especially their access to resources, or to question the subordination under which many women lived. If initial attempts had been sustained by successive governments, we should have even surpassed Rwanda as far as representation in this august legislature is concerned. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Esther Dapaah and all the participants reckoned the existence in the past of an Affirmative Action policy; however they argued that nothing seemed to have come out of that. Enforcement according to them has not been done, thus it
dysfunctional status currently. They opine that successive governments have never had the political will to make those policies operational. Esther further maintains that:

They remain on paper and at yearly conferences our presidents as usual make profound references to them without actually showing what it is on the balance sheet. The worse culprits are the political parties that we have. It is interesting how their manifestoes usually have beautifully couched segments on how to promote women participation, and whenever they are called to demonstrate these policies practically, they fail woefully. Our recent election was very horrendous, after initial agreements at policy levels that our women politicians will have a field day without having male challengers doing the primaries, the party reneged on its own promise, and our women were left on their own. What is the sense of having policies when we are not ready to implement them? (Esther Dapaah, Personal Communication, 2009)

Esther Dapaah’s words are buttresses other statements made by the participants about how dysfunctional party political policies and manifestoes have been. Other participants minced no words when they questioned the continuous disparity in representation between men and women in parliament. Some of them argued that very few women were given education during the colonial era and after independence, and though the thinking changed, it was not dramatic enough to improve the fortunes of women in the country (Robertson, 1983). The socio-cultural framework had been so seriously affected by the colonial legacy that a lot of families preferred their males rather the females to go to school. Adusah (2008), Annin (2009) and Dadzie (2009), researchers who have added to the literature on Ghana with their recent studies on females in difficult circumstances, unanimously maintain that few women were given an opportunity to obtain an education in Ghana because they were designated to end up in the domestic sphere, which did not
require formal education. Other seriously horrendous reasons given were that an education in academic subjects was considered neither socially appropriate nor within women’s intellectual capabilities.

It is interesting to note that this segment of the interview drew a lot of heated exchanges between the researcher and the participants. While minority party members’ unleashed venom on the current government for making promises in their manifesto to have 40% women representation and are only doing 11%, another member of government said government was progressively working towards that.

Hannah Tetteh a lawyer and a politician in the majority party was less offensive:

As far as our national legal framework is concerned, the Constitution provides the answer; we have provided that there should be a form of equal representation at every level of government. There is a definite legislation, but I think that the kind of affirmative action that could lead to a critical mass of women about 40% of women in positions, we have not had that yet. We are planning to have a constitutional review and so if the people of Ghana want that, then this is the time. The extraordinary ways will be through affirmative action and certain percentages and quotas written into our constitution. That is currently not the case. But again, it depends on what the larger population in the country thinks and whether they believe we are ready for that. (Hannah Tetteh, Personal Communication, 2009)

Hannah Tetteh thinks that having a policy on affirmative action may not be enough; she opines that making it a constitutional directive could make such objectives of increasing female participation enforceable. All the 15 participants unanimously agreed that it is only by government intervention through a policy framework that significant changes would be seen regarding women’s representation. Furthermore, some reported that if nations ever paid serious
attention to the United Nations Charter and the numerous other protocols that have been promulgated, the fortunes of women all over the world and in Ghana in particular, would be better.

**Dysfunctional political party manifestoes and policies**

Another interesting dimension of the discussion centered on policies that are churned out by political parties which become a nine-day wonder. My participants contended that their own political parties were not doing them any good in their desire and quest to participate in political activities. The women indicated that almost all political parties have manifestos with segments devoted to increasing female participation. However, they were again unanimous that enforcing these policies is fraught with the same attitudes that men show. In one breath, as one participant describes the situation, political parties give the impression that they are making every effort to increase women’s participation, and in another they stifle the efforts women make to participate in the political process. The participants strongly suggested that the onus rests on political parties to actualize the beautifully couched sections of their manifestoes that talk about women’s participation.

Ghana, as a parliamentary democracy, needs to build structures that will identify, nurture and position women to feature well in elections, and most importantly as the participants asserted, reserve safe seats for the females. The roles of political parties remain very crucial in building a political culture that will first change the old mentality and then replace it with a more female-friendly mentality.
There are as many as 10 registered political parties in Ghana; however, only two are very strong as has been shown in the last four elections in the country. These two are the National Democratic Congress (NDC), and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The others are the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), the Peoples National Convention (PNC) and other minority parties who in the last four elections have performed very poorly. The onus rests on these political parties to strategize and create spaces meaningful for women.

The Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP) was formed in 1949 during the struggle for independence. Its founding father was Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president. It was the first party to rule Ghana after independence. The CPP started as a vehicle of emancipation of the nation and the whole of Africa. It sees itself as a mass party that embraces farmers, fishermen, the rural folks, the rich and the poor alike. It is a party which sees no distinctions among people and believes that all citizens must be seen as Ghanaians first. The party believes that the state must ensure that all people are given equal opportunities to develop themselves before any ethnic considerations. It also holds the view that the state must be committed to solidarity with the poor. The CPP is committed to the ideas and ideals of the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and hold the belief that those ideals are still relevant to the youth of today. It is in light of this that the party wants to come back to power in order to continue the unfinished business of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The CPP has not seen political power for a rather long time now. CPP’s colors are white, red and green. Its symbol is a cock and its motto is “Save Ghana now.”

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) came into being in 1992 when the ban on party politics was lifted in Ghana. It had metamorphosed from the United Party in the 1950s,
the Progress Party in 1969, and to the Popular front Party in 1979, as a result of the intermittent military interventions the nation had. The NPP is a liberal democratic party in Ghana and one of the two dominant parties in Ghanaian politics. The party is center-right, but is considered to be more liberal than its leading rival, the National Democratic Congress. In the last elections, held on December 7, 2004, the party won 129 out of 230 seats. Its candidate, John Kufuor was re-elected president with 52.75% of the vote. The party symbol is the elephant and the party colors are red, white, and blue.

Ghana attained independence from the British in 1957, and until now has been governing itself. Its political history has been quite checkered due to the military interventions in the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s. The culture of political parties has therefore not been well instituted. It is still evolving, albeit at a very slow rate. I had the opportunity to deal mostly with women of the minority party, and a very limited number of the majority. It was easier dealing with the minority than the majority because I am a member of the current Minority in parliament, thus the saying “Pares cum paribus facillime congregantur” (Birds of the same feathers flocked together.) greatly affected my choices. The political manifestoes of the two biggest parties were among the numerous documents I analyzed. The two parties have made statements their manifestos which unequivocally deal with women’s representation. While the NPP mentions continuation of what it perceives as the good work it has done to improve women’s fortunes, and some notable appointments it had made into the Judiciary and Ghana Immigration Service all of which were for the first time being headed by women. The NDC, which was then in
opposition only made promises to increase women’s participation to 40% if the people
gave them the mandate to rule in 2008 elections.

**How the parties are perceived by the participants and others**

Almost a full year has come and gone since the National Democratic Congress
was inaugurated, its best so far is 11% and women occasionally draw their attention to
their campaign promises. According to Ofori-Parku (2009),

> These appointments of women to ministerial positions fall far below the
40 percent representation promised by the National Democratic Congress
(NDC). The least said about the appointment of women as District,
Municipal or Metropolitan Chief Executives, the better. The NDC
government should eat the humble pie and apologize for reneging on its
words during its ‘promise spree’ in the December 2008 Elections. The
NDC’s manifesto explicitly commits to an affirmative action policy. Now
that the party is in power, it should be acting it. Early days yet, they say,
but the level of women political participation is one thing that cannot be
ignored in these times. In a country, with a women population of about 51
percent, the involvement in development issues and political leadership
should be the concern of all. It should not be a promise to be made by
successive politicians on their platforms and left to fly with the wind
afterwards. (UPIU para, 2)

In all, the 15 respondents discussed the role of political parties and virtually condemned
them for their laissez-faire attitudes towards improved female representation in their
parties. Scholars including Tsikata (1994) and Manuh, (1995) have very often discussed
how women are used by political parties during campaigning and electioneering only to
be shelved when it comes to power and decision-making. I reproduce below reactions
from my respondents, Elizabeth Sackey and Gifty Kusi. First Elizabeth Agyeman (MP):

> Yeah, they think that should never happen. And there are certain areas
excuse me to say, when a woman is menstruating, they have all problems
with such occurrences. If a woman uses a bucket, they will not use it. And
those are some of the things affecting us as women and we are not being
accepted by the men. These are some of the issues they carry onto the public sphere. Why this mentality, I don’t just know. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) added her voice to the issue saying:

The party should come out with solid decisions about what is to be done about women, there were policies before the previous elections, if they had been followed to the letter, and most of us would not have had primaries. It should just be by acclamation. At the last minute, when we had been assured of protection, they relented and we had to slug it out with others in primaries. (Personal Communications, 2009)

This was followed by Gifty Kusi who drew my attention to the UN guidelines which mandates nations to ensure that the rights of both male and female are ensured in all spheres of human endeavor. Gifty Kusi (MP) supports the call by the other MPs for something more meaningful to be done to assist women in politics.

When they were amending the Constitution of the party, we told them, that women are so fragile that, we know is democracy, and in democracies they are protected. They gave us the impression that they were in agreement, but when it got to the time, they said we should all go to primaries. In neighboring Togo, the filing fees for women were waived off; I mean affirmative action for women. Yeah, CEDAW seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination on women, including education and political participation. Ten women were given slots in every region, but this has long been dumped into the dustbin. Don’t mind Atta Mills, he wanted votes thus, that statement. (Personal Communications, 2009)

Allah-Mensah (2007) supports the participants in their assertion that political parties and governments have the responsibility of ensuring female participation. She asserts that:

Political parties have greater access to state power if they win election. They have the tendency to influence policy processes, and more significantly, to contribute to the process when their legitimacy is assured.
Consolidation of democracy has implications for all aspects of governance including the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies needed to effect change. A party can make these changes through its manifesto into a policy document. (p. 320)

The question here is, “Are the political parties dealing with some structures that make it difficult for them to actualize their stated objectives of increasing the numbers of women in political participation?” In 2004, there were 25 in a chamber of 230 seats, roughly 10.9%. The year 2008 was filled with promises by the two largest parties in Ghana to work towards more positive representation. By the end of the year when elections were over, the results were not the upward trend in growth as seen between 2000 and 2004, but it was rather a decrease from 25 to 20, now 19 as the result of a bye election in one constituency where an incumbent woman who died was replaced by a man. The question I pause to ask is that, “Are Ghanaians becoming disinclined to women in politics?” Again, who or what is the culprit? Literature, theory and the data clearly show who the culprits are. It could be true that being a woman is not enough reason to be appointed into political authority or to be voted for. The political scene in the country clearly indicates that it is not in the interest of any woman to have risen to a position because she is a woman. But it is equally not in any society’s interest not to balance the scales to make it possible for the social economic and political inclusion of persons of either sex.

Summary

Research question two unraveled the challenges women face operating in the district, regional and national levels of politics. The narratives of the participants indicate the undulating nature of the political arena, and the difficulties of circumventing the entrenched structures they confront. Participants were unanimous in the assertion that
their political rights are being violated and trampled upon as a result of the impediments and bottleneck these entrenched structures place before them. They also in many ways asserted to political tokenism as a way most of the political parties have placated women, giving the impression that they are been reckoned. The violations of the political rights of women in Ghana are generally infringements on the United Nations Charter and other protocols. As long as Ghana remains a signatory to the Charter, steps must be taken to ensure that, these rights are upheld.

Research question three also looked at issues bordering on efforts of governments and political parties in improving the fortunes of women in the political process. The experiences of the participants are that, the efforts of political parties and governments have been very abysmal. Apart from the efforts during the First Republic which yielded fairly good results, successive governments have only succeeded in paying lip service to increased women’s participation. Political parties for their part have acted no differently from governments. These are “men’s clubs” with unwritten laws crafted for male admittance only. My participants described these subtle approaches made by parties and governments in waiting as their “modus operandi.” They designated efforts by political parties and governments as dysfunctional.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE POSITIONALITY, IMPEDIMENTS, CHALLENGES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND NON-POLITICAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

This chapter discusses experiences of women in local level and nation level politics. It has answered research question four ‘What are the impediments, challenges that women in political leadership and non Political leadership experience as a result of their gender?” and research question five “What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana?” The figure below looks at one critical ingredient in the relationship between men and women.

**Figure 15** Sources of Male Super Ordination and Female Subordination

**The Dynamics of Power**

The above illustration depicts the dynamics of social relations and power. Men’s and women’s accessibilities to power begin at birth and while the male’s accessibility is ensured by the prevailing structures of our society, the female’s accessibility is dimmed
by these same structures. To the extent that men and women have different degrees of political power, they will have unequal input into political decision making, and consequently, their interests and experiences may be unequally represented in law and public policy (Renzetti & Curran, 1999). Leadership and political participation is all about power and who has it and who does not has to be ascertained. Renzetti and Curran (1999) mention three levels of political activity besides voting. According to them there are the spectator activities, transitional activities, and gladiator activities, ranging from ordinarily wearing campaign buttons, writing to public officials, making campaign contributions through to working on a political campaign, and running for public office.

Van Dyke (2010) discusses power using Gramsci and Foucault. He dissects their two ideas and positions about the actual source of power. What makes Van Dyke’s article interesting is that at the end of the separate prescribed route the two charted, the product they arrived at is called power. Inferring from the above while Gramsci dwells on domination, Foucault’s idea is premised on power formulations. However these two positions are viewed, there is a structure which constitutes the base or the source of the power. The Hegemony Theory and its byproduct, offshoot, the Post Colonial Feminist Theory provide the theoretical underpinning for this study. However, for this research question in particular, the Hegemony Theory remains the fulcrum, lens and the conduit for analysis.

Janeway (1980), writing about power asserts:

It is a process that both reflects and produces great social changes, in a continuing dynamic of human interaction? If it is so, it is driven by ‘ferments’ which boil up in unexpected places while guardians of the superstructure are looking in another direction. Its ‘being’ is becoming. Its
steady existence derives from ceaseless shifts in tensions, its balance is maintained by thrust and response, hope and frustration, and by the practical actions that grow out of confrontations and compromises among its myriad human components. If power is a process of human interaction, it takes place between interacting members of a relationship. We can name them as ‘powerful’ and ‘weak’, in political terms as ‘rulers’ and ‘ruled’ or ‘governors’ and ‘governed’…. And women are the oldest, largest, most central group of human creatures in the wide category of the weak and the ruled. (pp. 3-4)

Janeway establishes the framework on which some societies may be seen especially those who have an unfettered entrenched structures. Ghana as most of the participants have alluded to in some of their earlier statements has such characteristics within the fabric of the society.

Gramsci, Foucault and Janeway are beating the same side of the drum—power and its dynamics exemplified by the concept of hegemony. A hegemon has power and dominion over another. The impediments and challenges are intertwined with the dispensation of power; with who has it and who does not. To have or not have it must be determined by a superstructure that Gramsci likens to half-human half-beast. Power is about domination and subordination, domination is about coercion and consent. Two scholars, Hoare and Smith (1971), postulate that Gramsci regarded every hegemonic relationship as an “educational” one. That is, hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure their consent to the dominant group’s agenda. Engagement in a war of position to transform the state similarly involves educational work throughout civil society to challenge existing relations of hegemony. Thus schools, societal norms and values, customs and traditions are all part of the process of “education” that Gramsci is alluding to. In other words, our societies are the sites for the
perpetuation of hegemonic tendencies, and the protagonists or central characters are those who are able to exert influence.

The question is whether one particular gender is exerting its influence over the other and thereby creating these impediments, challenges and difficulties that the other gender faces, and does this determine what successes that particular gender could attain? All the 15 respondents are female, and their narratives about governments, political parties are among the issues of power dynamics which Gramsci, Foucault and Janeway have collectively discussed. All 15 respondents in my research were dealing with issues Gramsci, Foucault, and Janeway at different epochs, had critically examined suggesting ways by which such challenges could be met. However, the frustrations, the pain and misery women go through in the political sphere as a result of their gender are articulated abundantly by my respondents in their voices below.

**Entrenched Hegemonic Structures, Domination and Subordination**

The data from my participants indicated a particular trend of the psyche of our society. It is referred to as the socio-cultural framework which manifests itself as hegemonic, with such by products as domination and subordination. The fifteen respondents reacted on issues that had hegemonic characteristics, especially domination of women by men. They describe the usual challenges they as women face as a result of the gendered roles in our society and the power play between the known dominant group and the subordinated one.

The participants provided information during the interviews that gave credence to the Ghanaian society. Snippets of such information reverberate throughout the study,
however, some of the statements which had characteristics of power relations as described by Janeway (1980) are discussed below. According to Hannah Tetteh:

I know the female is regarded as a subordinate, typically, when I went to my constituency and I go to a village, you will see that the sitting position of the men were different from that of the women. The women, whilst the men were at the front. The two genders will always be differently seated portraying the male and female dichotomy. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Hannah’s words portray the dynamics usually existing mostly in the rural settings of Ghana. Her constituency a typical rural enclave where illiteracy rate could be as high as 72 % for women and 64 % for men (Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy). In rural settings, the tendency for women to depend largely on their men usually makes the women become more susceptible to the whims and caprices of the men who tend to subordinate them unduly, while in the urban setting of Ghana, where the literacy rates for both male and female is higher, the levels of subordination is lower. However, domination as the participants confirmed prevails in every part of Ghana and among all the tribes.

Kate Bannerman provides another thread to the issue of the entrenched structures that invariably affects the female unduly. She asserts that:

We have the traditional set up which is not helping us much, because you grow up in a traditional setting as a woman/girl, you are already stereotyped by the society, your role and progression has been defined for you, you will have to fight hard to move away from that role, and it is only education which can assist you break away from that circle. If you are educated, there is the tendency for you to tow that line. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Kate Bannerman assertion borders on what is usually referred to as the “gender contract” as discussed in the literature. These kinds of experiences are what Janeway (1980)
discusses. According to her, society in general where men have been socialized to see themselves as superiors, where the male equals strength and power, and the female equal’s weakness, there is bound to be such occurrences as described above by Hannah Tetteh and Kate Bannerman. Janeway illustrates the issue further:

With us, men are assigned to the public world and instructed to compete there for fame, success, status, and all the attributes we commonly associate with power. The women attached to them participate vicariously in their achievements but are not supposed to pursue these goals independently. Women, instead are granted a right to exercise power (usually labeled moral authority) in private sphere of woman’s place, over children and other dependents, and to influence, to whatever extent possible …This is the traditional picture of what women’s condition is and should be. (p. 10)

My respondents have all alluded to the upbringing we all as male and female receive while growing up and are questioning why that must continue. The “gender contract” is signed right from birth through to adulthood, and even follows us into our grave, who knows what happens thereon. The next segment of the study examines gender mainstreaming.

**Traditionally Defined Cultural Roles of Ghanaian Women**

According to Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1988):

These expectations of how a person should act because she is female or he is male are called gender-related norms. Norms are the ‘supposed to’s’ of life –the behaviors our society lays down for us and expects us to carry out. Certain norms are attached to various positions. For example, attached to the social position of parent is the norm that parents should take care of their children…cluster of norms attached to a social position…sociologists call a role. (p. 17)

Janeway (1980) describes acts like crying as “effeminate” as unmanly acts, only proper for females. So according her, the formula to be female is to be weak’, is also
used in reverse that is “To be weak is to be female”. It is used by men themselves, spurring themselves and their sons on to engagements with the male role. How many times did I not hear my own father making statements to this effect? Power and weakness are thus factored into masculine and feminine gender images quite explicitly. Virile men are decisive and forceful, and feminine women are passive (p.10).

The operation of women in environments of power play is fraught with serious impediments. To give or not give, to share or not to share power remains a very thorny issue confronting women right from the very start when making the decision to contest elections, then contesting elections and operating in an environment where the dominant group is the other gender. The political sphere represented by the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary and even in non political leadership positions is the focal point where women experience problems. Whether they achieve successes or not depends to a great extent on the power-dynamics at play there especially how men play it.

