Transnational Media Articulations of Ghanaian Women: Mapping Shifting Returnee Identities in an Online Web Series

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Abstract
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This study examines returnee African women’s identity articulations in the web series *An African City*. Specifically, the research focuses on the appropriation of a U.S. popular cultural text perceived as more powerful by a Ghanaian producer in the creation of counter-discourses, cultural spaces, and identities in alternative media. Using multi-theoretical lenses – a framework of in-betweeness - the study is grounded in the theory of articulation to examine how the web series *An African City* uses *Sex And The City* in response to Western monolithic representations of African women. A social constructivist framework that considers identities as shifting subjectivities are interrogated through the theoretical lenses of transnational postcolonial feminism, using a framework of in-betweeness informed by hybridity and conviviality as intempestivity. The study makes theoretical links to transnational postcolonial feminisms, invoked by specific intersections of returnee African women. Using articulation analyses, thematic links are made between the series and in-depth interview with the series producer and focus group interviews with African women in Ghana and American diaspora. The argument is made that a continuum of ‘outsidenes’ and ‘insideness’ informs any system of identity and belongingness where identities shift ever so often. It is further argued that while *An African City* web series represents one of many re-configured identity formations
embedded within Eurocentric African women’s identities that conform to globalizing homogenization of capitalist cultural productions, the series creates and occupies a space of conviviality that engenders dissensus in the distribution of Ghanaian women’s representation in particular and Black women in general. Examining diasporan African women identity articulations is important particularly when African women use media technologies to represent themselves in alternative media spaces in a bid to enrich research on stereotypical portrayals of African women. Also, the tendency to focus on more “serious” non-fiction genres like news, to the detriment of those genres considered fictional and often taken for granted by their entertainment value, warrants such a research.
Dedication

Anastasia Abla Addo,

I wonder what would have been.
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Chapter 1: General Introduction

Worldwide, women’s media representations continue to be a challenge for feminists and activists. Central to issues engaged in scholarship and activism is the quantity and quality of representation in various fictional and nonfictional media texts. Furthermore, women’s cultural work in the media industry remains unacknowledged (Khannous, 2013). The Internet has emerged as a media space that enables young Black women with limited resources to create web-based counter-narratives to represent themselves. The Internet has become critical given the limited space available to them in mainstream media. Women’s glaring underrepresentation and participation in communications has been noted in the Chapter III, Article 46 of the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action (1995). Since then, the expected improvement in women’s share in power and decision-making (ownership) and the nature of the stereotypical representations, assumes that ownership will improve representation (Sesanti, 2009). While studies (Steeves and Kwami, 2012; Kwami, 2010; Kwapong, 2007; Klintz, 2007; Alhassan, 2004) have focused on gender and ICT, it is difficult to find statistics that demonstrate the digital divide in gender. Notwithstanding, the challenge of digital divide persists in gender, age and access (O’Connor, 2012; Sarfo et al, 2011; Geldof, 2011; Kwapong, 2009).

Media ownership trends show an overwhelming male dominance. While democracies seek to secure diversity in voice and content through enactment of laws that regulate ownership towards conglomeration prevention, they have generally remained unsuccessful. Overall, media laws emphasize deregulation to open up the marketplace for
competition based on the assumption that competition is adequate to secure public interest (Alhassan, 2004; Aufderheide, 2006; Napoli, 2007). In developing countries like Ghana, a similar trend has been to move from government control to privatization also based on the assumption that such a move will foster freedom of speech, expression, and rights of access to press and media (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, Chapter 6). However, rather than the diversified, expanded public sphere, in Ghana like many other countries, women remain outside the ownership sphere. Thus, women’s participation in media’s role as the fourth estate is lacking in democracies like Ghana.

That today’s societies are perceived as evolved is ironic considering that efforts towards plurality and inclusion of women in the public sphere have not yielded much. Rancière (2010a) argues that democracy, as practiced today, is not so different from that of “...[a]ncient cities comprised of men whose freedom was based on the exclusion of women, slaves and metics,” a point suggestive of who constitutes the ruling few (p. 50). In the Chronicles of Consensual Times, Rancière (2010b) alludes to the group of people who rule in a democracy and their close association to the power that derives from wealth. Rancière (2010b) points out that wealth has replaced the old power of birth when he states that,

Democracy is not simply the ‘power of the people.’ It is the power of a certain kind of people: a people deliberately ‘invented’ to dismiss simultaneously the old power of birth and the power that so naturally steps in to take its place – wealth. (p. 6)
Capital and media could very well replace wealth given that Rancière (2010a) writes at a time when the world had not seen the growth of media conglomerates as we see today. He clarifies the convergence of politics, media, and capital in asserting that

The normal tendency of these oligarchic governments, to which by way of confusion between the forms of state and the forms of politics, one gives the name ‘democracies,’ is not the egalitarian reign of communication and mass consumption. It is the integration of capital, state, military and media powers.

(Rancière, 2010a, pp. 110-111)

Indeed, women have been systematically excluded from the domains listed above. As far back as 1975, media were noted as sites for action that could change the status of women. In 1995, the media were a critical area of concern in the Beijing Conference’s platform for action. Specifically, the women and media issues include:

- Poor status of women in decision-making positions in the media;
- Continued stereotypical media portrayal of women and the increase in violent and pornographic images of women;
- Lack of gender sensitivity in media policies and programs;
- Poor access of women to media and ICTs;
- Poor participation of women in media and ICTs;
- Increased promotion of consumerism and its attendant drive towards the objectification of women. (Declaration, 1995)

---

1 The specific time that he wrote since the edition of this book is recent
As of 2015, the top ten most powerful media moguls in Africa were all men, with Koos Bekker of South Africa topping the list (Nsehe, 2011). Men continue to own Ghana’s diverse, pluralistic media, with over 200 authorized FM radio stations, 12 private television stations, and hundreds of newspapers. Although the policies that guide regulation of ICT in Ghana (the Ghana National Telecom Policy of 2005 - NTP-05 and Information & Communications Technology For Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy (2003)) specify gender development as a goal, minimal gains have been made thirteen years later. Among others, the ICT4AD policy states as one of its objectives, the need “[t]o accelerate the development of women and eliminate gender inequalities in education, employment, decision-making through the deployment and exploitation of ICTs by building capacities and providing opportunities for girls and women” (Republic of Ghana, 2003). While the Ghanaian media has seen increased participation of citizens in the democratic process, women’s representation in ownership, voice, access and control remain low (Gadzekpo, 2009; Gallagher, & others, 2000; Gallagher, 2006; Mawugbe, 2010; Macharia, O’Connor, & Ndangam, 2010; Spears, Seydegart) raising “. . . questions about the extent and the ways in which old and new media forms advance or impede women’s issues” (Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 76). More importantly, the alternative media space offered by the Internet for non-mainstream content and ownership by women and other underrepresented groups cannot be overlooked.

In the case of the United States, the problem that legislators failed to anticipate in passing the 1996 Telecommunications Act was in not determining /defining what constitutes public interest. For indeed, defining who constitutes the public, and then what
the interests of that public are will reveal the basic demographics of male and female. The Internet, seen as the fifth estate for governance (Al-Rodhan, 2007), facilitated a shift from media consumer to prosumers (Cooper, 2005) encouraging User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010). The globality and sense of community it affords has recently come under scrutiny regarding limitations of civic rights through technological censorship (Berdal 2004; Lainer 2013). Recent debates over network neutrality in the United States cannot be ignored since media law, ethics and regulatory practices in the Global North tend to influence those in the Global South. In this case, the example of using regulation by the state to preserve equal opportunity in cyberspace against the will of big, private cable companies is seen. Thus there exists the possibilities of transferring women’s media representation issues online. African women, in particular, remain a potential resource to be fully harnessed. Specifically, harnessing their cultural resources across national borders has become even more critical if the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be met.

**Background**

Recent media events suggest an upheaval of questions and endeavors to articulate identities and belongingness. Developments on the African continent and its diasporas envision changes in the narratives, discourses, and representations by and about Black people. The discontentment and dissatisfaction with representations are often directed towards Western media (Ranchod, 2013; Ponzanesi, 2011, 2014; Obenga, 2001) even though some of the responsibility lies with African media (Gadzekpo, 2009, Mawugbe, 2010, Nyamnjoh, 2012; Khannous, 2012). Diasporan Black women’s discontentment
with marginalized representation surface as calls for their inclusion in the media industries, with more opportunities to write, direct, produce and play leading roles, and resistance towards the nature of the historicized derogatory roles.

Black women of African descent in the United States including Ava DuVernay, Shonda Rhimes, Viola Davis, Taraji P. Henson, and Regina King have recently risen to prominence in Hollywood. Lupita Nyong’o, a Kenyan-Mexican, who Kenyans proudly lay claim to, won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in *12 Years a Slave*, leading to her nomination by *People* magazine as The Most Beautiful Woman and Woman of the Year by *Glamour*. The idea of Lupito belonging to “multiple homes” (Mexico, Kenya, USA) is a phenomenon that is common and demonstrated, yet seems at odds with international migratory laws that insist on clear demarcations of where one belongs (Nyamnjoh, 2015).

That the former president of the United States, Barrack Obama maintains his roots and occasionally returns to Kenya suggests the need to connect to one’s roots and the extent to which one will go to do so. Again the complexities associated with belongingness and its significance to identity formation particularly of dispersed peoples played out in the US media before Obama’s winning of the 2008 presidential elections with intermittent doubts cast on his “true” identity raising questions about the privileges he enjoys as an American with roots in Kenya.

Other Africans by citizenship have also featured prominently in American media and popular culture. They include the sampling of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s speech *We Should All Be Feminists* in Beyoncé’s feminist anthem, *Flawless* and Trevor Noah,
who made his debut on American television on 28th September 2015 as the first African (from South Africa) to host *The Daily Show*. Additionally, there are other media that exist between the West and Africa in transnational cyberspace. *An African City* is a web series that exemplifies the emerging trend of diasporan African women returnees responding to monolithic representations on the African continent with transnational reach. These celebratory achievements are epic in their own rights and evoke questions surrounding identity given the importance of the count gained as tokens of underrepresented groups they ‘represent” in the police – a count in the distribution of the sensible of the American mainstream media in particular, and the social consciousness of American society, in the Rancièrean (2010) sense. These are important achievements on many levels despite the exceptionalist global hierarchical structuring that positions the United States as the best.

**Statement of the Problem**

Media events (indicated above) point to issues about returning or living between the homeland and the diaspora - an indication of belonging to both and none simultaneously (Nyamnjoh, 2015; Nyamnjoh & Shoro, 2011). While media privilege a Global South to Global North flows, there are also movements of African diasporans towards “home.” Examples of such depictions dominated the Ghanaian movie industry productions between the mid-1990s to late 2000s (Garritano, 2013). Importantly, the depictions did not reflect the holistic migratory practices of the period, emphasizing a demographic characteristic of the non-elite, modest African (often male) traveler first time abroad (Garritano, 2013). Instead, a more realistic perspective from a 2012 survey predicted that 70% of African diasporans with MBAs earned in American universities
will return to work on the continent. More importantly, an emerging dynamic of mobile phone data use, startups led by returnees and internet activity in Africa suggests alternatives to mainstream media conglomerates. While the trend is for media giants to take over Video on Demand (VoD) in the United States, for instance, the trend is set by first-to-market startups like iROKOtv, Wabona and Buni.tv rather than the big pay-tv Multichoice and Telkom (Jackson, 2014). Recent studies (Khannous, 2013; Romero and Centallas, 2008) also show the web is conducive for young, women media content producers. An example of such web presence is the Ghanaian returnee produced web series *An African City*.

At issue is not only that women are underrepresented in mainstream media, but also that their work as cultural producers and remitters remains mostly unaccounted for as regards their importance to national and political concerns (Khannous, 2013). The tendency to take African women’s literary and artistic (film and other media) as politically and socially disengaged and to belong to the realm of the feminine, personal and the private sphere remains (Khannous, 2013).

Men dominate African media regarding both ownership and representation. Forbes’s list of the five most powerful media moguls in 2011 and 2012 did not include

2 The article *The Five Most Powerful African Media Moguls* lists: Koos Bekker (South African, CEO, Naspers); Linus Gitahi (Kenyan, CEO, Nation Media Group), Reginald Mengi (Tanzania, CEO, IPP Group); Prakash Desai (South Africa, CEO, Avusa); Nduka Obaigbena (Nigerian, Publisher, ThisDay Newspaper).

Similarly, Ventures, an Africa online source for news, analysis and discussion about African business, policy, innovation, and lifestyle in 2012, listed the following as 10 most powerful media moguls: Koos Bekker (South African, CEO of Naspers); Reginald Mengi (Tanzanian, CEO of the IPP Group); The Aga Khan (founder, Nation Media Group (NMG)); Ben Murray-Bruce (Nigerian, funder, Silverbird Productions); Chris Kirubi (Kenyan, owner, Capital FM); Linus Gitahi (Head, Nation Media Group);
women. On the other hand, online spaces enabled by the Internet have afforded women to find spaces for expression at limited cost with transnational reach (Khannous, 2013; Romero and Centallas (2008). In the era of capitalist globalization, trans-border media flows, homogenizing cultural production practices and notions of cultural appropriation aided by the Internet and its attendant technological development these questions become pertinent. More specifically, where do African women inside, outside and in-between times, spaces (online and offline) and their cultural work fit within the spectrum of reconfiguring discursive formations of identity and belongingness?

Other questions of “in-betweeness” is who then is an African woman and who qualifies as one within the context of transnational media representation? These questions allude to the increasing imprecision in identifying with specificity who an African is and how they should look like considering historical mixing of peoples, voluntary and forced migration into diasporas in addition to postcolonial/neocolonial ideological forces that push migration and cultural flows today. Postcolonial scholars (Nyamnjoh, 2007, 2012, 2015, Ponzanesi, 2011, 2014; Puar, 2013) have critically engaged these questions. Thus, a more critical question that feeds into identity and belonging questions can also be understood by conceptualizing identities as ideological embodiment and how their deconstruction of the specific avowals about identity – textual and contextual – serve to include and exclude hierarchies of peoples is important. This way, specific articulations

Prakash Desai (South Africa, CEO, Avusa); SK Macharia (Kenya, Owner, Royal Media Services); Raymond Dokpesi (Nigeria, Pioneer, Africa Independent Television (AIT)); Patrick Quarcoo (Ghanaian Quarcoo, co-founder and CEO of the Radio Africa Group)
can be examined to uncover the historical, ideological and contextual meanings they advance to understand how they might empower, disempower and reinforce existing power relations. Research on alternative media and identity have focused on diasporas and identity formations, intercultural migration and economic remittance, negotiating identities within receiving countries, and cultural hybridization as a third space. Of the studies that focus on web series, emphasis is on distribution (Christian, 2011, 2012) and fans and identity construction (Christian, 2011; Heinecken, 2013). Specifically, while there are studies that examine self-representation and stereotypes, there is a lack in a focus on diasporan returnees who are African women.

Diaspora identity formation issues and theories circulate and remain within the academy, leaving out groups of diasporans whose experiences inform these theories. While Gandhi (1998) points out limitations of postcoloniality to the intellectual immigrants within diasporas and the plethora of studies it has engendered, there is also the issue of the returnee diasporan in the postcolony – More so the female Western-educated returnee, who is often non-academic. The positionality of the returnee diasporan to the postcolony equally warrants the examination and articulation of their experiences as shifting intersectional subjectivities – gender and power relations – on arrival and within the postcolony and as they move in-between these two spaces. A case in point is the new web series, An African City which premiered in March 2014. A Ghanaian woman produced the series, designed as a parallel to the American produced Sex and the City. The co-creator of the series, Nicole Amarteifio, says her inspiration is rooted in the
frustration with the misrepresentation of African women with the aim to tell a new story of the African woman³.

Intricately linked to self-representation to seek representativeness are those of power (access to and use of media) and belongingness to a specific culture that one seeks to project. Such endeavors are predominantly those of people, like Nicole Amarteifio, who are at the verge of a sense of self (gained social capital through cultural accumulation). Like any rites of passage, they must demonstrate their sense of self through avowals comprising cultural articulations that communicate their self-awareness – conscientization (critical consciousness), and agency to their community and the world. Assumptions underlying such articulations are that prevailing representations of themselves by others are derisory and inauthentic. Hence the need to articulate their subjugated knowledges of the self by the self, of occupying shifting, unstable, spaces of in-betweeness (Nyamnjoh, 2015). As indicated above, the Internet has emerged as the alternative media space that enables young Black women in particular to create counter-narratives to represent themselves with limited resources as exemplified in *An African City*. It remains an important source for agency and empowerment for African women in negotiating their identities.

*An African City* tells the story of five African women who return to Ghana after living abroad in different countries. The young women are friends who talk about how they navigate their return in Ghana. The first season of *An African City*, appropriately titled, *The Return* elicited varied audience response, as well as critical reviews. While

³ In an interview with the *Guardian’s* Afua Hirsch.
some praised the series and its producers, describing it as “Africa’s answer to Sex and the City”\(^4\), some critics raised concerns about the authenticity of the representation of the five women in the series. At issue was whether media content produced by African women in alternative media spaces challenge stereotypes that they argue Western media content (often in mainstream media) fall short. Contextually, how were the experiences of diasporan African women returnees articulated? Are the representations reflective of African women’s identity realities? Considering transnational media flows, production and distribution constraints, and African women’s cultural work in alternative media spaces, are old stereotypes reproduced? What is the nature of new images of African women in An African City if any? Specifically, within the spectrum of emerging identities continually shaped by media, cultural and capital flows, what are the specificities of the contemporary African woman returnee in representing themselves?

Purpose of Study

Within the spectrum of emerging identities continually shaped by media, cultural and capital flows, this study examines the specificities of the contemporary African woman returnee’s articulations in representing themselves. To examine the issues that emanate, the following comprise the objectives of the study:

1. Identify how identities are articulated in An African City to examine how they empower and/or disempower African women.

2. Discover the reasons for the specific choices made in the articulations from the perspective of the producers.

3. Analyze the perceptions of audiences in the American Diaspora and Ghana towards the identities articulated.

4. Determine the strengths of the ties, and the differences that the articulations try to ignore or cover up (i.e., overlapping perceptions among women in the American diaspora, Ghana, and the producers).

**Significance of Study**

The awareness created through the identification of African women’s identity articulations is important to understanding women representing themselves and the specific choices made in the representations. Specifically, the study explores how marginal experiences get articulated without reproducing stereotypes and producing new potentially stereotypical images. This study is in tandem with other studies that find the importance of transnational postcolonial feminist theory as one that allows for a critical look at women’s experiences within the postcolony and the postcolonial conditioning that marks them as having shifting subjectivities carried into the diaspora and shapes their experiences within and ‘without’ diasporic spaces. The study is important to research for the contribution it makes to the following concepts and issues:

*Media representation of women*: The study will provide critical perspectives on the inadequacies of representation of women in general and African women in particular. The need for nuanced meanings about women and gender in media is envisaged.
Transnational women’s issues and postcolonial feminism: The research diversifies the discourse on gender and feminism in Ghana as it relates to that of the United States. It also seeks to contribute to the postcolonial/neocolonial discourse that continually shape perceptions about African women. The trend is to analyze transnationalism from economic perspectives, but this study contributes to the literature on diaspora studies with a focus on African women and their cultural work. To this end, the research enriches scholarship on diasporan and transnational African women studies.

Web series and gender: The inquiry enriches the emerging field of ICT and gender. Specifically, the perspective of African women inside/outside and in-between diasporas as they relate to Internet technology development and representation (content, access, and ownership) will be contributed to research.

Articulation theory and analysis: Through identifying the specificities of diasporan African women’s identity articulations in online media, this research seeks to contribute to Hall’s theory of articulation and analysis.

In-betweeness as a theoretical framework: Conceiving a framework of in-betweeness (informed by hybridity, conviviality as intempestivity) for understanding appropriation of cultural codes of returnee African women’s identity articulations, the research enriches approaches to studying lived experiences of misrepresented/underrepresented groups and charts ways solidarity might be formed among feminists in general.

Communication and policy formulation: The investigation will provide for governments, NGOs, CSOs and many other agencies, diversity in available information for planning
effective media strategy to promote the public awareness on women and gender issues for diasporan and returnee engagements both at home and abroad.

**Research Questions**

The main aim of this study is to analyze *An African City* web series to understand the identity articulations therein and how they might empower or disempower African women in the whole project of representation through self-representation. The following research questions guide the study:

RQ1: (a) How are identities articulated in the *An African City* web series
(b) What themes emerge?
(c) What are the reasons behind the articulations from the perspective of the producers?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of audiences towards the articulations?

RQ3: What are the strength of the ties, and the differences that articulations try to ignores or cover up (overlapping perceptions among women in the diaspora, the postcolony and the women producers)?

**Delimitation**

This research seeks to examine African women’s transnational representations of the self in media. The study does not seek to compare two different cultural texts: *An African City* and *Sex and the City*. The study focuses on returnee African women’s media articulations drawing on theoretical feminists’ engagements from Black feminists (African and American) theorists. The women under study fall within an elite group and does not cover all female returnees. Furthermore, data collection through focus group
discussions with graduate African and Ghanaian students in the U.S. diaspora, and
Ghanaians graduate students in Winneba. The approach for audience selection is
purposive and provides an in-depth understanding of the returnee identity articulations.

Set in Accra, Ghana, the web series is based on a plot of the Western-educated
female returnee woven around five, young, women born in the West but with strong roots
to various parts of Africa. While the series was produced in Ghana, it is published on
YouTube, a significant point that gives it an international reach. The producer, also US-
returned shows how women use strategies for success to navigate life in Ghana through
the eyes of the returnee. Themes of navigating economic difficulties and power dynamics
between men and women is at the core of the series.

While acknowledging the problems associated with using Africa to represent the
complexities and differences of people and cultures on the African continent, its use in
this dissertation is specific to Africa, South of the Sahara. Otherwise, specific references
are made to regions outside the scope of Sub-Saharan Africa when their inclusion is
intended.

**Organization of Study**

In terms of structure, the study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one which is
the introductory chapter sets out the background with a review of discourse on media
women representation (content and ownership) in the Ghanaian, African and U.S.
contexts. The chapter also states the research questions that guide the inquiry and the
rationale for the study while providing a scope. In addition, the significance of the study
to academic research is articulated here.

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Chapter two reviews current related literature on similar studies that have looked at aspects of the issues of identity as it relates to the intersectional specificities that mark the African woman returnee as a postcolonial subject. The chapter focuses on media’s core role within a society in relationship to women’s representation and their work as transnational cultural producers, remitters, and digital diasporas. Also discussed are the tensions within feminist orientations towards finding middle ground for solidarity. The theoretical framework that provides concepts and ideas for examining the issues in this research are also outlined. A conceptual framework of in-betweeness and boundary-crossing grounded in articulation theory is offered. Furthermore, related boundary crossing concepts of hybridity, conviviality, and intempestivity are reviewed.