Hannah Nyamekye (fMP) provides the answer:

That is the nature of the society. In the rural communities, if you are a woman, a second class citizen. You are enlightened, you want to be yourself you are called names, but you could also get used to it. Some of us are used to it now. A whole lot of women will not even venture into it because their men will say no. If the man says no and you say yes, then that means a break of marriage. Choose your political career or your husband. Some even put that on the table. I have said that these days the men are making an effort to give us equal rights, they have given it and are still holding it. If you have given it let it go, give the woman the freedom to also think and express herself without having to issue threats. So, like husbands, like fathers, it got to a point where my cousins and family prevailed upon me not to be talking at radio stations. They are suspicious
are doing it from the point of angle where you are taking over, instead of
him being the head of the family, you are becoming the head of the family,
and the man will not let that woman go anywhere. Culturally, our culture
puts the man above the woman, we are making noise that we have equal
rights, but you and I know that we have not reached there yet. (Personal
Communication, 2009)

As indicated by the respondent, the issues at stake here are that the woman is seen as an
inferior and not an equal to a man in certain societies as the literature indicates. There are
still men, in this day and age, who believe that women are less competent than men and
that men are superior to women. Such men not only frown on efforts aimed at ensuring
equality for women, but aggressively use their positions of power to diminish the dignity,
value and accomplishments of successful women. Beauvoir (1974) argues that, whereas
men have assumed the status of the transcendent subject, women have been relegated to
the status of the immanent other. Women are defined and differentiated with reference to
man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to
‘he’ the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute, and she is the other. This
distinction, between man as subject and woman as other is the key to understanding of
domination, subordination and oppression.

Even in developed nations strong traces of this dichotomy exists. Goldberg
(1993) describes the situation as “the inevitability of patriarchy” or the rule of men’. Men, it is increasingly clear, have a “fear of change” towards equality with women. When facing a change, most people invariably feel insecure. Let’s face it. Change of
any sort whether modest or major can be unnerving. The expected outcome of change
in the power dynamics between men and women, if it ever occurs, will be
phenomenal, unprecedented in the history of this world as history has it. For men and
even women it will be like waking up in the morning and realizing that the world is still dark. Janeway (1980) asserts that because the traditional female image is labeled weak, achieving equality with men is perceived by women as being a step up to a level of greater opportunity and wider horizons. What men perceive is the opposite, not a leveling up, but a leveling down for them. Do I think like this? The answer is probably yes because I was socialized to do exactly that. Do all men think like this? I am tempted to say to a great extent yes, but I do not have any empirical evidence to support that. However, Goldberg (1993) reechoes the inevitability of patriarchy, the universality of patriarchy.

A few of my respondents reported other perspectives about the challenges they face which invariably affect their output. Gifty Kusi (MP) has reservations generally about what men do to stifle the development of women, and she became a bit aggressive as she tried to state the issue. She discussed the fear generally spewed by men about what it takes to be in Parliament, and some successes women have chalked in Ghana’s democratic dispensation. This kind of information has the potential of knocking off women even at the very stage where they may be nursing parliamentary ambitions. Gifty Kusi asserts that:

It is still happening, hey this place women don’t come here ooh, meaning Parliament. People have formed this opinion and they are coming here with that opinion. And it is very difficult to change, but we are getting somewhere gradually. What I am saying is that some men enjoy lording over women, but some men are also liberal, they want to discuss issues with women who can help them in a better way. So it depends, men, number one, whether you are empowered or not they still demand that you respect them. And my culture does not support any stance that I take against my husband that we are equal. Women have become leaders in the banking sector, MDs, women lawyers; FIDA has championed the cause of
women internationally. In my constituency they see my worth and are ready to give me the nod to represent them again and again. We have had women deputy ministers of finance. Women have performed so well. District level elections have women fairly visible, although not to the point where it will look really fairly representative. The numbers of women who vie for national elections have tripled. So at least women are now aware, it is our input that made the past government to look for funding to help in maternal and child care. Women politicians like me, Gladys Asmah, Hajia Alima Mahama, late Grace Coleman, Christine Churcher, late Hawa Yakubu the Chief Justice, Georgina Wood, and other women who are silently making notable contributions to our political life. I must not forget to mention the numerous women who through their toil have supported our political parties and have voted for us. I must remind you of the 51 % of the population that we represent; our work would become more visible if we equally have at least between 40-50 % representation in our Parliament, Judiciary, and Executive. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Gifty Kusi believes that difficulties women face are enormous and challenging, yet she reckons that despite these challenges, women are still making a mark in the nation’s development. She identifies many women past and present in the political life of the nation who have made contributions positively to growth. She asserts that the work of women would become “more visible if we equally have at least between 40-50 % representation” in Ghana’s political framework.

Hannah Tetteh (fMP), a lawyer, and is the current minister for trade and industries in Ghana. Her reaction to this research question was 50-50. To her it would be untenable to generalize, the law characteristics in her could be attributed to the cautious nature of most of her statements. Though not deviating entirely from what the other respondents had alluded to, she exercised some restraint in her pronouncements:

I don’t want to generalize about that, I think it depends on the individuals and how they look at issues, because there are some men who have
encouraged their wives to go into politics, and others who have discouraged them. So it is really a matter of what that person particularly thinks. I think there are some men who might think that way, and some men who will be supportive, and it depends very much on the individual relationship. Now, will I say Ghanaian men generally think that way? I don’t have enough information to do that. I think that all over the world, there is consensus that the structures are more patriarchal, if we did not have that consensus, we would not have had the Beijing Declaration for a start, and I think that different countries are dealing with situation differently, and putting in place the kind of measures that they believe will promote the increased participation of women. I think that in Ghana, in every decade we have seen some improvements, we have not achieved the level that is ideal, we have not gotten the level of women’s participation that we have in Scandinavian countries, but I think that there is the acceptance that it is a goal that we work towards. (Personal Communications, 2009)

The law background of Hananh Tetteh guided every statement she made. She was always careful not to make statements which she could not support empirically. As to Ghana having structures that are patriarchal, she answered in the affirmative, adding that Ghana is dealing quite well with issues bordering on that. She affirms other sentiments expressed saying “we have not gotten the level of women’s participation…in Scandinavian countries.”

Other respondents especially those in my other category, (political analyst) expressed similar sentiments, about some of the bottlenecks that affect the development of females in their quest to become political players and when they are navigating the political terrain as MPs and leaders in government. Though Joana Bannerman a leading female banker with strong proclivities to politics does not have personal experiences in this regard, she thinks men have some innate difficulties they grapple with as a result of their socialization:
I think there are a lot of men that feel threatened, you know they socialized to be in control, so if a woman is now calling the shots, and then they can’t identify themselves. There is always a burden of proof that a woman constantly carries along, whereas if it was a male, it is assumed that he would perform. I think it has to do with upbringing, and it also has to do with expectation of society, as well as the roles women have played over the years. Because if you look at it, now things have improved, the ratios are still very poor, just imagine 20-30 years back, my mother’s time when she was working. Almost all managers were males, so if you saw a manager who is a female it is more like an aberration a departure from what is normal or desirable. So I think for employees who have never had a female boss, the ratio is quite high. When men are faced with this kind of situation, they wonder what the woman can do. And this cuts across every sphere of human endeavor. So you need to prove that you can do something before you earn their respect. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Mrs. Bannerman does not seem to see the present female crop of politicians in Parliament as being any force to reckon with. I was a little curious to know why she was alluding to this idea of non-performance. But she offered reasons reproduced below.

Believe me, there are even some women in Parliament who play second fiddle which is not in the best interest of women generally. I will also say that currently women in Parliament have not tickled me in any meaningful way. I just don’t feel there is no bite; it is just business as usual. There is no major drive by these women to champion the emancipation of women in this country. I recall the days of Hawa and the vigorous role she played in the first Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, and I yearn for women of that stature. If we have a sustained vociferousness of women in our politics, we can make meaningful strides. Those there need to set high standards for themselves and the men alike, this could possibly create a tsunami which will change the fortunes of women positively. If the females are no challenge to the males there then what do you think the outcome will be? (Personal Communication, 2009)

Joana Bannerman’s assertion here is that, yes she believes there must be fair representation, however it must be representation of women by women with quality and
excellence. Joana Bannerman is saying that representing women by just women without substance will not augur well for women themselves.

**Beyond Gender Roles**

Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1988) mentioning Money (n.d) and Ehrhardt (n.d) who had done some work in that area assert that:

What is really important is that a child grows up to know that sex differences are primarily defined by the reproductive capacity of the sex organs, and to have a positive feeling of pride in his or her genitalia and their ultimate reproductive use. If such is the case, it does not matter how interchangeable activities may be between mother and father. In fact, they emphasize that; it does not matter if mother is a bus driver and daddy a cook. (p. 31)

Men as well as women should learn the skills of either sex, so long as it makes the world a better place for all. Though this could be quite intimidating to some men, it could still be done.

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**Figure 16 Gender Mainstreaming**

Adapted from *Men, women and change* Scanzoni & Scanzoni (1988)
According to Women 2000 (1997) a gender advocacy group, mainstreaming gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women, and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs in all areas and at all levels. It is a approach for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

**Contributions of Women to the Politics of Ghana**

Research question five is presented and discussed in this section. The question “What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana? This research question brought out four main themes, captured below as the balance sheet

![Figure 17 The Balance Sheet](image-url)
The following are four main themes the above research question churned. They are contributions of women to Ghanaian politics, devaluing women’s contributions/sexism, emotional support system for male politicians, role models for other women and political tokenism.

Janeway (1980) and Koontz (1977) have expressly contended that women have left their mark on the world, at times changing the course of history and at other times influencing small but significant spheres of life. Only in the past century, however, have concerted efforts been made to represent women's contributions more fully in history books, though there are still attempts by society to obscure and downplay women’s accomplishments. Very early elementary school history mentions Florence Nightingale, a nurse who distinguished herself. Far later in life when it became prudent to learn my own Ghana history, I got to know of other equally distinguished women in Ghanaian history as such Yaa Asantewaa, of the Ashantis, Dode Akaabi of the Ga people and others. The efforts of women are no longer obliterated in this 21st century, since that could deepen our woes rather than helping. Many nations have about 51 % of their population being women; it has become more crucial to trumpet the achievements of women so that more opportunities are created for them.

Before the contribution of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana is examined, it is only appropriate to state the statistics of women in such positions. The balance sheet must be examined to serve as a point of reference. The following statistics on women in the Executive, the highest body, the Judiciary, the Legislature, the regional and the district level leaderships in Ghana have been made available for perusal.
A closer look at the figures on table 8 speaks volumes about what the prevailing structures within the nation allow for female participation. Much as the realization that female participation in governance brings unto the table female perspective is very crucial in ensuring the rights of that gender. The period after independence never saw the growth of female participation in real power dispensation in Ghana until recent times that a semblance of it can be seen at least in the political life of the country, albeit in very limited numbers.

**Table 8 Reality on the Ground**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Ministers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of State</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers of State</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Ministers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Ministers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentarians</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Chief Exec.</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. Assemblies</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s construction using Ghana Statistical Service Data

The above statistics show the abysmal levels of female participation in the politics of Ghana. Right from the very lowest levels of political participation to the national level, women’s representation has always been low. With such low numbers of women in a country where the population is 51% women, we as a nation should be ashamed of ourselves. In all the departments of power, our patriarchal structures have ensured that
women’s participation remains ridiculously low. In Ghana, the problem for women entering the power structure is not getting appointed to high offices. When inequality is traceable to structural imbalances and cultural values, it takes a more than a laissez-faire attitude to restore such imbalance. To give women their due does not in any way mean doing them favors. The low numbers of women in Ghana's political leadership as seen in the Executive, Legislative and local government administrations is a very thorny issue. It is a manifestation of a bigger problem, a serious structural imbalance in the scheme of affairs, fraught with injustices by one gender against the other.

Figure 18. Political Tokenism

Source: Retrieved from the Photo Gallery Ghana’s Legislature

The above a historical artifact depicts a “male club,” being showcased as a nation’s cabinet. Out of the 45 minister in the government of the first republic, it was fitting to break the monotony of men representation with only one woman, a postcolonial
mentality of new elites, and the legacy of Victorianism. Comparatively the situation has not significantly changed. Refer to the statistics provided in Table 2. Irrespective of the abysmal numbers; the contributions of women must not be downplayed. The history of Ghana is replete with names of women who made enormous contributions to the kingdoms and states that existed before colonialism. In the last several decades, it has become increasingly difficult to identify women of distinction in the political arena because patriarchal structures have muzzled them out or pushed them into the background. Despite these challenges, some women have in the last two decades made very useful contributions to the development of Ghanaian politics. Appiah (2008) contends that despite these challenges there are women who brazened the odds and distinguished themselves in the political sphere. At a time when few women would offer themselves to participate in politics in the 1990s, one woman who got elected into the legislature was a real heavyweight among the rest of the legislators, who were all men. According to Appiah (2008):

Hawa was a symbol of selfless humanity and a standard bearer for the down trodden in society. With open arms she always appealed to our basic humanity in the face of irreconcilable differences, such that everyone was a brother and a sister. She was the very essence of duty, compassion beauty and style; though a native of Pusiga she transcended tribes, regions, sub-regional groupings and nationalities. Someone with natural nobility, a heart of a lion, a shooting star, a trailblazer for modern day women politicians in Ghana and a pragmatic doer par excellence who was classless and proved reconciliatory in both word and deed…Though her genuine intentions were sneered by some, one can only deduce that genuine goodness is threatening to those at the opposite end of the moral spectrum, who only imagined Ghana and the world as it was and not how it could be. Thus her level headedness made her to pursue a high level of politics. (para, 3)
These words speak volumes; they are words depicting characteristics of a woman who dared the consequences, and met men politicians “pound for pound.” There are several thousands of such women out there in our societies whose wings have been clipped by the structures that dictate who “could participate” and who “could not.”

*Perspectives of Female Politicians*

Examining the contributions of women is a subject that could become a very thorny issue if care is not taken especially by patriarchs who may be tempted to gloss over very salient and crucial roles women play in the development of nations. The tendency for people to take women’s contributions for granted could continue to worsen their already challenged circumstances. The contribution women make to family life, by emotional support, continuity of relationships, monitoring and easing friction, and domestic skills and daily management of the lives of family units and most importantly sexual accessibility though not always mentioned, cannot be overemphasized.

Obbo (1980) contends that:

> Women found that because men depended on them for achieving these goals themselves, they regarded any direct attempt by women to seek the same goals as women becoming uncontrollable. The need to control women has always been important part of male success in most African societies. (p. 78)

Ms Kate Bannerman (SO) supports the above assertions. To her, women have done more in non political positions.

Economically, women have played a very significant role in this nation. Women are the engine driving economic growth in Ghana, and I believe the world. They have really carried the flow of Ghana’s economy to appreciable heights. Women today form the majority of providers in most homes. In the political realm, a good number of women are doing well in our political life, but as to whether they are part of very significant
decisions that are being taken today is another issue entirely. Women have become increasingly important as managers, investors, entrepreneurs, and directors. Women already make the vast majority of purchasing decisions and their financial powers continue to grow. Men are taking advantage of their numbers and their ignorance. Generally, I will say that women have made very positive contributions more in non-political positions. But let me say that women are always looked at differently especially by men. Ghanaian women are more judgmental about female capacity, whilst for men, there is always this assumption that they are tough enough. As women, we are always caught in a kind of double bind, expected to act like men and punished for not doing that. Women are not men, so accepting the idea that they should behave like men has created this sense that they are a cheaper model, that they are a Toyota Camry to the male Lexus, same manufacturer, but without all the extra power, fancy upholstery, and the state of the art electronics. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Ms. Bannerman and others like her believe that there is generally some unfairness when women come under the search light. The unfairness, they assert, stems from the fact that they are looked at as if they were biologically the same as men, leading to all kinds of erroneous impressions being made about them.

Grace Asobayire the women organizer of the New Patriotic Party, provides a deeply seated political contribution, I was astonished by her in-depth knowledge of history. According to her testimony:

I am recalling these facts to emphasize the major role that Ghanaian women played at independence and continue to play in the development of our country. Presently, women constitute about 70% of the players in the informal sector and care giving in homes…We look forward expectedly to next year’s census to address some of these concerns but the most important challenges for women in Ghana today as we mark Dr Nkrumah’s Centenary next year, is how to maximize our representation in decision making (especially at the district and national levels where planning and resource allocation decisions are made) and ensure that the concerns of women and children who together, constitute about 70% of our national population are effectively addressed. After 53 years of independence, can we say that we have empowered our women enough when presently, we have less than 10% representation of women in
Ghana’s 230-seat Parliament? …research shows that, the empowerment of women politically, economically and socially inures to the benefit of nations. It is therefore the right and the wisest thing to do. We need to support and create space for women to effectively participate in national development. We need particularly the cooperation, collaboration and facilitation of men who should see women as partners and collaborators in development and not as rivals in the quest for power. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Grace Asobayire’s statements are deep seated issues that she desires the nation Ghana to take care of. She acknowledges the immense contributions of women in other sectors, but laments that women seem to be endangered in the political sphere. She sounds sentimental about the efforts of the first president, and bemoans the current situation in Ghana. Her call to men if heeded will change the political topography and place women strategically for national development.

**Historical Contributions of Women**

The role of Ghanaian women and their contributions to the politics of Ghana goes back into history. Arhin (1983) Aidoo (1985) Manuh, (1995) Bortei-Doku (1995), have written about the role of Ghanaian women from the period preceding colonial rule to the present day, mentioning the laudable contributions they have made to the political life of their country. As mentioned in the literature Ghanaian women were very visible in the liberation struggle for independence. However, the women’s movement in Ghana faced a range of different challenges including gender discriminatory laws, low levels of political participation by women, resisting co-optation, and maintaining autonomy as a result of the dynamics of politics over the last several decades. It is necessary to trace what women’s organizations went through in Ghana to place their contributions to politics in
the right context. Women’s organizations in Ghana, prior to independence in 1957, were active participants in local and communal politics.

When the nationalist struggle gathered momentum, the nation’s human resource shortfall was very huge. Very few of Dr. Nkrumah’s Verandah Boys and Girls, as their elitist opponents called them, had enough high formal education to take national leadership roles. The worst hit in his human resource base were the women. That was an era when very little attention was given to female education. Though not as visible like their male counterparts on the frontline, the female politicians nonetheless provided a vanguard force, rallying their families, communities, trade and various interest groups to join the struggle for national independence (Dei, 2009).

Politically and within traditional set ups, women were queen mothers, and in some cases acted as chiefs. Women also played leadership roles in war and conflict, such as Yaa Asantewaa of the Ashantis who led an army of men against the British colonialists, and Queen Dodi Akaibi of the Ga-Adamgbe people in 1610. These were names of women heroines we crammed into our heads in our first history lessons in primary school. They achieved feats usually made by men in our history.
Between 1972-1992, women's organizations, like many other civil society organizations began to be marginalized. I recall the role the National Commission on Women and Development before its activities were hijacked by the 31st December Women’s Movement in the 1980s during the dictatorial regime of an army captain. The continuous marginalization of women continued with the 31 December Women’s Movement (DWM). This was the women’s wing of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), which later became the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in 1992. Though the DWM claimed to represent the interests of all women in the country, its activities did not translate into positive gains for all women. Among the accusations levelled against the DWM was the fact that it engaged in the mass co-option of autonomous women’s organizations in Ghana by creating an umbrella organization. In doing so, the DWM became the main recipient of donor support for the promotion of gender issues. Some have also argued that women who had political positions under the
NDC government had to be strong allies of the leader of the organization, Nana Konadu.

Another criticism levelled at the DWM concerned its focus on the economic emancipation of women in rural areas, to the neglect of broader political and social injustices that existed within the wider community.

Devaluing the Contributions of Women

In recent times in Ghana there have been mixed reactions to appointment of women, a cross-section of society has expressed satisfaction about the strides Ghana seems to be making to recognize the indispensable role of women in our political life. Some expressing dismay still think that the percentages are sill nothing worth writing home about. The general feeling that promises made by the current government to have about 44 % representation of women was just a political gimmick played to win the votes of women during the elections in 2008. There are about 11 % of female representation in government and about 9% in Ghana’s Parliamentary representation. However, others are cautioning critics of women, especially those attacking the current attorney general and minister of justice to refrain from such attacks on women. Media and political opponents of government have in recent times been bashing some women in government saying such females are incompetent, and ignorant of the complexities of public work.

According to Dake (2009), recent successes in an unprecedented number of women attaining high political positions and exercising political clout in arenas hitherto monopolized by men, are bound to trigger an even more vicious reaction from such men.

Dake laments:

This new wave of refined sexism especially in today’s politics does not typically take the form of a 1960 blatant sexism that is deliberate, direct
and visible, but comes in more subtle and covert ways. There may be no
deliberate systems and strong men that openly tell women to shut up and
keep out today, but there are numerous conscious and unconscious acts
that perpetuate the same agenda that old fashion sexist tactics did—to
silence and undermine women. We have seen manifestations of this
particular form of attacks in recent months, by very powerful men and
groups, aimed at some of the most outstanding women leaders of our time.
(para, 2)

It is such attitudes and such manifestations that seem to suggest the uneasiness of men in
sharing power with women. Such issues tend to suggest that women may not be playing
their roles effectively in politics. It also has the tendency to distract women politicians by
rechanneling their energies into counterbalancing the negative bashings. According to
Tamale (1999):

Women politicians are further painted incompetent through reports
which suggest that women cannot succeed in the public sphere
because their “natural” place lies in the private sphere. Thus
sweeping statements such as the following appear often in local
newspapers. Nearly all our women politicians have failed
marriages or are hanging onto long cold marriages either for the
sake of the children or as a public relations ploy. The message
advanced by the argument is that if you are a woman, you have to
choose between your marriage and politics, you can’t have them
both. (p. 189)

Men don’t come under such scrutiny. Married or not, nobody questions their capability.