Chapter three provides the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data. It indicates multi-level qualitative approach grounded in the tenants of critical theory. Details of analytical approaches used are provided here. Methods of data collection, instruments, and data handling are also stated.

Chapter four presents the findings of what emerged from analyses of the web series. Drawing on the theoretical framework, the chapter discusses the outcomes with reference to the research questions. Similarly, the chapter discusses and analyses data collected from informants and focus groups.

Chapter five draws on the findings and analyses and makes interpretations on issues detailed in chapter four. It will also evaluate the new trends in communication and identity research in general and diasporan African woman returnee articulations in general. In conclusion, the chapter will acknowledge the limitations of the study and
outlines issues for future research. The chapter, finally, provides recommendations for media representations of diasporan transnational African women.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

A Framework of In-betweeness: A Theoretical Positioning

This chapter provides the theoretical framework founded on the literature review. In this chapter, I will also discuss women’s transnational media commission and the need to reconceptualize women’s cultural work as politically potent and their positioning as cultural remitters. The section will also explicate the importance of the Internet for women’s media work in allowing them the much-needed space for identity articulation and how the articulations are constituted.

Global colonialism and constructing transnational subjectivities: A global cultural process. The perception of the world as increasingly interconnected primarily enabled through the ever-evolving media forms suggests the currency of the term “globalization.” However, the concept of globalization has been found to be problematic (Marchand & Runyan, 2011; Steger, 2009) and tends to gloss over enduring fixities and complex ways in which the world is interconnected and in turn hierarchically structures it socially, economically, and culturally. For example, Lind (2010) presents examples of how feminist development industry policies and globalization narratives (with neoliberal assumptions) produce new transnational subjectivities, particularly in the Global South. Furthermore, regional equality is assumed in the concept of globalization obscuring ongoing neoliberal processes emanating from the Global North which shape particularly, women’s lives in postcolonial/neocolonial spaces in the Global South. Chang and Lind (2010) in rethinking globalization prefer “global restructuring.” They consider global restructuring as enabling the identification of Technomascular
Capitalism’s (TMC) more visible) and its intimate other, Regime of Labor Intimacy (RLI) (often invincible) to be primarily made up of women. Massey (2003) notes that non-white and women are typically the invisible in the “power geometry” of globalization (p. 24). Similarly, Steger (2009) notes the failure of the term globalization to allow analytical distinctions between cause and effect. Rather, Steger (2009) suggests the term “globality to signify a social condition characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural and environmental interconnectedness and flows that make most of the existing borders and boundaries irrelevant” (p. 8). As a result, the division of the world in ways that previously positioned the Global South as poorest is fading with evidence of the existence of similar conditions in the Global North.

**Transnational complexities and diasporas.** Transnationalism particularly describes interactions that characterize behavior of diasporas and homeland. Mathews (2014) drawing on Vertoc (2009) defines transnationalism as “. . . connections and interactions that link people and institutions across nation-states [and is used to describe] . . . new identities and communities in a global world” (p. 1). The concept also indicates the fading of national boundaries, circulation, and development of ideas, political institutions and corporations across national borders (Sreberny, 2006). The evolution of transnationalism has also enabled migrants to maintain ties to both countries of origin and host countries simultaneously while creating new transnational subjectivities within communities. The transnational phenomenon is also characterized by “trans-attachment” and transnational exchanges pushing a shift from scholarship examining immigrant integration to exploring transnational behaviors.
Diasporas are often conceptualized in association with the West. However, a critical look at the constitution of postcolonial cities suggests that they embody characteristics that mark them as diasporan spaces. Thus, understanding the circulation of cultural products in postcolonial cities requires a conceptualization of diasporas as global cities. For example, the issues that immigrants face in Western diasporas including cultural assimilation are also present in trade diaspora (Gosch, 1994) and for that matter, the postcolonial city of Accra. The term “Diaspora” has roots in Greek meaning to scatter or dispersion. It is used to describe the movement of peoples from places where they have lived over a long period or where their ancestors lived. Cohen (1995) asserts that “[s]ome diasporas appear to have mutated across several phases and assumed different forms, refurbishing themselves as they go along” (p. 6). Cohen’s (1995) allusion to the possibility of multiple conceptions of diaspora is clear. Building on that, Hall (1990) gives a sense of the complexities of diasporan identities indicating an uncertain and sometimes imperialist relationship with specific homelands. Alluding to the dispersion of the Jewish people, Hall (1992) as (cited in Cohen, 1995) asserts,

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Cohen, 1995, p. 62). Here, diasporan identities open up processes of identity creation as evolving reconfigured forms of hybridity. Understanding the nature of diasporan identities requires
an assessment of the impact of the historical, cultural assimilatory processes on current configurations of African women returnees.

Within these global complexities are people with shifting subjectivities (race, religion, class). The issue of intersectionality and the power dynamics that characterize such interactions, then, becomes central to making sense of trajectories of histories that especially aims to focus on African women’s representations. However, issues of gender and race and their discussions often proceed on assumptions that ignore historical roots of the outcomes of such interactions (Blay, 2008). Interactions among peoples from different geographic regions have always been part of the human experience. Interactions between men and women from different geographic regions and races are historical - since people began to travel to engage in trade exchange. Out of these interactions, Gosch (1994), for instance, notes the emergence of important trade interconnections and formation of communities through which ideas and cultural products were exchanged. Drawing on Curtin (1984), Gosch (1994) brings to the fore a type of diaspora that is rarely in the literature. Curtin (as cited in Gosch, 1994) notes the formation of “trade diasporas” which he defines as “communities of merchants living among aliens in associated networks” (p. 5). Specifically, Gosch (1994) asserts that “. . . trade diasporas are important in world history because the merchants who participated in them were both commodity-brokers and culture-brokers; the traders facilitated the exchange of things and also served as transmitters of ideas” (p. 8). Returnees by their nature of moving from a culture positions them as transmitters of ideas. Historically, trade diasporas have existed in most capital cities of African countries and can be
considered as sites of cultural exchange. Furthermore, cultural interactions formed part of assimilatory processes that foreign traders encountered. The concept of trade diasporas then foregrounds postcolonial African cities as spaces for diasporan identity issues.

The importance of Gosch’s (1994) specific diaspora is helpful in locating the issue of cross-cultural interaction, transnationalism, and clues about intersections of cultures and peoples (race). Cultural assimilation through marriage also characterized such diasporas. Osborn (2011), through an examination of historical sources: interviews with elders, formal oral traditions by jeliw or griots’ references to the past events in everyday conversations, shows an example of cultural assimilation in Baté. In the case of precolonial Kankan-Baté state in the Milo River Valley in West Africa (present-day Guinea-Conakry), for instance, marriage formed part of the process of assimilation for foreigners. Arranged marriage between local women and male settlers whose talents were deemed to be important to building of the state characterized such a trade diaspora (p. 59). Here, examples demonstrate how marginalized men accessed power within trade diasporas. While economic sociopolitical push and pull still underlie today’s conceptions of diasporas the emphasis has been on diasporas in the West. Further, the fluidity of movement, migration, connection (enabled through technological development) have blurred national boundaries and enabled new concepts of community and place (Christensen, 2012). Thus, intersections of peoples and their ways of being in interaction with each other and the outcomes that emerge are not new but that their reconfigurations have become more rampant and more complex. Moreover, turning attention to global cities of postcolonies in the global South may reveal other unexamined complexities. A
common complexity is the outcomes of (intermarriages) between Africans and Europeans - last/surnames, that continually shape race interactions worldwide (Ray, 2015).

*African women as cultural remitters.* Women’s underrepresentation in the public sphere transcends regions and cultures. Hence, major global efforts (the Millennium Development Goals and impending Sustainable Development Goals) have identified women and girls as target groups that need focus. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2015) reports that two-thirds of countries failed to meet the MDGs primarily due to the growing trend of absolute poverty. The development of the SDGs to supplement efforts stipulated in the MDGs suggests the need for a more comprehensive plan to create a better world. An important aspect of the SDGs’ development is its drawing on the OECD’s 2014 fragility report that focuses on “. . . the extent to which aid was used to leverage domestic revenue mobilization.” The report also shows that addressing fragility will be central to achieving the new SDGs. Again, the SDGs’ success in achieving the desired outcomes has implications for development planning at national levels and finding the resources (both human and financial) for planning, implementation, and evaluation. Harnessing Women’s resource potential across national borders has become even more critical if the SDGs are to be met. While the tendency is to focus on aid to fragile states, the 2015 report of the OECD indicates that remittances to sending countries rather than aid forms the largest aggregate of financial flows to fragile states and economies. Consequently, understanding remittances with a focus on women’s role is critical.
However, there seems to be a lack of focus on women as a remitting group. A way for improving mapping strategies of diaspora resources for development is to pay attention to African women’s contributions to their home countries. Mapping African women’s resources within diasporas and transnational spaces will need to proceed from a critical analytical position, a perspective that conceives of their cultural productions as contributions that are equally significant and critical to national development. This implies a critical analysis that uncovers the specific contributions that women as cultural remitters have made (pre/independence/post) and given equal attention and value accorded financial and skills remittances as contributory factors to development in sending countries. This is important in the light of the varied efforts being made to map diasporas for development and the new SDGs’ persistent focus on women and girls as a group whose development will enable the eradication of factors that contribute to their underdevelopment and poverty. In particular, a critical focus on goal 5, of the proposed SDGs as it pertains to how diasporas might enable developing countries “[a]chieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” is imperative (United Nations, 2016, p. 8-9).

Faller and Freinkman (2013) indicate that over 70,000 skilled professionals leave Africa each year and over 30 million or 3% live outside their countries of origin. It is important to note that some of these immigrants gained their skills from the African continent using primarily African resources. Hence, expectations for re-injection of these resources back into African institutions is in order and must be encouraged. As other literature on diaspora studies (Callahan, 2012; Iskanda and Lowe, 2013; Kim, 2001) also
point out, immigrants accumulate and build on previous skills from the sending country and often improve on such skills while in the host country. Furthermore, diaspora high achievers positioned as outsiders to a large extent enables a transfer of skilled resources comprising financial, educational and technological while engaging in public debate and challenging society’s formal and informal rules. Also, they are positioned to begin the change process through identifying the need for reform in home countries and are relatively powerful to enact new policies and change institutions. This is exemplified by the examples of figures from the historical generation like Kwame Nkrumah who shaped the political landscapes in some African countries for independence. It is important to note that while women, particularly in the diaspora and homeland, played critical roles in pre-independence mobilizing across the African continent, they were not acknowledged and given decision-making roles when independence was gained (Arhin, 1993). Indeed, African women’s Western diasporan influence contributed to the independence struggles like that of Kwame Nkrumah. For example, while women including Mabel Dove Danquah, Adowa Frema, Sophia Doku, Ramatu Baba, Ama Nkrumah, played leading roles as politicians, organizers, and journalists, women were not part of the cabinet until 1960 (Quist-Adade & Dodoo, 2015). It is important to note the roles women played in government were focused on the “well-being of women and children (Quist-Adade & Dodoo, 2015). Additionally the All-African Women’s Conference (AAWC) formed at the 1960 Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent in Accra was transnational in nature.
Within the current globalizing world, African women’s presence in transnational spaces and their contributions to development both in the receiving and sending countries has gained prominence and must be accounted for. Additionally, the global development efforts with a focus on women, begs the mainstreaming gender question: where are the women? Gender and intersectionality lenses are required to enhance the accuracy of capturing African women’s contributions. The questions that arise then are: what specific high achievers’ skills do women contribute to diaspora engagement strategies and how may these skills be identified and mapped? Studies that have examined diaspora engagements reveal a focus on monetary and skills remittances with a lack of focus on cultural remittances. Other studies have focused on transnational transfer of tacit skills by middle group of migrants (Faller & Freinkman, 2013; Iksanda and Lowe, 2013; OECD, 2014; SDGs, 2015), importance of elite migrant groups (political and bureaucratic) at the junctures of independence, and economic reforms in the sending countries and financial remittances (Kapur and Gupta, 2013). Kapur and Gupta’s (2013) examination of diaspora elite migrants reveal an uneven gender distribution of returnee social entrepreneurs in India. The gender dynamics indicate low representation of women as founders and co-founders of organizations suggesting that the situation may be due to the low numbers of women returning home. A further step to understand this dynamic is to examine the number of women who migrate from India to be able to draw a better conclusion regarding the return rate of women migrants. If indeed such a comparison shows a lower return rate of women, then, important questions that arise are those about existence of conducive cultural conditions that may encourage personal growth - conditions that may

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be non-existent in the sending countries. Or rather, women find themselves distanced from immediate familial and religious intuitions that police their behavior in the sending countries. While the study focuses on elite Indians, the findings provide a way to focus on the mapping of diasporan African women’s resource potential in particular and their contributions to diaspora engagement in general. Additionally, the commonality of postcolonial experience and how they may differ offer nuanced identity issues of returnees.

**African diasporas and cultural transmittance.** While work on diaspora have shifted from migration and labor markets to examining linkages between diaspora and development, emphasis has been on how African cultural practices have survived in diasporas (Mohan and Zack-William, 2002). Recent shifts have focused on monetary and skills remittances to the neglect of cultural remittances with more studies conducted by international development and migration organizations. More crucial is the gender dynamics and the obscuring of women in diasporan engagements despite the fact that they have historically migrated alongside African men whether forced or voluntary. Here, it is suggested that a focus on cultural remittance provides a sharper lens to recognize the specifics of African women remittances to home countries. Faller and Freinkman’s (2013) examination of various cases characterize diaspora high achievers as highly accomplished, motivated by quasi-rents (ambition and expansion of their personal empires and intrinsic motivation (self-actualization), can be both foreign or local, share their vision and convince others about it. While this definition of high achievers is useful, the examples presented in the paper, exclude high cultural achievers like musicians,
artists, sports women, and men, etc. High achievers like former model, fashion icon, and actor Iman Abdulmajid (Somalia), Akon (Senegalese), Lupita Nyong’o (Mexican-Kenyan), Chimamanda Adichie (Nigeria), Nicole Amarteifio, Ama Asante Abebrese, etc. have built successful careers and occupy a unique space as cultural remitters. Their specific positionalities of living in-between the homelands (as cultural ambassadors to the West and their productions of knowledge about themselves and their homelands) are similar to the contributions of the historical generation’s roles as cultural remitters to their homelands. Internet technology has enhanced the cultural remittances through the ubiquitous availability of their cultural products and knowledge. More importantly, this domain of diaspora high achievers potentially offers a largely unexplored arena to capture the particularities of African women high achievers as cultural producers/remitters.

**Diasporas, African women’s cultural work, and media.** It must be acknowledged that Western diasporas continue to be the hub of creating counter discourses about Africa. As indicated above, attempts to document diaspora contributions to sending countries, often lose sight of the role of cultural remitters. In this section, thematic engagements of African women in the diasporas and homelands are outlined to argue that African women filmmakers (including writers and other media content producers) are in essences cultural brokers and must be considered cultural transmitters. Moreover, their work in the domain of diaspora engagement for development needs to be acknowledged and accounted. More specifically, African women within transnational spaces are socially and politically engaged in developmental issues on the African continent and similar to male diasporan political actors must be identified to have influenced pre-independence, independence
and post-independence socio-political landscapes in their various African nations. They are cultural remitters regarding cultural productions. To this end, the contributions of African diasporan women to the African continent, the forms of media used, the issues and how their contributions were shaped by events in the host and home countries and the globalizing world are outlined. Furthermore, discussions will include a focus on the resulting themes they have engaged.

Like many other forms of women’s underrepresentation, their omission on the production of media persists. While the literature on women’s representation in media (content and production) indicates their underrepresentation, the issue is not that women are not active media producers but rather that their work has not been formally accounted for as related to political and national concerns. The general tendency is to take African women’s literary and artistic (film and other media) as politically and socially disengaged and belonging to the realm of the feminine, personal and the private sphere (Khannous, 2013). While women, in general, have a longstanding use of film as a creative act, hardly are they recognized as cultural producers especially, in their homelands. Rather, women are perceived as outsiders to the field. In effect, women suffer a similar erasure in film production as they do in their representation in prominent roles (Ott and Mack, 2014) as well as other forms of media (Media Monitoring Project, 1995, 2005, 2010).

Any work on African women in media must take as a starting point their work in literature (which led to development of feminist scholarship on African literature). Generally, women’s use of film can best be described as activist. African women’s engagements with film has been in response to monolithic representations including
African feminist/womanist concerns to have their experiences seen, and their voices heard on their terms (Manuh, 2007; Sessanti, 2009). Some of the themes that African women have engaged include motherhood, sexism, patriarchy, sexuality, marriage, education, and migration.

An important work that aims to account for women’s media work is Touria Khannous’s (2013) *African pasts, presents, and futures: generational shifts in African women’s literature, film, and internet discourse*. Khannous provides evidence of how African women have used media to express their activism and political commitment from 1968 to 2011, covering a vast geographical area and languages (French, English, and Arabic). Drawing on theoretical sources comprising Fanon, Derrida, and Khatibi, the author analyzes works from Ghana, Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The critical approach using historical and political contextualization provides background for understanding women’s media production in Ghana and Africa. While Khannous shifts from the nation-based conceptualization of culture with a focus on gender and race, the concept speaks to the limitations in terms of language (Jameson, 2007) and obscuring of state institutional constraints, especially of media, in shaping the constitution of culture. Furthermore, her extensive overview provides a framework for further studies on African women producers in transnational spaces.

Khannous’s (2013) identification of a fourth/today’s generation of women’s media use is useful in understanding African women’s media use in contemporary times. The author argues that the internet, its accessibility, and globalization have enabled the emergence of young activists and new forms of feminisms which has shaped women’s
agency, helped feminists mobilize through global forums and transnational networks. African women have embraced the community and instant connectivity offered by social media (Facebook, blogs, etc.) to make their voices heard through making feminism relevant to the challenges of their generation (Khannous, 2013). Further, the use of internet to cultivate their feminism and disseminate their views to a wider public has increased the circulation of feminist film and video (ethnic media) that critique both Third-world anti-colonial nationalism and first world Eurocentric feminism.

Digital diasporas and African women’s work: A politics of aesthetics.

Information technology (internet and content) has enabled the creation and maintenance of virtual communities while quickening the pace of communication between home and destination countries. The advantages afforded by transnational interactions in this digital age have also allowed diasporan women to more freely and publicly express themselves at relatively cheaper cost. For instance, more women, feminist and activists use social media to campaign for equal rights and effect sociopolitical change in their home countries while living abroad. Additionally, women writers, filmmakers, and online feminist activist are shedding new light on their discursive articulations and mediations of feminisms, their cultural forms of expressions, and their enduring commitment to social and political change (Khannous, 2013; Sreberny 20001). In this sense, the development of digital diasporas has enabled a space in which African women more easily and freely articulate their ideas and advocate for change as transnational social movements (Sreberny, 2001). Hence, African women are shaping their cultures through the creation of cultural artifacts within virtual communities with transnational reach. Consequently,
diasporan women’s experiences must be examined from the perspective that accounts for the “in-betweeness” of cultural remittances and how they contribute to the home country.

Nicole Amarteifio’s *An African City* web series is an example of a cultural product of a transnational returnee African woman that aims to counter the monolithic representations of African women. The choice of channel for her product is important in making sense of the realities within which women as marginalized groups in production operate. The Nordicity Group Ltd., & Independent Web Series Creators of Canada (2014) define web series as “. . . episodic entertainment delivered via online distribution platforms” (p. 8). They also specify “independent” to be “creators who are not affiliated with, for example, a commissioning company, agency or broadcaster” (2014, p. 8).

Similarly, Christian (2014) defines indie TV producers as “. . . an under-counted segment of producers who create mostly short-form serials and release them through YouTube, Vimeo or other online platforms for web distribution . . .” (p. 161). The exclusionary practices of masculine media culture (masculine newsroom culture, omission in ownership) that leave women predominantly outside mainstream media, has forced them to look for alternative avenues of expression. To buttress the point, Wotanis and McMillan (2014) caution that while women have found the Internet as relatively accessible for their independent media products, the most visibly dominant productions are those of middle and upper-class white men regarding profit with productions that are heteronormative and misogynistic. Hence, it is not in doubt that the web series which falls into the category of online short fictional narratives has become the hub for young, female audiovisuals and ethnic media producers. In fact, Hesmondhalgh (2010) argues
that apart from independent television role for enriching media through “innovative ad
open storytelling,” they frustrate media corporate employment exploitation through “. . .
creative ownership with “free” labor, a “highly ambivalent” political project to thwart
corporate employment exploitation (pp. 280-282). Romero and Centallas (2008) argue
that “[c]ondemned for viewing in circuits with small distributions and scopes, the short
has traditionally been one of the most deeply rooted genres for young audiovisual
creators, and not in vain, it continues to be the format par excellence where future
audiovisual professionals gain their experience: Scriptwriters, producers, actors...” (para.
1, 5.2. Online shorts). Thus young African women like Nicole Amarteifio and others
elsewhere find the Internet, the community and space it has created as fertile grounds to
birth and grow their skills and articulate their particular politics whether through
entertainment or activism (Khannous, 2013).

Media and technological convergence has in many ways shaped the ways media
are consumed. First, it has enabled transmedial text. A transmedia text is a media text
that has evolved structurally from a text designed for one medium/channel to fit another.
In this sense, web series fall into this domain. Particularly, An African City series can be
said to be both transmedial and transnational. It is transmedial because it draws on a
traditionally structured cable television series Sex And The City which premiered in 1988
in creating an African web series. An African City web series is also transnational because
it borrows codes from two distinct cultural texts: Ghanaian/African and
Western/American.
A major structural distinction between a series on broadcast and or cable television and one available/published on the web is how each is embedded in the meta discourse of the media organization. Specifically, cable TV series are embedded in the meta discourse of program schedule, which has consequences for production regarding times that it will air, duration, so it fits into the programming and advertisements. Again TV series also determine specific ways of viewing, usually at home. Here, it is important to note that most cable TV providers are also providing their content online as an add-on for subscribers. Again, there are non-traditional broadcasters like iRokoTV, Netflix that make available their production online. Web series narratives unlike TV narratives do not have channel schedule restrictions but fall within the meta discourse of World Wide Web in general, and YouTube in particular (Romero and Centellas, 2008). They can be watched on-the-go and accessible through devices with internet. They are shorter, with a duration of ten to fifteen minutes (in the case of An African City) and longer for cable TV series with durations typically between twenty-five to thirty minutes. Again, the cost of producing web series is relatively lower than a TV series (Romero and Centallas, 2008).

How has the recent development in Internet and associated technologies enabled the empowerment and cultural productions of African women? What technologies have been used and how have they used them? What is the nature of the content produced? For as Sreberny (2001) has noted, media content produced by women will not necessarily have a “woman’s touch” (p. 64). Hence, women’s cultural products should also be subjected to gender analysis to determine if any difference is being made through representations of themselves. For indeed as some scholars point out, apart from
“locations,” “contexts” and “strategies” indie aesthetics and ideology do not differ much from that of Hollywood (Christian, 2014; King, 2014) while maintaining television practices (Christian, 2012). In essence nothing has changed much. Christian (2014), further argues that the declaration of web as the “newest form of television” the dialectics that characterizes their operation remain fundamentally similar – “monetization and domination through amassing a large dedicated audience they could sell to advertisers” (Christian, 2012, p. 341).

**African Women, Diasporas, and Gendered Issues**

Widely, it is acknowledged that the tendency to replicate gender dynamics pertaining in the home countries in the diaspora exists. Kapur’s and Gupta’s (2013) study on diasporas demonstrates that consistent with the general gendered expectations that characterize the nature of work; women were found to be innovative in the service industry. This shows the transnational nature and prevalence of women in specific types of work considered feminine and associated with the care industry. Sharma and Reimer-Kirkham (2015) point out that transnational feminization of caregiving and migration is enabled by globalization and “neoliberal entrenchments.” Such tendencies have encouraged and legitimated specific gendered migration patterns with particular skills set. For example, Yeates (2009) notes the increased migration of women nurses from the “developing”/Third world to “developed”/First World. Recently, Female Genital
Cutting/Mutilation, for instance, takes place in The United States even though it’s generally associated with certain parts of Africa.⁵

An important aspect in the replication of problems of the home countries in diasporas (for example ethnic differences and political dynamics) raises concerns of such replications occurring in virtual communities. The transnational nature of virtual communities has enabled such transfers. For instance, violence against women which occurs in private spaces have become frequent online. According to the 2015 Networked Intelligence for Development report, about 9 million women have experienced some form of cyber violence since the age of fifteen. The Violence Against Women Learning Network lists six broad categories of cyber violence that women and girls fall prey to: hacking, impersonation, surveillance/tracking, harassment/spamming, recruitment, and malicious distribution (Broadband Commission, United Nations, 2015). While domestic violence remains a common familial occurrence, online platforms have become extensions for social life where cyber violence occurs. Christensen (2012) points out that ‘othering’ pushes members of diasporic communities to seek online platforms as alternative means of sociality where social inequalities tends to be carried over (Christensen, 2013; Morna, 2002).

As Kuumba (2003) notes diaspora cultural producers embody the African diaspora and hence provide a resource potential. Acknowledging, isolating and accounting for African women’s diasporan cultural contributions to their homelands is

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⁵ FGM has proven to be such a present challenge in New York that the state legislature passed a law in 2015 to raise awareness and public education about the consequences — physical, mental, emotional and sexual — of FGM and vacation cutting (Allen, 2015).
important as their activism essentially remains transnational in that, much of the visible
recognition given their theorizing and practice occurs in the Global North. Hence such an
exercise forms part of the general project of feminist, gender and women’s work to place
women and girls at the center of development efforts in general and African women’s
empowerment work in particular. A focus on women in-between homelands and diaspora
offers an opportunity to examine and track circulatory gendered cultural norms that have
transferred into diasporas, found consociation with similar cultural practices and
subsequently form part of the cultural remittances to home countries (Haluanani,
Menoza, & Drzewiecka, 2009). Identifying such circulations offer understanding ways in
which they hinder and/or empower women and international organizational efforts to
empower women.

**Identity, Cultural Brokers, and Cultural Reentry**

Returning home permanently or occasionally to the homeland is a key
costistic of diasporans. Upon their return, the dynamics of returnee experiences have
been described in ways that suggest linearity (Martin, 1986) and non-linear but cyclical
(Kim, 2000; 2002) or recursive. Chang (2010) makes an important distinction between
temporal and permanent returnees noting gaps in the literature of cultural reentry that
lacks focus on temporal reentries. While this research does not specifically address this
gap, it draws on issues raised regarding what constitutes cultural reentry, the question of
what is considered home and the idea of multiple homes, and the reliance of current
literature on anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Chang, 2010) to expand the
literature to include media articulations with a focus on permanent and temporal African
women returnees. Further, while a plethora of theorizing is ongoing on transnational and
diasporic relations focusing on the Global North and Global South, a closer look reveals
the focus skewed towards Asia and Southern America, with a dearth in Africa more so,
African women returnees.

Discussions about diasporic connections with perceived places of origin often
described as home surround the concept of cultural reentry. Cultural reentry assumes that
the returnee has a previous home that s/he returns. Hao (2012) drawing on Gama and
Pederson (1977) and Martin (1986) defines cultural reentry as “. . . the return or transition
of sojourners to their home cultures” (p. 72). There are multiple experiences often
occurring simultaneously that the returnee undergoes. Scholars (Collier, Hedge, Lee,
Nakayama, and Yep, 2002; Hao, 2012; Kim, 2008; 2002; Martin, 1986) have theorized
how these experiences occur. Martin (1986) primarily draws on uncertainty reduction
theory that indicates that returnees necessarily go through stages of experience to
culturally transition into the “home” culture. Here, questions of what constitutes a home
culture and the underlying assumptions of a home and host/foreign culture being
mutually exclusive and distinct arise. This demarcation also alludes to the local/global
and indigenous/Western dichotomies deployed in explication of transnational,
international relations. Kim’s (2002) work based on cross-cultural adaptation
demonstrates the cultural adaptation process as cyclical. The author explains that multiple
feelings and behaviors are experienced eliminating the complexities of the adaptation
process while noting the importance of context in understanding the process. Kim (2002)
also emphasizes the intercultural transformation of the returnee as a result of the process.
A set back is the focus on the permanent returnee and the notion of one belonging to one “home.” Kim’s (2008) Intercultural Personhood (IP) model addresses transnational identity dynamics that emerge from “... experiences of acculturation, deculturation, the related stress-adaptation-growth dynamic . . . open-ended, adaptive and transformative self-other orientation” (p. 364). Also, the IP model addresses issues of identity inclusivity and identity security. Callahan (2010) notes that “... while sojourners may never be able to ‘go home’ in the psychological sense, . . . upon returning, migrants are more than who they were when they left, not less” (Conclusion section, para. 3, italics in original).

Returnees necessarily gain a new cultural experience that may manifest in distinct ways to most observers in the home culture. These manifestations become markers for distinguishing returnees – hence the use of term “been to,” etc. about anyone who returns from travels abroad, whether temporarily or permanently. On the other hand, any returnee who is not recognized as such provokes questions. On another level, like behaviors in general, those expressed by returnees can be mimicked mainly because of the social capital associated with living abroad, particularly the West and which is thought of as acquired by the returnee.

Conversely, there are difficulties associated with returning home as sojourner due to the same behavior patterns one manifests. A major difficulty is the perception that the returnee is culturally inauthentic due to the behavior patterns and modes of expression that mark them as foreigners. For example, the lack of fluency in local languages and dietary choices, for instance, are indicative of a “been to,” a modern Westernized returnee. Again the Western cultural acquisition of the returnee, while present in the

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postcolony remains identifiably American, British, Canadian or another big Western country. Together, these ideas of cultural inauthenticity and a higher Western culture assumes that the cultures are nation-based producing unique identities and in turn equates nation-state to a distinct culture (Haluanani, Mendoza, & Drezewiecka, 2009). Additionally, such conceptions structure a mindset that privileges cultures that are Western.

On the contrary, nations in the modern sense do not embody one distinct culture. In their analysis of the shifts that have shaped the conceptualization of culture, Haluanani, Mendoza, and Drezewiecka (2009) note the juncture in the theorizing communication where culture is equated to nation-state. Rather, they argue for the examination of culture through historical context and power relations with particular attention to articulations of race, class, and gender (Haluanani, Mendoza, & Drezewiecka, 2009). Jameson (2007) also notes the importance of language in setting boundaries on humanity and therefore becomes a basis for enactment of community-based identity politics by distinguishing one from the other (1998, p. 38). Furthermore, theoretical framing of identities as nation-based has been found to be problematic (Asante, 1980; Haluanani, Mendoza, and Drezewiecka, 2009; Moon, 1996, Gonzales and Peterson, 1993). Haluanani, Mendoza, and Drezewiecka (2009) note that such conceptualizations limit researchers to the “surface aspects (or external, behavioral or public practices) of a cultural group’s subjectivity” . . . “not recognizing the role of state and other structural forces (such as governments, legal, media, educational, and institutional spheres) in
constituting, constraining, and enabling particular forms of cultural practices and communication” (p. 25). Haluanani, Mendoza, and Drezewiecka (2009) argue that, To accept cultures as nations, inherently and naturally truthful and accurate at a surface level would be to risk reproducing external framings of cultural groups advanced by colonialist governments, dominant nationalist parties, and ruling power interests that benefit from such “status quo.” (p. 24)

In other words, understanding identity as rooted in culturally stable phenomena risks overlooking critical sedimentary formations accrued over times and spaces. For understanding African women’s identities then, this is a call to reach to the precolonial pasts with attention to locating and mapping reconfigurations of transfer of power through colonial to postcolonial/neocolonial settings. Drawing on Collier, Hedge, Lee, Nakayama, and Yep, (2001) Hao (2012) advocates for the study of cultural reentry beyond the boundaries of nation-state arguing for a “. . . reframing of culture as a contested site where meaning is historically, politically and socially produced (p. 74). Hao (2012) emphasizes the importance of shifting subjectivities and identities suggesting that, “[g]oing beyond the nation-state approach allows possibilities for multiple understandings of how cultures and identities are never static, but continue to evolve and change over time in place-based and space-based ways” (p.82). For indeed, as Haluanani, Mendoza, and Drezewiecka (2009) argue “culture needs to be understood both in its enduring sedimentations (the deposits and traces left by historical contestations) and in its radical transformations and itineraries as it travels and enters into translations within specific localized contexts and toward differing goals” (p. 23). The
historical iterations of enduring sedimentations African women’s images and representations and how they have transformed within contemporary media spaces becomes central to understanding current media identity issues. The following sections will render visible, important historical gender constructions that continually shape African Women’s lives. Following that, the commonalities among gendered issues in-between diasporas will be discussed.

Colonialism and Gender: Transnational Gender Constructions

It is important to establish the legacies of colonial experience that continually shape African women’s lives. Postcolonial feminism (the unique experience of women in postcolonial states deserves a particular entry into their study that considers such experiences. Of importance are the following that shaped their politics: the nature of common omission of women from post-independence governance across most African states; their focus on institutionalizing laws that protect women’s property rights, civil wars and associated violence and rape against women; imposition of economic recovery programs by world bank and IMF on most African states during the late 1980s to 1990s,

The nature of African women’s representations has a complex history and multifaceted reasons. An immediate cause is the failure to acknowledge women’s role in pre-independence struggle in most countries across the African continent (Arhin, 1993), except in a few cases and their subsequent exclusion from political representation is one

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6 In Ghana’s immediate post-independent era, women’s role in the mobilization efforts for independence was rewarded with affirmative action: The Representation of the people’s (Women Members) Bill proposed by the first president Kwame Nkrumah which
that characterizes most postcolonies and is well noted in literature (Enloe, 2014; McClintock, 1992; Otinkorang, 2012).

Women’s further exclusion from the official nationalist discourses of nation-state and nation building is also a reason that African feminist theorist McClintock (1992) has noted. Significantly, McClintock’s argument that “the very representation of ‘national’ power rests on prior constructions of gender power” (p. 92) which has become institutionalized and excludes women or rather represents the woman as subordinate to the man is illuminative of the status of women in post-independence ‘Third world.’ For her, marital law entrenched the subordinate position of a woman whose citizenship is mediated by her marital status and serves to define her legitimate functioning within the public space and nation-state. These trends persist today in countries like Botswana and South Africa with exemplars of cases where life can be difficult for married women who fail to change their last names to their husbands.’

Again, McClintock (1992) argues that the representation of “global militarization of masculinity the feminization of poverty” (p. 16) guarantee the ‘post-colonial’ experience for women and men are different and so will have different ‘post-colonial conditioning.’ Further, despite the fact that traces of causes of the plight of the African woman have roots in colonialism, it not the only reason for women’s continued marginalization. The author directs attention to the

was later passed into an Act to include women in decision-making at the various levels of governance (Otinkorang, 2012)
continuing weight of male economic self-interest and the varied undertows of patriarchal Christianity, Confucianism and Islamic fundamentalism continue to legitimize women’s barred access to the corridors of political and economic power, their persistent educational disadvantage, the bad infinity of the domestic double day, unequal child care, gendered malnutrition, sexual violence, genital mutilation and domestic battery (McClintock, 1992, p. 92)

which can only be understood in the light of ‘distinct theories of gender power relations.” McClintock’s allusion to global linkages and gender intersections that did not sever upon independence and the possibilities of specificities of the woman’s postcolonial conditioning are seen.

Enloe’s (2014) *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* provides detailed analyses of the transnational nature of gendered international politics – how intimacy in the private spaces is intricately linked to global power. Drawing on the second-wave feminist mantra, she makes the argument that the “. . . personal and the international is political” (Enloe, 2014, p. 196). Making links between colonialism and nationalism as fertile grounds for excluding women’s experiences in post independent countries’ nationalist discourse the author notes that “[o]ne becomes a nationalist when one begins to recognize shared public pasts and futures. But most women’s past experiences and strategies for the future are not made the basis of the nationalism they are urged to support” (p. 222).

Additionally, Enloe notes the patriarchal practices that construct women as bearers of the nation’s culture, possessions and in need of protection, yet does not transform into economic and political power.
Making connections between the “home” and “international system” to explain how women’s domination transfers to the public domain, Enloe (2014) notes that, “[t]he processes that ties them together is not just globalized consumer advertising, it is domestic relations between women and men” (p. 225). The author also addresses how nationalist militarization can privilege men through of alliance formations. Further, Davies (1997) also alludes to this notion of connection of the private and public spheres in nation-states. She asserts that:

As a general rule, collectives are composed of family units. A central link between the place of women as national reproducers and women’s subjugation can be found in the different regulations – customary, religious, or legal – that determine the family units within the boundaries of the collectivity, and the ways they come into existence (marriage) and end (divorce and widowhood) and which children are considered legitimate members of the family. (p. 219-220)

The balancing act that women must perform to have any space within nationalist concerns is one that persists and transcends cultures. For women, there are these ‘uncoded’ prerequisites of submissiveness, marriage, childbearing and old age, often menopausal, widowed (Osborne, 2011) or celibacy (Basu, 1995) that must be fulfilled to be bestowed wisdom to partake in national politics. This is the case despite women’s well-documented roles as symbols of nationhood and participation side by side their male counterparts in pre-independence struggles, especially in the case of Ghana (Arhin, 1993).
Gender in African Societies

While there are many aspects of colonial interventions in Africa, an important aspect is the impact on gender constructions. Colonialism shaped gender relations in complex ways, especially through the institutions of education, religion, customary and civil/legal law, and media. Yuval-Davis’s (1993) (as cited in Yuval-Davis, 1997), focus on “customary, religious, or legal [laws] – that determine the family units within the boundaries of the collectivity,” (p. 406) reveal themes of marriage, education, social mobility and social capital (resources), and state-building provides evidence of how colonial administrative processes excluded women from nationalist agenda. For example, while males were trained for clerical duties in the colonial administration of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), education of the average girl-child was not encouraged. The few that enrolled in school were educated in home science to be housewives (Sutherland, 2002). Daughters of elite families, however, got higher and most often Western education. However, colonial institutions did not fully penetrate the local institutions, resulting in hybrid forms of institutions (Byfield, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Shadle, 2003). This section outlines the prominent ways in which the colonial experience constructs gender. It is imperative to note that while the African societies differ in many ways from Western ones, they are similar in ways that institutions shape gender relations. Regarding differences, Yuval-Davis (1997) makes an important point on the nature of the constructedness of third world societies and how they differ from industrialized nations. She asserts
in Third World societies, there is often only partial penetration of the state into
civil society, especially in its rural and other peripheral sections. In such cases,
gender and other social relations are determined by cultural and religious customs
of the national collectivity. This may also happen in “private domains” of ethnic
and national minorities in the state. Often citizenship rights and duties of women
from different ethnic and racial groups are different. They could have different
legal positions and entitlements . . . (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 218)

The complexities described are similar to other societies in most West African
countries. Most of these societies found ways to maintain important aspects of their
indigenous cultures or rather found ways to mix their cultural practices with the newly
instituted colonial laws (Byfield, 1996; Shadle, 2003). However, the hybridization that
occurred privileged mostly elite men and institutionalized their positions (Enloe, 2014)
and elite women.

Marriage under colonial rule provides ways in which African women’s lives were
impacted. Mann (1983), Byfield (1996) and Shadle (2003) discuss the questions and
processes of marriage and divorce in Nigeria and Kenya. Conditions that created complex
and mixed outcomes of colonial rule and how they evolved are also discussed. Mann
(1983) points to the impact and tensions that characterized the introduction of Christian
marriage by repatriated slaves and Christian missionaries and the hybridization processes
of Yoruba and Christian marriage practices that emerged. Discourses in private and in
pamphlets, newspapers, and meetings focused on what marriage was and how it should
be conducted. A central question about marriage was elite women’s response to the
marriage institution in the light of cultural processes instituted by colonial legal and economic changes, their roles, opportunities, sexist Victorian values and their changing relationship with men. Mann (1983) notes the tensions between elite Christian teaching and African domestic realities as a result of European education. While new Christian converts were encouraged to wed in church, most elite incorporated Yoruba bridewealth as part of the preliminaries for the marriage process, an important arrangement that characterizes complex marriage processes in most postcolonies in the West African sub-region today (Man, 1983).

Mann (1983) also notes an interesting difference between the definition of “elite’ men and women. While it was easy to define “elite men by their occupations which comprised “. . . professionals (doctors, lawyers, ministers, headmasters, surveyors, and engineers), first-class clerks and above in the colonial service and educated import-export merchants . . . planters and newspaper publishers . . .” (p. 25). It was difficult to identify a clear group of “elite women,” citing reasons for invisibility as a result of most women’s confinement to work at home (seamstresses or the few who were teachers). This categorization of labor becomes problematic as it assumes that work within the home does not qualify as work, which in turn undervalues women’s work. The assumptions rests primarily on values attached to earning an income, a notion that continues to shape women’s work as income earners. Consequently, women taking up occupations traditionally associated with elite men allows women to be elites.

Focusing on Gusiiland in Kenya, Shadle (2003) discusses bridewealth as it relates to women’s choice of a spouse and parental control. Often the husband was older based
on their ability to pay the high bridewealth in an economy and legal system that favored “senior men.” Specifically, Shadle (2003) notes the changes towards mechanization in agriculture that benefited men with access to land. The changes also enabled older men to consolidate their wealth, especially those “. . . who had appropriated their wives’ land and labor” (p. 246). This way, women’s value increased and pushed bride wealth higher. A resulting complexity was the elopement of lovers to establish “illicit” unions, a situation similar to the marriage disputes Mann’s (1983) assessment of marriage discourse in Yoruba revealed. Shadle (2003) also notes a specific kind of hybridization of African courts in Kenya that was “. . . created and backed by the British government, fully African in staff, employing mixtures of “customary law” and colonial law. The author indicates that the selected court elders were local men. Furthermore, while the courts often took the side of husbands and fathers (consolidation of male privilege), they acknowledged the importance of female consent in marriage (Shadle, 2003).

Similarly, Achebe (2005) makes an important point on the construction of gender regarding bride price. Traditionally, future husbands paid the bride price in Igbo. However, the ability of females to marry other females was a well-respected tradition that had a long-standing precedence in Igboland. Sex and gender did not necessarily coincide, and therefore biological women who had constructed themselves socially as men could marry other women in an arrangement called woman-to-woman marriage. This marriage allowed the female husband to marry a wife and assume the social role of husband and father (p. 116). While the gendered nature of bride price cannot be overlooked, Achebe (2005) points out the checks and balances that guarded against ownership rights. An
example of the checks and balances took the form of a portion of the bride price always owed by the husband as a guarantee against wife ownership. It is imperative to note its importance as checks regarding how it could have prevented domestic violence against the wife in Igboland. Achebe (2005) goes on to explain that the female husband would need to pay a bride price for her wife to guarantee rights over children bore by the wife. It was the expectation, and indeed the wife was encouraged to meet her sexual needs with “any available and desirable man or men” in the community. It is important to note that while the female husbands described demonstrates the de-conflation of sex and gender, it also underscores the privileged position of a husband in the Igbo society Achebe portrays: have their family name carried over to the next generation. Importantly, women who became husbands enjoyed this privilege.

Similarly, Byfield (1996) also addresses the issue of marriage and divorce in Abeokuta during the second part of the nineteenth century. The period saw the “. . . emergence of an increasingly important Christian community, the rise of a new class of wealthy warrior traders, and the town’s increasing incorporation into the international economy through legitimate trade” (Byfield, 1996, p. 32). The research focuses on the beginning of colonial rule which saw the expansion of the railroad into Egba enabling women to abandon traditional authority for new spaces under British Railway Commissioners. Byfield (1996) notes that the Native Courts that often heard divorce cases used aspects of customary law and sections of “Western legal institutions.” They also used the courts as sites for “establishment and enforcement of colonial hegemony” (p. 32). The author takes a distinct path by focusing on dispute and divorce cases that
were brought before Railway Commissioner in Abeokuta to demonstrate the complexities of gender conflicts and their interaction with state formation, a critical, often excluded aspect in colonial state formation. Through Byfield (1996), a specific representation of African women is seen: as having agency and initiative with interests and desires that they took steps to assert. There was also a shift towards marriage based on mutual consent, attraction, well-being and personal economic considerations on the part of the woman, an arrangement that was reserved for slaves and people without kin and reduction in betrothal of infant girls, and creation of new opportunities for divorced women to remarry (Byfield, 1996). Women in Abeokuta were able to challenge authority exercised by senior men and women.

Byfield (1996) outlined reasons why the Railway Commissioners and colonial officials advocated divorce in the cases that were brought before them, illuminating the fact that the colonial officials lacked understanding of the social practices and organization. As a result, their assumptions that women in polygamous marriages were oppressed, that women were passive objects and their oversimplified understanding of slavery made it impossible to predict the intensified gender struggles that would result from their readiness to grant divorces. Byfield (1996) asserts that “Even though British officials were willing to grant women divorces, they were not committed to treating Egba women and men equally. Instead, they protected men’s disproportionate access to power and resources” (p. 47). The author argues that while women held important titles, none was given a seat on the Egba United Government (EUG), reflecting British gender
ideology. Here, the evidence of Enloe’s (2014) notion of male privilege gaining an international ally is demonstrated by the exclusion of women in leadership positions.