Most often in Ghana, especially in recent times, some female politicians have had
references made to their physical appearance which draws attention to them often
derogating their stature as serious and capable politicians.

According to Dadzie (2010):

A little over two months ago, Nii Afotey-Agbo, the MP for Kpone-
Katamanso was criticizing information minister, Zita Okaikoi, for failing
to live up to her responsibilities. He made history. He was the most senior
member of the ruling party to publicly criticize the information minister,
whose ability to deliver began being seriously questioned after she granted
her first radio interview. So far she’s done very little to shame her critics
but the president doesn’t seem to be in any mood to fire her. (para, 1)
The fellow who criticized this same female MP was appointed a year later as a
Minister of State. According to Dadzie:

Mr. Afotey-Agbo appeared before the committee with a poorly-prepared
CV and at least two members of the panel urged him to go and get some
lessons on how to write a CV. Afotey-Agbo gave his fellow MPs a lot to
laugh about with his funny answers to the questions he was asked. Asked
about his view on land guards, he said 80% of them are armed robbers. To
a question about where he felt he could be most useful in the government,
considering that he’s supposed to be a utility player, he simply answered:
“I think in this case I can do very well in conflict areas.” The committee
members burst out in laughter. The nomination hearing ended
immediately. (para, 3)

This is a male with no credentials, someone who never went to high school describing a
female lawyer MP as being incompetent fellow, when he does not have the wherewithal
to function as a minister of state? Such is the reality of the society in which we live; the
structures are, as Tamale (1999) puts it, “male and pale.” A clear exclusionist male
patriarchal exhibitionism without basis. In a patriarchal world a new born male is seen in
a much better light than a female. This is a female who is highly educated than this male,
much more discerning than this male MP, yet this “patriarch” with very limited
educational background, and operating within a seemingly hegemonic environment
describes her as incompetent. Men have been in the saddle for generations and have
consciously or possibly unconsciously thought that they are even supernatural human
beings. Most men, because the position their gender places them in, have a tendency to
play down anything female. There is also another group, indeed the other gender, females
who have a tendency too, to play down whatever the feats of their female colleagues.
One question that ran through all my interviews was, “Are women their own enemies?” Only 2 out of the 15 respondents said no, indeed the remaining 13 (86.7%) said Ghanaian women fall prey to that mentality. Again, they identified the culprit as the socialization that takes place in our communities. Both sexes usually don’t question certain occurrences because of the way they have been socialized. There are benefits through for both the male and female through socialization, and there are problems too.

According to Dawuni (2008) despite its many critics, the DWM has had some successes. For example, it was instrumental in providing micro-credit schemes for women traders especially at the height of the World Bank economic austerity measures. These economic ventures aimed at economic empowerment sometimes translated into social and political empowerment. In addition, the DWM is credited with the gradual increase of the number of women in politics at the local level. The District Assemblies established under the PNDC in 1988 through its decentralization project saw an incremental number of women engaging in politics. Today, the participation of women at the district level has become the focus of women’s organizations such as ABANTU for Development.

The respondents in the study, especially those in elected and appointed political positions (MPs, and members of the Executive) were unanimous saying women in politics have really distinguished themselves. Though their numbers are still not significant, they assert that their presence at least sends out the right signals to all and sundry that women are establishing themselves. A couple of the respondents remarked that out of the 25 chairpersons of the many committees in Parliament, six are chaired by
women, making it a significant achievement. Gifty Kusi (MP) asserted that the process of getting particular bills passed in Parliament were as a result of the contributions of the women. She continues saying there are other worthy feats that women have achieved.

For our party made of 111 members, we are only 13. Our numbers as they are will not allow us to go in and fight. But we have achieved certain feats in committees, we have 20 committees and 5 ranking members are women. At least judging from our numbers we feel this is an achievement. (Personal Communications, 2009)

Gifty Kusi (MP) believes in her own personal way, she has really made an impact on her constituents, whose confidence she has. They have given indications that they will want to maintain her for the next round of elections slated for 2012:

In my constituency they see my worth and are ready to give me the nod to represent them again and again. We have had women deputy ministers of finance. Women have performed so well. District level elections have women fairly visible, although not to the point where it will look really fairly representative. The numbers of women who vie for national elections have tripled. So at least women are now aware, it is our input that made the past government to look for funding to help in maternal and child care. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Gifty Kusi (MP) strongly believes that through their presence in Parliament, though not very significant in numbers as compared to the men, women are making a big impact on the psyche of other women. According to her, more and more women are showing interest in all forms of political activities at both the district and national level elections. She claims this marks a shift from the hitherto perception that local and national elections are male domains. Gifty recalls the preliminary work before the Domestic Violence Bill was passed. The original bill specifically prohibited marital rape; however, this was not included in the final version of the act. The reason, according to Gifty Kusi was that, men made a hue and cry on the original version which they perceived too harsh on them.
Supporters of the bill and gender activists were portrayed as purveying foreign ideas that threatened Ghanaian cultural beliefs and practices, in particular, the sanctity of marriage and men’s rights within it. The bill was subjected to an unprecedented nationwide consultation on the grounds that its provisions had serious implications for family life and gender relations:

We also passed the Domestic Violence Bill, we passed the Anti Human Trafficking Bill, the Criminal Code has been repealed, and rape sentence has been increased from a minimum of 5 years to a maximum of 25 years. We think that will help the situation where women cannot be suppressed too much by men, because there is a law now. Hitherto when there was no law, the husband can just get up and say, you I will beat you, now you can take your husband to court. (Gifty Kusi, Personal Communication, 2009)

Though the bill eventually became an Act of Parliament, it was not easy for the women who wanted certain aspects of it to be maintained because they as women knew exactly what was best for them. The female MPs were unanimous that if their numbers had been significant enough, they could possibly have made a better case for those elements they strongly felt ought to have been left in the original bill. As usual, and in an environment that has a large presence of males, their strength and the power they wield made them have their way.

Another respondent, Elizabeth Sackey (MP), provided a further tread on the positive contributions they as women are making towards the political development, irrespective of their numbers.

What we have been doing now is to empower the women knowledgeably, in the community, and the nation as a whole. We deal with a wide range of issues with them to help improve their lives. I am opening a center where issues of development will be discussed and people assisted. (Personal Communication, 2009)
Similar sentiments were shared by Esther Dapaah (MP) former Minister of Environment Science and Technology.

We work better. My work as a minister and working with big companies I showed the way. They were amazed as to how I conducted myself. They could not bribe me. As a woman you will think that “I must perform” to get the recognition. As a woman, you go out of the country to negotiate you are able to bring all the good qualities in you to be successful. The way we are made makes us manage things well. Women have played meaningful roles, but that has been played down. Male chauvinism is accountable for this. The culture and structures within are preventing women from being seen in good light. Yes, seeing some of us seem to be changing the thinking of girls especially in my constituency, you hear them say “me ko school, meye tisee mama Esther” (Meaning, I will go to school and become like Mama Esther) Not really, until they come here and meet women who are articulate, women who understand issues and then they think twice. Men are overwhelmed when they hear women like us articulate issues some of which they themselves might have no idea about. (Personal Communication, 2009)

A very clear example of other females being influenced by the presence of females like is Esther Dapaah who is currently in the political arena. These kinds of effect cumulatively affect the lives of many people who hitherto may have shied away from politics because of the kind of socialization they have been through, and the fact that they may have been told that politics, and for that matter power is the responsibility of males. Another MP discusses another angle of the issue which undergirds the issue of patriarchy within our society.

According to Bernice Boateng (MP), the accessibility of some women politicians to other women sometimes becomes problematic because of some of these same societal inclinations. She mentions how some women think that, because they have been appointed by men to their positions, they must do the bidding of men.
She has been appointed there by men, we do not know the mandate that she has been given. Most often when some of us have requested visits to the minister’s ministry, she always tells you she will call you when she is ready. I don’t know what sort of readiness she is talking about. But let me say that we are trying. Before coming into Parliament, I thought we as women will have the full cooperation of other women in whatever we desire to do. It has not worked like that. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Kate Bannerman however thinks though women in politics are doing well in the present circumstances, they still have a lot of work to do to enable them level up squarely to the men. She does not hesitate to add that any comparing the achievements of men to women will not be in anyone’s interest.

I have always applauded women in political positions. Anytime there is a political debate on radio, television, I always carefully listen to what the women say and I analyze them. I admire such women for their courage and intelligence. On a scale of 0-10, I will say that women in political positions today have scored about 4, and I think they have a lot of work to do. They have done well and are still doing well; they all have very good track records and are leading the revolution to change the topography of women’s presence in high places. However, the public perceptions of women are sometimes tagged as having slept their way into such positions. Interestingly enough too most of these political heavyweights that I have known in the past have not had partners, they have been single. There is this trend, I may not have the empirical evidence to support that though those women usually as they climb the political ladder especially lose their partners, or may have already lost them before they venture into politics, give this superficial situation of politics being good only for women if they remain single. The domestic life of care giving I am tempted to say remains a barrier to any woman nursing political ambitions. (Personal Communications, 2009)

The Hansards of Parliament the official records of parliamentary proceedings could be a good source of information about the kind of statements women make during deliberations in the august house. The limitation I had there was that there was just no way to go through all the several hundred thousand copies that were available. The handful of copies purposely selected covering the life of Parliament during the four
republics so far have not yielded much on the role of women. The Minority Chief Whip indicated that women’s contribution during committee meetings are overwhelming, since they operate in smaller groups, their input during preliminary discussions on bills to the house are very useful. The level there of the entrenched structures are quite minimal and some amount of equity and fair play becomes the norm. As a former MP and having operated at committee levels, I know the above statement is very factual. The nature of the august body, the skewed nature of representation with large numbers of men makes it quite intimidating for some men and women to contribute effectively to issues on the floor.

Official Parliamentary Records/Observations in Parliament

In this segment, I discuss some of the salient trends and patterns of women legislative activity in Ghana. First, during the First Republic, Second, Third and the current Fourth republics respectively. The principal focus here is the legislative transcript (official Hansards of Ghana’s parliament from 1950s to present day), and some observations made while doing my study. The Hansard is the traditional name for the printed transcripts of parliamentary debates in the Westminster system of government. Ghana practices a hybrid of this and the American systems. My choice was just to do random selection of Hansards of any typical day’s activity in Parliament. An issue which formed the basis of analyzing the Hansards was to ascertain whether female MPs favored one kind of legislation over another. In other words, I was trying to find out whether Ghana’s Parliament is in anyway heavily gendered irrespective of the smaller numbers of females present. Currently there are 19 women in a 230-member chamber, and the
likelihood of females toeing a particular line of action could be a possibility in the deliberations of the female gender when legislative activities are being done.

In the 1950s of Ghana’s Parliament, there were 103 members, and nine were women representing the various regions of Ghana. As I pored over the combined Hansards for 1958, I did not really see any serious issues by any of the women. The reason, I could not fathom, I could only hazard a guess that since those women in parliament had not been voted for, but appointed in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s affirmation action he took to get women into Parliament, these women did not feel competent enough to deliberate on the issues on the floor of parliament, or were simply incompetent, or felt extraordinarily intimidated by the large presence of men comparatively. A further research may be needed to sort this issue out more.

Again, in spite of the distinguished roles played by women during the liberation struggles for independence, there was not a single woman in the cabinet of the first president. By 1960 when Ghana attained republican status there were no women in cabinet when Ghana attained Republican status in 1960 (myjoyonline, 2009). During my interviews, most of my respondents indicated that their legislative procedures limited their activities to the deliberations during their discussions on bills and other related issues. They indicated that about 60% of their work takes place during committee meetings. As a former MP, I operated along the same lines, my role as a former member of Ghana’s Executive placed me more in mainstream power dynamics than as a legislator. Unfortunately, the proceedings of committee meetings are not covered by the official Hansards of Parliament. Therefore most people usually find it difficult to
appreciate the work of members of Parliament. Deliberations on the floor of the house to a great extent depend on a lot of variables. Members indicated that they were quite cautious of the statements they made on the floor of the house for several reasons. One cited a member’s statement on widowhood rites on the floor of parliament which truncated her career as a politician a few years ago.

According to Elizabeth Agyeman (MP):

There was this woman in Parliament, I won’t mention any name, she was talking about some widowhood rite in her constituency, and because of that they made sure she never returned to Parliament again. The whole town ganged up against her, and now she is out of Parliament. She made a statement on the floor of the house, and the people from her constituency came to her to inform her that they did not bring her to Parliament to come and destroy them so they did not vote for her, and true to their word they did not vote for her. (Personal Communication, 2009)

One realizes that the above issue which this member in question brought to the floor of the house is a typical gendered issue. Ghana has some traditional customary practices as I have discussed earlier, which work against the advancement of females and are difficult to abandon. However, women tend to discuss issues that affect the family, food health education, peace, corruption, budgetary proposals, and social issues, most of which the women have the language and the information to use, while very turgid subjects usually do not attract them. In the Hansards that I read, especially those after the yearly address by the president indicated a very large contribution from the female MPs, thanking the president for coming to the House to address members of Parliament. I recall with nostalgia my very first statement made on the floor of the House and how it was pregnant with lots of political innuendoes against the former president who had served two terms. There were 19 women in the august body, the number had increased
dramatically from two in the previous parliament to 19 and 90% of them made their maiden statements after the then President Kufour made his maiden speech in Parliament. Though female members usually made statements on the floor of the house, 95% of the official records usually were statements from men.

What I gleaned from the Hansards that contained such annual addresses was that many more women contributed, since each member was at liberty to contribute on any issue, so long as it was related to the address. Whatever was said by the female members were usually made through a gendered perspective. For instance, anytime a statement is made by a female member, it is a statement that premised on women. Christine Member of Parliament from 2001 to 2004 in a typical fashion made this gendered statement on the floor of the house

Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate. The water situation in recent times in the Cape Coast Municipality has worsened because we are in the dry season. This situation has created so much difficulty for my people in Cape Coast. We need immediate assistance from the Ghana Water Company, because women are affected most when such situations occur. Mr. Speaker, I wish to add that women in other parts of the region have been worse hit by this present problem. (Parliamentary Debates 2002, Ghana)

These statements superficially may be dealing with a genuine issue of difficulties being faced by people in a municipality in Ghana, however, statement is deeply gendered. Another example of a typical gendered statement was made on the floor of the house in 2001 during the Sessional address of the president of Ghana. Gifty Kusi who was a new Member of Parliament after having won an election in the year 2000 made her statement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the President’s Sessional Address to this house. Mr. Speaker, this parliament has been used to the presence
of mostly men, from about one in 1992, to 25 in 2001. There are a lot of women who find it difficult to come into this house because of the financial difficulties they face. Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the President has found it proper to set up a Women and Children ministry. Women Mr. Speaker, will be given a better deal in this country under New Patriotic administration (NPP) administration. (Parliamentary Debates, 2001)

This is another example of a gendered statement from a female Member of Parliament.

According to Tamale (1999), “Not all female MPs can represent or are willing to represent the interests and concerns of women in the legislature….and that there are some male legislators whose views are more representative of women’s interests than those of some women.” (p. 77)

Myers (2008) however, alludes to the thinking that women largely feel drawn to issues they think would benefit children, those facing social injustices, the needy and the subordinated. Whatever policy issues which they made contributions to were about possible implications government directives could have on the society especially on women and children. I do not intend to imply here that women don’t talk about very serious issues. I observed parliamentary proceedings on the December 1, 2009. The house had a little late start at 11.05 am, though parliamentary proceedings are supposed to begin at 10.00am prompt, Monday to Friday when parliament is in session. There were only a handful of women in attendance and only one of them made a contribution to the debate.

Honorable Frema Osei:

Mr. Speaker, my honorable colleague said something that needs further clarification. That is “anytime you want to bring inflation down, you create unemployment”. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that when inflation is down you can have more businesses by having reliable source of capital that does not erode and therefore, opportunities may be created
for more jobs, because businesses can expand. So, his analogy, I believe that economists here owe this house a duty to correct this very serious statement that my honorable colleague and friend made. Because inflation that is under control actually stimulates business. People know that they have a reliable source of money they can use to expand without this kind of up and down situation. Please, the economists owe this house a duty to correct what has just been said. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Such a critical statement came from an analytical mind. Frema Osei (MP) is a second-degree graduate who understands the dynamics of parliamentary duty, and her numerous appointments, as indicated in her profile, demonstrate the qualities women must have to be up to the men in this august house. She was among the handful of female parliamentarians who were in Parliament during my first day of observation. It must be mentioned that from 11.05 am when prayers were said, to 5.00 pm when Madam Speaker closed the day’s sitting, only one female made a contribution to the debate. My field notes indicated that there were about five women present in the chamber that day. I also noticed from the observation and the Hansards of December 1, 2009 that the Speaker was referred to variously as Madam Speaker, and Mr. Speaker. One would have assumed that the current Speaker of Parliament being female should be addressed as Madam Speaker. While some felt it appropriate to refer to her as Madam Speaker, others felt it had to be Mr. Speaker. Enquiries led to the revelation that the Speaker had made a statement to the effect, “Call me Mr. Speaker. Call me Madam Speaker.” According to Dake (2010):

When Ms. Betty Boothroyd became Speaker of the British House of Commons in 1992, she asked to be addressed as Madam Speaker. It is also Madam Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the US House of Representatives. Mrs. Bamford-Addo has consented to being addressed as “Mr. Speaker” which seems to be the mode of address on the lips of almost all the MPs who are
used to having male Speakers around. The President, John Ata Mills, chose however, to break with the ranks and in his first State of the Nation address to Parliament, “Rescue for a better Ghana,” on February 19th 2009, he referred to Mrs. Joyce Bamford-Addo as “Madam Speaker.” Parliament will have to make up its mind whether to follow the President and change its manner of address or continue with its ways. (para, 19)

The above demonstrates some of the entrenched structures in our society. Since the inception of Ghana’s Parliament with its historical antecedent running into the 1900s, Ghana until recently had not had a female Speaker. It was a purely made domain. It began like a slip of tongue when Majority leader, Alban Bagbin first addressed the newly sworn in Speaker of Parliament, Justice Mrs. Joyce Bamford-Addo as Mr. Speaker. This designation by the Majority leader did not go down well with the members of Parliament. The Majority leader further explained that, the Standing Orders of Parliament had not created any room for a female speaker. And that it was not gender sensitive enough. The framers of the Standing Orders of Parliament probably never thought of a female occupying the Speaker’s chair. However, since the change has come, it could be a sign of the breaking down of the patriarchal structures in our society that they are being affected, interrupted and slowly but surely being dismantled.

A critical examination of the above issue clearly demonstrates the dominance of the male in an arena of power. The message is loud and clear, this is a male domain and no arrangements have been made for the female. Accepting the title “Mr. Speaker” by the newly appointed Speaker of Parliament also speaks volumes about the dynamics of hegemony. The female Speaker did not insist that she should be addressed as Mrs. Speaker or Madam Speaker. She just acquiesced, probably because the dynamics of
patriarchy and hegemony were at play as usual. According to Forgas (2000), hegemony is the:

Spontaneous consent [is] given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production…The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed. (p. 307)

Raymond (1977) questions why society is difficult to change. He notes that the Italian writer Gramsci offers hegemony as a term which "supposes the existence of something which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci puts it, even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its sway." (p. 412). Commonsense ideas which you could be defined as "hegemonic" include the idea of women as "naturally" nurturing and the notion of men as "naturally" violent. Accepting what may be men’s hegemonic tendencies may be seen as “common sense,” here and Mrs. Banford-Addo agreeing to be referred to Mr. Speaker demonstrates how hegemony manifests itself. Society programs us to act in certain ways. Saying that the Standing Orders did not make room for a female Speaker may be seen as the “common sense’ that Williams contends. Though the opportunity had come for a needed change of the Standing Orders, the status quo of male dominance was accepted and ironically a female Speaker is now being referred to as Mr. Speaker. The legislature could have seized the opportunity they had to make the
position of the Speaker gender neutral. The situation described above is what Williams (1977) terms “selective tradition” within an effective dominant culture. Williams contends that such hegemonic manifestations are passed off as tradition. These are crucial because certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, while certain others are neglected and excluded. Some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture. There is the possibility that irrespective of the undue hegemonic structures existing in our society, the female is highly reckoned and continues to have an enviable place in the scheme of things despite the entrenchment of structures of patriarchy which gives a semblance of hope.