Childbearing and motherhood gave and consolidated a woman’s social capital in Baté. Similarly, Yuval-Davis (1997) offers another dimension of this link: “The question of legitimacy of children relates to the ideologically constructed boundaries of families and collectivities. However, a major part of the control of women as national reproducers relates to their actual biological role as bearers of children” (p. 220). Furthermore, the example Yuval-Davis gives to illustrate the “control of women as producers of national stock” bears some semblance to the practice of matrilineal line of inheritance among the Asante in Ghana. This idea operates on the principle that the biological mothers are positioned to be easily and rightfully determined as parents rather than fathers. The idea is that it is a woman who gets pregnant, carries the baby and the one who knows the father of the child. This ensures that the successor to the Asante golden stool is from the right stock. Here, pinning this responsibility on the woman ensures that there’s no ambiguity over who the Asantehene (who is always a male) is. It is important also to mention that the queen mother, who is mostly the oldest in the royal family, has to confirm the new Asantehene. Meanwhile, she is not part of the selection processes. Like the British, the Asante’s also worry about the stock of its population and who becomes Asantehene. However, the difference in gendered succession to the throne/stool is one that is obvious.
Religion. Hoehler-Fatton (1996) historicizes gender analysis of Kenyan women’s changing roles in Roho Religion, an indigenous independent Christian church. Adopting a qualitative approach informed by feminist methodology, the author conducted intensive fieldwork over eight months among women and men Roho members. The author uses multiple data sources including student’s study of Luo traditions, fieldwork of other independent churches and British responses to the Roho movement (district and provincial, Kenya National Archives) and Church Missionary Society records (Birmingham, England). Hoehler-Fatton (1996) makes the argument that “... the exclusively ceremonial character of present-day female Roho leadership is the result of historical process that involved both Western and indigenous patterns of routinization of charismatic religion” (p. 98). Hoehler-Fatton (1996) further states that some historical circumstances – social, political, economic – during the 1960s made the leadership of Roho churches attractive to literate men. While the Christian concept of equality formed part of Roho doctrine, like many other indigenous churches, the expression of political leadership was denied women while they were expected to perform domestic work (sweeping the church floors, cooking for visitors, and serving men) in addition to their ceremonial role. The author cites the following factors that pushed privileged men to capitalize on the opportunities for upward mobility in independent churches: the passing of the Societies Ordinance in 1957 by the colonial government requiring the registration of all local organizations and the concomitant institutionalization of male authority; increased educational requirements for government jobs for men with primary school education which pushed them to leadership in Independent churches like Roho;
legitimation of African cultural and religious forms provided by the Uhuru (national independence); and the political strategy to use the independent churches as sites for mobilization of popular support.

Hoehler-Fatton (1996) notes that before the 1960s, women played leadership roles in the Roho church. Women predominated in ecstatic religion in which contact with spiritual forces was expected, a position that was usurped and “tamed” with the transformation from “antiestablishment possession cult” movement to “…male-run religious system that reinforces the status quo in rural Luoland” (p.113). Hoehler-Fatton (1996) asserts that “…the western style of institutionalization of Roho religion was reinforced by a complimentary process of routinization embedded in Luo patriarchal norms” (p.111). She identified women’s primary role in the Luo society to be mothers and laborers, socializing girls on the importance of obedience to one’s husband, responsible mothering and diligent work in the home and the garden, childbearing, the conformance of which equaled success and respect. Hoehler-Fatton (1996), discusses the prevailing attitude of European missionaries to African women and the practice of subsuming their actual role under the “Victorian ideal feminine – the moral sweet passive homemaker.” As a result, the author notes the difference in the accounts by British missionaries who saw the predominance of women as devious and Roho oral tradition that recounts it as a sign of strength.

From the foregoing, the many facets and complexities of African women’s status in Africa are clear. Common themes of marriage, celibacy, childbearing, gender, “women as symbols of the state” were found. While women had agency, engaged in leadership,
held property and accessed the ‘husband’ position, these status roles did not transfer into the post-colonial era. Rather African women saw the erasure of their positions through the systemic patriarchal ideology administered through the colonial system. It is fair to conclude that their current roles and positions are historically based and have reconfigured but not changed in essence. Furthermore, there is an indication of erasure of some aspects of power and privilege over time. Consequently, the impact of colonialism served to entrench the male privilege and strengthen patriarchy through international allies (Enloe, 2014).

**Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism, also interpretivism (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2014; Dezin and Lincoln, 2011) approach to communication theory is informed by philosophical assumptions that reality is co-constructed. This research seeks to discover the specifics of African women’s media articulation from the perspectives of *An African City* web series, audiences, and producers of the series. Accordingly, this research falls within the purview of underrepresented and/or marginalized groups, African women in this case (Maxwell, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; Nyamnjob, 2015).

The approach proceeds from the assumptions that people hold subjective views about their daily experiences with work and life in general which in turn, shapes their meaning of such experiences. In this way, meanings are varied, multiple negotiated socially, culturally and historically (Creswell, 2013), making such meanings complex. Historical and contextual meanings are central to understanding the complexities of people’s varied everyday lived experiences. Consequently, such an approach seeks to
understand the “. . . complexity of views, rather than narrow the meanings into a few
categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Similarly, this research aims to make sense
of African women’s media identity articulations from the perspectives of the text, the
producers, and audiences. The approach is also inductive and emergent to generate
multiple meanings.

This study draws on some critical theories that are useful in explaining the
phenomenon of African women’s identity articulation in media. Critical/cultural theories
refer to a “. . . range of theories which take a critical view of society and the human
sciences or which seek to explain the emergence of their objects of knowledge” (Macey
2001, p. 74). Specifically, it refers to a major thread in the work of the Frankfurt school,
especially those of Adorno and Horkheimer with Habermas being one of its important
contemporary spokesperson. In general, a critical theory can be described as one that
seeks to give social actors a critical take on the taken for granted. It also seeks to promote
a free and self-determining society by dispelling the illusions of ideology. The media as
ideological tools then become central to the aims of this research in understanding media
articulations of returnee African women – media as sites of identity reproductions.

Critical theories take the works of Marx and Freud as starting points drawing
analogies between the theory of ideology as illusion and individual delusions (Freud,
1927b as cited in Fuchs, 2009) by seeking to dispel the delusions through critical self-
awareness of the impossibility of the delusion and demonstrating why the social subject
clings to the delusion. Primarily, critical theories critique capitalism and domination
(Fuchs, 2009), concern political engagement (Macey, 2001), and “attempt to bring truth
and political engagement into alignment” (Payne, 1997, p. 118). Calhoun (1995) broadens the definition to include emergent identities. He asserts that critical theories “exist[s] largely to facilitate a constructive engagement with the social world that starts from the presumption that existing arrangements – including currently affirmed identities and differences – do not exhaust the range of possibilities. It seeks to explore the ways in which our categories of thought reduce our freedom by occluding recognition of what could be . . . It helps practical actors deal with social change by helping them see beyond the immediacy of what is at any particular moment to conceptualize something of what could be . . . By taking seriously the question of what it would mean to transcend the current epoch, critical theory opens more space for considering the possibility that the world could be different than it is than does any simple affirmation of existing differences or claim that postmodernity is just a matter of perspective (pp. xiv, 9, 290).

Calhoun’s (1995) perspective brings to the fore a rethinking of established identities as possibilities for recognizing other identities that exist outside normalized ones. This is not to say there are new emerging identities per se, but that those considered so do not fit in the agreed socio-cultural forms that traditional thinking allows. More importantly, the allowance for difference beyond identity politics to exist as mainstream is what remains to be achieved. The processes required for recognition of other identities are those that disrupt the normalized institutionalized ways of knowing. Here, Rancière’s concept of
dissensus is useful for understanding how a process for a place within normalized identities can be achieved.

In defining what constitutes critical research, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) point to resistance of dominant ideas and ways of being. They define critical research to “. . . generally aim to disrupt ongoing social reality for the sake of providing impulses to the liberation from or resistance to what dominates and leads to constraints in human decision making” (p. 1). The authors explain “critique” as referring

. . . to the examination of social institutions, ideologies, discourses (ways of constructing and reasoning about the world through the use of a particular language) and forms of consciousness in terms of representation and domination. Critique explores if and how these constrain human imagination, autonomy, and decision-making. Attention is paid to asymmetrical relations of power, taken for granted assumptions and beliefs. (Alvesson and Deetz 2000, pp. 8-9).

Within the context of current globalizing capitalism that shape media, culture and communication flows, there exists the tendency to overlook taken for granted beliefs and assumptions inherent in media products. Thus, subjecting transnational media identity articulations of African women to critical analysis forms part the project of critical research and for that matter, critical theory of societies.

Critical theories perceive society as placing limitations on human development. The theories go beyond seeking understanding, prediction, and control. Researchers working from the critical theory paradigm proceed from the assumption that the social world has flaws that need to change radically hence it is political. Critical theorists aim to
gain knowledge of the social world by critiquing it in a bid to change it. Similarly, this research aims to contribute to the discourse of African women media portrayals to improve their representation in media.

In conceptualization of paradigms, Burrell and Morgan (1979) note that one basic underlying conception of this paradigm is that “. . . the consciousness of man is dominated by the ideological superstructures with which he interacts, and that these drive a cognitive wedge between himself and his true consciousness. This wedge is the wedge of ‘alienation’ or ‘false consciousness,’ which inhibits or prevents true human fulfillment” (p.32). Hence, reality and what is knowable (ontology) for the critical theorist results from interaction between the structure and agency. As its name suggest, the axiology is very highly value laden. Its epistemology argues that knowledge is expanded through serving to create knowledge that frees people and communities from the dominant within society. However, other theorists (Bourdieu, 1986; Giddens, 1984; Archer, 1995) have found Burrell’s and Morgan’s (1979), subjectivism/objectivism distinction in social theory positivist-oriented and imposes structures that render institutionalized relationships as stable across time and space (Giddens, 1984).

In a critical review of the critical theory field, Fuchs (2009) identifies that Bhaskar (1993), Bourdieu (1986), Giddens (1984), and Archer (1995) go beyond the structure/agency dichotomy toward an integrative, boundary crossing theoretical space that accounts for overlaps between the four paradigms. Contemporary social theory

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7 Burrell and Morgan’s four approaches in social theory: radical humanism (subjective, radical change), radical structuralism (objective, radical change), interpretive sociology (subjective, continuity), and functionalism (objective, continuity).
applications are more reflective of the nature of dialectical interactions that characterize human relations within an interconnected society (Fuchs, 2009). Based on their points of departure, Fuchs (2009) makes further distinctions based on Bhaskar’s and Bourdieu’s critique of class with the general purpose to eradicate it as an “integrative-radical change” approach and those of Giddens and Archer as “integrative-continuous” approach with aims to transform modernity (p. 45). Drawing on Craig (1999, 2007), Fuchs (2009) cites the following examples of boundary-crossing studies:

Kenneth Burke, David S. Kaufer and Kathleen M. Carley (Rhetoric-Semiotics);

Noting the critical communication field as still emerging, Fusch (2009) identifies critical media, information and communication theories as those that take approaches to integrate subfields and encourage dialogue – “. . . approaches that blur the boundaries between subjective and objective theories” (p. 46). Specifically Fuschs (2009) identifies three theory domains shaped by production, circulation and consumption spheres: (1) Repression hypothesis (commodity hypothesis: media as commodities for accumulation capital or manipulation and ideology hypothesis: (2) media as a means of manipulation
for ideological enforcement of class interests); (3) emancipation hypothesis (alternative media hypothesis: media as spheres of grassroots production and circulation of alternative content and reception hypothesis: reception as contradictory processes involving oppositional practices; towards a unification of repression and emancipation hypotheses towards integrative critical media theories (Fuchs, 2010). Fuchs (2010) offers an integrative approach that argues for a broad communication theoretical framework that considers “information as a dialectical process that establishes an interconnection of subjects and objects via a threefold process of cognition, communication, and cooperation” (p. 42). This is to move from subjectivist ideological conceptions that places the individual at the center of creation, driving intellectual property, and objectivist ones towards commodification of information.

**Finding Middle-ground, Crossing Boundaries**

To move towards an approach that enables accounting for a deep understanding of African women’s identity articulations, there’s the need for an assemblage of theories that provide aspects meanings for the sedimentary layering of identities that have occurred over decades and recur in current flux of cultural identities. Following Fuchs (2010), this study takes an integrative approach to assemble critical theories that cross boundaries towards a transnational, postcolonial feminist approach to examine African women’s media identity articulations. We all inhabit shifting in-between intersectional spaces often articulating identities contingent upon the demands of the prevailing environment.
Jacques Rancière’s (2009) concept of the “distribution of the sensible” is engaged to consider how notions/concepts of in-betweenness (hybridity, conviviality as intempestivity, intersectionality) might be conceived as a political, aesthetic act that constitutes dissensus within postcolonial feminist media projects in particular and social reality in general. Specifically, the aim is to explore notions/concepts of in-betweenness as an endless process of the meeting of logics: in creating intempestivity, that is convivial (Nyamnjoh, 2015), hybrid (Bhabha, 1994, Hall, 1990) at the transnational intersectionalities to make meaning of returnee African women’s identity articulations. Concepts of in-betweeness - intempestivity that conceives hybridity and conviviality, as meeting of contradictory logics) are consequently conceived as a site for deconstructing emerging identities. To chart a way, notions of in-betweeness are explored in these concepts to illustrate how they might operate as a gaps in the “distribution of the sensible” (Rancière, 2009, 2010) to explore the potential of an aesthetics of in-betweenness in media identity articulations. This is important because of the links he makes between politics, aesthetics and marginalized peoples and processes of engaging in politics.

**Distribution of the Sensible**

The concept of “distribution of the sensible” (police) in *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1999), is central to Rancière’s notion of politics where aesthetics is a site for resistance and possibilities for reconfiguration of the police (regimes of socially affirmed identities). Rockhill, in the translator’s introduction to the book, defines the police “…as an organizational system of coordinates that establishes a distribution of
the sensible or law that divides the community into groups, social positions, and functions” (p. 3). The police logic is herewith used in the global sense while the egalitarian logic is conceived as the “Otherness excluded from the consensual domain. . .” (Zizek, 2010 p.73) which resists the allocated subordinate place within the sensible (Zizek, p. 70).

In thinking about the consensual domain, Rancière’s (2010) explication of democracy as practiced today is illuminating and can be summed up as follows: “‘democratic paradox’ is thus: democracy as a form of government is threatened by democracy as a form of social and political life, and so the former must repress the latter” (p.47). For Rancière (2010), that the internal contradiction of democracy, the ‘democratic paradox’ is not at the top of peoples’ agenda in most democracies is the reason of consensus. In Rancière’s (2010) view, the period that we live in is one of consensus not because we agree to the elite system of governance in operation but that there appears to be no better alternative to the present distribution of the sensible and their accompanying roles. As articulated by Rancière (2010a) in Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics, rather than the usual meaning of consensus that attempts to settle political disputes through negotiation and agreement in a mutual partaking of parties involved,

. . . consensus consists in the attempts to dismiss politics by expelling surplus subjects and replacing them with real partners, social and identity groups and so on. . . closing spaces of dissensus by plugging intervals and patching up any possible gaps between appearance and reality, law and fact . . . The aim of
consensual practice is to produce an identity between law and fact, such that the former becomes identical with the natural life of society. (p. 71-72)

In this sense, consensus as it is commonly understood operates ideologically. It is important to explicate the role of ideology in media and how it may enable an understanding of Rancière’s (2010a) focus on media (news and film). Ideology has its roots in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They define ideology as the entirety or system of ideas of the ruling class within a society. Antonio Gramsci’s definition is helpful in contemporary times extending this understanding to include how ideologies operate. Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony as an extension of ideology to mean that ideology’s power derives from consent and not by means of force. His expansion of ideology as comprising a set of formal ideas to include common sense . . . habitual attitudes which have been assimilated from the ruling class speaks to the normativity of ideologies. Ideology operates as natural and common, yet evolved as artificial concepts that served the purposes of a specific group. Althusser (2006) further develops on this concept into two types of “apparatuses” for maintaining dominance: repressive state apparatuses (RSA) (the army, police, etc.) which exert control and ideological state apparatuses (ISA) (the media, education, and the family) often semi-independent without clear intent to exert control. Ideology through discourse enables the transmission of ideas, values, and assumptions. While it can be argued that the importance of ideology and the transmission of ideas within news media can be easily ascertained, its significance for film may be easily overlooked because of its perception as entertainment. In order words, how entertainment media’s role consciously or
unconsciously promote or subvert dominant ideology can easily be overlooked.

Furthermore, how film discourses (in major film industries like Hollywood considering their formalist features), transmit ideology to Nollywood or Ghallywood, for instance, remain largely ignored. For example, the use of stereotypes as codes to quickly and easily transmit narratives about peoples and places can support dominant ideologies. Further, counter-cinemas (or oppositional cinema), or alternative media (ethnic media) while they may challenge dominant ideologies especially those which disrupt the distribution of the sensible, they have the propensity to rely on normative narratives that feed dominant ideologies. Thus, how *An African City*’s aim to further resistance to monolithic representations of African women through the identities represented the web series must be deconstructed to determine the extent to which such aims are achieved. This is what this research seeks to do: determine how African women’s media articulation disrupt the distribution of the sensible to be part of the count. The concept of Intempestivity in Ranciere’s politics of aesthetics is utilized within a framework of in-betweeness to explore the articulation of identities in *An African City*.

It is important to note that while Rancière (2010a) rarely makes women central to his arguments, they are the first group he uses to illustrate exclusions in the Western society (p. 57). Furthermore, Rancière makes an important point which may chart a path forward after dissensus has occurred: de Gouges’s “... argument blurred the boundaries separating these two realms [private and public] by setting up a universality entailed in the so-called particularity of bare life” (p. 57). Through their protest, French women demonstrated their political capacity. They demonstrated that since they could enact those
rights, they, in reality, possessed them suggesting recognition of the state of affairs by the miscounted/uncounted group. Similarly, there must be a recognition that a wrong has been done on the part of the police. DePalma and Atkinson (2007) caution that “… the rendering of certain things invisible, the designation of certain people as ‘others,’ operates on a societal level. It is not within the individual’s power to become visible, no matter how much that individual might accept, embrace, and even celebrate him or herself” (p. 511). Rather, Feola (2014) argues for a democratic practice of hearing pointing out that “… conceptualizing hearing as a democratic practice offers a more equitable distribution of possibilities to disrupt closures upon citizenship” (p. 518). If Rancière typically fails to ask questions regarding a politics of hearing in the process of dissensus, it is to his credit that he leads us to the point where their exigency can be recognized (p. 519). Perhaps Rancière fails to ask these questions because of the privileges that the specificities of his positionalities confer on him and for that matter preclude his ability to anticipate the extension of practices of hearing as part of his whole project of equitable democracy.

For Rancière (2010a) this is what constitutes a democratic process: “creating forms of subjectivization in the interval between two identities; creating cases of universality by playing on the double relation between the universal and the particular. Rather than await the messianic democracy to come, he argues for a thinking and acting in “the broken time” and “intermittent legacy of emancipation” (Rancière, 2010a, p. 60) – one that responds to globalization and cosmopolitanism: “… the democratic shape of an
otherness that has a multiplicity of forms of inscription and forms of alteration or
dissensus (Rancière, 2010a, pp. 60-61).

Identity and In-betweeness

Identity scholarship either takes approaches that are essentialist, a perspective that
views identity as unitary, complete and fixed or anti-essentialist. Conversely, anti-
essentialist identity discourse takes the position that identities are multiple, never fixed,
and have influences from other identities (Baker, 2001) and becoming (Nyamnjoh, 2015).
Within African postcolonial settings, notions of the hybrid condition of postcoloniality
have been discussed (Biko & Stubbs, 2002; Mbembe, 2001; Fanon, 2008; Bhabha, 1996)
often from diasporic positionings. Mbembe’s (2001) conviviality as alienation of
postcolonial subjects from their culture and identity particularly within the postcolony
assumed an essentialist position. Mbembe (2001) suggests that the postcolonial condition
results in the exhibition of split identities in the representation of the self (p.104). On the
other hand, an understanding of conviviality (Callahan, 2012; Hay, 2014; Nyamnjoh,
2015) proposes an in-betweeness as a way of being, one that resembles Rancière’s (2010)
tempestivity. For Nyamnjoh (2015), conviviality is currency for frontier Africans, and
is suggestive of “... alternative and complementary modes of influence over and above
the current predominant mode of coercive violence and control” (abstract). The
conception can apply to people who live in cosmopolitan contexts comprising urban,
rural, and between communities covering local, national, regional and global levels (p.
11). Conviviality can also be applied to postcolonial diasporan returnee communities
inside, outside or in-between the postcolony. Indeed, trends in migration studies point to
Nyamnjoh’s (2015) descriptions of frontier Africans as “. . . those who contest taken-for-granted and often institutionalized and bounded ideas and practices of being, becoming, belonging, places and spaces” (p. 6). Nyamnjoh (2015) further argues that “[c]onviviality often emerges from the delusory and elusive search for autonomy and in contexts of dreams of completeness through violence, hostility, and conflict . . .” (p. 12). While Nyamnjoh (2015) acknowledges agentive forces within societies that encourage conviviality, he asserts that “. . . a context of recognition and well-represented incompleteness” encourages an “imperative for harmony and collective success” (p.11). Nyamnjoh argues that “[o]nce the illusion of completeness is mitigated, the need to create space for one another to get by begins to be considered seriously by urban Africans” (pp. 12-13). As it pertains to identity, Nyamnjoh (2015) asserts that “. . . conviviality encourages us to recognize our own incompleteness, it challenges us to be open-minded and open-ended in our claims and articulations of identities, being and belonging” (p. 10) and that “. . . [i]f being and becoming are an eternal work-in-progress, it follows that identities and identifications are open to renegotiation in part by mobility and frontier encounters that enable purported outsiders to nibble away at the peripheries of host communities, even as they know and are constantly reminded of the prescribed aspiration to commit loyalties to cultures and communities to which they are purportedly wedded by birth and place. (p. 10)

Thus living in-between two or more spaces in a globalizing/transnational world is increasingly becoming the norm rather than the exception.
Nyamnjoh’s (2015) conviviality takes as a starting point the acceptance of incompleteness, as a critical factor that builds on Feola’s (2014) politics of listening. However, conviviality does not account for the issues that arise with convergence of capital, media, and wealth that create hierarchies of power relations. For such hierarchies engender particular positionalities that endear though they may shift.