Ghana is not the only country that has a female Speaker, the US followed Ghana’s steps closely by appointing Nancy Pelosi the first female of its House of Representatives, and Botswana in 2009 elected Margaret Nasha as the first female Speaker of its National Assembly. What used to be a strong man’s position is in the process of being un-gendered. (Piet, 2009; Kotey & Kpeglah, 2009).

One trend which the Hansards revealed very peculiar to women was the very passionate way the female Members of Parliament presented issues about their constituencies. Most of the statements made by the females were done with emotion which created all manner of reactions from other members present. Janeway (1980), who discusses power, correlates the expression of emotions with being weak and therefore being female. She designates any characteristics related to emotion and breaking down (crying) as weakness, usually in the domain of women, which is not suitable for the
public domain. The late Hawa Yakubu was a member of my political party which was the majority in 2001-2008. Though by all standards she was a woman, her style of delivery on the floor of the house was unique.

**Role Models to Other Women**

Participants discussed at length the roles other women played in their quest to become politicians. A person who serves as an example, whose behavior is emulated by others is called a role model. A highly visible woman at the top of a major party has the potential to generate significant interest in political activity and this is what most of the participants shared as part of their experiences. According to Guibert (2006), visible female candidates trigger conversations about politics between parents and their adolescent daughters, familiarizing girls with the political world and leading them to envision themselves as participants in politics. According to Collins (2006), female politician often claim that, in addition to providing exemplary public service, their candidacies and terms of office, offer positive female political leadership for women and girls.

Cambell and Wolbrecht (2006), proponents of descriptive representation frequently argue that by challenging both reality and norm that politics is a male occupation, the presence of female politicians transforms the beliefs about the appropriateness of politics for women, and this increases interests in political activity among women, especially young women (p. 223).

The issue here is that there is the thinking that the presence of visible female role models could have a kind of ripple effect on other women or females.
The data from my participants actually corroborates this assertion. Majority of the participants indicated that female political icons and role models like the late Hawa Yakubu was the main driving force that kindled their interest in politics buttressing the literature that there seems to be an attraction by other females when such visible female politicians make the headlines. Others also intimated that their female members of the constituencies had on several occasions made statements to the effect that, they will aspire to become female politicians like them. Gifty Kusi relates her experiences:

A lot of girls see me as a role model, and as such, most of them want to go to school. Because they realize that it was because I went to school that I achieved this position. And also in all their social life, their health and economic activities, I have made a lot of impact. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) reiterates experiences too, saying:

I met with Hawa Yakubu my admirer, she was key in this decision, she advised me on the difficulties the challenges and how to circumvent those challenges. I met Theresa Tagoe, she also gave her blessing. I met all the women parliamentarians at the time to get the feel of what the road looks like. Their pieces of advice helped in making my final decision that I could contest and make it. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Elizabeth Sackey’s reference to other women who had profound effect on her in her desire to become a Member of Parliament and other sentiments raised by other Members of Parliament underscore the issue of role models in Ghana’s politics.

Another woman who strongly believes her current position as (MP), and former minister of state has had a profound effect on other females is Esther Obeng Dapaah. According to her, her constituents make statements to the effect that:
Yes, seeing some of us seem to be changing the thinking of girls especially in my constituency, you hear them say “me ko school, meye tisee mama Esther” (meaning I will want to become like mama Esther.) (Personal Communication, 2009)

It was not all positive of women’s stance on other women’s desire to go into politics. Two of my participants had different opinions about some women. They saw some women as detractors who disparage and devalue other women. Esther Dapaah (MP) asserts that:

Other women who are not confident themselves, who have been housewives in their own little corner looking after their own husbands and their children, see you and think “oye biribi dudu.” Sometimes they ask you what you are still doing there. “aden wongyai na wonko tra wobeebi” (Meaning, You are disturbing the “honestest nest, challenging the status quo, and you must put a stop to it)They will judge you according to their own standards. You have to educate them. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Such sentiments by other women support the cliché that women are their own enemies. It is not only women who other women see as role models. Bernice Boateng (MP) had another angle of role models which borders on men. At least one of the participants indicated that she was inspired by her late uncle, and it was because of the commitment he showed towards the political process that gingered her to ply that trade.

M Boateng in Koforidua, he was the first ever regional chairman for NPP. He was also a founder of our party. So it turned out to be that because he was a politician and his involvement in the political struggle in Ghana. He is the “father” who brought me up when my mother divorced. Because of the brutalities meted out to him, his real children equated politics with pain so none of them was ever interested. I was always with him; I think I might have been inspired by that. I had always wished to become a leader. I had a feel of campaigns at a fairly early age, which was crystallized whilst at the University of Cape Coast politicking as usual for the NPP. (Bernice Boateng, Personal Communication, 2009)
The above experiences shared indicate strongly how people are impacted by others to embark on a cause. This was what the late Hawa Yakubu was to many Ghanaian women and indeed men by her effectiveness as an (MP), and an Executive of Ghana.

My personal encounter with her revealed sterling qualities women desiring political participation damn all the odds in the society should attain. Hawa Yakubu, very eloquent, tough, resilient, purposeful, deliberative, intelligent, and somebody who easily thinks on her feet. Men admired her and felt very proud of her when she very emphatically made her contributions. There were others like Hannah Tetteh who also had finesse, flair, grace and elegance of language, and deliberativeness, yet without the bite that late Hawa had. In a 200 member Parliament at the time, Hawa was a lone voice who
demonstrated her prowess on the floor of the house during debates. The men respected
her and affectionately called her ‘Iron Lady’ whose presidential ambitions were
unfortunately curtailed by her untimely death.

The Hansards also revealed other MPs like Theresa Tagoe another strong female
who contributed towards the development of the female stature in Parliament. Even
though she did not have the flair for finesse, this in no way prevented her to contribute
towards debates very passionately. Theresa Tagoe was a quite a “controversial” female
MP. Most issues she deliberated on bordered on controversy, for which she received the
necessary flak, but she was a tough customer on the floor of the House, and was admired
particularly as the “hatchet woman” for majority, and then the minority at the time. The
Hansards reveal such tough words used sometimes to drive home her point. A graduate
with a major in French, Theresa Tagoe was a hard nut to crack but sometimes
phonetically and grammatically challenged. It must be mentioned that there is research
that explains the trends women usually follow in Parliaments as regards their gendered
approach to legislative activities.

Thomas and Welch (1991) contend that:

The attitudes and behavior of women state legislators are expected
to be a reflection of two separate socializing influences.
Socialization as legislators teach “the rules of the game” and how
to operate within them. Socialization as women in a society
engaged in gender specific public and private roles will…impel
women legislators to give high priority to issues that address this
dual status. (p. 105)

Women are unique in every conceivable way. As a man I have come to admire this
uniqueness in all the women with whom I have dealt with professionally. Whenever the
going gets tough, women have always relied on their uniqueness to drive home their objectives. I recall a debate on the floor of the house in 2003 about ‘trokosi’ a ‘religious-based tradition, with patriarchal superstitions which continues in Ghana, as well as in Togo, Benin, and southwestern Nigeria, was being discussed. According to this custom, when a relative commits a crime, ranging in severity from petty theft to murder, the family must offer a virgin daughter, typically from eight to 15 years of age, to the local shrine, where she will become a *trokosi*, or “slave of the gods.” The priest then exerts full ownership rights over the girl, beating her when she tries to escape, controlling her interaction with others, demanding labor and sex from her, and denying her education, food, and basic health services (Mensah & Godwyll, 2010).

The female members of Parliament were in full battle mode, firing all arsenals to drive home their point about what they termed “patriarchal madness.” The men on the other hand though contributed to the debate, they sounded more cautious advising their colleague parliamentarians not to be in a haste to “throw the baby away with the bath water.”

Arat (1989) however cautions women to be circumspect saying:

> When women enter the political arena to represent women’s interests, there is always the danger that the sexual division of labor in society be duplicated in the political realm to the detriment of women. Women thus might not get the opportunity to move beyond issues related to the reproductive realm to exercise their will on questions concerning the productive realm. Rather than change the political discourse, they might be trapped in it. (p. 300)

Examining this issue that Arat (1989) raises takes me back to some of the sentiments the participants raised during the interview. From the interviews it was quite evident that the
female MPs contributed to all kinds of discussions on the floor of the house, however, issues that affected women and children most, received a greater contribution from them. The MPs also indicated that, they needed to be circumspect on the kind of comments they made, so as not to be ostracized by their constituents who might not really like those comments. They made references to a female member who made some comments on widowhood rites only to be forced out of Parliament during general elections in her constituency. The constituents especially the males ganged up against her saying they did not send her to the august house to champion issues on widowhood rites. Widowhood rites remain an anathema for women who lose their husbands. They are made to undergo very inhumane processes for a period of time when their husbands die. Men usually do not go through any rites when they lose their wives, and some women tend to question why they are subjected to such inhuman practices. These are some of the arguments the ostracized former MP made and was shown the exit.

There is a link between cultures as it pertains in some societies and fundamental human rights. Some traditional practices usually come in conflict with human rights and these will be examined in the next chapter. However, looking at the significance of culture forms the next segment of the study.

**Emerging Related and Unrelated Themes**

*Cultural Artifacts and Values*

Conducting research has a way of unearthing interesting issues which might have or might not have any connection with the main topic under study. In my case, I was
pleasantly surprised that a good number of my participants made use of proverbs “heavy local language”, when they discussed issues.

Figure 21 Uncovering Levels of Culture

Adapted from Schein’s (1992) Organizational Culture and Leadership

According to Schein (1992) they are cultural artifacts. Artifacts are expressions of a culture and at the same time mediums in the creation and reinforcement of cultural values. I am not too sure how the issue of examining the cultural relics of Parliament came unto my radar while I was on the field. But no one will fail to notice the extent to which the inner chamber of the Parliament of Ghana has been decorated using more of the traditional relics and artifacts of Ghana. Though I had seen these relics several times as an MP, it was only during my study that I began to closely examine them for any kind of information that could enhance the study. My observation yielded results, because the more I observed and inquired, the easier it became to connect the dots between artifacts in parliament and power dynamics in the august house. The mace, the seat of the Speaker
of Parliament, the Kente cloths that bedeck the background and other relics are all culturally laden pieces that portray the values of nation. There is no single objective way to describe why an artifact is significant to a culture. I, as an indigene with a shared meaning, appreciate and value these artifacts. Objects are important to different people for different reasons, yet as shared cultural objects, most Ghanaians cherish the sight of these relics.

**Figure 22** Parliament as a Cultural Artifact

Source: Retrieved from the Photo Gallery Ghana’s Legislature

Having looked at the interior decoration of the present Parliament led me to delve into history to ascertain what Ghana’s old parliament looked like, in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. The discovery of old pictures of the old Parliament added a historical significance to
the study. Though sitting arrangement in the old was different from the current one, the
interior decorations had a very strong resemblance to the current one.

Figure 23 Ghana’s Parliament in the 1960s

Source: Retrieved from the Photo Gallery of Ghana’s Legislature

Sessional addresses of presidents are usually days during which the culture of Ghana is showcased as the above picture portrays. Members are draped in beautifully colored and woven Kente cloths, one of Ghana’s national attire worn on important occasions. Kente cloths have their own significance worth mentioning, there are Kentes for both men and women, and on such occasions, MPs exhibit such differences in the cloths that are worn. However, the most important artifact that caught my attention this time while researching Parliament was the mace of Parliament shown below.
Observing parliamentary proceedings led to the realization of new things hitherto taken for granted. I observed parliamentary paraphernalia and sought their significance and meanings. Interestingly, the values and norms of the society are all represented in Ghana’s parliament. One of such relic of parliament is the mace, a long staff which leads the procession into the House of Parliament. According to Ayensu and Darkwa (2006), the present mace of Parliament was made when Ghana became a republic in 1960. The upright position of the mace in the chamber may be likened to a linguist staff of office; it also gives prominence to the head of the mace, which is the eagle, our heraldic bird. The shaft of the mace has six traditional insignia symbolizing the common sharing of responsibility, the presence of God in our society, lasting personality, prosperity, the presence and effect of feminine/male power, and pride. Why shouldn’t the presence and effect of feminine power and pride be represented in this august house with a strong representation in numbers of females, if the representation of both the male and the
female on the linguist staff should be deemed to have any significance? The *Mbaadwa* and the *Dwanimmen*” are the female and male symbols on the linguist staff.

*Mbaadwa*’ means a symbol of the presence and effect of feminine power in the society, while the *Dwanimmen* means a symbol of manly strength. Representing both sexes as sources of power on the mace of Parliament may possibly be remnants of the once-egalitarian society that existed in Ghana before the advent of colonial rule. The likelihood of these symbols transcending colonial rule could be representations of the nature of society long before colonial adventurists landed on our shores. The Ga people are known to have had very strong egalitarian credentials which made for society unique and thriving. The *Adinkra* symbols embossed between the Insignia denote the omnipotence of God, critical examination, strength, immortality and justice.

*Proverbs, “Heavy Laden Local Language Usage”*

Cultural artifacts need to be deciphered and evaluated to bring out shared meanings and relevance (Schein, 1992). I will not describe these sayings and words used as mundane, far from it. Indeed they are very heavily worded expressions that are pregnant with nuances and innuendos, indirect remarks some of which carried suggestions of impropriety, made by the participants.

A proverb is a short, wise saying. Proverbs play a very important role in the everyday language of the Ghanaian. They epitomize cultures of people often couched in very flowery language in many parts of the world. In areas where their use is part of everyday life they are a joy to the ear. Proverbs are usually used by the adult population in Ghana especially when very serious issues come under consideration. When children
are being admonished or reprimanded proverbs usually come in handy. I recall in my
days of growing up the very many proverbs I had from my parents anytime I exhibited
naughtiness. I grew up with a long repertoire of very different types of proverbs which
once a while were used to drum home a point here and there. The word *proverb* comes
from the Latin proverbium (pro meaning “in front of, on behalf of” and verbium meaning
“word” suggesting that a proverb takes the place of ordinary words. Proverbs are
important in all traditional societies.

But proverbs are a vanishing heritage associated mostly with the rural world.
They have not become part of the world’s literary system and are dying out slowly.
Schools in Ghana have not brought out the importance of proverbs in the lessons being
taught. Our languages have beautiful proverbs which cover all aspects of life. They are
drawn from careful observations of social events, the lives of people and animals, or from
experiences in occupations such as farming, fishing, hunting, and weaving. We have
proverbs that talk about family and human relations, good and evil, poverty and riches,
joy and sorrow.

Most of the participants used proverbs when they became emotionally charged
while dealing with very thorny issues bordering on marital or spousal challenges, other
politically charged issues, and sometimes using some proverbs to make a long story
short. The significance of these proverbs or “heavy local language” is that they provide a
means of communicating complex ideas with heavily laden cultural expressions.
When I embarked on my research, I knew the medium for my interviews would be English. All my participants were educated people with high levels of fluency and proficiency in English and also the local language.

The first of such statements rendered in the local language came from Elizabeth Sackey. “Wote h⇒ na ⇒baa di wo so.” This statement, translated literally means “you are sitting there and a woman is sitting on top of you.” This statement is quite interesting, especially in a patriarchal environment where a man must necessarily be seen to be in charge in all departments of life. Men who usually do not have good jobs compared to those of their wives, or who are unemployed, usually face such denigration. They are seen by their peers and the general public as being “incapable men.” A real man, according to the expectations of our society is somebody who has a good job and earns enough to take absolute care and control of the family. Elizabeth Sackey made this statement in her attempt to discuss the issue of men being educated to accept the participation of women in politics. The thinking which is a manifestation of the entrenched patriarchal construct does not have room for the female as far as power sharing is concerned. Most males in Ghana feel uncomfortable in this contemporary world, when they are in a subordinate position to women. As the literature and the participants in the study have asserted, this thinking of men having dominion over women might never change.

Bernice Boateng (MP) made another interesting statement. “Se ⇒ba paa abetu Yaw Barima  paa agu n'anim ase de a, eye se yetu no fi so” is closer in meaning to the statement made by Elizabeth Sackey. Translated literally, it means “if a woman has the
impudence to unseat a man Yaw Bermah and disgraced him along the line, then we men have to do all we can to unseat her.” They carry the same hegemonic thinking as discussed by the participants.

Esther Dapaah made another statement pregnant with innuendos. “nea ⊃ so na ∋ mene ne ny∋nko.” Literally translated, it means “The bigger one swallows the smaller.” Esther was trying to demonstrate that men proverbially as bigger than women. However, her point was to the effect that if they women are smaller and weaker as they are perceived to be, and do nothing about their peculiar situation, the status quo will remain the same. Esther was remarking about some counter-hegemonic reactions on which women could embark. It might seem as a very mundane statement, to the ordinary person, yet it resonates with Gramsci’s concept that for every hegemonic occurrence there emerges a counter-hegemonic reaction as the literature reviewed has clearly shown.

As a man seated in front of these participants, listening to them pouring out their sentiments, I became enamored by the depth to which they went, carefully selecting their language to voice out their feelings. On the other hand, some of the very heavily laden local language use was directed to other women who are seen by others as not doing enough to champion their cause. Bernice Boateng (MP) made this statement: “Wo ny∋nko na ereko no na woda so te h∋,,” meaning literally “Your colleague women are breaking grounds, and you as a woman continues to do nothing.” There are many women out there in Ghana who have taken up the challenge to break the patriarchal yoke entrenched in the society. Such women could be uneducated yet intellectually able, very well-educated, or politically matured, who find the socio-cultural framework in Ghana
spurious and bogus which should be jettisoned into the lowest abyss. Such women are described by some members of the society as “social misfits,” “feminist” bitches and witches “alomozata,” “prostitutes” or any derogatory name that offers itself. Some have managed to capture top positions in the society; some are lawyers of international repute, heads of nongovernmental organizations championing the cause of women. These women have been crusading against the inequalities within society, especially in the last decade. Societal reactions to their work are mixed, yet, the women remain resolute.

It is unfortunate that most of these crusaders remain single women, an indication that the structures they may be “fighting against” may have treated them unfairly, or the nature of their work determines their status. Be that as it may, watching and listening to some of these women, I am tempted to say that they are really doing a good job, but segments of society seem to frown on their exploits.

The proverb “ṣe ṣe baa ṣe tuo, ṣe baa ṣe tuo” is seriously a patriarchal proverb, and Bernice Boateng (MP), spewed out this proverb. It literally means that “If a woman buys a gun, it is kept in the room of the man.” The issue here is that in Ghana a gun is a prestigious property. Women, because they are perceived to be weak are not supposed to go near a lethal weapon like a gun. Women don’t hunt, therefore they don’t need guns, and hunting is seen as an exclusively full male domain. Guns can hurt and kill, and women are not seen to be capable of keeping and using them safely. A gun is a man’s possession, so if by any miscalculation or unforeseen circumstances, a woman comes into possession of one; it must be placed in the safe environment of a man. But Bernice disputes this saying, “Now, we can at least buy guns
and put them in our own rooms,” a kind of counter-hegemonic reaction giving the impression that some of the socio-cultural structures with time, are beginning to crumble.

This statement is profound; it is a clear warning to men in that there is a growing band of female crusaders who want to see a change.

The saying “Women are their own enemies,” runs through 90% of the responses from my participants. There were two who debunked it saying it is men’s creation.

Hannah Tetteh former MP and currently a member of Ghana’s ruling government gave it a patriarchal twist and said this, “I think that it is mainly from men, it is as a result of lack of understanding.” According to her, it is a creation of men to keep their dominion over women, since the more women imbibe this, the more their front remains broken. Gifty Kusi (MP) reiterated Hannah Tetteh sentiments saying, “Women are not their own enemies, this is based on ignorance. Because those who say it are ignorant, and the Bible says that “my people perish because they do not know.” (Isaiah, 5:15) Out of the 15 participants, only 13.3% of them said women are not their own enemies. What does this signify? It may be this same socio-cultural framework, established through the concept of hegemony, which uses both coercion and consent as its main instruments, and which socializes the society to accept a subordinate situation as acceptable and normal. It may not be lack of understanding, but rather a deliberate attempt to make women feel that they are neither equal to, nor capable as men supposedly are. If the rank and file of females’ remains perpetually divided, it strengthens men and entrenches their stance.

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) in an attempt to explain the difficulties she faces dealing with men said, “Fa mmaa asem k פוסakyire” literally meaning “take matters of women away
into the background.” She emphasized that this statement is used not only against
women, but also against men when they demonstrate among their peers they seem not to
understand issues or when a man makes a statement that seems to be favoring women.
When a man in a meeting is not making any sense, men say “Faa mmaa asem kɔ akyire.”
The implication is that women do not have the intelligence to contribute meaningfully to
discussions.