**Aesthetics as Forms of Resistance and Identity Articulation**

Media events covering acts of resistance, whether valid or invalid points to the discontentment of groups of people about the inadequacies to account for them as full functioning members of societies with equal access to benefits that accrue to affirmed members. Today, if women of different races and LGBTQ communities, for instance, seek equal access to what societies have to offer, the suggestion is that most of our societies are less democratic in allowing politics to occur. For indeed, inequality of access and marginalization is at the core of many struggles for recognition and representation (political and media) towards equal access and representation. Specifically, African women take the position that their prevailing representations are monolithic, inadequate and lack the complexities of their real lives (Amarteifio, 2016).

As Corcoran (Rancière, 2010b) states in his introductory notes to dissensus,

“Political struggle proper is therefore not a matter of rational debate between multiple interests; it is above all, a struggle to have one’s voice heard, and oneself recognized as a legitimate partner in debate. Conversely, the most elementary gesture of depoliticization is always to disqualify the political quality of the speech of those who argue [to] demonstrate their equality (p. 9)
In a world where, democracy (in its varied forms) is hailed and promoted as a government for and by the people and the best type of governance, its inability to be meet the standards of its own tenets is an issue that never fails to rear its head.

In *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Rancière’s (2004) notion of the police is helpful in making sense of who indeed takes part or whose views are recognized in a democratic system:

The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party’s share or lack of it . . . The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise (p. 29).

The ideas of police expressed above are indicative of who shares in, and are within specific visible positionalities, whose sayables are understood within a democracy. Here, there is also a suggestion of a deficit in the type of representation of people who must be engaged in politics for democracy to take place, hence the need to further clarify how politics occurs.

For Rancière (2004), politics is not a given. In *Dis-agreement*, he offers the following definition for politics as “. . . primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and the existence and status of those present on it” (pp. 26-27). Hence, for politics to occur, there must be the naming of a wrong that shifts the current distribution of the
sensible – the police. In other words, politics should challenge the hierarchical order within a social arrangement. To explain, Rancière states,

Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place’s destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once heard as noise (p. 30).

Thus politics produces dissensus. For Rancière (2004), in the expression of the wrong, the individual does not suddenly come to the realization of an awareness upon asserting what belongs to him/her. Rather they subject or occupy the space/gap that they identify by disidentification with the place assigned. This bears semblance with identity articulations captured in the literature of identity politics (Anzaldúa 1999; Spivak 1996; Young 2000).

Rancière (2004) further argues that for politics to exist there must be the meeting of the police logic and egalitarian logic. In the Rancièrean sense, any form of resistance can be considered political so far as it produces a count in the distribution of the sensible. For him, the meeting of the two logics must produce a reconfiguration of the police. The police is not a system of equality. There can be better police systems, one that is not what presently pertains to the kinds of existing democracies. One police system – a distribution of the sensible – can be preferable to another, however, who determines what is preferable, alludes to those who hold power.

Rancière (2004), indicates that the police is not the opposite of politics and the connection between the two is not smooth, asserting “[p]olitics occurs when there is a
place and a way for two heterogeneous processes to meet. The first is the police process. . . [t]he second is the process of equality” (p. 30). For Rancière (2004), equality is not a given . . . [it is rather] a mere assumption that needs to be discerned within the practices of implementing it” (p. 33). Politics is bound up with police because it has no objects or issues of its own. The main principle of politics is equality, but not in itself political. Hence there can be no politics without the police. For politics to occur, “politics must act on the police . . . in places and with the words that are common to both, even if it means reshaping those places and changing the status of those words” (Rancière, 2004, p. 33) (emphasis mine). This calls for malleability and flexibility, with a vision of interlinkages and interconnections to “. . . relate to the world and the hierarchies we would like to claim or contest therein” (Nyamnjoh, 2015, p. 4). Here, a positionality of in-betweeness must be assumed in order to engage in politics successfully.

Questions that arise then are those that seek to understand how the police and politics are bound up – how subjectivities are bound within the existing distribution of the sensible: the way disidentification can occur for dissensus to take place. A form of hybridity can be deduced and further clarified here: “All political subjectification is the manifestation of a gap of this kind. . . Any subjectification is disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where connection is made between having a part and having no part” (p. 36). Rancière (2004) further explains politics to be “. . . a matter of subjects or, rather, modes of subjectification. By subjectification I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity
for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience” (p. 35) (emphasis in original). Thus upon enunciation, which may take plethora of forms including artistic articulations: literature, film, etc., the body gains an identity within the police logic – the “reconfigured field of experience.” African women have historically articulated dissensus through artistic enunciations. However, the contingency of the identities articulated through the specificities of the enunciation must not be taken for granted. Rancière’s (2009) assessment of the relationship between art and politics in *The Politics of Aesthetics* widens the possibilities of aesthetics as inherently linked to politics by the similarities found. His analyses show how they both delineate the visible and invisible, the audible and inaudible, the thinkable and unthinkable, the possible and impossible (p. 40). Rancière (2009) defines “. . . aesthetics acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense of perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity” (p. 9).

**Aesthetics of in-betweeness: Hybridity, conviviality, and intempestivity.**

Hybridity presents ways of examining cultural resistance. Steger (2009) notes that hybridization is the “the mixing of different cultural forms and styles facilitated by global economic and cultural exchanges,” and is symptomatic of globalization (p. 6). However, the elements involved in the cultural mix are not equally ranked. Within hybridization of cultural globalization, there exists a structuring of relationships that often disadvantage the global south. The state of hybridity often manifests in different aesthetic forms with underlying Western influence as driving currency – clothes designed along
Western/Eurocentric forms and appeal; furniture and architecture; fast food, shopping malls, etc., in the urban cities of postcolonies. Within the globalizing world, legitimacy for Third world culture/neocolonial culture rests on “Western approval and metamorphosing of Western consumers” which in turn shapes production and consumption practices, a situation Ponzanesi’s (2014) describes as “the new orientalism.”

Hybridity connotes a mixing. Kraidy, (2005) asserts, “rather than a single idea or a unitary concept, hybridity is an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other” further cautioning against the application of hybridity as a universal concept pointing out its tendency to be an empty operator (p. vi). Drawing from the above definition, it can be argued that hybridity then, is unstable, unpredictable, ambiguous, emergent, and “inevitable” in the globalizing world (Kraidy, 2005). It is the sense of its instability, unpredictability, and ambiguity that makes hybridity similar to intempestivity. Similarly, Rancière’s aestheticization of art makes hybridity and intempestivity aesthetic. In the introductory notes of *Dissensus*, Corcoran asserts that for Rancière, (2010) “aestheticized art thus does not always exist, but is only ‘ever the set of relations that are traced here ‘and now through singular and precarious act” (p. 18). There must exist knowledge of the police in occupying a gap to be able to engage in an act of dissensus. This also suggests accumulation of knowledge of more than one logic system which can be powerful in alluding to cultural assimilatory practices.

Postcolonial cultural products must have at its core/basis western and have hints of aesthetic values considered indigenously authentic from the postcolony (fashion items – clothes and accessories) western styles made in wax prints. It must be noted however that, due to the increasing flux of cultural product and processes of contamination, appropriation and re-appropriation, it is becoming increasingly complex to determine with certainty, the origins of a cultural artefact.
associated with migrants and diasporans who add on cultural knowledge of host countries (Kim, 2007, 2008; Hay 2014).

Similarly, the power inherent in hybridity is obvious in Hall’s (1996) conceptualization of identity being a “. . . process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from,’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (p.4). Another helpful perspective is Bardhan’s (2012) understanding of postcolonial migrant identities as hybrid identities and “. . . worked over by forces of colonialism and migration” (p. 150). Drawing on Bhabha (1996), Bardhan (2012) makes the argument that “. . . performing hybridity strategically, at mundane levels of intercultural interaction, could be a liberating position of enunciation and agency for those who identify as postcolonial migrant subjects” (p. 150), a position supported by Hay (2014).

Like performing hybridity strategically, Rancière (2010) proposes a process of everlasting intempestivity. He defines the state of intempestivity to be “. . . at once that you do and do not belong to a time, just as to be a-topian means that you do and do not belong to a place . . . being thinkers and actors of the unconditional equality of anybody and everybody” (p. 82). In that sense, intempestivity is a state of continued emergence of unpredictable hybridities. He further states that” [to] be intempestive and a-topian communist means that occupying a site both inside and outside. It means framing – with our thoughts, acts and struggles – a certain world of material and immaterial communism” (p. 83). Similarly, Kraidy (2002) makes the case that “. . . hybridity is a conceptual inevitability and proposes an intercontextual theory of hybridity, which
comprehends global cultural dynamics by articulating hybridity and hegemony, providing an initial theoretical platform for a critical cultural transnationalism” (p. 316). Here, the suggested knowledge of the police system and that of the uncounted/miscounted is implied to be able to engage in communal intempestivity. Homi Bhabha’s (1996) notions of hybridity as a mixing of dominant and subaltern cultures and the outcomes of mimicry, producing a “blurred copy” is useful in understanding Rancière’s intempestivity and how it relates to An African City. His argument that communism exists within capitalism is telling:

…today, because capitalist production produces fewer and fewer material goods, and more and more services or means of communication: and because its production is increasingly less material, it tends to shake loose its status as appropriated commodity and deceptive fetish. Capitalist production tends to become the production of the global network, construed as the sensory materiality of immaterial collective intelligence. What contemporary capitalism essentially produces – rather than goods for private appropriation – is the network of human communication in which production, consumption, and exchange are no longer separate but joined together in the same collective process . . . Communism is held to be more ‘actual’ than ever before in so far as the power of the capitalist network renders the power of our nation states, and the power of political action surrounding them, increasingly ineffective (Rancière, 2010a), p. 77-78).

Here, Rancière (2010a) suggests a communism of a global nature but which fails to meet the standards of communism, a paradox. If it were so, it will culminate in a communist
intelligence. He argues that the separate forms of intellectual power – the global network of computerized intelligence, capitalism and socialization of the individual’s intellectual capacity - will be fused together. Furthermore, he lists technological developments, mainly of media – electricity, radiography, broadcasting, television, computers and mobile phones – that though they purport to represent the immaterial intelligence in our world, fail to fuse together into “a collective intellectual power” (p. 78). For Rancière (2010a), capitalist communism has resulted in the erasure of other forms of communisms.

Rather than a program, Rancière (2010a) advocates that communism should be a process, devoid of capitalism as its basis for development and separate from it. He succinctly points out that if a communism existed as a program, “. . . there would be speculations on what it might yield. Some will predict that it would lead to a new form of totalitarianism. I take the view, however, that if it existed, and if it was a good one, capitalists would buy it and exploit it as they see fit (p.83). Comparatively, Rancière (2010a) seems to have dealt with hegemony in his whole project of deconstructing democracy, politics and how wealth, capital, traditional media⁹ and more recently, the Internet and associated technologies have systematically usurped the power of the people in a globalizing world.

The convergence of wealth capital and media that Rancière (2010a) argues alludes to the complexity in Vertovec’s (2009) transnationalism and in essence that which characterizes media flows. Vertovec (2009) notes that “just as transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization, its constituent processes and outcomes are multiple and

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⁹ Print, radio and television
messy, too” (p. 2). Thus the notions of cultural hybridity alluded to by Rancière’s (2010a) convergence positions the West as more powerful and supports the cultural imperialism thesis. The usual conception of cultural imperialism achieved through media points to forms of reversal of this trend considering Bollywood, Ghallywood and Nollywood cases where localized media from the global south find audiences in other parts of the world to break the dominant ideation of cultural flows from the Western countries in the development of identities. Frameworks of cultural globalization and hybridity serve to explain such phenomena to capture the constant interaction of the local to the global. Jin (2010) in an examination of Korean cinema using hybridity as cultural globalization argues that “. . . the hybridization process of the local popular culture is heavily influenced by Western norms and formats” (p.2). Jin (2010) further argues that rather than the third space that hybridity enables in creation of the perceived “unique local culture,” Western cultural products are re-presented. Indeed, as suggested in the naming of the Ghanaian movie industry as Ghallywood, that of Nigeria as Nollywood and the Indian as Bollywood, suggest a hierarchical structuring that positions Hollywood at the top. I take the position that whereas there exists a large flow of cultural products from the local to the global West, the West dictates the evolution of such cultural products.

**African women’s politics of aesthetics as dissensus.** Women all over the world engage in various acts of resistance that use forms of aesthetics as a mobilization tool (Sutton, 2007; O’Keefe, 2014, Khannous, 2013). More importantly, the centrality of the body as sites of resistance in women’s feminist political projects is known (Butler, 1990; O’Keefe, 2006). Globally, Black women’s bodies have historically been sites of
contentious struggle. Parallel to this phenomenon is the African women’s bodies as sites of resistance to sustained rhetoric of colonialism and postcolonialism (Coly 2015). Integral to the acts of resistance is the use of aesthetic choices on bodily acts of resistance which fall within a spectrum of the use of bodily adornments and nakedness. These bodily aesthetic choices include style choices surrounding hair, clothing/apparel which are always in contention with Eurocentric beauty standards and Victorian ideals of what is considered beautiful. For most African women, beauty contentions are rooted in the colonial influence on cultural institutions (Coly, 2015). The contentions have intensified as media, particularly the internet have enabled speedy circulation of events that require Black women to articulate their resistance to the Eurocentric standards. While a young female child in Ghana encounters Eurocentric beauty standards early on in life – where, long hair is discouraged and yet allowed for interracial children – rarely are the politics of the imposition of Eurocentric beauty resisted. Indeed, young females are eager to chemically straighten their hair, resembling a rite of passage into adulthood and sophistication.

**Methods of protest.** Globally, there exists a diverse and complex use of nakedness as political articulations. Most of the activism take the form of protests that center on the body as powerful sites of resistance (Butler, 1990; O’Keefe, 2006, 2014). African women’s bodily resistance practices can be understood to exist on a spectrum of elaborate bodily adornment to nudity/nakedness. Historically, African women have engaged in resistance in response to everyday power struggles and micro-aggressions

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10 Nudity and nakedness
through aesthetic choices as simple as wax print designs to threats to disrobe and nakedness as a last resort to attracting attention to their agenda.

Methods of protest can also be understood as appropriation of the very idea that is resisted. Hutcheon (as cited in O’Keefe, 2014) notes ways in which Pink and Silver Bloc combined militant and playful protests using “strategic appropriation of carnivalesque performance and aesthetics, including playful mockery, ritualized inversion, gender bending” to articulate resistance. For a successful re-appropriation that is subversive, the ability to speak the language of the dominant is important (O’Keefe, 2014, Rancière, 2010) and fails when parody is not effectively communicated. There are dangers of re-appropriation and deconstruction where double-bind occurs when audiences or spectators fail to recognize the parody if not articulated well (O’Keefe, 2014)

Protests and acts of resistance are ways to articulate identities in order achieve a count. Women have done so through (re) appropriation as subversive reclamation (Juris, 2008, as cited in O’Keefe, 2014). Of the many uses of aesthetics to articulate politics, the prominence of politics surrounding hair (head) cannot be ignored. Black women’s hair remains a site for resistance as result of its exclusion from what is considered normal, especially in ISAs. Black hairstyles (afro, braids, dreadlocks) have been at the center of struggles in schools and workplaces. Images of students’ protest against attempts to police their hair in Pretoria High School for Girls (Mahr, 2016) recently hit the media, sparking discussions both online and offline. Similarly, the United States has recently experienced some protests against African hair. The politics of African hair is ubiquitous in media. For instance, dreadlocks are considered a form of resistance despite its global
popularity among people of African descent. Exploring the connections between
dreadlocks and resistance, Kuumba and Ajanaku (1998) found dreadlocks together with
other markers to symbolize an example of culturally based everyday resistance.
Dreadlocks have historically embodied themes of the African identity, resistance, and
self-determination (Alkalimat 1990, Fanon, 1967). While the political potency of
dreadlocks is being erased through commercialization, (Evans, 1994) its acceptance as
mainstream is mixed and often considered inappropriate and against policies in the work
environment.

Not all feminist resistances constitute feminist political projects. Indeed, other
scholars (Butler, 1990; O’Keefe, 2006, 2014) have raised concerns regarding the
particularities of recent feminist articulations about aesthetic choices and the tools
deployed to demonstrate their activism and resistance, especially through public protest.
O’Keefe (2014) found “the linking of nudity to liberation problematic. Subversion can be
achieved through ironic strategies of exaggeration, understatement, or literalization
strategy of reclaiming terms ‘pop star look’ (Zychowicz, 2011). O’Keefe’s (2014)
analysis of online content produced by and about SlutWalk and FEMEN using
intersectionality found flaws in politics of emerging young feminists citing “a
problematic interface between third-wave and postfeminists” (abstract, p. 1). The author
argues “... that any subversive potential these recent mobilizations might offer is limited
through their reproduction of patriarchal, hegemonic norms” (p. 5). O’Keefe (2014
further argues that the signifiers they sought to “re-appropriate actually reinforce the
original use of these signifiers and their associated norms” (p. 4).
A Transnational, Postcolonial Feminist Approach of In-betweeness

Women’s representation in the media can best be described as minimal. A look at the Media Monitoring Project reports (World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010) indicates low representations regarding quantity and quality in the content produced and content production as well technological development (ICT) and ownership. The trends in content cut across all forms of media including newspapers and magazines, radio, television, digital news, film and entertainment media, music, literature (Fonchingong, 2006). A seminal work *Hearth and the Home: Media Representation of Women* in 1978 found that women are usually omitted/absent from media. On occasions when they did appear, women were trivialized and condemned (Tuchman, 1978). Since then, other studies have found similar treatment in other countries. In Ghana, Mawugbe (2010) found that predominantly, women were absent from news discourse. A main argument is that when women are involved in media content production, women’s representation improves in terms of quality and quantity. Other studies have, however, found that women’s presence in media houses does not change women’s representation because they are assimilated into the pertaining culture of production in the media which are often patriarchal.

Since Laura Mulvey’s (1975) feminist analysis of film as a male gaze with women as its object, scholarship with this focus have evolved to show how eating disorders is the result of male surveillance of the female body to self-surveillance among young women and especially girls. Studies on women’s media representations have also advanced to reveal differences in the representation specific to race: African-American
women as mammies/matriarchs (Collins, 1990), Asian/Asian American women as sexually servile or powerful dragon ladies (Kim, 1986), Native American women as either beautiful princesses or unattractive squaws (Bird, 1999), White women as madonnas or whores (Kuhn, 2013). While there is a dearth of studies on African women’s representations that reflects the contemporary realities of media use on the continent, the situation can be attributed to emphasis on development and its limitation to mass communication (radio). Mass communication’s aim for standardized information diffusion pre-packaged by Western experts. It is also important to note that the evolution of post-independence media in most African countries was shaped by media use primarily as a government mouthpiece – governments that were mainly made up of men due to the colonial legacies that excluded women from institutions of state (Aidoo, 1985, Arhin, 1993). Furthermore, studies that focus on trends in African women’s representation are found in larger world studies as detached and not in conversation with women’s representations elsewhere. The interconnections and linkages that characterize the media flows between the West and Africa since colonialism, the impact of technological development and the complexities of the realities of women and media is not reflected in such studies. Thus, there exists the need to take an approach to examining African women’s representation using frameworks that take account of the historical and contemporary realities of transnational interactions.

Jones (2011) asserts that “[p]atriarchy and feminism are terms that are fundamental to any discussion of the representation of women in any culture or across cultures” (p. 15). If political, social and economic power is held by men in most
contemporary societies, feminisms as a response to patriarchy should of essence be conceived transnationally. However, the varied concerns that shape feminists’ concerns in different spaces and time, particularly those that have shaped African women and Black women in general, warrants the incorporation of postcolonial perspectives in transnational feminists’ projects (Jones, 2011).

Feminist postcolonialism makes connections between imperialism and patriarchy, links Third World Women issues, transnational labor and capital and gendered oppressive colonial legacy (Spivak, 1996, 2010; McClintock, 1993), global migration and relations of power (Mohanty, 2004), hegemonic middle-class values as normative (Mohanty, 2004), dominant international issues that constructs U. S. Western feminists as “saviors and rescuers of ‘oppressed women’ elsewhere within a global economy run by powerful states” (Feola, 2014, p. 511).

While African women’s activism have been transnational in nature, Moghadarn (2000) notes that “. . . neither the globalization literature nor the social movement literature examines feminism as . . . transnational organizations linking women in developing and developed regions and addressing social, economic and foreign policy issues in supra-national terms” (p. 59). Moghadarn (2000) asserts that invention of development studies evolved as an extension of colonial administration. Mohan and Zack (2002) note the divisions within the study of Africa and developing world (development studies that focused on postcolonies while sociology and cultural studies dealt with issues of diasporas) primarily served colonialists’ agenda. A transnational approach thus
essentially, bridges the historical “. . . intellectual and spatial schism between studies of African development and the African Diaspora” (Mohan and Zack, 2002, p. 213).

African peoples in homelands and diasporas share similar standpoints, are mirror images of each other and African women in particular share a common destiny in the quest for dignity and empowerment with African American women. Furthermore, a majority of African women write from diasporas and constantly move between home and receiving countries. Lewis (2001) also notes that African women’s feminist theorizing is shaped by “enormous geographical, political fluidity” and that differences between African descendants in the diasporas is becoming increasingly blurred. While a number of scholarly works by African women have critically analyzed differences between African feminisms and womanisms in the United States and Europe, “earliest critiques of ‘Western feminisms’ emerged in the Global North. . .” spearheaded by Black feminists and Womanists of African descent who drew from Audre Lorde and bell Hooks (Kuumba, 2003).

Themes of African activism across time and space share the themes of “. . . transnationality and dispersion; multiple and interconnected oppressions; multiple and interconnected resistances; ambiguous relationships to the larger nation-state; and gendered struggles within [libertory] movements” (Kuumba, 2003, p. 10). The interconnectedness and transnationality of women’s oppressions offers “opportunities for counter-hegemonic struggle” (Kuumba, 2003, p. 9) as a result of the “common context of struggle” (Mohanty, 1991, 2004). Lewis (2001) argues that diasporas create spaces for
liberated expressions for African women, and raises issues and tensions of nationalism, citizenship, cultural authenticity and allegiance. Lewis (2001) asserts that

The diaspora is . . . a contentious space, as issues between the homeland and ‘otherland’ play themselves out … [and] … creates space and opportunity for transformational and liberated expressions for some African women. The fluidity and motion has both material/structural and subjective/consciousness dimensions. On the material/structural level, African women’s productive and reproductive labor has been, and continues to be, exploited and appropriated to fuel the global accumulation on both the continent and abroad. (p. 6)

Understanding the dimensions of “material/structural and subjective/consciousness” of the “contentions” that lay within diasporic spaces on one hand and the postcolony on the other and how they intersect with online articulations of African women engages contemporary realities relating to identity, media, Black women, and transnationalism.