If hegemony, and patriarchy need to be demonstrated practically, these
statements, proverbs, or “heavy laden language usage” demonstrate beyond all reasonable
doubt that the home, the community, and the nation are deeply patriarchal.

**Summary**

This segment is the thorniest area of the survey—the dynamics of power play, the
position or status of the female as dictated by the structures of society, and the
contributions of women to the Ghanaian society. Issues of entrenched hegemonic
structures that allow the male to dominate every sphere of human endeavor remains a
crucial issue here vis-à-vis the female being relegated to subordinated position.
Participants gave indications of how they navigate these structures and the constant
denigration in very subtle ways with which they are confronted. Most of the participants
suggested that any attempt to resist to these structures could easily place them in
situations where they might not be able to honor societal expectations as regards
marriage, family, childbearing and child raising.

The contributions of women to the political process of Ghana have been
phenomenal. The contributions were examined through the participant’s own statements,
the official Hansards that record parliamentary proceedings and indeed my 20 day observation in Parliament. There is no doubt that women’s contributions to the political process have been enormous. There is also no doubt that the impediments they face limit the level of contribution. The evidence from the literature to support the assertion these participants made that their unique contributions cannot be understated. The same hegemonic framework that devalues women’s contribution to the political development of Ghana was also discussed. These discussions done to analyze the responses to the research questions have been quite useful, but they have opened a Pandora’s Box of burning issues confronting women to me, as they navigate the political terrain in Ghana.

At this juncture having interviewed 15 women, conducted a focus group interview made up of five women, having observed parliamentary proceedings for 20 days, and pored over several single and bound copies of parliamentary Hansards, I can refer to those burning issues as the themes that came out of my study. It must be mentioned that what came out of these interviews also addresses the five research questions that undergirded the study. The questions elicited responses from my participants which cumulatively led to the coming up of particular themes. It is convincingly clear at least from what the literature says, what the participants have also said and again the theoretical frameworks have established beyond all reasonable doubt that Ghana is a patriarchal society, and this has been deepened by the specific roles our society has carved out for each gender.

The socialization which begins in childhood and continues to and through adulthood carves out a domain for men and women respectively. The male domain is
characterized by the dispensation of power while the female domain is powerless. An attempt by females to “encroach” onto the male preserve has always been met in variety of subtle forms.

Figure 25, emerged when I decided to put the whole research encounter in a diagrammatic view. It encapsulates the research topic, the five research questions, the various themes that emerged, the bigger concepts and the fact that they all lead to a particular direction, our hegemonic society. Figure 25 is shown on page 337.
Figure 25 A Kaleidoscope of the Study

Source: Created from original data from the field 2010
The conceptualization, design and analytical framework have been reduced into a pictorial illustration as shown in figure 25. The above showcases a kaleidoscope of all the research questions under girding the study, the numerous themes that emerged while examining the responses from the participants, and bigger concepts that unfolded eventually.

The repercussions, the implications of the difficulties females face navigating the undulating political terrain, and the suggestions and recommendations therein form the next and final segment of the study.
CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The study 1) explored the issue of patriarchy and how women experience it in their everyday lives, especially within Ghana’s political realm; 2) it examined the intersection of patriarchy and politics, especially the challenges women experience when navigating the political terrain; 3) it examined the intersection of human rights abuses as regards politics and how women navigate and deal with these oppressive experiences in the political realm vis-à-vis the unwritten societal values and norms, finally, 4) it investigated what women who have brazened the odds have that could be relevant to their entry and participation in politics. On the basis of the issues raised, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What socio-cultural factors support or hinder women’s participation in political positions in Ghana?
2. What are the experiences of women in local and national politics?
3. What radical changes in policies have opened the way for women’s participation in politics?
4. What are the impediments, challenges, and successes that women in political leadership and nonpolitical leadership experience as a result of their gender?
5. What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana?
Summary

The first chapter, the introduction provided the background, purpose of the study, research questions guiding the study and delimitations, as well as the definition of terms. My ultimate goal was to examine the intersection of women in Ghanaian politics vis-à-vis the structures of patriarchy, hegemony and human rights within Ghana. The fact that our socio-cultural framework as it is has existed till present times cannot be overlooked. The dichotomy between males and females remains topical in Ghana because the disparities seem to undergird the rather slow developmental trends the country is registering.

Various studies made by numerous scholars in Ghana have in one way or another attributed stunted growth rates to the dictates of the socio-cultural framework that directs our limited educational, economic and political and accomplishments. Bortei-Doku (1995), Takyiwa-Manuh (1995), Kueinyya (1995) Tsikata (1994), Annin (2009), and Adusah (2008) have contributed to the discussion from many angles, culminating by reechoing the rather entrenched structures which seem to be slowing down the developmental effort of the nation.

The arguments made by these scholars strongly suggest the correlation between the snail pace of our development and the hegemonic structures within the society. If one gender is limited as regards education, economic and political development, it translates to the loss of a huge segment of the female population. Some progress has been made over the last several decades; however, there is unanimity that the pace is excruciatingly slow. Ghana became independent in 1957, and has made several attempts at nursing a
democratic society based on the Westminster and the United States’ systems. However, the basis of these two systems calls for equality and equal participation. Though these two world democracies still have a long way to go as regards women’s participation, legislative instruments give equal rights to both genders. For nations like Ghana yet to have such supporting instruments, undue advantage seems to be the preserve of the male gender, and it is this disparity based on the existing societal framework that the study sought to examine.

Efforts made by civil society to interrupt the framework has not made any meaningful impact, and successive government efforts can best be described as minimal, being more rhetorical than action backed. The significance of this study was to contribute to the knowledge available on the disparities between women and men in the political arena in Ghana, with a focus on the experiences of women who have brazened the odds and are struggling to navigate the undulating political terrain. Being quite a topical issue in Ghana, women’s participation continues to engage the attention of scholars and researchers. This study remains a unique one, it was conducted by one of the dominant group who has navigated the political terrain and therefore has a wealth of experience on what our framework makes available to both genders. My having served as a MP in Ghana, and also as a member of Ghana’s Executive, offers me a strategic positionality which others who have done studies on women in the political arena did not have.

In the usual proverbial manner in which issues are explained in societies like ours, it is said that, "sɛ apɔŋkyereni firi nsuo mu asi beka sɛ ɔdɛnkyem awu a, yɛngye no akyini."
Meaning, that "If the frog comes out of water to tell you the crocodile is dead, you need not to doubt it." I am the frog from the political pond, saying these words from my respondents are loud and clear. The women are being suffocated by the entrenched male structures in our societies. I should sound very credible because the voices of some of these political players form a very large part of the study. The voices of these women are loud and clear.

Recalling the trajectory of this study brings back into focus what chapter 1 entails. It dealt with background information which was very necessary to provide a basis for visualizing and understanding the characteristics of the researcher, the reasons for embarking on the study described as background information, the purpose of the study, research questions guiding the study, delimitations, as well as the definition of terms. My objective of understanding the impediments of female participation in politics was the focus and main goal for this study. Attempts to look at women from all angles of our social, economic and political lives have been looked at one way or another, however my topic “Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Human Rights: The “Invisibility” of Women in Ghanaian politics was purposefully given a twist to give women “a voice.”

Chapter two of the study reviewed the relevant literature as well as explored the theoretical framework and foundation for the study. I could not have understood the dynamics of such research without the information provided by others who have traversed that route before me. Indeed, the original topic went through a series of metamorphosis as the literature unraveled issues hitherto not considered. It provided the desired lenses that should undergird a study that discusses issues bordering on injustices,
marginalization, exclusionism, domination, subordination and violations of one gender by the other. The literature review section was categorized into seven major themes:

Among the issues examined were, patriarchy from many angles, human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, CEDAW protocols, women in politics, education and democracy, traditional African values and norms, Postcolonial Feminist Theory, Hegemony theory, and other relevant issues.

Chapter two addressed two essential and fundamental issues, significant to the objectives of the study, these being literature and theoretical framework. Patriarchy in its literal sense means the rule by the fathers. Having it roots in tribal society, it was institutionalized in post-tribal societies into more complex religious, social and legal systems and formal governmental structures such as the senate of ancient Rome and most subsequent governments.

Throughout recorded history some form of patriarchy has prevailed in most societies, reinforced by cultural values derived from systems of male dominance. The pride and dignity of women are derived from and dependent on men as the proverb connotes. According to Mbiti (1991), proverbs, mythology and even prayer present the religious wisdom of African peoples which are skewed towards male dominance.


Others also examined patriarchy from the perspective of n both orthodox and unorthodox religion. The lenses which undergirded the entire study were the Hegemony
and the Post Colonial Feminist Theories. Gramsci and other Gramscian scholars like Williams (1977), Cox, (1993) and others provided additional perspectives which elucidated the study since they helped in identifying the main underpinnings of domination and subordination. Gramsci defined the state as coercion combined with hegemony. He defines hegemony as political power that flows from intellectual and moral leadership authority or consensus as distinguished from armed force.

Bucock (1986) mentions that “hegemony means ‘moral and philosophical leadership’, leadership which is attained through the active consent of major groups in a society.” (p. 11). The issues discussed by all these scholars hinged on domination and subordination, the two main issues underpinning the two theories used for the study. The issues surrounding the invisibility of women in the political arena are clearly tied to a socio-cultural framework that assigns roles based on gender, that dictates who has power and who is subordinated.

Chapter 3, which is the methodology segment, it discusses the techniques, steps, and procedures used in data gathering and analysis. The phenomenological-case study approach was the methodology used. These two qualitative designs combined offered the study a deep-seated procedure more profound than if either were used on its own. Each of the respondents was handled as a special case having her particular peculiarities and characteristics investigated, bringing out lived experiences of the participants more vividly than I ever imagined. Conducting the study within the comfort of the halls of Ghana’s Parliament which the female members preferred, positioned the participants to open up to the probing which sought to ‘dig deeper’ to unearth substantial issues relevant
to the entire study. Politicians usually want to shy away from intrusive journalists, but my approach coupled with the experience as a researcher served as the icing on the cake. The result of the study was rich and thick descriptive narratives of the philosophies and life of 15+ 5 women in varied circumstances. Data for the study were collected through one-on-one interviews, a focus group interview, document analysis, and observation.

The theories and literature offered a form of triangulation, in addition to the non MPS in the study (focus group) who corroborated most of the issues discussed by the MPs. For the purposes of validating the data collected from different sources, triangulation was used. Both the interviews and focus groups were recorded using a digital voice recorder. I sought the permission of participants to have interviews recorded. I captured both audio and video and this was very useful since nuances that tend to enrich such narratives were all captured. During the fieldwork in Parliament house and other venues, I made notes about the emerging themes and about insightful observations. However, I began transcriptions after I returned from the field. A five-step process outlined by Carol M. Roberts (2004) was adopted in analyzing my data.

Step 1: Transcription and Initial Reading of Transcription

Step 2: Coding and Categorization of Responses

Step 3: Organization of Patterns and Themes

Step 4: Final Review of All Transcripts to Validate Patterns and Themes

Step 5: Completion of Data Analysis and Report of Findings

Chapter four is devoted to women in Ghana. It was inevitable that I would trace the history of female participation in politics, especially before the advent of colonialism.
Understanding how and why women face such bottlenecks in their quest to participate in politics, the staggering statistics of women in decision making, women’s organizations, women’s participation in the decentralized local government system, attempts to promote gender sensitivity were very useful in drawing certain conclusions.

Chapter five presented and discussed the profiles of the respondents as well as research question one. Attempts being made by women themselves to interrupt and affect the political playing field were crucial to contextualize the study. Research question one examined the cultural and traditional roles of the society and how that affects the female in her quest to venture into the political realm. It is evidently clear that the crop of women parliamentarians in the study were all fairly well educated people. Without the desired level of education, a university degree, a member may not have what it takes to function effectively in the august house. The societal expectations impinge on the navigation of women in the public sphere. Religion has permeated all facets of the society, and it is seen by many as a delimiting factor of the female in advancing into the echelons of power. The issue of social capital and its positive and negative perspectives were also discussed in dealing with research question one.

Chapter six dealt with research questions two and three, the experiences of women in local and national politics within existing frameworks. The revelation from those questions portrays the negligence of government and party policies and manifestoes.

Chapter seven examined research questions four and five, also positionality, impediments, contributions, and contributions of women. In addition to that, other
mundane yet revealing issues that came up during the research were examined. Some of the issues of research question four and five that came up were the dynamics of power, prevalence of entrenched hegemonic and patriarchal power. Participants shared experiences on how they navigate through these structures sometimes leading to counter hegemonic tendencies. They mentioned societal expectations like marriage and child bearing which tie them down to certain positions making some positions no go area for them. In all these, relevant literature and the undergirding theories all seem to be moving in the same directions.

**Major Findings**

In this subsection, I present a summary of my major findings, the themes that emerged from document analysis, interviews, focus groups, and observation of participants involved in the study.

**Socialization and its Trappings**

Information gleaned from research question one “What socio-cultural factors support or hinder women’s participation in political positions in Ghana,” cumulatively led to the emergence of a broader concept “socialization and its trappings.” The study and the data unraveled many of the conditions that militate against the visibility of women in Ghanaian politic, which can be said to be deeply entrenched in the socio-cultural dynamics of the nation (tradition and culture) which serve to keep women in a state of subordination, subservience and compliance. It has become evidently clear that these bottlenecks women encounter cut across status, thus, no matter how well educated, economically resourced a woman is, circumventing these overt structural barriers and
other covert barriers such as prejudiced attitudes, beliefs and male-defined exclusionary behavior remain quite Herculean. It was also evident that such overt structural barriers have been woven into the fabric of society making it difficult for women to easily break through. Again, despite these barriers, it is also possible that women who are prepared to be dare these odds face many forms of discrimination as the respondents alluded to.

Women who break through the traditional barriers are no less subject to the processes than those who do not, buttressing the statements the respondents made that irrespective of all these covert and overt bottlenecks they prevailed and moved on.

Although they have debilitating and invidious effects on women in politics and those desiring to go there, most of the women usually consciously or unconsciously see such occurrences as normal daily routines, exhibiting the concept of Hegemony which Gramsci refers to as “coercion and consent.” Although women parliamentarians seemed to have some autonomy, it is also quite clear that the seeming autonomy places them in situations where they are seen, as non-conformists, and called all kinds of names as revealed in the data.

Again, it appears that as part of tradition, some women have been socialized into internalizing infringements on their rights and circumstances. Although many of the participants continuously confront this socio-cultural dynamics as part of their everyday lives, there remains very little that they can do to effect changes in the status quo. Trying to do so causes every action of theirs to be translated as an affront to societal expectations and womanhood in particular. One of the most captivating discoveries to emerge from the interviews was hearing women describe the balancing act that many of them engage in on
a regular basis as they confront the entrenched structures in the Ghanaian society. What the findings indicate is that women are constantly challenging and protesting on many levels in their quest for equitable treatment in their homes, at workplaces, Parliament, government and all spheres of human endeavor.

As these challenges are faced, acts of resistance, counter-hegemonic acts are exhibited. All the respondents were unanimous that they perform these acts in very many ways while their men counterparts either consciously or unconsciously maintain the status quo, thus defying women’s attempts for equality. Women’s vulnerability and subservience were observed as I have mentioned in parliamentary proceedings. Indeed, male dominance in the Ghanaian society has become increasingly clearer through the study and it cuts across all facets of life irrespective of education, social status, level of affluence, social standing of all women. About 90% of my participants were very well educated, yet their circumstances were not any better. Either they conform or go on their own. According to Myers (2008) women have not been able to carve out much space on the top floors of any endeavor in any country or culture in the history of the world. She challenges us to imagine a not-too-distant future in which increasing numbers of women reach the top ranks of politics, business, science and academia.

*Endangering Women in Ghana*

The second research question “What are the experiences of women in local and national politics” brought out similar issues as the first research question, however, a deeper insight into the responses of the participants revealed more deep seated issues
which cuts across most societies in the world. Ghana’s traditional values dictate a paradoxical position for women in all spheres of life. According to Nicolson (1996),

The disproportionate relationship between gender and domestic/child-care responsibility also disadvantages women...Successful women, have to give up time with their children for the sake of their careers, but unlike men, women’s role in relation to parenting is constantly under scrutiny. Therefore if a woman has chosen to be child free or employ professional full-time child care, she is in constant danger of reproach, or having to justify her choice, from colleagues, friends and family. (p. 104)

There is one aspect of womanhood associated with home and family in which mothers focus while socializing their daughters – the ability to run a home, to be a “keeper of the home fire,” providing a comfortable family atmosphere (Koonz, 1977). The reinforcement of the double burden was seen especially clearly when women reported that, of course, it would be nice if their husbands helped them with the chores, but they rarely insist on such help. None of my married respondents ever reported that her husband assisted with the household chores. The majority of my respondents are single, and the use of domestic help in their homes may have taken care of their long absence from home due to the demands of the job.

Having a family or maintaining a family remains crucial to people of Africa and Ghanaians in particular. None of my respondents hesitated at all expressing the values of families, and this same issue that limits their participation in a way. In our culture a woman without a family is viewed as less of a woman, as if she is somehow defective or flawed. This forms an inferiority complex in her; she is ashamed to admit that she is a woman without a family. I have heard often women saying that, “For me to be a woman, is to live for my children and for my relatives. Family is the most important thing in my life.” It is generally not frowned upon if a man does not marry. According to Conway et
al (2004), “A man was perceived as capable of combining marriage with a political career in politics because his wife would take care of the domestic responsibilities” (p. 20). On the whole, however, all the interviewed saw childbirth as an essential role for women in society, either for the benefits it bestows upon the mother or for the honor it brings to her family.

The survey suggests serious difficulties with women’s economic status in Ghana. The framework in which women operate limits the opportunities that could be available to them. The respondents alluded to this factor saying it places them in very disadvantaged positions in our society. The genesis of this development as I have explored in the literature suggests that the limitations women face in accessing education naturally places them in subservient positions which diminishes their opportunities. How can their economic situations be any better if they come in from seriously disadvantaged positions? It is evidently clear from both literature and data, that women operate under very difficult circumstances. The research question therefore helped in drawing a conclusion that women are endangered metaphorically, that their presence as the statistics have shown at the local and national levels can be described as “endangered species.”

The structures at the local and national levels are seen by these women as male bastions of power, where females desire to go are “no go” as a result of the challenges they face. For women who break the barrier and enter, they get into areas of subordination, as doubly disadvantaged professional women striving for achieving success as local and national politicians. This according to the participants makes their problems a hydra headed one. In the words of one of my respondents women are in a kind of double
jeopardy very reminiscent of the underlying principles of what Postcolonial Feminist Theory seeks to address. Kate Bannerman contends that:

Combining family and politics can be a nightmare. I admire the women who do, but I know they get all kinds of reproach and criticism for it. Women need to be supported through all kinds of ways and not discriminated against or castigated. But firstly, there should be more advocacies, we should have the few women who have excelled, they should come out and educate the women as to what they will need to do, to improve their confidence, show them where and how they can get finances, build their capacity, and help them to assert themselves. Men may desire to help women, but they will not do that, knowing that women are in the majority, and sometimes I feel that when they open up too much they feel threatened. And in a very subtle way, they always want you to remain where you are. (Personal Communication, 2009)

The structures are male in every way as the literature says it is in patriarchal societies. The data from the participants re-echo the patriarchal nature of our Ghanaian society. In Ghana, female appointment into public office remains low (Table 8) despite the availability of qualified women. The national Parliament, the Judiciary, the Executive and the District Assemblies all have few women suggesting a kind of discrimination against them. The fact that superficially, some initiatives are being made especially in recent times; these have very limited success, suggesting a kind of institutionalized prejudice.

My recent experiences with women in the field has positioned me to hazard this statement that professional life for women in a patriarchal system as Ghana’s is painfully stressful. But it increasingly becoming clearer to me that men who perceive threats from women are also in danger of being overwhelmed, because as one participant puts it, “It is
only when we are reckoned and dealt with as equals that the best in both gender will be unleashed.” This cannot be true the more.

**Dysfunctional Policies of Government**

Research question three “What radical changes in policies have opened the way for women’s participation in politics” has some connectedness to research question two. However, what it sought to unearth could be handled on its own, despite the relationship that they do have. The patriarchal culture the literature has revealed is endemic. (Goldberg, 1993; Gordon, 1996; & Tsikata, 1997). The culture of patriarchy according to these writers is the perceived threat of the rise of women’s power in the society. Patriarchy according to these scholars is both visible and hidden in the sphere we all operate in. The level at which policy and practice are organized seems to suggest very subtle ways to advantage one particular gender. Ghanaian governments over the years have instituted sometimes very laudable policies aimed at addressing the shortfalls that women confront. I have mentioned that a whole Ministry of Women and Children was created from the scratch in 2001 to champion the cause of women. Its initial operations gave hope to many Ghanaians, but as usual, it seems to have been consumed by the same structures that set it up in the first place. One step forward, two steps back, because no transparent and genuine objectives undergird this establishment. Making it a conduit to share money among party faithful does not really address the disparities that exist in the male/female equation.