From the foregoing, it is clear that there exists within the following gaps and inconsistencies that this research seeks to contribute. First, the lack of representation of the African woman as complex and empowered subjects will be addressed. Second, a transnational approach that bridges the historical “. . . intellectual and spatial schism between studies of African development and the African Diaspora” (Mohan and Zack, 2002, p. 213) will be accounted. Third, this study aims to contribute to the inconsistencies in cultural reentry literature by shifting the focus from receiving diasporas to home diasporas and between both spaces – temporal reentries that focus on African women (Chang, 2010; Hao, 2012; Kim, 2002; Martin, 1986). Fourth, an understanding of how
specific diasporan gender dynamics are transferred to the home countries by returnees is gained.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed media’s core role within a society in relationship to women representation and their work as transnational cultural producers, remitters within digital diasporas. The historical sedimentations that continually shape African women’s identity issues in-between homelands and diasporas are interrogated to uncover how positionalities are informed by contextualized historicity of colonialism and gender. Furthermore, how the positionalities may present in media articulations of the African woman returnee identities were also addressed. Informed by the positionalities that emerge at intersections African women returnees, a framework of in-betweeness (hybridity, conviviality, intempestivity, and intersectionality), grounded in articulation theory is offered. The framework is oriented in the social constructivist framework, to examine identities as shifting subjectivities. Moreover, the tensions within feminist orientations towards finding middle ground for solidarity were also discussed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures used to obtain and analyze data to study the online media articulations of African women returnees. The chapter details methods of data collection and instruments, data handling and analysis. Reasons that underpin choices made are also discussed. The underlying principles of the various methods and procedures for the research design are also stated. It is important to restate the questions that guide the research and to demonstrate how data collected answers the questions. The following questions guide the data collection and analyses:

RQ1: (a) How are identities articulated in the *An African City* web series?

(b) What themes emerge?

(c) What are the reasons behind the articulations from the perspective of the producers?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of audiences towards the articulations?

RQ3: What are the strength of the ties, and the differences that articulations try to ignore or cover up (overlapping perceptions among the audiences in the diaspora, Ghana, and the women producers)?

To answer these questions, a qualitative methodology of elicitation, reduction and visualization stages was used (Romano, Donovan, Chen & Nunamaker, 2003). Elicitation involved gathering data from the web series, in-depth interview and focus group discussions (FGD). At the reduction stage, a multi-level analysis using articulation and narrative analyses of the web series *An African City* was conducted.
An African City is appropriate for objectives of this research on two levels: the distribution of the sensible (media) (Rancière, 2010a) and Nicole Amarteifio’s efforts to disidentify (disavow) with the place (i.e. limited representations of a specific kind of African woman) given her and others like her in mainstream media – dissensus - by subjectifying her specific composite identity through self-representation in order to shift the distribution to include her specific constitutive positionality. Second, the choice of YouTube as the distribution channel for the series speaks to how the channel can be conceived as a form of disidentification in order to cause dissensus on the web on one level, and media industries in general to achieve a count.

Additionally, focus groups were conducted with audiences in Ghana and the United States of America for their views about the identities articulated in the web series as they relate to general identities of African women. Furthermore, an in-depth interview was conducted with Nicole Amarteifio, the producer of the series. Finally, other documents (48) including videos, web-based news stories about the series and other observations documented during interviews and random conversations about the web series during the study period were also analyzed (Haenfler, 2004). To clarify, the three major sources of data comprise primary sources (the web series, interviews (with the producer and focus group discussions) field notes and secondary sources made up of media records about An African City.

While the web series were viewed online before the decision to study it, the videos were downloaded for storage on the 23rd of August, 2015. The interview with Nicole Amarteifio was conducted on Wednesday, January 6th, 2016 at the Villa
Monticello, located at the Airport Residential Area in Accra, Ghana. Two focus group discussions were conducted in Ghana and the United States of America. The first focus group was conducted on Monday, January 4th, 2016 at the Department of Communication, of the University of Education in Winneba, Ghana; and the second on January 30th, 2016 at my residence at Athens near Ohio University.

The framework for conducting articulation and narrative analyses and their explanations for the issues and themes are provided in the chapter. The interview schedule that guided the interview with Nicole Amarteifio is also included. Additionally, the interview guide for the focus group discussions is also included. Finally, details about tools for conducting interviews, consent forms and recording device used for data collection are discussed.

**Positioning Myself**

To deny the ‘heritages’ of my constitutive identity as a Ghanaian woman comprising British colonial legacies of education, boundaries that determine being Ewe from the Volta Region of Ghana will be to deny the historicity of colonialism and its bearings on the construction of my identity. Furthermore the entrenchment of this identity through neo-colonialist linkages (i.e. media, education, work, religion and the state) often necessitates migration for some reasons including education. The continuum that characterizes the construction of the neo-colonialist identity of most Ghanaians with roots in the colonial era begun before I was born. Thus it takes a myriad of concerted efforts for most people, if not all from my generation, to have any level of consciousness of this complex identity amidst the pervasive influences that maintain the neo-colonial status
quoting. Or that, for Ghanaians my struggles with ambivalence are but my own and does not occupy their daily lives.

Born in Accra, I have lived almost all my life in urban centers and have found the English language very useful in navigating the educational systems and career path. At all educational levels, I have been able to use the English language very well and have always been commended by my teachers. This is a social capital with currency in Ghana. I also speak *Asante Twi, Fanti* with the fluency of native speakers who are surprised when they discover later that I am *Ewe*. Striving to express myself, like many other feminists, “I cannot escape the effect of prior tempering upon those tools” of the colonizer’s language and its accompanying traditions, value and knowledge systems I have imbibed (Hein, 1990). These tools continually shape the depictions of African women.

The feeling of ambivalence related to the postcolonial condition of uncertainties regarding my personality traits while they shift my positionalities better relate to the contingency of identities I navigate every day. They also recall historical colonial interventions that shaped my education as basis for the knowledge seeking and production I’m presently engaged. This dissertation represents the shifts that characterized my experiences on many levels. In methodology and design (insider/outsider), I make cultural shifts between Ghana and America (with Athens becoming my second home)\(^{11}\) using shifts surrounding my identity as Black, Ghanaian

\(^{11}\) It’s the second place I’ve lived for more than a year at stretch
born, single woman, temporally living in America with plans to return to Ghana on completion of my doctoral studies as central to my Identity.

Identity issues in the American media while studying, and visiting home (Ghana) in December 2014-January 2015, and December 2015-January, 2016 positioned me as a temporal returnee even though I am Ghanaian by birth. While the objective began to examine the identities represented in *An African City*, it speedily shifted between understanding representations of women in America, Black American women, African women living in Africa and African born women living in America and its diasporas. Media events forced a deep engagement with issues surrounding the politics of the Black, female Bodies. Those of hair in South Africa, the USA forced me to reach into my childhood experiences of hair and to acknowledge the enduring similarities and how so much has changed yet remain the same. For one, I have gained deeper understanding of how I have personally navigated issues about my hair and how contentions in Ghana surface here in the USA. Again I have gained insights about race and how my experiences as a Black African in the United States differ from those of African Americans and yet have been starkly aware of how institutionally similar we are.

Often, writing about the down-trodden in Africa who, more often than not, are women is common and attracts research funding. However, failure to write about elite women feeds the narrative that Africa’s women are a monolithic group. Furthermore, recognizing shifts that have occurred over immediate past decades in modern West Africa allows for understanding the complexities that shape the shifting, unstable identities of
African women in navigating social mobility in a patriarchal society. Importantly, how women are elite or access and shift inside and outside that status are better understood.

**Research Design**

The study uses a qualitative methodological approach (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Babbie, 2013; Creswell, 2013). This approach is also transnational, feminist and indigenous (Smith, 2012), and adopts a purposive approach to sampling. Thus, an approach that is multi-level, grounded in the tenets of critical theory is used. This multi-level approach has been deemed appropriate to studies that aim to examine processes and meanings using multiple data sources (Bishop, 2015). The research design is purposeful using *An African City* web series to explicate the emerging and shifting identities of African women returnees (Creswell, 2013). The series presents a typical case of African women returnees who fit the characteristics of western educated returning to settle in home countries. On the surface, the depictions in the series represent manifestations of the phenomenon of interest.

The aim of this research is to examine meanings as shifting subjectivities embedded in *An African City*. Further, interviews with producers of the web series and audiences serve as triangulation (Fetterman, 2010) to provide multiple interpretations and deeper understanding of identity articulations of returnee African women. A qualitative method is suited to this study regarding flexibility in allowing for the shifts that occurred during the study period and for the study to emerge from the initial sets of questions that guided the work to accommodate realities of fieldwork, data collection, and analysis (Creswell, 2013). The approach is indigenous because it addresses specific
issues emanating from identity constructions based on not only geographic region, (Ghana, a former colony of the British) but also nongeographic spaces (online) that such identity issues emerge. According to Smith (2012), indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices. The mix reflects the training of indigenous researchers which continues to be within the academy, and the parameters and common sense understandings of research which govern how indigenous communities and researchers define their activities. (p.143)

**Media Theory and Method**

Media texts are not innocent. A helpful way to understand them requires an approach that proceeds from a perspective that considers texts as socially, historically, politically and culturally situated (Jin, 2014). A media theory that guides the analysis of this research is *articulation* theory (Brown, 2007; Hall, 1998; Slack, 2001; Yin, 2010). Articulation is both a theory and a method (Brown, 2007; Hall, 1998; Slack, 2001; Yin, 2010). For Slack (2001), articulation is a joining of parts and so to analyze articulation is to study how the parts are connected. What constitutes the parts of articulations in *An African City* and how they are connected, then, is central to this study. Importantly, the perceptions of the parts as corresponding is what complicates articulation analyses.

Beyond theory and method, Slack (1996) notes that articulation works at epistemological, political, and strategic levels.

As a theory, Slack (1996) considers articulation “. . . as a way of characterizing a social formation without falling into the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism . . .”
and as a method “... suggests a methodological framework for understanding what cultural study does ... [and] ... provides strategies for undertaking a cultural study, a way of ‘contextualizing’ the object of one’s analysis” (p. 113). Articulation then allows the researcher to attend to varying elements of data without a predetermination of meaning as but beyond reductionism and essentialism. Articulation signals the avoidance of reductionism (Chen 1994 as cited in Slack, 1996) and

... speaks of other possibilities, of other ways of theorizing the elements of a social formation and the relations that constitute it not simply as relations of correspondence (that is, as reductionist and essentialist) but also as relations of non-correspondence and contradiction, and how these relations constitute unities that instantiate relations of dominance and subordination (Hall, 1980, as cited in Slack, 1996, p. 118).

Similarly, Yin (2014) defines articulation as the linkage “between two distinct discursive elements that would not be connected ordinarily or naturally. It is through articulation that a linkage is established” (p. 287). In this way, articulation is arbitrary and conditional (Yin, 2014). Articulation operates in the domain of power as those with “... institutional, material and discursive resources naturalize its own practices through the control of articulation” (Yin, 2014, p. 287).

At one level, to analyze articulation is simply to study the way different sorts of elements are forced to be connected to each other. Rather than a reduction of everything to economics, articulation by extension considers how intersections of race, sexuality, language, and economics, are combined (Slack, 1996). More precisely, the study explores
how the creator of *An African City* with specific interests connect other people, groups, economic arrangements, ideas, and property to carry out her own interests, in this case, produce identities of herself and others with similar identities. Additionally, the study analyzes how Nicole Amarteifio forces different cultural objects to act as a unified media content that embodies the returnee identities of African women. This way, the theory of articulation is well suited to examine *An African City* as its central storyline, inspiration, and main characters draw on those in *Sex And The City*, an American cultural text (TV series that debuted in 1988), to constitute a strategic intervention within the popular monolithic representations of African women. This way, *An African City* is a political articulation when understood as activism for better representation.

As articulation relates to identities and activism, Bishop 2015, draws on Moufe’s (1993) use of articulation to examine the constitution of sociopolitical identities. Bishop (2015) maps the articulation of youth organizers as activists using articulation as a theoretical framework. The author found the importance of “. . . articulation of identities in fluid discursive spaces of human rights activism” existence of “moments of activism . . . in multiple instantiations, where signification is best understood as continually shifting” (p. 67).

As an analytic tool, articulation examines actions, language (discourse) use to forge an alliance. In this study, this applies at two levels. On one level, articulation analysis is conducted to uncover connections (correspondence and non-correspondence) of the parts within the web series. A second level articulation analysis deals with connections among the series, interviews with the producers and the audiences to
determine the strength of the ties, and the differences that articulations try to ignore or cover up as it suggests that disparate elements share particular interests (Bishop, 2015). Rather than focusing on hegemony, ideology or power, Hall (1986) argues that a focus on articulation is fundamentally always contingent: one of many articulations, other alliances, articulations are always possible. As Slack (1996) indicates

> In practice, this has opened the way for cultural theorists to consider the role of a range of other social forces both in their specificity and in discourse, interrogating the ways in which they are complexly articulated in the structures of domination and subordination and considering ways that they might be re-articulated. (Slack, 1996, p. 124)

Hall (1966) argues that

> . . . so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness.’ The ‘unity’ which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (p. 142)

Consideration of how identities articulated in *An African City* may be re-articulated point to the activist aspect of articulation about Nicole Amarteifio’s motivations.

**Data Sources**

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Main sources of data comprises the web series, interviews (in-depth and focus group discussions) and other documents
(videos, web-based news stories and other observations documented during interviews and random conversations about the web series).

**The web series.** Purposive sampling techniques were used which allowed for drawing samples that have critical links to build support for the findings. Purposive sampling is appropriate to this study as Miles and Huberman (1994) (as cited in Macnamara, 2005) argue “. . . that sampling strategies for qualitative research should be driven by a conceptual question, not by concern for “representativeness” (p. 29) (P. 18). All ten episodes of the season were analyzed. Electronic media form part of our daily lives. Despite the difficulties associated with studying them they represent an important aspect of everyday lives and form important data sources for understanding identities on the personal and transnational levels (Castelló, 2009; Castelló, Dhoest, & O’Donnell, 2009). More specifically, the importance of the role of media, the expansion of access, and the affinity young women find with it makes online content in general and web series (returnee-produced) in particular *An African City* critical to understanding African women returnee identities in Africa. They also represent “spheres of activity” and social worlds in which important, accepted practices and sense-making are integrated.

The first season of *An African City* comprising ten episodes which debuted in March 2014 through YouTube were analyzed using articulation and narrative analyses. During the study period, the second season comprising sixteen episodes of *An African City* became available on January 24, 2015. Only this time, it was available on VHX platform, a digital distribution landscape for a subscription fee of $19.99. This development is in tandem with the progression of independent media producers who
begin their career in alternative media spaces (Christian, 2014). It is important to note that I consider the first season to more accurately represent the original intentions of producer’s production choices and first attempt at self-articulation through an online media space. Since an objective was to gain insights into Nicole Amarteifio’s production choices for self-representation, the first season better embodies her aspirations of creating counter-narratives and images about African women. Consequently, the first season’s representational choices are less likely to be informed by fans’ views and opinions. Indeed, in the promo video for the second season, Amarteifio indicates that they have taken into consideration fans’ expectations. A list of season one and titles are attached (Appendix A).

The process of analysis used multiple viewings and “constant comparison” (Glaser, 1992). This involved immersion in the data identifying emergent codes and repeated viewings to review codes towards the emergence of central themes. The web series videos were viewed noting how the four characters articulated their returnee identities, the discourse deployed to make connections to the scenes, issues discussed and how they relate to the socio-cultural and historical present in the series. While some scholars argue for an intentionalist or ahistorical approach, I take a middle-ground based on Frank Cioffi’s argument (as cited in Botz-Bornstein, 2011) that texts are “best read” sometimes as knowingly intended by the artist or other than the intentions of the artist because the artist may be unconscious of the full significance their work (“Philosophy of Film: Continental Perspectives | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,” 2011). The units of analysis are scenes an approach that responds to the “. . . use of scenes as sites for
theorization [as it] allows for work that makes entertainment values and writing style crucial elements in producing theories about the spectacular world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries” (Saper, n.d.).

**Interviews.**

*In-depth interview: Self-articulation.* An In-depth, face-to-face, interview was conducted with Nicole Amarteifio, creator and co-producer of the web series using a semi-structured format (see Appendix B). The interview was recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Nicole Amarteifio was interviewed as the creator of the series and the best respondent/interviewer positioned to offer insights to answering research question 1(c) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Again, the choice responds to calls to conceive projects that widen the conception of subjectivities and subalterneity as not only “studying down” but also “studying up” and horizontally (Mahmood, 2001, Nyamnjoh, 2012) to the privileged (Hughes, 2010). This is a crucial gap that remains woefully unexplored and invites researchers to engage power dynamics involved in the research process critically. Or that, researchers who encounter such issues, underreport or leave them out of their reports. Importantly, the dynamics substantially differ from those encountered in “studying down.” Indeed, studying up allows for another perspective on the power dynamics that arise in conducting interviews. Again, co-production and reflexivity as they provide for collaboration and co-implication within the interview led to a deep interrogation of my knowledge about Ghanaian women and cultural issues and the extent to which it influenced my interpretation of data. Nyamnjoh, Richa, and Nagar, (2010, 2014) argue that “[f]ar from suggesting the absence of conflict, co-production invites us
to provide for knowledge production and consumption as a conflictual and contested process within academia . . . and in different regions of the world” (p.70). In this sense, my positionality during the interview interaction resembled one that can be defined as shifting between “studying up” and horizontally for the following reasons:

First, Nicole and I belong to the same social class given commonalities of traveling, living and higher education in the United States. While Nicole has lived in the United States longer than I have (since 2012), we both move in-between Ghana and the United States or constantly interacting with Ghana when in the U.S at different levels and frequency. However, I felt a contradiction. Nicole’s choice of venue for the interview is one that I’d hardly choose for lunch. She chose Monte Cello, where she could have lunch while we had the interview. Again, she seemed to be a regular at Monte Cello as the waiters recognized her, and at least two other customers stopped to exchange pleasantries.

The choice of Monte Cello is very much reflected in the many places the women in An Africa City regularly meet and or dine and interesting to see an event similar to a scene in the series play out. I could not help but also note her choice to have a burger for lunch. It was for me an echo of the images in the web series. On the two occasions that I’ve been ‘home” in Ghana, I always ate Ghanaian food and ensured that I carried as many Ghanaian ingredients allowed into the United States. Perhaps the differences allude to class distinction where western food is a sign of privilege and (exemplified by the growing number of American and European cuisine/restaurants) alongside Ghanaian cuisine-based ones despite the relative higher cost. It may also be that she had been in
Ghana for a longer period and was craving the burger she had grown accustomed to while living in the United States.

Second, the difficulty associated with establishing initial contact with the producer is worthy of note because of the methodological issues it presents. I was unable to get a response to the first two email requests for an interview until Nicole’s colleague from film school contacted her on my behalf. After she agreed to the interview, she picked the date, time and place. When I asked her after the interview about the late response to my request, she said that she did not intend to respond due to the tone of my email based on the use of the word “worthy.” The part of the email referenced reads “I think the web series is worthy of further studies.” Indeed, she explained that but for the intervention of her colleague, she would not have responded to my emails. Further probing revealed that my emails did not reveal my feelings about the series. Nicole indicated that other people including fans had indicated in their initial emails or chats with her whether or not they liked the series. Nicole’s explanation brings up methodological issues concerning neutrality often assumed by researchers, especially those conducting pejoratively termed “native” or “insider” research (Nyamnjoh, 2012). As the native and/or insider researcher with stakes in the group and text under study, my specific positionalities as a Ghanaian woman studying in the United States with plans of returning “home” allows for understanding nuances that otherwise would be overlooked (Smith, 2012). While I did not assume neutrality to the media text, for I had mixed feelings regarding my connection as “native”, “self”, “insider” (Widjanarko, 2007) to the identities in the series, as a researcher, I was inclined not to declare those feelings when I
had not subjected the web series to any systematic analysis. To do so would have been premature and preempting the results of the study and not to deterministically approach this study. While the recorded interview lasted approximately fifty minutes, the interaction continued for about twenty minutes more discussing recent gender relational issues in Ghana and personal issues of life in the United States and Ghana.

The dynamics of the interaction recounted above raises issues that resemble the concept of relational positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990). Harré and van Langenhove (1999) define positioning as a

. . . metaphorical concept through reference to which a person’s ‘moral’ or personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected. One can position oneself or be positioned as e.g. powerful or less, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized. (p. 17)

The initial difficulties with establishing contact with Ms. Amarteifio, for me, informed the establishment of our subject positions and subsequently predetermined “location and subjectivities” within the interview (Sampson, 1993, p. 1223).

Focus group discussions: Transnational sites. Apart from lending validity to the research, student participation in the focus groups is important and valuable as their contribution afforded a deeper understanding of perceptions of media articulations of African women in general and Ghanaian women in particular. The conception of media audiences as existing “positions within analytic discourse” (Allor, 1988, p. 288), “shifting

12 The rape case involving Ewuraffe Orleans-Thompson and Kwasi Kyei Darkwah (KKD)
constellations . . . never entirely outside media discourse, (Grossberg, 1988, p. 386) promote an expanded analytical framework beyond the web series. To this end, three focus group interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach (see Appendix C), recorded and transcribed for analysis (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Initial questions that guided the interview pushed the discussions towards questions not included. At certain points, questions like “what is feminism?” “what constitutes independence for African women?” were logical.

One focus group discussion (FGD) took place in Ghana at the University of Education, Winneba and two in the United States (Ohio University, Athens, Ohio). Purposive sampling was used for all recruitments. Participants (10) for FGD in Ghana comprised graduate students of the Communication and Media Studies program at the University of Education, Winneba. The importance of proficiency in English is on the basis that the series is primarily in English and occasionally, code switches to some Ghanaian languages. In the focus groups conducted in the United States, the same criteria were applied with an added requirement of being African-born on the continent and arrived in the US in the past four years. This added criteria was to ensure that the participants understood the basic cultural codes prevailing in most countries in Africa. Furthermore, English is a predominant language among African students at Ohio University.

For Ghana FGD, the study was introduced during a lecture in a required class. Initial contact was made through the instructor with who I had a pre-existing lecturer-student relationship. He facilitated the initial contact with the students. It was also the

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best avenue to recruit participants as the class was required for all first-year graduate students in the program. It was also going home in another sense as I was a student in the same department.

The FGD in the U.S. was conducted in my apartment in Athens near Ohio University. Respondents all agreed that the venue was more suitable and convenient than meeting on campus. Recruitment for this U.S. FGD differed from that of Ghana. First I introduced the study to individuals who I had previously identified through the African Students Union at Ohio University differing from the Ghana FGD where all participants were from the same department. Once, they agreed, I asked for their emails and sent them details of the study. Here, even though the participants were graduate students of African descent who arrived in the U.S. within the past four years, they were enrolled in different departments at Ohio University. The departments comprised African Studies, Languages (French and Swahili), and International Development Studies.