The ministry over the last nine years has not made any meaningful effort at churning out policies that could affect, or interrupt societal deeds that undermine the very
existence of the female. Used more for political chicanery, the current government that inherited this ministry is doing business as usual. Other issues which I could read in between the lines from the data, bordered on issues like “old boy network”, “political patronage,” and others politicians rely on especially for their own parochial interest. Old boy network through former school class mates and other men’s social groups in addition to political patronage where men deal with those they can obtain political capital from, all lead to warped decisions made that affects a particular gender. These are all very overt in form yet the repercussions of such networking especially among men mostly disadvantage women. A policy therefore remains a policy on paper, irrespective that it was mooted to address an issue. Such has been the nature of government policies. Participants were 100 % unanimous in their assertion that governments have failed them. When lucky, it is only done as what repeatedly came out from them as tokenism.

It is now evident that promises made during the 2008 elections aimed at addressing the yawning gap between the level of representation between men and women in Ghana were just a complete hoax. Individual women and groups in the last year have made persistent calls on the government to fulfill its electioneering promise of giving women at least 40 % representation in government. The government is its second year, and we are all waiting to see if the promises will be fulfilled by the end of the first term. One wonders why a government that had a whole women’s movement (31st December Women’s Movement) led by a powerful a first lady in then government of the National Democratic Congress (1992-2000) cannot identify and use qualified women to demonstrate that they really mean business and rather than pontificating on its
preparedness to change the fortunes of women in Ghana. Currently, as the statistics indicate, there are only 21% of female representation in cabinet positions in government, 24% in ministerial positions, and 21% in deputy ministerial positions. But these percentages all fall below the promised 40% level. The dynamics of male dispensation of power which tends to keep women in perpetual obscurity may be at play here, all to the detriment of the 51% strength of women in Ghana, a large chunk of untapped human resources that abound in Ghana.

**Dysfunctional Political Party Policies Guaranteed/Affirmative Action**

Closely related to governments are political parties sometimes described as governments in waiting. Political parties form governments when they win elections. They are governments in waiting. Political parties are mirror images of our society and therefore consciously or unconsciously, replicate the dynamics of society. Pushed to act by the prevailing wind of change in contemporary times, they feel compelled to make attempts to change the situation as regards women’s representation. Indeed, political parties remain the most likely entities to make inroads into the issue of female representation; however, the challenges they face as a result of these same entrenched patriarchal characteristics of our society usually “eat back” their words (promises they make) as many of the respondents indicated. The possibility of championing parochial interests cannot be ruled out in this discussion.

Manipulating society, the electorate, remains a strategy used by politicians all over the world. Great seats of democracies like the United States and Great Britain cannot escape blame since history is replete with examples where promises are made and not
Though the United States came close to electing its first female president, have we ever considered that it will be easier for a “camel to go through the eye of a needle” than the US to elect a female president. Have we ever paused to ask why the classic democracies have such low representation of women in their congresses, parliaments, the senate’s and other political institutions? The characteristics of human being all over the world go along one direction. Males think like males and females think like females, so the issues remain the same virtually everywhere. What makes the difference between the great democracies and the developing democracies like Ghana is just the issue of legislation, law order and the desired institutions which give a semblance of a level playing field for both sexes. These structures are missing in the developing democracies.

The participants were loud and clear, enhancing the fortunes of women in political participation through policies have been very minimal, and unrealistic, and this has spanned the period of attainment of independence, till present day. This a clear manifestation of women being doubly colonized long after colonization ended in the 1950s and 1960s. Postcolonial Feminist Theory undergirds this situation where women continue to receive a raw deal, when decolonization had signified the end to such actions. What makes such discriminations to women more unacceptable is the fact that their own compatriots are among the perpetrators of such unjust practices. The trend is virtually the same in many countries including supposedly “distinguished” democracies. Table 9 below shows blocks of nations under democracies, and the level of women’s representation needs no further clarification on the issue of patriarchy and where it is leading this world.
Table 9 Representation of Women in blocks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Single House or lower House</th>
<th>Upper House or Senate</th>
<th>Both Houses combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe - OSCE member countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including Nordic countries</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe - OSCE member countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excluding Nordic countries</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regions are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union

The above is a league table of nations under democracies with female representation. Celebrated democracies like the United States of America, and the United Kingdom pontificate on their democratic credentials, yet male–female representation in these countries remain problematic. The reasons are not farfetched, these are patriarchal nations too.

Call for Affecting and Interrupting Entrenched Structures

Research question four, “What are the impediments, challenges and successes that women in political leadership, and non political leadership experience as a result of their gender”, identified very entrenched structures that disadvantage women. According to Nicholson (1996), “Socialization into femininity is not as clear cut as masculinity (p. 137). For men however; their masculinity sets the pace for all. This point of view underlies most actions and practices that undermine the very existence of the female. The
issue of what is right between the developed world and the developing nations remains another big hurdle for both groups. Universalism and cultural relativism remain interesting paradoxes. Proponents of each continue to draw each other’s attention to examine the underlying issues. Each group of protagonists has their underlying reasons for taking particular stances. My stance is pragmatism, which cannot be negotiated. This is the reason why I continue to frown on cultural relativism and some actions of the Universalists. Actions which undermine the very being of women have constantly engaged my thoughts. The tendency of reducing violations women in Africa and other developing nations go through, as issues of culture and tradition has presented Africa in bad light to the developed world.

For a woman to be successful in a career like a politician and numerous others considered to be male domains, she has to negotiate her way around dominant social expectations that go along with the female most important among them being mothering and the related responsibilities that go with them within what is said to be tradition and culture. Ghana specifically has many traditions and cultures that seriously impinge on the development of women, as I mentioned in chapter two that deals with the literature. Most of these traditions and cultures though seen as societal creations often are more of patriarchal manifestations.

Africans have advocated for the inclusion of their values and norms which were not considered when the UN Charter was written they opine. Those against cultural relativism have debunked the idea that rights are universal and therefore cultural relativism is unacceptable. When human beings are subjected to degradation all in the
name of cultural relativism, holding the view that such violations are not criticized by outsiders really undermines humanity. Though I have some problems with both, I strongly think that whatever impinges on the rights and existence of any individual should not be upheld whether its relativism or universalism. Both gender go through socialization of all forms in our society, however, the subordinate position that hegemony, patriarch tend to subject women to influences them usually to become content with low positions in the society. Though many women are breaking this jinx gradually, there is always a negative effect that such patriarchal influences do have on women. Usually Ghanaian women do not seem to be motivated enough to go for higher achievements, which invariably diminishes their potentials and capabilities. My respondents voiced out clearly their abhorrence of any acts that compromise their status as females, and I support that into-to. The respondents overwhelmingly called for the repudiation of cultural dogmas that are anti-female in our society. The barriers, impediments and challenges women face are taking different more subtle forms today. Grappling with them remains a balancing act for women that they continue finding themselves in a paradoxical situation.

**Decoupling Women from Children**

Societies all over the world place a premium on children and the reasons are not farfetched. Life rejuvenation cannot happen on this planet when procreation is downgraded. Thus until our world decides what it really desires, women will continue to play their unique role as the conduit for life regeneration.
Enforcing the Rights Deepening Equality

Be that as it may, that women, albeit necessarily must fulfill a societal expectation if they so desire, we as men must not lose sight of the rights of women as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and protocols, the Constitution of Ghana which emphasizes equity, fairness, and equality. Nations all over the world have the responsibility of ensuring the rights of its citizenry. Women’s rights are human rights as it is usually said, and any attempts by any person, organizations or governments to undermine these rights have to be condemned in no uncertain terms. In the last several decades, many developed nations have made serious inroads into ensuring that both sexes have equal access to every facet of life. Most countries have gotten this far through legislation and instruments that have been enforced to the letter. It cannot be said that these nations have reached the very apex of ensuring the rights of all their people. Many developing nations continue to perpetuate the undulating and rugged environment that females have confronted since time immemorial. The statistics of all developing nations show that few if any efforts are being made to ensure that the social, economic and political environments are enabling for both sexes. It took genocidal developments in Rwanda before women ever reached parity with men in their parliaments, which is very reprehensible. The United Nations-mandated operational frameworks for ensuring equality, equity and fairness do not seem to be resonating well with most developing nations.

Opening the Doors to Political Power

Having gone the length and breadth of delving into the depths of women to ascertain the difficulties they encounter in navigating the political terrain, I feel it
becomes more pertinent for nations all over the world to make very conscious efforts to literally open the doors to women so they can be fully engaged in the political processes of their nations without any inhibitions. Opening the doors requires every effort to affect, to interrupt the structures that are deeply entrenched in our societies. Affecting the structures will not come easy, the tendency to deepen hegemonic structures remains crucial to the existence of the dominant group; however, counter-hegemonic efforts also remain equally crucial in this equation. Women are very powerful yet they may not be fully aware of the power and might they wield. Men derive their strength from the state of women’s weakness. Women have the tools to make meaningful changes in getting the ‘political doors’ widely-opened.

Women as Members of Ghana’s Political Culture

The political culture of exclusionism is deeply rooted in our history as humans. Some kingdoms that existed in ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai are replete with complimentary roles that women played. Okonjo (1976) describes the West African traditional political societies, saying major interest groups are defined and represented by sex. He mentions the “dual sex” system saying each sex system manages its own affairs. According to him, “dual sex system organizations contrast with the “single sex” system that obtains in most of the Western world, where political status-bearing roles are predominantly men” (p.45) Our historical past especially the activities of the colonial masters and exploiters of Africa, reversed very meaningful gains made by women around that part of the world. It is a historical fact that the early missionaries envied the egalitarian nature of the Ga state for instance. Through their concept of Victorianism that
places their women into subservient and subordinated roles, they made every effort to change what existed among the Ga people by first denying the women the right to be educated and then refusing to employ them in the administrative machinery the colonialists ended up putting in place. The previously existing political culture was replaced by one that excluded the female. This was more or less continued by the new political elites at the dawn of independence. The need to create a more inclusive political culture, open to both genders is crucial.

Finally, research question five “What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics in Ghana” opened the door for a re-evaluation of their contribution from an un-jaundiced perspective. The literature indicates the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana. Irrespective of the complexities that our Ghanaian women find themselves swathed in the patriarchal web, it is an undeniable fact that their contributions have been quite phenomenal. Any attempt by anybody to weigh the contributions of women must first look at the numbers the endemic structures allow to meaningfully participate, and this calls for a thorough reflexivity.

The participants indicated the tendency to play down on women’s contributions politically. They also indicated the doubts created about the capabilities of women which impinges their choice in electoral procedures, in their hiring into executive, they being by passed irrespective of their seniority, and their being sidelined when important decisions had to be taken. However, the data clearly showed that women are contributing meaningfully to the political development of Ghana in meaningful ways. Literature revealed where women dared where men feared to thread as in the case of Yaa Asantewa
in Ashanti, and Dodi Akaibi in Accra among the Ga people. It has been established that
the Ga people lived in an egalitarian society, and this possibly could have accounted for a
female warrior like Dodi Akaibi to have emerged to lead them to war against skirmishes
made by foreigners in the 1600s. By extension, Yaa Asantewa may have attained that
leadership status because of her capabilities and the prowess she exhibited to have led the
Ashantis in their war against British infiltration. The contribution of women becomes real
rather than imagined. Other Yaa Asantewas have emerged and made their contributions
since then. The likes of Hawa Yakubu, a lone female voice in a two hundred member
Parliament in Ghana is still fresh in our minds. Currently in Ghana, are women in very
sensitive government positions who are gradually becoming forces to reckon with. The
female political topography is gradually emerging.

Implications of the Study

The study was conceptualized based on a need that was identified while serving
as a Minister of State, and a member of Ghana’s Parliament. Several attempts have been
made to understand the dynamics of these issues; however, this study offered the best
opportunity to get to the bottom of it all. Sharing the findings with those embroiled in the
dynamics remains crucial now. One recurring issue in the study is how can education be
used to affect the entrenched structures in our society? If our society takes a look at the
disparities between men and women, reckon the loss of potential of women in economic
terms, then it may be possible to appreciate more meaningfully, the implication of this
study. The study had revealed beyond all reasonable doubts that at least there is a
yawning gap between men and women in political leadership, and that there is a price to pay.

In order that these losses of the potential of women are reversed, certain approaches need be made. It is getting these approaches in place that the need to draw the attention of organizations in our society, our heads of institutions of learning, organizations that have been advocating for women and our society as a whole. There are implications from this study on education, formal, non formal, and informal. Education is for public good, could be the panacea to the hydra headed problems of women in our society. This has everything to do with the broad spectrum of our socio-cultural life. The quotations below could lead us to what organizations dealing with women could do to bring about the necessary change.

Culture does not change because we desire to change it. Culture changes when the organization is transformed; the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day. (Hesselbein, 1999)

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek. (Obama, 2008)

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. Washing one’s hands off a conflict between the powerless and the powerful means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral. (Freire, 1970)

Manuh (1995), Kuenyiyna (1995) Tsikata (1995) have all added their voices to the call that women have different needs, that women can find answers to. They opine that to study women in Ghana means to focus on the conditions, opportunities, and
constraints that different women face as they conduct the daily round of living and to pay
attention to the gender and class issues. Women’s organizations, (FIDA, WILDAF,
Ministry of Women and Children) need to champion the cause of redeeming women from
the clutches of these patriarchal directed structures and organizations women have to deal
with. Issues about female gender should be handled by that gender.

These organizations need education of all forms to address the challenges of
women. My study, since it uses the experiences of women in their own voice places it
strategically as a history lesson, a sociology lesson, a study on the politics of men against
women, a study suggesting a re-conceptualization of gender and provides tips on how to
navigate a “patriarchally” charged political terrain. Without education, women cannot
participate in the political development of Ghana, and this invariably will not improve
their situation. The dependence of women on men will continue thereby perpetuating the
patriarchal “insanity.”

The government of Ghana mandated to provide a political system of equals needs
to revise its pre-colonial mindset which subordinated various groups of people, and
operate within a postcolonial framework that abhors the subordination of human beings.
Through education, practices that discriminate against and harm females such as early
and forced marriages, the dowry system, wife abuse, obnoxious cultural practices, and
discriminatory inheritance regulations can be progressively mitigated. Initiatives
sponsored by the government are doomed to failure if these measures are not enforced.

The panacea and the way forward, I strongly believe, is through education which
can play a crucial role in setting an appropriate agenda for change in the socio-cultural
foundations of our society. Education can help us as a society identify and demystify structures in our culture that are male-driven, patriarchal, and hegemonic. Education can help to affect these structures to make them as gender-neutral as possible. We need to tread very cautiously in our endeavor so as not to create sudden dislocations that we cannot manage. Change does not come swiftly; not even revolutions can bring absolute changes. The main venues for education will remain the home, the school, the community and the nation at large. The targets will remain the custodians of the traditions and cultures that are anti-women, and the inculcation of egalitarian concepts which uphold the equality of all gender. Religions of all kinds are sites for anti-women dogmas. Through re-education we need to de-emphasize segments that deepen subordination, and rather emphasize dogmas that promote and enhance equality. Janeway’s (1980) suggestions made almost 30 years ago of “inventing the future” keep reverberating all over the world. She asserts that, “women have been thinking long and hard about the reasons for the continuing linkage of gender to status. We have, in a way, accepted our own social contract or…Let us begin our map (p. 37).

First, I believe that education can be a source of anti-patriarchal practices by advocating for the equitable treatment of women and denouncing those traditions that marginalize women. Second, I believe that education could bring greater awareness of the structural and systemic components of patriarchy, including the ways in which religious institutions, workplaces, economic structures, and social mores all continue to support male dominance. Further, educators could help students learn how to deconstruct the rigidly defined roles of men and women and widen the discourse on constructing more
equitable relationships. Third, I believe that bringing more awareness to the role of patriarchy as a contributor to male acts of aggression could transform men’s relationships with women, and how institutions address/support/condone male aggression.

Addressing the realities, barriers and inequalities that exist in maintaining and supporting such an oppressive system as patriarchy, should be an area of concern for the educational establishments. However, this would require that educational institutions be scrutinized and held accountable for the ways in which their practices have contributed to the minimization and devaluing of women as well. This could be a gargantuan effort, but it can be done progressively.

**Implications for Theory**

The two theories adopted were extremely useful in unearthing and explicating the core experiences of the women who participated in the study. Domination dynamics are exhibited wherever there is power and influence especially in politics, being the public sphere, and in the more private circles as the home.

In the public sphere, participants expressed many subtle ways in which their spouses, their male colleagues at work operated along that line. Useful examples that came up included when choices are made which tend to favor men than women, especially during elections, appointments into executive and parliamentary positions. The general experiences of participants were sentiments of being discriminated against because someone thinks and sees them as inferior to men. When women are not being discriminated against, then they are relegated into subordination, where they are usually pushed to play second fiddle even when they are overly qualified than the other gender.
Being made to look invisible is another way of subordinating women, being overlooked and ignored. Making someone invisible can sometimes be difficult to discern because it often happens without words. A woman could be silently by-passed when she could be the most senior to occupy a particular position within the political, economic and social spheres, yet the other gender, the male consciously or unconsciously perpetuates his influence or power. The study indicated just that as the participants discussed their experiences.

Ridiculing or scorning a woman’s efforts, making fun of, or giving derogatory names are all part of the grand agenda by the male to deepen their hold over women. When men make women feel uncomfortable, women may succumb to such pressures and will do what the male might wants. Withholding information occurs when men automatically take up matters only with other men as some of the participants indicated when their male colleagues usually met without their input. Withholding information is a common technique of domination. Women who are kept in ignorance feel lonely, insecure and stupid, making it easier for men to retain the initiative and for male culture to retain its dominant position.

Particularly in political spheres, I am aware that information is exchanged, opinions formed and decisions taken in restricted circles, like for example, male leadership in Parliament could meet at places where the females may not find convenient to go, pass information to one another before meetings. Women are not invited into these restricted circles or, purely and simply; women just do not have the same opportunities to join in.
Apart from their experiences in public, the home remains another terrain on which the same characteristics used to dominate and subordinate them occur. The societal hierarchical arrangement backed by religious inclinations where the male is seen in a better light than the female makes the private realm of the female also worrying and resentful.

These are the characteristics Gramsci originally termed hegemony, which encapsulates acts of coercion and consent, through very subtle means where the gender on the receiving end internalizes and invariably accepts as the norm. The experiences of the participants as regards factors that support or hinder their participation in politics, at the national level, the local level within political and governmental frameworks and their experiences as to the impact they have made over the years were all fraught with patriarchal underpinnings. By going through all these machinations, women are being doubly colonized in the 21st century, long after colonization ended in Africa. When our women develop counter-hegemonic tendencies, they again receive the flak for doing so. Damned if they do, and consequently, damned if they do not. The combination of Hegemony and Postcolonial theories have clearly exposed the Ghanaian environment as patriarchal, with women under the pangs of the “Half Beast Half Man” image Gramsci used while he had been incarcerated.

These two theories have proved crucial for studies seeking to unearth inequalities, marginalization, power dynamics and influence, a relation where coercion and consent manifest.
Contributions to Literature

My contributions to literature are twofold. Firstly, literature reviewed showed various works that had been done on women in the area of development, education, economics and the socio-cultural dynamics such as female servitude, female early betrothal, and politics. Works reviewed so far on women in the Parliament of Ghana do not indicate the use of the voices of members of Parliament in the manner that this study has relied on. This makes my study a very unique one in a sense that, very large segments of the information provided were given by real-life women one could meet on the streets in Ghana, and confer with. Additionally, as a consequence of my “self” interest, the study of women in politics became skewed towards women members of Parliament and members of Ghana’s Executive, areas where the presence of women is clearly invisible. Be that as it may this is the most recent contribution to literature on women navigating the political arena in Ghana. The information in this study is not only from a single research effort in 2009, my experiences as a former MP and member of Ghana’s executive have all been brought to bear on this study.

Suggestions

The political turfs of many countries are undulating and mostly male faced. Men have been in control from time immemorial as literature seems to suggest, and men have resorted to all kinds’ overt as well as covert ways of continuing to entrench their hegemony. Many attempts have been made by some men and largely women to reshape this terrain on which men and women operate. Feminist approaches have been made and corrupted by the very gender they were aimed at, all in a subtle way to perpetuate
patriarchy. The cancer of patriarchy is still alive, the necessary counter hegemonic strategies must be fashioned out to interrupt, affect the undulating nature of both the private and the public sphere. A few suggestions from a sympathetic patriarch could help address the imbalances in our society.

**Gender Role Expectation and Political Socialization**

Political socialization according to Conway et al (2004) is:

The process by which people learn what is expected of them in their particular political system. Women’s political socialization should be understood in the context of cultural expectations for gender roles. As girls and women learn to be more passive than boys and to care about things not commonly thought of as political. Furthermore, the socialization women experience as adults in their family roles has been thought to reinforce the idea that politics is not their business. Women’s family responsibilities have been found to affect their political ambition. (p. 23)

It is clear those barriers that go against women’s full participation politics need to be circumvented and re-positioned. Our socialization process should be revisited, and refocused to reflect the realities of today that both sexes are capable of leading the home, the office, the business, the church, the district, the region, and the nation. Women need to think of themselves as both public and private people and be socialized along that line, and this is where women come in. Most socialization that takes place is done by women. To a large extent, then, the future of women’s participation depends on the openness of what has been a male-oriented political culture, and here, our women who do most of the socialization should revise their methods.

**Affirmative Action Policy**

It is not only critical to enhance women’s access to opportunities and positions, but it is extremely important that solidarity mechanisms be put in place to support women
in leadership roles when they come under unjust attack. This is where affected patriarchs like some of us can make a difference. As a nation, we must consider what should go into a women’s affirmative action program instead of being caught up in the debate of whether it is right or wrong. The government of Ghana should implement an Affirmative Action Policy to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making positions. Several innovative ways exist which the Government and people of Ghana could take. I am particularly excited by attempts made by Uganda and some other countries to bring the numbers of women up in their legislature and Executive. Every country must have its own peculiarities, so Ghana needs to devise its own workable and sustainable “affirmative action” that would not reduce the quality of those ‘called to serve’ but rather would strengthen public structures equally to levels where they could be described as egalitarian. Government should urge political parties to agree to implementation of a quota system as a means of having more women in politics. Our nation Ghana is currently looking at the possibility of amending its constitution, and I strongly suggest that it is about time we inculcated affirmative directives into the national constitution if we desire to move forward to fully utilize the vast resources women represent.

Appointment of ministers of state in government should reflect government’s commitment to bridging the gender gap through a 50/50 policy. For real results to occur, we must have a bottom-to-top change in our beliefs by launching a fiery crusade now to win the hearts and minds of the younger generation.
Proportional Representation

Another possibility worth considering is a kind of proportional representation in Ghana. My participants suggested that for every constituency, there must be proportional representation. Under proportional representation, representatives are elected from multi-seat districts in proportion to the number of votes received. Proportional representation assures that political parties or candidates will have the percent of legislative seats that reflects their public support. A party or candidate need not come in first to win a seat. According to Tamale (1999), the essence of proportional representation is to have an accurate part-by-part mirror image of the society it represents. Other participants also discussed getting political parties to set aside safe seats (seats that the party could easily win irrespective of who the candidate is, either male or female.) These are very laudable ideas that political parties need consider if the issue of women’s invisibility in the political realm is paramount to them.

Education

Education remains the key. I have emphasized several times that education holds the key to the future. The structures of education as they are continue to create inequalities in our society. Women’s lack of education reinforced their confinement to domestic roles. Ghana’s illiteracy rates are daintily for women, thereby limiting their opportunities in all spheres of endeavor. The younger generation should not face the inequities of the past; our society should be cognizance of the fact that refusing a female’s access to education tantamount to violating her educational rights. Apart from violating this right, our nation is perpetuating a cycle of poverty. The same dominant
group holds sway over the dominated group, continuing the perpetuation of the status quo. Unless we want the dichotomy to prevail in our society between men and women, then it should be business as usual. On the other hand, if it is our desire to erase the inequalities in society, then a gargantuan effort is needed for this. The re-education of Ghanaians to understand that neither gender is necessarily superior must begin at home. The home, the classroom, should be vigorously used to re-conscientize the citizenry. Our traditional structures need to be affected through education, to open the way for a quicker assimilation of more egalitarian society.

The Role of Ministry of Women and Children

The creation of the Ministry of Women and Children was touted as a laudable idea in 2001 when the new administration of the New Patriotic Party took over the reins of government. Women organizations were full of excitement that the ministry was going to be unique in focusing on the challenges of women and, by extension children. The ministerial efforts and milestones chalked up have not been seriously examined. My efforts at engaging the current minister proved futile. However my participants did not speak highly of the ministry, giving all kinds of reasons, some sounded petty though. Upon serious reflection, I am tempted to say that the ministry may have been “trapped” by the same hegemonic tentacles bedeviling our nation.

Affecting Endemic Structures

My study reechoes the issues of our society and others. The efforts of other Ghanaians looking at women’s participation have all gone in one particular direction towards “societal structures.” According to Arat (1999):
Others on the other hand question the fundamental organization of the structure of the society, assuming the root of the problem to be the structure of the entire social system that is the economic structure of the society, capitalist or socialist, or the social structure of the society, patriarchal or communal. (p. 258)

The facts as the study portrays them are that, the issue may not necessarily be women’s lower level of participation, but rather the status our society has bestowed on them. The study has reinforced me of what women are made, what they are capable of doing and what they bring to the table that men have always missed. My respondents gave indications that as much as they tried to become more visible, even their own gender colleagues could not bring themselves up to rally behind them. Thus, there seems to be an inkling that society generally has reduced women to second rate citizens not fit for political positions. These explanations draw attention to the logic of the whole social structure and focus on the broader question of women’s lower status within the society rather than merely their lower level of political participation. It can be summed up that the societal structures may be the factor inhibiting the participation of Ghanaian women in politics, most importantly parliamentary democratic politics. As a nation, it is becoming increasingly more urgent to modify social and cultural patterns, the underlying framework that promotes prejudices, injustices and inequalities within the society. These are the issues that confront daily crusaders for social justice, and until the political will emerges among men in governments, political institutions, regional administrations, district administrations, political parties, the politically “endangered species” women, very little progress will be made. We need to fast-track women’s participation in this day
and age where the fallacy of women’s incompetence has found its rightful place in the
dustbin of history.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has been done using women to ascertain their challenges in the political realm. Another and future research could focus on the perspective of men as to why they think women are invisible in the political realm. It could be a study which, together with this data from women, opens new dimensions in our socio-cultural discourse and its repercussions on our society. Another suggestion for future research is ascertaining the political culture of political parties in Ghana, and possibly beyond.

**Conclusions**

In this dissertation, I set out to investigate the invisibility of women in Ghanaian politics with a focus on Ghana’s legislature, the main hub of national politics and lawmaking. My task was to ascertain this through the gender whose invisibility forms the basis of this study and this I have fully done. Although the study was largely exploratory, the in-depth nature of the interviews offered a good look at Ghanaian women politicians and their challenges as they navigate the political realm in Ghana. What was evident from the interviews was that patriarchy is alive and well in women’s lives and is experienced in multiple ways. By patriarchy as explained in the literature, I meant a structure of power that endorses male supremacy. Patriarchy has clearly stood for inequality in power-sharing between men and women, which invariably impede the participation of the gender that is not dominant.
My interviews revealed the paradoxical nature of women’s political challenges which are tied to patriarchy. Issues of gender difference and gender bias are always being fought in women’s personal and professional lives. Within these structures, women have found ways to strategically accommodate and resist, creating spaces in their lives to address issues and situations that are important to them. Women have to be persistent in their efforts to maintain and protect what equality they do have and consistently challenge in areas where they are still treated as inferior. There is no denying that patriarchy, at least for the women in this study, continues to be a source of concern and struggle. Patriarchy has been repeatedly cited in the feminist literature as a system oppressive of women and the participants in this study corroborate these findings. By its nature, patriarchy puts issues of power, dominance, and control at the center of human existence in relationships between men and women (Johnson, 1995, p.72).

More than anything, the structure of patriarchy is found in the unequal distribution of power that makes male privilege possible, in patterns of male dominance in every facet of human life, from everyday conversation to global politics (Johnson, 2005, p.72). Of course, this is not to say that women have not experienced some equity in their intimate relationships and in the workforce, because many have. However, patriarchal mindsets and practices continue to create barriers for women in all spheres of their lives. Nicholson (1996) contends that:

To be successful in a career, a woman would have to negotiate her way around the dominant societal expectations that accompany the female sex principally that motherhood and its associated responsibilities should be paramount and other situations subordinate. (p. 33)
Many of these conditions were reflected in the narratives as my women participants discussed their constant protesting of unequal treatment and how they simultaneously resist and accommodate. Although women have shown that they are competent on many levels and in many different capacities, men continue to be viewed as superior and women as inferior. In this conclusion, I discuss two larger themes that cut across all of the data that speak directly to how women have to confront and struggle against the patriarchal establishment in their quest for equality. The first and foremost is the dialectical tension between being a strong, independent, passionate woman embedded in patriarchal relationships and institutions, and secondly how women tend to rely on spirituality as a support system, a vehicle for strength, guidance, protest and resistance. These are very real life situations where women virtually have nowhere to turn. The experiences of my mother keep reverberating in my subconscious mind as I churn out this work.

**The Dichotomy of Being a Woman Navigating a Patriarchal Domain**

Myers (2008) asserts that, “In fact, women devalue whole sectors of the economy just by showing up; studies show that both men and women attach less prestige to certain professions if they have more women—or are expected to have more women in the future” (p. 31). It could be one of the reasons for the invisibility of women in certain professions, and indeed in most Parliaments all over the world. In the hub of law-making and power, the patriarchs may be protecting their turf. This may be a never ending battle. About 90% of the respondents expressed their dismay and frustrations with this struggle between the women and the men they deal with in all socio, political and economic encounters.
Particular mention was made of all forms of religion which, according to my respondents have a male face, or patriarchal in outlook and deeds. They ask if their beliefs which are centered on what scripture tells them, which portray inequalities, which gives the male the power to subjugate them, if these institutionalized religious dogmas are undergirding the hegemonic characteristics of men and invariably intruding into women’s personal human rights and their existence. Ogundipe-Leslie (1993) asserts that:

Christianity which destroyed the old religions or subverted them as Islam also did. Women sometimes lost their important and high positions in the old religions with the new patriarchal religious values. So male dominated is it now that women have to fight for leadership roles within Christianity, while the very idea of female leadership in Islam is inconceivable. (p. 111)

Religion as portrayed by the participants has hierarchical structures that give prominence and power to males and denies others such dispensations. If religion as they say, does not grant them equality, seeing them as unfit to occupy certain positions, then where do they stand? When women exhibit certain characteristics at variance to the supposed norms sanctioned by religion and societal arrangements, they find themselves in difficulty in our society.

When these hitches are the everyday occurrences of women, then they constantly remain in a state of limbo. For them, it has always been a win-lose situation. According to the research participants, when they ask for equality, they are not saying women and men are the same. They are not saying that women have to act like men.

Myers (2008) contends that:

Because if women buy into that, then everything else becomes men are the normative standard of behavior in the world...it means that women’s ideas and opinions and experiences should be taken as seriously as men’s – regardless of whether they conform to traditional stereotypes. (pp. 76-77)
The difference between how women see themselves and the reality of living in a male-dominated society was echoed throughout the interviews. Ultimately, what became very clear from the research data was that women are constantly accommodating, resisting and weighing the costs of being visible (Bierema, 2003).

**The Flipside of Religion**

As Mbiti (1994) opined, Africans are incurably religious, and Ghanaian women are no exception. Any kind of a church would always be “like honey to the bee.” I value the directions of my faith, and I derive a lot from it. Religious tolerance in Ghana is very high. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. Spirituality, for all the women in the study, was described as a major source of their inner strength and power in dealing with the inequities that they face in their everyday lives. One of my respondents asserts that, “In most churches in Ghana today, about 90% of the congregation is made up of women, women take a lot of consolation in religion.

Many of the women talked about their personal relationship with a higher being or God (as some referred to it) and the strength they gain from this spiritual connection. They also expressed how their spirituality operates as a support system that helps them to deal with many of the social justice issues that are inherent in living in a patriarchal society. Some of the responses made by the participants focused on their understanding that gender difference and inequality are not aspects of the higher power they serve. So, for these participants, spirituality was described as vital to their lives and served as their connection to others and the universe. Besides being acutely aware of the inner power
and strength that comes from this relationship, they also discussed how their spirituality created an avenue for courage. Spirituality, in this sense, becomes a conduit for courage. Being courageous, for several of the participants, has allowed them to take action and make changes in their lives. Moreover, their spirituality has provided them with the courage to cope with the patriarchal practices of their male counterparts in their homes, community, parliament, and the nation as a whole.

Be that as it may, the dependence of my participants on religion for peace and tranquility, for hope and succor, from the pangs of patriarchy, and life in Ghana are premised on the statement “God will provide.” However, they realize that change comes slowly, change is not imminent, and change is not without struggle and protest. Yet as they juggle albeit in very difficult situations, they thrive on the feeling of hope.

Culture and Traditions

Culture and traditional norms lend a hand to men when they desire to subjugate women perpetually. Playing the tradition card usually places women in very difficult circumstances. Do they go against the societal norms and receive flak from the community or do they just need to acquiesce as they usually do? Females like the late Hawa Yakubu and others who stepped out of the domestic realm to claim spaces in the public realm invoke unto themselves vituperations from both men and women. At the extremes, so much pressure is brought to bear on them that some may throw in the towel, especially if their marriages or families are threatened.
Women’s absence from positions of political power has conditioned our society to think that leadership rests with men. When a very formidable group of people (51%) of our population is starved from participating in running a nation, our society looses the opportunity to take advantage of the group’s intelligence, skills, talents and perspectives. Despite all the very convincing reasons favoring increasing women’s participation in politics, they are still woefully underrepresented in Ghana’s political sphere. This thinking should be changed in this 21st century. And the onus lies to a great extent on our womenfolk.

Women need other women, and therefore have to support each other. Nicolson (1996) writes that it is a male view that women cannot work together. Wolf (1994) says that women also believe that to be the case, and that is the predominant myth. About 85% of my respondents said “Women are their own enemies.” Women must realize now that they need a concerted effort to have leverage with men. Eliminating the hostility that exists towards and among women in politics will not go away easily. This is why the reason why the little successes chalked by women need be sustained and improved upon. Reconstructing the existing male-dominated political structures remains a daunting task. Women and women’s groups need to double their efforts now, especially against subtle attempts by men to play down on their successes, and undermine their sense of mission and purpose. Though affirmative action may be an easy way out for women, they should work harder to gain a stronger footing in society. The stance taken by women in Mali, threatening their president that they would not vote for any political party during an
election unless positive moves were made to give them some representation through affirmative action, can be emulated by Ghanaian women in seeking leverage.

Though affirmative action has its own limitations, in these circumstances, it is better than no action. It is about time for women to resist being part of outmoded customs and traditions that undermine their very being. The government also needs to take action towards the real problems of equality by breaking down the structures that deepen hegemonic and patriarchal tendencies. Affirmative action is simply the same old discrimination in reverse. We need a progressive and innovative approach in challenging discrimination and subordination against women. It is a double-edged sword. I need to reiterate that it still remains a necessary “evil” towards the difficult road to transformative action that allows for a democracy with a broader base.

Government needs to advance women’s strategic gender interests, offering them access to the real power base. Such actions do not come that easily. It takes political will for governments to pragmatically embark on such objectives, since unapologetic patriarchs can put stakes in the wheel of progress. Women share commonalities with each other, they share a biology, a culture, and a struggle.

After going through all the difficulties trying to find an answers to my question whether women are visible or invisible in Ghanaian politics, Esther Dapaah (MP) made an emphatic pronouncement which resonates through 100 % of the interviews conducted. Esther Dapaah (MP) said:

To a greater extent, they are invisible...Now we have a woman speaker of Parliament, a woman chief Justice, the chief immigration officer is also a woman, various women in top positions, and they are doing very well, yet the percentage is low. We need to get the government to put women into
positions where they can make a difference and we need a woman president. (Personal Communication, 2009)


Women politicians, not to mention female prime ministers, are rare. Women who try to succeed in the world of politics discover that the hurdles they face, whether based on tradition, finances, ethnicity or organization, are compounded by the hurdle that is theirs by birth—that of gender. (p. 285)

_Patriarch Turned Advocate_

Because I had a very hazy picture of what I was embarking on when I decided to research on women in Ghanaian politics, I was not too sure the final form it was going to take. I had an artist’s impression of what I wanted to do though, but as to whether to render the work as a realist tale, impressionist tale, or a confessional tale, I was not too sure. I believe I am closer to a realist tale. Maanen (1988) asserts that:

By far the most prominent, familiar, prevalent and recognized form of ethnographic writing is the realist account of a culture—be it a society, an occupation, a community, an ethnic enclave an organization, or a small group with common interests...Perhaps the most striking characteristics of ethnographic realism is the almost complete absence of the author from most segments of the finished text. Only what members of the studied culture say do and, presumably think is visible in the text. (pp. 45-46)

I was not too sure of what I really wanted to do at the beginning. I was only sure of one thing I wanted to in-depth and rich description of the phenomenon under investigation to enable me understand how participants of the study contest the political space in the Ghanaian milieu. I knew that I needed to bring on board all the skills acquired as a researcher, to be able to delve into the privacy of women who I needed to
talk to and to use their words. Most importantly, I needed to remain as ethical as possible. Several names came and fizzled out initially, but eventually a few stuck.

The female gender was conspicuous less visible in the political realm that I had navigated. The visible ones were a joy to work with, but they were so few that for every 10 men there was only one woman. My entire life had been shared with females; I had been socialized to think of them as inferior, weak, mothers, wives, girl friends, concubines, mistresses, playthings, “prostitutes” and girls. I have never seen anywhere in my life where children are grouped together with men, it has always been “women and children.” Men have always been in their own group. When I began learning how women exhibit their own ways of counter-hegemony in critical pedagogy, I started revising my old notes about women. There is a revolution out there, it is slow, but it could be dangerous. It will surely catch up with the other gender.

Women’s issues, they say are the province of women. Myers (2009) aptly sums it all up:

> If the three wise men had been women, they would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, brought practical gifts, and there would peace on Earth. Of course! But they weren’t women, so the wise men got there late—and brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Can you imagine what Mary—who’s just delivered a baby on a bale of hay without epidural—must have thought about that? (p. 137)

It is about time that the “gender contract” be revised. Because of how we men expect a woman to keep a job and run a home, keep a job and raise a family, do a job which needs long hours and some travel as men usually do and still run a home like our
female politicians? I could not agree more with Myers (2009) that “Women are just more practical than men.” (p. 137).

My interest in exploring the ramifications of the invisibility of women has been fulfilled, and my horizon on women’s issues has been broadened beyond my wildest imagination. I have come to realize from this study that in the “chests of women lie the zeal to have power equally” with men. Women will continue to play second fiddle to men for a long time; however the driving force in them will be continuously rekindled to challenge, in every way they can, the structures that maintain their subordination. There should be advocacy at all levels to change the image of women. It will rely heavily not only on the leadership of women but on public campaigns, public education and changing social and cultural values.

Having a woman as third in command is a significant achievement for Ghanaian politics. The study clearly defines what is impeding the visibility of women in Ghanaian politics. Until there is a concerted effort at affecting and interrupting these hegemonic structures and redefining the role of men and women in our society, the balance sheet will remain skewed towards male. My findings are very clear, pointing to a particular direction where the “rule of fathers” continues to be the order. The challenges posed by the hegemonic structures in Ghana remain the fulcrum on which the dynamics of politics and power are determined. These hegemonic structures are tied to the socio-cultural framework that prevails in Ghana and other nations. As I have indicated earlier in this study, little did I know that patriarchy is pervasive in this westernized part of the world. The hegemonic structures present a framework of domination and subordination through
coercion and consent. Our socialization seems to be a perfect process for perpetuating the challenges women continue to face, and these have been perfected over generations without question. There are few numbers of women in Ghana’s legislature though; they represent all the women in Ghana. Their roles in the legislature are progressively making an impact on other women.

The study indicated that women are continuing to champion the cause of women in their own way. However, it is evident from this study that gender affects the social interactions of male and female MPs. One gender, the male, has an unfettered terrain to navigate, while the female is inhibited by the patriarchal structures, squashing the female into political obscurity. The process of breaking the hegemonic and patriarchal structures will continue to be a long drawn out battle between women and men.