The FGDs lasted between an hour and thirty (1:30) and two hours thirty (2:30) minutes. The discussions were completely confidential, in that the recordings were not associated with their names. At the beginning of the discussions, participants were informed that the interactions would be recorded to ensure the thoughts, opinions, and ideas shared were captured accurately. Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. They were also assured recordings would be destroyed as soon as transcriptions were completed.
Before the actual discussions began, copies of a description of the study (previously sent via email) were passed out to participants, and I read it out. This information also includes preparation required for participation. Participants were also asked to sign two copies of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D), to indicate their willingness and to meet IRB requirements. Once signed, I reiterated the consent policies and their power to terminate the interview at any time without any penalty. Upon completion of the discussion, the audio recording was transferred to my password-protected computer and immediately saved to a password-protected folder on the computer.

**Interview analysis.** Analysis of interviews used preparation and organization, reduction, and interpretation through a critical framework of in-betweenness (Creswell, 2013; Madison, 2006). Relevant themes were allowed to emerge from the respondent’s and participants’ own discourse rather than according to my own preconceived notions of relevance (established in the interview protocol). To systematically organize, review and analyze data the following steps were undertaken: A close reading of interview transcripts was undertaken several times, leaving gaps in-between readings. During close reading, themes were highlighted. Following this, an analysis of how the themes connect to (or diverge from) the web series results was conducted. This aspect of articulation is crucial to understanding the correspondence and non-correspondence of fragments that constitute the identities in the web series. For example, there was non-correspondence between the use of Accra as the setting, a place of return and a marker of being Ghanaian in the series on one hand, and the distanciation of the returnees from Ghanaians and other
places on the other. The non-correspondence was further strengthened by the FGD participants’ perception of the returnees’ as not Ghanaian enough.

**Other Data**

In addition to the main data sources – series, in-depth interviews, and FGD, other sources of data were analyzed to lend richness to the overall findings of the study. The data discussed here comprise video commentaries and online posts (Facebook and YouTube) and online news stories published about *An African City* series (Widjanarko, 2007). This cluster of data was found online using the keywords “*An African City*” in Google search engine. Dates of results that fell between two months before and six months after the first season was published were selected for analysis. Data in this section were downloaded and stored in folders on a computer. Web pages were saved as PDF, and those that did not allow for the procedure were copied and pasted in Word document and saved, allowing for viewing as “live” data and as documents (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). The three-step analysis described above was used for the data derived from the search. At this stage, close reading and viewing were undertaken where applicable for relevant themes that connected to the web series and interviews.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have described the methodology I used in the study of African women returnee identity articulations in media. The study dictated a qualitative approach using a framework of in-betweeness informed by hybridity and conviviality as intempestivity. The approach also necessitated audience perceptions from focus group discussions observations, review of documents as well as the producer of the web series’
reasons for production choices towards a deeper understanding on the identity articulations. I conducted the study in Ghana and the United States and outlined data collection procedures. The following chapter, I present and discuss the findings of how Ghanaian women returnees articulate their identities in online media.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from data analysis of *An African City* web series and how the focus group discussions, other documents reviewed together with the producers’ production choices deepen understanding of returnee identity articulations. First, Nicole Amarteifio’s background will be discussed in relation to her position as the creator and co-producer. Second, in presenting how identities are articulated in *An African City* web series, descriptions of the five main returnee characters are first presented to situate the emergent ways in which identities articulated are embodied by the returnees. Finally, major emergent ways in which the returnees articulated their identities will be outlined and discussed in relation to how Nicole Amarteifio intentions as the creator and co-producer, in addition to views of audiences align to strengthen ties in the articulations.

The Creator and Co-producer

Nicole Amarteifio was born in Ghana, but left in 1982 for the United Kingdom with her family to escape a coup d’État at three months old. Nicole with her family relocated to the United States after six years in London. She grew up in the United States until her return to Ghana in 2012. She has a Master’s degree in Corporate Communication from Georgetown University as well as an undergraduate degree from Brandeis University in African Studies (Politics/Economics). Apart from working for international development organizations like The World Bank and United States African Development Foundation (USADF), she also worked for the Government of Ghana in the
capacity of External Relations Officer for a year. Accordingly, Ms. Amartefio lived between the United States and Ghana.

According to Amarteifio, “My mission is to change the way the world sees African women” and fight the single story (Rao, 2016). “I wanted a TV show about modern, beautiful, educated African women -- sometimes doing unintelligent things or going through absurd situations -- but for comedic purposes. When it comes to the African woman, there is room for many stories” she states in an interview with Karimi (2016). Consequently, her focus on returnees was in tune with telling a story about her own experiences and at the same time avoiding a backlash from telling a story about a local Ghanaian woman. Here, Amarteifio alludes to her alienation from the “local” Ghanaian woman and her inability to adequately represent her. In response to who her target audience is she indicated that while she didn’t have a specific demographic, the African diaspora has been most responsive to the series. She added that, like any producer, she wants

. . . everybody to see the series. . . . So if you’re an old white guy sitting in Tennessee, I’m happy you’re watching the series, I’m glad. If you’re 18 sitting in Tamale, you sell shea butter and you’re watching the show, I’m happy as well. I mean if you’re a producer, you want everyone to watch your show . . . (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016).

Amarteifio’s choice of Sex And The City was personal as well as strategic despite its perpetual tag to her creation An African City. The show changed her perceptions about expressing sexuality and was an effective entry point “. . . to hook viewers who might
otherwise not watch a show about Ghana, but it also helps her learn the ropes of an industry in which she has no formal training—a sort of directing by trace paper” (Rao, 2016). Ms. Amarteifio makes the case that, rather than retelling the stories in *Sex And The City*, the artistic component is answering the question about

. . . what would the original *Sex And The City* be if set in Accra and brought to life by women of Ghanaian/Nigerian descent? That’s the art. And I always go back to that. That’s my drawing board, that’s my compass. And when I am true to that, my art that I set forth to create is being realized. Anything else would not be my art. Anything else would be another show. (“‘An African City’ Migrates from Ghana to Worldwide,” 2016, para 5)

Another aim was to create opportunities for Black women in the media industries pointing out the limited opportunities (acting and directing) and mistreatment of Black women producers and actors by Hollywood production and network companies. So, she focused on

. . . casting . . . women from the African diaspora. The women we were looking for are usually told they are only good enough to play Store Clerk #3 or Prostitute #5. We were telling them, “We see you. Your worth is the worth of a leading role. That is what you are.” (“An African City’ Migrates from Ghana to Worldwide,” 2016)

Like telling a story she was familiar with, Nicole Amarteifio ensured the integrity of her characters by casting actors of the same ethnicity for authenticity. It is also imperative to note that Nicole Amarteifio took inspiration from other young Black women like Issa
Rae, creator of the *Awkward Black Girl*, to publish on the Internet. Within the constraints of mainstream media, Nicole didn’t only find it easier to publish on YouTube, but also responds to busy consumers who “. . . want that instant gratification. They want TV when they want it. Not wait till Thursday . . . [they can] see it in the doctor’s office . . . [or] in traffic.” (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016). She stressed the advantages that she gains on the Internet by having “creative control and . . . not being dictated to by [television] networks” as well as the proximity to a transnational audience of African diasporans (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016). Indeed, Christian (2014) has succinctly pointed out the web of control (comprising network development executives, production companies), over producers which in turn shapes series production. The author argues that “[a]ny consideration of the value and function of the independent television market must contend with who has power in corporate series development and how power is brought to bear in making decisions” (Christian, 2014, p. 160). With the ultimate aim to be on television networks, similar to many other independent TV enabled by the Internet, Amarteifio developed *An African City* in the margins of mainstream media processes (Christian, 2014).

Amarteifio’s business model includes product placement and sponsorship from Ghanaian owned businesses. Regarding the initial difficulties associated with raising funds, she used her savings to produce the first season. Furthermore, *An African City* website solicits financial support from fans who then become part of building the show. Again the main characters have “. . . become part of the promotion machinery for the show granting interviews and sharing their experiences with others involved in the
production” (Christian, 2014, p. 6). Similar to the nature of independent web producers, Amarteifio reveals that “Ghanaian designers graciously loaned us clothes to use during production. I wanted this show to be a platform for all creatives -- fashion designers, musicians, interior designers, painters, etc.” (Salu, 2014). Rao (2016) also notes the difficulties Amarteifio continues to face with “[s]ecuring locations [which] can be tricky, as some property owners demand exorbitant fees and public officials can withdraw approval on a whim” (para. 9). In fact, Kiem (2014) has pointed out that securing venues in Africa forms a critical part of the reasons for the limited representations of Africa in American media, and informs the lack of “. . . serious understanding of how Africans currently live” and that “. . . most African elite live in cities and don’t like reporters and filmmakers prying into their affairs (Keim, 2014, pp. 16-17). Overall, Ms. Amarteifio’s experiences gained through the production of the series, in the bid to self-represent, is reflective of Black women’s experiences in a masculine media industry. Additionally, her work is critical in projecting modern Ghanaian, and African life.

Five Returnees

Nana Yaa, also the narrator, is played by Maame Yaa Boafo. She is the first of the five returnees presented to us on arrival at the Kotoka International Airport. Nana Yaa is a Ghanaian who left for the United States with her parents when she was seven years old and returns for the first time in the first episode. Even though Nana Yaa’s parentage is not stated, it can be deduced that both parents are Ghanaian: her mother is from the Northern Region of Ghana and her father comes from an Akan ethnicity. However, there are indications (in her own words in the first episode) that she returned multiple times
while living in New York State. During her initial meeting with her friends, she specifies 
this was the first time returning home. In the first scene, we are also sure that Nana Yaa is 
back for good, having gained a first degree from Georgetown University and a graduate 
degree in journalism from Columbia University.

Her motivations for returning are in the hopes of finding a job and to fulfil the 
idealistic expectation of returning to the land of her birth. In the voice-over narration she 
says:

. . . I was back in Ghana because at the end of the day, Ghana is home. Ghana was 
my first love. Ghana was the place of my birth. Ghana was the place of my 
parent’s birth, my grandparents birth. Why else would I return?

But by the end of the first episode, it is clear that love is a priority for Nana Yaa despite 
denials to her friends’ interrogative guesses. The confirmation is revealed when Nana 
Yaa runs into her ex-boyfriend Segun at dinner holding another woman’s (Kuukuwaa) 
hand. Also a returnee, Segun is played by Jason Nwoga, Nana Yaa’s ex-boyfriend with 
whom she lived in New York for seven years. At this point, it is clear that Nana Yaa still 
holds feelings for Segun. We also learn that Nana Yaa’s hopes of getting a job are closely 
tied to her father’s recent political appointment as a minister of state for the energy sector 
in Ghana, a development that places her close to political power and the perks that come 
with it. Nana Yaa, after exploring Sade’s option of finding a sugar daddy among the 
“cadre of men” she promised, finally buys her an apartment through the Ghana Home 
Loans, a mortgage company. For her, true independence through ownership of a house 
with her own resources makes her happy. She has issues with intimacy and breaks up
with Kofi based on what she considers bad bathroom etiquette. However, after seeing Segun a second time, she admits to Ngozi that she broke up with Kofi because he’s not Segun, her soulmate. She is also self-conscious about her “natural” (chemically unprocessed) hair and comes under pressure from her mother (who holds the view that hair is the glory of every woman) and hairdressers who encourage her to perm her hair. Worried about her lack of fluency in Akan (Twi) and how it undermines her Ghanaianess in relation to Kuukuwaa, she takes lessons in Akan. Under thirty and worried about the ticking of her biological clock, Nana Yaa is impatient with her boyfriends’ lack of appropriate social skills and an understanding of boundaries. Despite her westernized orientation to life she falls back on her maternal Ghanaian grandmother’s wisdom-filled proverbs for direction.

Nana Mensah plays the character of Sade (pronounced Shaday), a Ghanaian-Nigerian raised in the US. As seen later, her mother is Ghanaian and her Nigerian father is a pastor of one of the mega churches in Nigeria. Her Christian background is at odds with her dating married men and sugar daddies as well as her reliance on them for her needs, regardless of the fact that she has a job. Sade is a graduate of the Harvard Business School. Before living in Accra, Ghana, she lived between New York and Boston. With her fixation on older, rich and powerful men, Sade still longs for her “one and only.” This way, she embodies “the mistress” trope. Sade’s motivation for returning appears to be the availability of more Black men with “big biceps” and is not deterred by her friends’ concerns about Ghanaian men’s womanizing behavior. Sade openly flaunts her sexuality and shares her sexual escapades with her friends. She represents one end of the
heterosexual sexuality spectrum, with Ngozi on the other end. Obviously a very confident
woman, Sade lives in an apartment bought by her married sugar daddy who openly dates
other single women. Apart from her nonchalant disposition towards cheating in
relationships, her concerns with living in Ghana are encounters with the Ghana police and
suspicions that her house help steals her bras. For her basic education, she attended
Ghana International School (GIS), known to cater to expatriate children and those of rich
families and the politically powerful including children of presidents. Indeed, children of
the first families in Ghana are known to have attended GIS. GIS is a social marker of
affluence and proximity to the West. People of lower economic status enrolled their
children in GIS when Ghana’s secondary school system was changed from the British
Ordinary and Advanced Level system to Junior and Senior High School system. It is
important to note that parents of the middle class enroll their children in anticipation of
giving them access to a higher class and/or increase their opportunities in life. Attending
GIS also means students are socialized differently with exposure to a more Westernized
curriculum.

A committed Christian and daughter of a pastor, the character of Ngozi (played by
Esosa E.) Ngozi is a Nigerian raised in Maryland and the most religious in the group.
Having left Nigeria for the United States at the age of five, she moved back to Ghana to
take up a job with USAID after earning her degree in International Affairs. Also a
vegetarian, her motivations for returning are informed by the availability of fresh produce
in addition to the “always sunny weather, beaches, and restaurants,” even though she
doesn’t seem to easily find a vegetarian dish on the menu at the restaurants visited. Naïve
about relations with men, she struggles to find a Christian partner who would agree to abstinence from sex out of wedlock. Ngozi relies on her father for her needs despite having a job. Regardless of the fact that driving a car is synonymous with her social status, having her father’s driver chauffeur her around is also a marker of her social class. She is remaining celibate till marriage while unsettled about imminent intimacy with her future husband once Sade tells her about the “belly button test.” Overall, Ngozi, would have passed for the all good chiffe (Christian) young woman but for her dreadlocks.

Marie Humbert as Makena is a lawyer trained at Oxford Law, born in Kenya with a Ghanaian mother and an English father. After a career at a law firm in Britain, Makena returned to Ghana without a job and divorced, perhaps for a fresh start. During the first season, she appears to make a living through freelance work, which obviously doesn’t pay enough for her to get her own place as she lives with her uncle and aunt. Like the other women, she’s also looking for a long-term relationship while navigating disappointing experiences with Ghanaian men. While confident in many ways, she lacks the confidence to ask Ghanaian men to use condoms during sex, a situation she overcomes.

Maame Adjei as Zainab is a businesswoman engaged in shea butter export to the United States with an interest in other business opportunities. Working with women in the Northern Region of Ghana, her business forms part of The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) project that allows “qualifying Sub-Saharan African countries, access to US markets.” A Ghanaian-born in Sierra Leone, she grew up in Atlanta. Business opportunities are her primary reason for returning to Ghana. Zainab lacks
fluency is Akan language, is skeptical about buying medications in Ghana and prefers commodities from America. Her skepticism permeates her daily interactions with navigating life from attempts to get an order of “coke without lemon” to business deals without being hit on by powerful men in authority.

From these characterizations, we see a centering of the series on women with active attributes to the extent that they (especially Nana Yaa) drive the narrative. Throughout the series, the returnees frequently appear beautiful and dressed-up with a constant preoccupation of discussing their relationships with men either at Nana Yaa’s new apartment or in high-class restaurants. They appear independent and wield a high amount of social capital deployed through high educational levels and depictions of exclusive spaces, uncultured men and its implied middle-class status. Complexly, their preoccupation with men shows a level of dependence that undermines the independent elements of their characterizations. With all women holding graduate degrees from prestigious Western educational institutions, the evolving trope of “higher education is for women” appears to be enforced until the educational levels of their male partners balances it out. The returnees also represent different diasporan Africans with different kinds of parentages (Ghanaian; Ghanaian-Nigerian; Ghanaian-Kenyan, Ghanaian-British and Ghanaian-Sierra Leonean) and having lived in the United States of America or Britain. Interestingly, Nana Yaa as the main character who is more Ghanaian regarding parentage,” but cannot speak her mother tongue, an issue that complicates the authenticity of her position as a “full” Ghanaian. Holistically, the rendering of the African women returnees in An African City appears simplistic. However, a viewing
through the Ghanaian socio-cultural lenses reveal complexities that procure the use of hegemonic and anti-hegemonic attributes in the identities articulated by the returnees. They resemble what Ong (1999) refers to as the elite flexible citizen or the cosmopolitan transnational (Desai, 2004).

Some “types” of African women returnees were omitted, e.g., those who return to work in academic institutions. The intention here is not to offer a critique of the series’ representativeness of African women but to provide a broader understanding of the issues that emerge about the identities articulated in the sociocultural context of Accra and Ghana. This study consequently reaches beyond the text under examination to an interview with Nicole Amarteifio, focus group discussions with Ghanaians in Ghana and the USA, as well as a selection of media events and personal experiences. It can then be argued that the producer allowed *Sex And The City* to dictate the type of women represented in *An African City*, and, in effect limits the extent to which the representations reflect African women returnees in general.

**Articulating Independence: Navigating Gender Relations**

*Articulating independence.* The five main characters in the web series articulated their identities through their definitions of independence within overarching presence of varying forms of paternalism (paternalistic need) invoking the “never a self-made woman” trope. Independence was inherently linked to navigation of gender norms within and without the Ghanaian cultural context. The paternalistic need was fed by conditions that shaped the women’s strategies to access social capital befitting their status, a state that also alienated them from the men they sought after strengthening a
relational trope of “can’t live with them, can’t live without them.” On a larger scale, this represents the varying ways in which elite women navigate patriarchal cultural impediments to access social capital and status. The definition of independence for the returnees has to do with control over their sexuality, owning a home, and having a career that positions them socio-economically to choose the “perfect partner” – not necessarily for marriage. Additionally, the African women returnees differed in their conceptions of marriage with Ngozi and Sade at opposing ends. For Ngozi, marriage is “. . . sacred. It’s a holy union of love” while Sade approaches it as “a contract at best and a business transaction at worst.”

Living single. Varying forms of independence featured significantly in how the returnees articulated their identities. In articulating independence, the African women returnees articulated their identities through possession of their own personal space – an apartment – an uncommon expectation for most Ghanaian young women today. Processes of acquiring their personal spaces also varied. While Ngozi’s apartment was paid for by her parents, Sade’s was paid for by her sugar daddy. Despite living with her aunt and uncle, Makena who is job-hunting looks forward to eventually finding her own place. Her situation of living with extended family is not uncommon, especially for single women. Drawing on her experience, Makena advises Nana Yaa that “it’s completely acceptable for any unmarried woman of any age here in Ghana to be living with their parents.” On the other hand, Nana Yaa, before finding her mortgaged apartment found the experience of living with her parents unpleasant.
Finding accommodation is a major aspect of returning home whether temporal or permanent. It is no accident that Nicole Amarteifio brings this issue up very early in the season. In the beginning of the second episode, Nana Yaa is out shopping for an apartment. For most Ghanaian returnees, the goal is to find one that is similar to what they’re used to in the West which invariably ends up being in the capital city of Accra because of the similarities that Accra shares with most global cities. Women articulating independence through house ownership is not new, but a shift/swing from the dominant expectation in modern West African socio-religious expectations. West African women’s self-reliance even in marriage is historically culturally documented (Aidoo, 1985). Before the colonialist intervention, Aidoo writes about fiercely independent West African women who owned property, including houses, land, businesses, and educated their children abroad. The independence described here jumped the colonial and postcolonial eras where educational, religious and cultural expectation was for women to meet the Victorian ideal of housewife and mother. Today’s expectation is for young women to get married and move in with their husbands. In other words, the expectation is for men to own a home and female partners to move in with them. The disjuncture between women’s precolonial colonial and postcolonial eras accounts for the misunderstanding in the local Ghanaian context that a returnee woman or any other woman for that matter articulating such independence is Western acquired. In particular, a male participant pointed out that “... in the traditional sense when you get married, your husband is supposed to take you to his house and some people will get married, and they will expect that the husband will do that [provide a house].” On the other hand, a man who moves
into his wife’s or female partner’s house is considered a social misfit, a reduction of manhood that earns the name “Salomey.” As a male participant indicates, the issue is unpopular saying “But you know that some men will not like to go and live with a woman.” Thus, there’s a gendered cultural expectation that forces men to live up to their ascribed provider role.

Consequently, a young woman living alone signals some assumptions. Among others, the assumption is that the apartment or house was bought or rented by a man – mostly of a higher economic status. Apart from the genderedness of the assumption, it can be understood within the context of the expensive housing acquisition/rental practices in Accra which tends to benefit those with higher economic status – mostly men. Renting an apartment can require one to two years’ rent in advance with those in affluent areas quoted in dollars. The dialogue between Nana Yaa and an agent at an apartment viewing precisely captures the realities of the returnee who wants to replicate the lifestyle in the West and most middle-class Ghanaians living in the city. The apartment Nana Yaa viewed required her to pay “$500,000 upfront” if she wanted to buy it outright and $60,000 upfront towards a year’s rent advance of $5000 per month.” Surprised, she tells the agent “That’s more than my rent in New York,” and the agent replies, “Well, this is not New York, unfortunately.” Knowing the endemic issues with the supply of utilities, Nana Yaa probes further, asking, “But water, light, and electricity, no guarantee on a daily basis . . . And people here can afford this?” The agent answers “yes” and walks out of the apartment obviously out of patience with Nana Yaa.
It must be clarified that apartments with rent quoted in dollars are high-end and often found in areas patronized by customers who can afford to pay in dollars – expatriates comprising rich Nigerians, employees of development agencies and some returnees. Such housing is located in prime areas of Accra including Airport Residential Area, Labone, Cantonments, East Legon, and recently, Ghana’s first gated community Trassaco Valley. These areas are accessible to politicians and ministers of state, doctors, lawyers and the rich. Hence, living in such affluent areas symbolizes success. While there may be other apartment choices in relatively lower end areas in Accra, raising the two to three years’ rent in advance remains a challenge. The inability to find appropriate accommodation can deter Ghanaians living abroad from returning home. The tendency for women who can’t afford such high rent is to find cheaper accommodation in less expensive areas, fall on “sugar daddies” exemplified by Sade or, in the case of Ngozi, her father who paid for her apartment. These two women represent some women’s inability and in some cases, refusal to cut the paternal cord that re-inscribes patriarchy. Comparatively, Nana Yaa is able to detach herself from her parents despite her positioning to benefit from her father’s new appointment as minister of energy to obtain her apartment.