One way by which we can reduce the effects of these entrenched structures was suggested by all my respondents and I do support that into-to. Other nations have in one way or the other used this process. Designated as “Affirmative Action,” it has been used all over the world to create a fairly enabling environment for the gender which through society’s own creation has been marginalized. One of the respondents whose words aptly describe that issue is reproduced below. Hannah Tetteh (fMP) contends that:

As far as our national legal framework is concerned, the constitution provides the answer; we have provided that there should be a form of equal representation at every level of government. There is a definite legislation, but I think that the kind of affirmative action that could lead to a critical mass of women about 40% of women in positions, we have not had that yet. We are planning to have a constitutional review and so if the people of Ghana want that, then this is the time. (Personal Communication, 2009)
The District Assemblies, power hubs at the grassroots level, have achieved the mandatory 30% benchmarks, and enrolment in schools, at least at the lower levels have registered 50-50 gender, though reduction in the numbers of females at the senior levels still remains a thorny issue. Does this suggest that there could be some amount of optimism for increased female participation? Your guess is as good as mine. In countries which now have the highest ratio of female to male politicians of which Ghana is certainly not one, quotas have proved effective in increasing these numbers; whether legally mandated through constitutional or electoral law, or based on voluntary actions by political leaders. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, for example, as a result of the introduction of quotas, Rwanda jumped from 24th place in 1995 to first place in 2003 in terms of women’s representation in Parliament.

Using the United Nation Charter as a framework, the study reveals very strongly that, females in Ghana are being seriously shortchanged vis-à-vis their political rights. Some African scholars have always spoken against the UN Charter, castigating its stance of universalism. I have my own qualms about the charter though, but I also feel strongly against ‘cultural relativism’ which remains ambiguous from many perspectives. Interpreting it within a ‘sea of cultures’ through overt and covert ways could be quite problematic for many nations advocating that. Navigating the terrain of culture in contemporary times remains a very difficult issue. Men usually use culture as a conduit for excuses in one breadth when its suits them, and in another when it does not suit them, and the losers most often are women.
My study revealed many difficult situations women face as a result of the culture and tradition. Nations that exhibit patriarchal and entrenched frameworks will undoubtedly violate the rights of its people. A large majority of women from the point of view of my study seems to suggest that their social and political rights are seriously being undermined. Meaning the efforts of our governments in signing the declarations in 1948 and other Conventions aimed at further strengthening the role of the woman are all being undermined. In a country where women constitute about 51%, their involvement in development issues and political leadership should be of grave concern. In many areas across the African continent, some men still do not accept that women and men are equal, and so they refuse to recognize women’s capabilities beyond their nurturing roles and other second-fiddle positions in society. Unfortunately, even in an advanced country like the United States, women still earn only three-quarters of what men make for equal work. It is these kinds of stereotypes and blatant inequities that all Ghanaians need to both unequivocally dispel from their collective reasoning and work hard to correct. At least in Ghana both men and women receive equal pay for equal work irrespective of these suffocating structures that impinge on their rights as women.

In the 1950s, Ghana democracy was fashioned out of the British system. It has undergone metamorphosis over the years till it hybridized with the American system making it very unique. Several military interventions did not make democracy thrive in Ghana. Three military takeovers stalled the deepening of democracy in Ghana. Subtle attempts to introduce a “utopian system” by a military adventurer in the 1978 (Union Government) was nipped in the bud through a referendum. However if the Westminster
tradition is anything to go by, then we have a long way ahead of us. According to Childs et al, (2008) the “Mother of all Parliaments, is overwhelmingly male, and pale, 128 women (out of 529) MPs—just one in five of all members of the UK parliament—were elected at the 2005 general election” (p. 43).

The percentage of women represented in their parliament is excruciatingly low, with 17%; Ghana a latter day saint in democracy has 9 %. Again Childs et al (2008) also contend that that there is still under representation in the UK, however, they acknowledge the effects of the kind of affirmative action put in place:

For much of the post war period, the numbers of women remained static at about 4 percent and when the sea change occurred in the 1990s it was party specific and a consequence of a political decision: it was equality guarantees introduced by the Labor Party in 1997 and again in 2005 that first delivered, and then protected, the unprecedented numbers of women sitting in the House of Commons. The impact of these quotas in transforming the sex balance among MPs is beyond dispute and importantly, acts to negate the disadvantages associated with … gender advocates should campaign for political action to ensure that the legislative framework allows political parties to use equality guarantees…introduce measures to guarantee the selection and election of women MPs. (p. 15)

Such suggestions on approaches to normalizing the representation of both sexes cannot go without question. Such an approach depends to a great extent on the political will of our nation’s political pundits. My respondents mentioned some approaches reminiscent of the British “equality guarantees” but were quick to add that such arrangements were thrown to the dogs when selection and elections became eminent. It may be seen as a good start though; subsequent approaches should make some
meaningful gains. I have imbued so much of issues of women that today; I question virtually any untoward actions of men especially the way we deal with females in any sphere of human endeavor. I question the actions of friends, professors, students and virtually everybody who in a way denigrates, subordinates, violates, or impinges the rights of women. Watching films that exhibit patriarchal tendencies lead me to questioning why as a society we keep perpetuating these characteristics whether consciously or unconsciously. My life has been greatly transformed through this study, making me believe that our society and especially our patriarchal and hegemonic structures can be affected and interrupted.

**The Political “Obaa Sima”**

Breaking the “political glass ceiling” became necessary after almost a year looking at women in the political arena in Ghana, their challenges, their tribulations, the factors that hinder and support them, the structures that undermine, and impinge upon them, the underlying established human concepts that orchestrates it, the repercussions on society, the female positionality in the dilemma, led me to search for an ideal woman who despite the odds, can break the glass ceiling of the political sphere. I settled eventually on *Obaa Sima*, an Akan designation of who they believe is an ideal woman, based on their socio-cultural framework in Ghana. However, being “ideal” could be relative; it depends on the positionality of the individual, the group or ethnic group. My political *Obaa Sima* therefore is a combination of various characteristics the literature on women, the data from the participants through the theoretical lenses that undergird the study in addition to my own experiences as a “political animal” yearning for equity,
fairness, equality in representation which could harness the enormous potential of women in Ghana for sustainable development of the nation. According to the Hansard Society Commission (1990):

Many women are blocked in their attempts to gain access to the higher reaches of public and professional life. They remain clustered in positions that fail to make full use of their qualifications and abilities. Over 70% of women work in lower level clerical and service sector jobs,…For too many, there is a glass ceiling over their aspirations— it allows them to see where they might go, but stops them getting there. In any given public position, the higher the rank, prestige or power, the smaller the proportion of women. (p. 15)

The above quotation is very reminiscent of the situation in Ghana, and many other nations both developed and developing (Myers, 2009). As a nation, I believe the time is ripe for women to break the glass ceiling. According to Allah-Mensah (2007), a survey conducted by the Department of Political Science in University of Ghana indicated a strong shift in the perception of women’s participation in politics. My participants also indicated that they were approached by men in their constituencies to offer themselves as district assembly /parliamentary candidates. Hannah Nyamekye asserted that:

They said they wanted me to represent the party in the constituency, and for over five months I said no. But then the request kept coming, and I said OK, but why me, yet let me give it a try. Maybe they might have seen something in me that I have not seen myself. Other contestants came but they all withdrew and I went unopposed before the election. Five people came after I had filed my nomination, but they all withdrew and I went unopposed. (Personal Communication, 2009)

Those who tried contesting Hannah were all men, at least which buttresses Allah-Mensah’s statement that perception of women about political engagement has somehow changed. Again according to another participant Gifty Kusi (MP), she was approached by men also to become the candidate for the constituency. She asserts that:
I told you that one Saturday, I was in my house and my cousin came, saying, Gifty we are looking for someone run elections for our constituency. I said me, I am not a politician; he asked that I should think about it. Later I was introduced to some party members; indeed a big crowd was there to welcome me. So I got convinced that the people really wanted me to contest elections. (Personal Communication, 2009)

This statement from Gifty Kusi also buttresses the fact that the perception of women’s engagement which hitherto was negative has been affected positively in a way.

Elizabeth Sackey (MP) shares a similar experience in 2004, when her constituents demanded her participation in the politics of Ghana. According to her:

There were more men than women. My support was from men the more. Before then, some women met with me saying “you don’t have to bother yourself, a woman tried it and she did not win, and it has been the trend. I was quite resolute telling them that I would win. They warned me about the insults that could come with my attempt, so I could still go and try. Yes, I did, many challenges came, one because you are a woman, they realize that you are now opening up and there is the danger of you taking up another position. There were fears and the MP at the time was also worried. I remember that whenever I organized a program, and invited the MP at the time, people passed comments that they felt I articulated issues better than the MP. (Personal Communication, 2009)

These very vivid statements portray that at least the perception of men about women’s effective involvement in the political process has been markedly and positively affected than it was during the exclusionist periods between 1966 till the dawn of the Ghana’s fourth attempt at democratization in 1992. Hitherto, the nature of non democratic governments like the dictatorships of General Kutu Acheampong, (1972-1978), Jerry Rawlings 1981-1992, were all dictatorial regimes which were more exclusionist of women. It suffices here to say that the hegemonic characteristics of these dictatorial regimes cannot be underestimated. The question therefore is that, has anything changed? Yes, but very minimal. According to Allah-Mensah (2007), it appears the psyche of our
society is being gradually affected. The figure below shows a survey on the capability of women in political leadership.

**Figure 26** Are women capable in Political Leadership?

Source: Adopted from Data in Allah-Mensah (2007)

Inferring from the above pie-chart it is evident that that perception of women’s suitability and capability in politics cannot be doubted at this day and age. The question therefore is what are the debilitating factors making the representation of women dim? Firstly women must break the yoke patriarchy places on them. This they can do by voicing out their sentiments against the system that keeps them mute. For far too long, patriarchal, colonial and postcolonial machinations have muted their voices. My study has attempted to provide a platform for the voices of female politician in Ghana to be heard. This is not enough. Female politicians can tell their story better than I may have done. We need to hear their voices more, louder than it is at the moment. They must move beyond pleasing men and be seen to be making their strength be felt by waging a holistic war against patriarchy, culture and tradition, twenty first century colonization, and gender imperialistic tendencies. When I embarked on this research, little did I know
about the depths of female subordination, my information was peripheral at the time. Today, as I bring the curtain down on this activity I have become an apostle for change among men.

**Closing Words**

Two women readily come into my mind at this juncture of the study whose characteristics could be a point of reference for all women desiring to “break the political glass ceiling” in Ghana. The first belongs to our remote past and who many writers of history revere as a woman who dared the rule of men, and who exemplified the sterling qualities of womanhood. Donkor (2001) asserts:

> Yaa Asantewaa has been variously perceived by posterity,… was a brave army general who led her people to war…. described as a courageous and outspoken woman who used her position as queen mother of the Edweso State to publicly attack British imperial encroachment, and to question gender ideologies in Asante. For others, she is simply the embodiment of female assertiveness, bravery and valor…she is seen as the antithesis of Asante womanhood who went against the grain of accepted norms, defied the male traditional rulers and called the bluff of the British by declaring war on them. Some of the norms she was supposed to have overlooked are those couched in such sayings as “if a woman buys a gun it leans on the chest (bosom) of a man” or “if a woman buys a gun it leans in the room of a man” and “a woman sells garden eggs and not gunpowder.” (para. 12)

The fundamental logic in these sayings is that an ideal woman should be mild-mannered and should accept the dominant position of the man, at least in military matters. An ideal woman of most ethnic groups in Ghana is described as, mild mannered caring, motherly, exhibiting the characteristics of submissiveness and subservience to the dominant group the men. However, the nature of any political terrain cannot be traversed with the characteristics described above of who an ideal woman is. The “Political Obaa Sima” must necessarily be a woman with the characteristics Yaa Asantewaa embodies.
There have been many types of “Yaa Asantewaa’s in Ghana, however, the most recent Yaa Asantewaa in Ghana’s political history was the late Hawa Yakubu. When the last Ghana’s political exclusionist regime came to an end in 1991, and the country was ushered into a democratic dispensation, Hawa Yakubu was the only female in a two hundred member chamber. Hawa singlehandedly represented fully the 51% female of our population. Her contribution towards Ghana’s democracy cannot be underestimated.

Yaa Asantewaa was simply the embodiment of female assertiveness, bravery and valor, while others see her as the antithesis of Ashanti womanhood who went against the grain of accepted norms, defied the male traditional rulers and called the bluff of the British by declaring war on them. Yaa Asantewaa symbolizes defiance against all forms of oppression and domination. Hawa Yakubu though did not lead an actual war in Ghana; led a verbal one which should be emulated by women in politics in Ghana. To some, she was also the antithesis of womanhood, but those are the members of the “club of patriarchy” who want to see the domination and subordination of our women.

Though family and childbearing do place a very huge burden on women, Kolawole (1997) asserts that:

The average African woman’s exaltation of marriage and family values and assertion of feminine outlook are important canons of African womanhood. Nonetheless, these women are crying out for justice where these values and traditions are abused or when the ideals of African culture are perverted in the patriarchal structure. (p. 197)

Both Yaa Asantewaa, and Hawa Yakubu, demonstrated the embodiment of female assertiveness, bravery and valor. These ingredients, spiced with high education,
resilience, sense of purpose, devoid of pettiness, are some of the characteristics needed today for political participation.

**Remaking the World**

There is no doubt at all in my mind that we as a nation have come a long way, but there is still a longer journey to make. All my participants and I agree that we have made some progress, yet there is a long journey ahead of us. Myers (2008) thinks so too:

> Sometimes, it takes one woman; sometimes, it takes many. Almost always, I’ve found, when there are enough women in the room so that everybody stops counting, women become free to act like women. It’s then we can eliminate double standards and accept that men and women are different—and that they bring a different range of experiences, skills, and strengths to public life. It’s then that we can start to value women as much as men and retool our institutions to fit the broad range of choices that women—and men—make. It’s then that we can expand our definition of leadership—and the language we use to describe it. It’s then that we will have more representative government…and a fairer society. (p. 240)
> “It is only the fool to whom a proverb is explained.”
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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

1. What socio-cultural factors support or hinder women’s participation in political positions in Ghana?

2. What are the experiences of women in local and national politics?

3. What radical changes in policies have opened the way for women’s participation in politics?

4. What are the impediments, challenges, and successes that women in political leadership and nonpolitical leadership experience as a result of their gender?

5. What are the contributions of women in leadership to the politics of Ghana?
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Topic: Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Human Rights: The “Invisibility” of Ghanaian Women in Politics

Interview Protocol (Women in Elected Positions)

Background Information

1. Tell me about yourself.

Research Question 1

2. Give me your experiences in education, and life in your home and the community when growing up. RQ2

3. Kindly discuss your economic background, what influenced or impinged your economic progress or otherwise. RQ2

4. Tell me about your experience as a woman in leadership positions? RQ2

5. In your opinion what socio-cultural factors hinder or promote women’s participation in politics RQ1

6. In your own way, what strategies do you think are available that can be adopted to mitigate these socio cultural structures.RQ1

7. What national or legal frameworks seek to promote women’s political participation in Ghana? RQ3

8. What in your opinion could be done to encourage the participation of women in politics? RQ3

9. How can women be more visible in the public sphere? R Q2
10. How have women fared in politics? R Q4

11. How will the increased participation of women ensure, enhance, and promote the human rights of women?

12. What benefits could be derived from increased participation of women in political life?

13. How did you become a politician/MP, Political Appointee, District Chief Executive, Party Official?

14. What contributed to your being elected into office? R Q2

15. Discuss the role of women’s groups, organizations that may have been part of your political journey. R Q3

16. Tell me about your campaign experience. R Q1 R Q4

17. How has your family supported or impinged upon your political development? R Q2

18. What is the perception of women on women in leadership positions in the public sphere? R Q4

19. In your opinion what do you think is the perception of men of women in the public sphere? R Q4

20. What would you say your personal or political goal in life is at the moment?

21. Could you please tell me about something that I did not ask but you wish add?
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Protocol (Women in nonelected positions/others)

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. Give me your experiences when growing up.

3. Tell me about your experience as a woman in leadership

4. In your opinion what socio-cultural factors hinder or promote women’s participation in politics

5. In your own way, what strategies do you think are available that can be adopted to mitigate these socio-cultural structures?

6. What national or legal frameworks seek to promote women’s political participation in Ghana?

7. What in your opinion could be done to encourage the participation of women in the public sphere?

8. How can women be more visible in the public sphere?

9. What has been the contribution of women in the public sphere?

10. How will the increased participation of women ensure, enhance, and promote the human rights of women

11. What benefits could be derived from increased participation of women in political life?

12. In your opinion how can women be more visible in the public sphere?

13. How have women fared in the public sphere?
14. How will the increased participation of women ensure, enhance, and promote the human rights of women?

15. If you were to run for political office, in what way will your family support you?

16. What is the perception of women of women in leadership position?

17. In your opinion what do you think is the perception of men of women in the public sphere?

18. Could you please tell me about something that I did not ask but you wish add.
APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Topic: Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Human Rights: The “Invisibility” of Ghanaian Women in Politics

 Guidelines for Focus group discussions (Women Ordinary)

1. Please tell me your names, your educational backgrounds, and what you are currently doing.

2. What were your experiences while you were growing up as children, your life in your homes, what your parents and your extended family did to shape your life?

3. What socio-cultural factors impacted your lives?

4. What is your opinion about a 230-member Parliament with a 211-19 representation for men and women?

5. What in your opinion may be the reason behind this representation and what can be done to improve the situation?

6. We have a female Speaker of Parliament. What in your opinion will this appointment do for women’s representation?

7. How have our women parliamentarians fared in the last two parliaments?

8. In your opinion what would determine your interest and entry into politics?

9. Which aspect of our socialization would you suggest we need to affect that may reverse the trend of current participation of women?

10. What will be different if women became equitably represented in our political life?
A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Human Rights: The Invisibility of Ghanaian Women in Politics

Primary Investigator: Edward Akita

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Francis Godwyll

Department: Educational Studies

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

11/12/09

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Topic: Hegemony, Patriarchy, and Human Rights: The “Invisibility” of Ghanaian Women In Politics

Introduction: Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results of the study.

Purpose: This purpose of this study is to examine the visibility or otherwise of women in Ghanaian politics. This understanding will add to the body of knowledge in the area of education and democracy. You will be one of 25 participants taking part in this study.

Duration: Your participation in this study will last for the length of time it takes to conduct my interview. Each interview may take approximately one to two hours. The interviews will be collaboratively scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Procedures: During this study the following procedure will take place:

- You will be asked to participate in one interview that will take place in a mutually agreed upon place.
- The interview will be video-taped by Edward Akita
• The interview will be interpreted/translated from their signed format and transcribed into English.

• Your name or any other identifying material will not appear on the tapes or transcripts. You will be given a pseudo name to ensure anonymity.

• If desired, you will be given the opportunity to review the final transcribed portion of the interview.

• The information you provide in the interview will be combined with the information from other participants to come up with what it takes to be a woman in the political sphere. Some quotes will be cited directly, but when this occurs, the statements will be anonymous, with no personally identifying information given.

Exclusion: Children are not part of this study.

Risks/Discomforts:
The study is not expected to involve any risks or discomforts. However, some people may find talking about certain experiences discomforting. The safeguards to avoid these discomforts or risks either refuse to answer a particular question if you don’t feel comfortable.

Benefits: You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation may help in creating awareness about women in politics. You may also find it personally helpful to talk about these experiences.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. Agents of the Ohio University will be allowed to inspect sections of the research
records related to the study, but neither your name nor any personally identifying
information will be present. The findings from the study will be presented as a written
doctoral dissertation with the possibility of publication or presentation at conferences.
Your identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law, such as
mandatory reporting of elder abuse, or immediate danger to yourself or others. Some of
the things you say will be directly quoted in the study, but always in an anonymous
manner. Neither your name nor any other personal identifiers will be associated with
what you say. Upon completion of the study the videotapes will be destroyed.
Transcripts, without any personally identifying information, will be kept in a secure
location and not accessed by anyone other than the researcher.
Payment to Participants: There are no incentives or payment for participating in this
study.
Right to Refuse of Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to
participate, or may discontinue participation AT ANY TIME, without penalty or loss of
benefits to which you or your parent are otherwise entitled. The investigator has the right
to withdraw you from the study AT ANY TIME. Your withdrawal from the study may be
based on reasons related solely to you (for example, being unavailable for interviews) or
because the entire study has been terminated.
Offer to Answer Questions: If you have any other questions about this study, you may
call or text Edward Akita, Dr. Francis Godwyll at 740-593-448. The Director of Research
Compliance of the Institutional Review Board would also be able to answer any
questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.
Legal Rights: Nothing in this consent form waives any legal right you may have nor does it release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM FOR MY INFORMATION.

_________________________________  ____________
Participant Signature                  Date

_________________________________  ____________
Signature and Title of Person Obtaining consent Date

(Used only when the content is interpreted to participant)
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Source: Inter parliamentary Union