The cost of finding one’s own accommodation as previously discussed could easily compare to any global city and above the means of the young women depicted in the series despite their socio-economic status. Sade declares, “We can’t afford shit. It’s all Ngozi’s people [Nigerians] showing up from Nigeria to buy everything.” Makena adds “. . . the foreign expats and development agencies and multinationals, too.” An
alternative to building a house from scratch is what most Ghanaians do. However, the process of acquiring land is wrought with challenges, as one piece of land can be sold to multiple buyers. Zainab seems to take that route, but takes extra precautions by asking Makena to look “. . . into the legal documents” to ensure she is the only owner. Yet, most Ghanaians navigate this hurdle and build their own houses from scratch.

The returnees’ inability to afford high-end apartments and the maintenance of a petite-bourgeois lifestyle presented a contradiction that needed further interrogation in the focus group discussions. Drawing on her personal experiences, a participant explained how people who want to live such a lifestyle can afford it:

They are not even people who are even rich. I have mates that I graduated with, and some of them have found their way; they are seeing “big men” [sugar daddies] now, and they ride in big cars, wear all the most expensive clothes, live in big houses and all that they do it just as these girls are doing. And I think that in Accra, it’s the norm…you have to live big” (female 4, Winneba)

Another student added

For all those that I know, they are seeing all the big men in town, all these politicians…and there are some who are seeing all these . . . “Sakawa guys.” I have a friend, my colleague, we both graduated together, and if you see her now, she’s even more than a star.

Here the comparison of the participant’s friend to a star suggests the reliance on media to make sense of social realities and in turn the influence of media lifestyle/culture and celebrity status as a marker of success and affluence. Similar to the focus group
discussion participants’ view, the producer’s position provided further insight into the issue of sugar daddies . . . It’s happening; I mean I used to judge people who have sugar daddies. I used to judge, judge, judge, until I met some people at Legon [University of Ghana, Legon] who just said Nicole, you see, . . . the reason you get to judge us is because for you it’s a choice. For you, you can choose whether or not to have a sugar daddy. But for some people, it’s not a choice. And I said it’s a choice for everybody. They said no. And until I understood that for some people it’s actually not a choice. Or it’s a choice of not having a sugar daddy and not going to school . . . (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016)

Reasons for the reliance on men exist within the realities that most men have traditionally relatively more economic power, a position that became entrenched during the varied colonial administrative processes that excluded women from state institutions (Aidoo, 1985; Sutherland, 2002), -- a space that largely erased women’s economic power and enabled male transition of dominance from an exchange economy to a monetized economy. Consequently, women have to depend on powerful men to access social capital. The depictions also represent the socially entrenched obstacles that work against women and demonstrates how far the modern African woman will go to “climb the ladder of success.”

Consequences for articulating independence through house ownership. In the series, house ownership as an articulation of independence for the single woman signals other assumptions. House ownership is correlated to financial independence and can be
an affront to some men’s masculinity as providers. Owning a house is a lifetime achievement that most people look forward to. Nana Yaa’s achievement of buying a house would be regarded as such but for the fact that she is a woman. Like sanctions that are meted out to women who subvert expected gender roles, the series also depicts the consequences of articulating independence through house ownership for the African woman returnees. The consequences can also apply to middle-class women with a social status similar to the returnee women. Whereas Nana Yaa imagines that her new apartment in some ways prepares her for a partner, her friends who have been back longer immediately enlighten her about the consequences for a woman. Sade informs her that owning an apartment shows “Ghanaian men that you are a financially independent woman.” To this Makena adds, “. . . it all goes downhill from here. Men wouldn’t know what to do with you.” Despite the fact that all the women supported Nana Yaa’s decision to get her own apartment, they differed on the means of acquisition. Ngozi’s position was that a husband should be made to feel like a man by providing the apartment. Sade felt that a man should provide a bigger apartment and Makena thought “the world has changed and men need to grow up” and accept that women can buy their own things, including an apartment.

Zainab’s articulation of independence through buying things for herself shifts to Makena and the others at varying levels. During their stay abroad, the returnees accepted “going Dutch” as the cultural norm. On the other hand, their general expectation is for Ghanaian men to pay for everything. Given that the term “going Dutch” exists at all speaks to a normalized expectation for men to be providers. Most women, exemplified by
Makena who typically asserts her independence through “going Dutch” or even pretend to “reach for their purse,” in diasporas discard this behavior in order to fit the general cultural expectation in Accra. She says, “I always used to go Dutch. I would even pay for an entire date as part of the grand feminist statement, and then I got married. My husband paid for everything.” Nana Yaa adds, “I didn’t mind going Dutch in New York, but Accra has spoiled me.” Here, Makena typifies how women can lose their economic independence and its assertion can be erased through marriage. Again, equating the act of going Dutch to “a grand feminist statement” reduces feminisms to common narratives that inform the attached superficial meaning of women taking over men’s responsibilities. In the same vein, her example demonstrates the dominant cultural expectations in Ghana that men pay for everything especially, at the beginning of relationships of this nature. It is important to note that this prevailing expectation may differ significantly from what actually happens in real life situations, especially when men take credit for women’s acts of independence.

Participants in the Ghana FGD understood the switch in behavior of expecting men to pay for everything as a result of the limitations of gender awareness in Ghana. Comparing the limitations of gender awareness as it pertains to women’s independence, one participant noted in reference to the Makena’s shock about going Dutch in Ghana that “. . . maybe they are portraying their independence or the uniqueness of the Ghanaian woman or how the Ghanaian woman is becoming more assertive” (Female participant). Another view was that the limitations placed on women’s independence through
gendered expectations are not unique to Ghana. It was a result of their Western socialization. She says,

in the world of the film all are Western and they’re . . . here in Ghana. So . . . I’ll say that they all suffer from the Cinderella story. They are all looking for the prince charming. No matter how independent they are, when you take them out for a date or whatever, they expect you to pay . . . they are looking for someone who will pamper them, take them to those places, buy them the cars, buy them the houses. Even if they [women] are not getting them now, if you are waiting in line to be with them [men], you should pay. (Female 3, Winneba)

Additionally, the view above suggests that independent women should pay for their meals and their needs without any reliance on men. Again, the use of media text to make sense of representations in *An African City* (also a media text) casts the returnees search for prince charming as unrealistic and exists in the cultural world of media.

Ultimately, the prevalence of “the man as provider” in Ghanaian society is reinforced through religious patriarchy (exemplified by Ngozi, who represents the Christian way of life). Indeed, all the women in the series but for Zainab and Nana Yaa (partially) equated independence to economic power. Sade insisted the man must still provide “bigger” things than what she, an independent woman, can afford. Her position assumes that most men should have more economic power than women. For how are they supposed to provide more with similar economic status as their female counterparts? Similar to Sade’s position, a female participant remarked:
The fact that I move into my husband’s house does not reduce my power. You say you want to be man; you’ve come to marry me. Take me to your house . . . I can still take care of myself, but I have given you the space to at least prove yourself confirming the man as provider trope. Significantly, Sade represents a certain kind of “high-time woman” (Garritano, 2013), but one who is elite and with relatively better economic status.

Another often overlooked reason is that women whose economic status is at par with most men and who take care of their needs (like Zainab) end up being lumped together with those who depend on sugar daddies and are not credited with the achievements that their status allows. In the imagination of most Ghanaians, women’s economic success hinges on rich, powerful men in particular and men in general. While this holds true to the extent that men hold most of the economic power and social capital, women who achieve economic independence through hard work are often not given credit for it. In the same vein, men with lower economic status are forced to take credit for such successes to maintain the cultural expectation of the provider. As one participant noted, the cultural expectation is for women’s economic independence and its assertion especially in marriage to occur under those of her husband:

African societies are gender aware, but our form of gender awareness has its limits. We are much aware that our societies are patriarchal and that even if I am aware that I have the right to do this, I reserve that right for my husband to do it. There are even times that a woman can be in the house, she has all the money and her husband doesn’t have but still allow the man to take charge of her. Why
doesn’t the woman take charge of the whole show? For instance, a woman can even build a house and allow the man to live in house but the house will be in the name of the husband and not the woman herself. It doesn’t mean that she’s not aware. She’s aware, but . . . because of society, she allowed her husband to lead and take charge of everything. (male 1, Winneba)

Women enable the limits of their independence and as such re-inscribe patriarchy as the expected norm. Another participant also added that the situation of women allowing men to provide was a consequence of men feeling threatened:

. . . I think some men are threatened but it’s not general. [There are] very educated Ghanaian women who are not assertive, who still wants a man to lead; the man to take decisions for them. . . . Everything they think the man must do it . . . But they still have their independent-mindedness.

Similar to Ngozi’s assertion about “men being providers,” the underlying assumption here is that men should be allowed to be providers. Or that, if women can afford to provide for themselves, men must still provide. Better still, women who actually provide allow the male partners to take credit for it. Although these underlying assumptions feed the “women needing protection” narrative, they were not associated with the women’s construction of their identities. They were featured as strategies to navigate obstacles in their acquisition of their personal spaces. As a result, there are symbiotic tensions of relinquishing sociocultural expected gender roles.
**Trophy men.** The returnees articulated their independence through their definition of the ideal man – trophy man – subverting the trophy wife trope. Like the older, affluent man who seeks a younger, attractive wife as a status symbol, the modern African woman returnee after achieving their social status, sets and dictates high standards for the men in their lives. Here, though, the men are similar in age except Sade, whose ideal trophy man is older and richer. Sade might then be a trophy girlfriend for the older and richer men she dates. Again, the returnees’ social status (education, job, etc.) also matched the men if not higher.

For Zainab, all aspects of her life are perfect except for a “perfect modern man” to fit into her “perfect life.” She is not looking for a man to provide. Here again, the trope of the trophy wife is subverted with Zainab seeking a trophy man who is not a provider. Nana Yaa’s narration at the beginning of episode three captures the modern African woman returnee’s needs as well as expectations of the men with whom they enter relationships. She says

> [t]he modern girl wants to have it all. She wants a job that she loves waking up to every day; she wants financial stability; she wants great friends; she wants equally great boyfriends; she wants great sex; she wants a great love.”

Nana Yaa’s separation of “sex” and “love” and exclusion of marriage suggests that the returnee African woman does not perceive marriage as the ultimate goal in her aspirations, even though she wants to be in some form of committed, monogamous, heterosexual relationship. This is a shift from the normal expectation for young women to get married. This way, the women returnees’ expectations and standards do not differ
from Christian ones only to extent that a wedding is required. It can be argued that the economic power and status of the returnees account for lack of interest in marriage. Or that lack of economic independence in many cases engendered marriage as the only important and viable step for most women of low economic status.

The returnees’ orientation towards marriage alludes to trends in the US that show that women are getting married later in life because of the freedom to pursue higher education and career economic independence allows them. According to Traister (2016), American women’s identity was covered by the identity of her husband, under Coverture, a law drawn from English common law where women had less freedom and economic power. Given the historical connection of Ghanaian law and English law through colonialism, it is not farfetched to conclude that the stipulations of Coverture found affinity to the proverb “If a woman buys a gun, it is stored in a man’s room” - a conflation that continues to influence Ghanaian imaginations about women’s roles and identity in marriage. A recent study (Anyidoho, et al., 2016) that examined perceptions about the proverb among others found that 76% of respondents agreed with the proverb. Thus, given the returnees’ economic independence, waiting till they find a man who meets their standards with the capacity to improve on their lives is in order.

**Defining the trophy man.** Consequently, the returnees also sought to define the perfect man. All the men portrayed as potential or actual partners had Western, higher education, were of similar age as the returnees, and belong to the same social class. In defining the “perfect guy” being Western-educated (United States or The United Kingdom) was presented first in the descriptions about the men drawing attention. The
type of Western institution also mattered. The educational institutions range from Oxford, to Harvard.

In the world of the returnee women, the perfect guy does not snore, sweat during sex, does not take “an African dump” . . . and if he did have any of these issues, they had knowledge of ways to fix them. Men with big penises are the ideal as Sade declares in a moment of epiphany, “How is it that a guy like Ben [who is short] could have this big, huge penis but then could be cursed.”

**Policing the Female Body: Obsession with Etiquette**

*An African City* brings to the fore common but less discussed ways in which women police the natural processes of their bodies to achieve the ideal woman mould. This policing of the female body is juxtaposed with the freedom that their male partners enjoy in unconsciously taking up space and how it encroaches on the personal spaces of the five women. There’s also a lack of etiquette among the men represented in the series. However, the etiquette issues discussed by the women are more of bodily functions they cannot control. Etiquette issues include leaving used condoms around without proper disposal and “taking dumps” while those about bodily functions are “non-perfect snore” and “non-perfect sweat,” regarding their partners and open urination and indecent exposure of Ghanaian men in general.

Among the etiquette issues, taking “an African dump,” also the title of episode three, deserves further examination because of the prominence given it. Nana Yaa has a problem with her current boyfriend, Kofi, a Harvard graduate and a junior partner at a top law firm in Accra because he takes “African dumps” (uses the bathroom while staying
over) in her new apartment. Waking up with Nana Yaa, Kofi “announces” that he’s going
“to take a dump.” Nana Yaa immediately responds to Kofi, who’s already out of bed on
the way to the bathroom “. . . Kofi, Kofi, Kofi, Kofi, Kofi eermm okay so you’re not
allowed to take dumps, you cannot take a dump in my house.” Surprised at Nana Yaa’s
reaction, Kofi asks if she’s serious. To which she responds “Yes I am. If you want to take
a dump, you go home and take a dump okay?” According to Nana Yaa, the use of the
word “dump” is bad manners, and the sounds that accompanies Kofi’s bathroom trips
makes him unattractive to her. For Nana Yaa, asking Kofi to go home and take a dump is
“speaking my mind, [and] keeping the boundaries in place.” For Kofi, attendance to
nature’s call is “. . . normal it’s; it’s natural” and asks her “you take dumps right?” Nana
Yaa responds with the following suggestions as more appropriate “I don’t call it dump.
So no I don’t take dumps, but yeah I use the restroom.” Even Kofi’s use of “toilet” was
met with “. . . toilet that bugs me, that word bugs me, ok ok the non-crass way to mention
toilet is to say bathroom or restroom or lavatory.” By the time Kofi gets Nana Yaa’s point
and uses “lavatory,” she responds, “too late; get out,” and the scene cuts to another scene
in a restaurant with Nana Yaa and Ngozi. Despite the harshness of Nana Yaa’s action
given that it didn’t matter that they had just spent the night together the occurrence must
be understood within the wider context of gendered etiquette socialization that alienates
the couple engendering Kofi’s inability to respect Nana Yaa’s space. Or his ignorance of
the general codes of behavior that is expected within their social class. Indeed, to
presume a similar cultural etiquette for Kofi is not far-fetched given the similarities of his
education to that of Nana Yaa and the other the returnees.

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The taking of dumps as it stands may come across as trivial unless considered together with men’s open urination and indecent exposure as male privilege. This privilege is demonstrated in Nana Yaa’s complaints about men urinating openly in public. It is not that women should be encouraged to engage in the practice of open urination, but that Nana Yaa “sees . . . penises every day, unwillingly.” The comfort with which men engage in the practice points to its acceptance in the Ghanaian cultural context as a gendered norm.

Nana Yaa also equated the assertion of herself by throwing Kofi out (because he takes dumps in her house) as “speaking her mind and keeping the boundaries in place.” It is important to note that Nana Yaa can throw Kofi out because she owns the space and defines the level of comfort Kofi is allowed. Here, the effects of economic power and accompanying capital and the power shifts it engenders is exemplified (Traister, 2016).

In the discussion among the women leading to Nana Yaa’s example above, Zainab recalls her experience: “I once went to Lagos with a guy; we stayed for the weekend in a hotel. Every time I needed to use the bathroom, I would go down to the hotel lobby.” Makena adds “I would have done the same thing. I even keep mini air fresheners and perfumes in my purse, and I turn the faucet on.” Zainab agrees with Makena: “Me too - I don’t want anyone seeing anything; hearing anything; smelling anything.” But Ngozi, who’s not yet shared intimacy with any man, asks, “Wait, wait, wait, wait, true love is supposed to be about intimacy. I mean, everything you guys are talking about is part of that intimacy.” To which Sade retorts “Wrong! True love is about boundaries. Where there are no boundaries, there is no love.” Questions regarding what
constitutes intimacy and boundaries in relationships, not necessarily marriage arise. In addition, how women navigate the internalized, historical, colonial policing of their bodies (Victorian, etiquette taught in schools), in everyday life are demonstrated. In contrast, the men portrayed do not appear to be schooled in the same system of courtesy the returnees are schooled even though they belong to the same socio-economic class. On one hand, these examples are symptomatic of the accommodations most women have to make consciously or unconsciously to fit the ideal woman mould. On the other hand, the women re-inscribe their internalized gendered policing of the female body to fit the Victorian ideal. Furthermore, the returnees, through their embodiment of the Victorian ideal, project similar standards of policing their bodies on their male partners. Consequently, the returnees enforce the civilizing mission of the colonizer.

**Sexual Harassment**

Navigating gender relations about sexual harassment in finding work in the business world of Ghana also characterized how the returnees articulated their identities. The returnees’ experiences were also specific to their gender. This is exemplified in how Makena’s job interview quickly turns into a date negotiation with the potential employer. Of course, she does not get the job since she did not agree to go on a date with the male interviewer. Voicing her frustrations, she says “. . . several months; still no job and every single job interview turns into ‘you’re so beautiful; are you married?’ - I mean seriously? And it’s usually married men with one two three children doing the inquiring.”
In the socio-cultural context, a recent media event further illuminates the issue. During a radio interview, a prominent former CEO and co-founder of Unique Trust (UT) Bank Prince Amoabeng captures the taken-for-grantedness of the problem:

... in Ghana, it is almost a norm that a lot of MDs [Managing Directors] decide that they would sleep with [a] staff [member] and if the person wants to keep their job, how can they tell their MD or their immediate boss that I won’t allow you? ... And some of them are married, but they still take advantage of these things. I don’t want to see any of these things ... I find that African men, especially tend to exploit the younger female either to get a job, or to get promotion or to be appraised or things like that so I don’t encourage it and therefore there is a policy at UT that you don’t have relationships in the company (“4 things you need to know about Prince Kofi Amoabeng,” 2015)

It is also enlightening that the same person fails to credit women for their hard work and education towards developing a career. In another interview, Mr. Prince Amoabeng is also quoted as saying

... I used to tell people that if you are a lady and come to apply for a job with a First Class and you are very beautiful, I suspect [the authenticity] of the First Class. So, we have to find a way to test whether it is genuine or not.

The suggestion here is that beautiful young women cannot be intelligent enough to earn a first class undergraduate degree and that such women should be subjected to further examination to prove their intelligence. Furthermore, this bears a semblance to the age-old notion that associates intelligent women with witchcraft. Indeed, the association of
intelligent women with witchcraft still exists. As recently as 2012, a 17-year-old high school student was banished to Gambaga Witches Camp in the northern part of Ghana for “stealing the intelligence” of her classmates until she was rescued by the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MoWAC) (Mensah, 2012). For a powerful man in the Ghanaian society to express a sexist view about intelligent “beautiful young women” speaks to another dimension of the endemic nature of the patriarchal obstacles women navigate in order to get jobs. Women, are forced to internalize such sexist views and not work hard. For what’s the point in getting no credit for your hard work? Furthermore, Makena and George share experiences about job hunting at a funeral (they both consider funerals as networking events) they both attended in Ghana. The differing outcomes point to how job hunting can be gendered. While Makena was not promised the job, she was pursuing, George gets offered a contract of ten percent of the 2 million housing deficit in Ghana. Conversely, the relative ease with which George gets his contract demonstrates how men consolidate their powerful positions through forming alliances with their male counterparts, a reconfiguration from Enloe’s (2014) patriarchal alliances between colonialists and their male colonized in colonial states to those between male returnees and their Ghanaian counterparts in the postcolony. That women’s hard work is not often rewarded with success is also demonstrated.

Navigating gender relations regarding sexual harassment begins in familial spaces for most of the returnees. Throughout the series, the women recall instances in their childhood when they had been sexually harassed by “uncles,” other family members and male family friends. The nonchalant way that characterized the women’s reference to the
issue reveals the prolonged exposure to sexual harassment over their lifetimes – a desensitization and the returnees’ acceptance as the norm. Makena says, “My parent’s friend or my uncles hit on me all the time. My life has changed since I got boobs.” Nana Yaa (as narrator) referring to her ex-boyfriend adds “… even his [Segun] idiot cousin, kept trying to grope me at last year’s Christmas party.” The above demonstrates oversimplification of sexual harassment and abuse within familial spaces. That the returnees failed to seek redress in any way also points to how such issues are taken for granted. Hence, in *An African City*, women are anesthetized to male promiscuity and accept it as part of their everyday experience.

**Education is not enough for women.** Importantly then, education is not enough for women in a patriarchal society like Ghana where resources are “exclusively owned and run” by men. For example, Makena with her graduate education needed to get a job through men. As a female participant passionately pointed out and which puts the gendered experience of returnees finding jobs (Makena and George) into perspective:

. . . is education enough . . .? Be realistic . . . is it working for the women? It’s not working for them. . . . is it not these same women who have gone to school with men and they’ve come back from wherever? Where are the men that they went to school with? They are running companies out there. Now they have come back [home] and it is till men running companies here. And the women who have gone to school with these men, where are they? They are still trying to come up. So like we’ve always been talking about, the structures in place are not favoring women…and now what is available and fast is the men . . . (female 5, Winneba)
The complexities discussed above engender questions surrounding what constitutes independence and for that matter, dependence.

**Portrayal of Men: All Men Are Bad**

The overall portrayal of men is negative with Accra full of deceitful old men who lavish their mistresses with gifts. The younger men are too poor, sexist, have outdated culturally gendered expectations of the returnees, lack the social skills that meet the expectations of the returnees and are somewhat weak. As a consequence, the “women are better than men trope” is constantly in operation where men are accessories available for token romance despite emphasis through the women’s continual discussion of men as a group. *An African City* then has only a few good men who live in London and Angola (Stefan and Fidel Roberto respectively) and not in Accra. As one commentator stated “. . . in fact all the men on the show last [season] were ridiculously terrible! (californiabawlar, January 25, 2016). *An African City* portrays very limited and negative representations of Ghanaian and African men. The question that begs answering is whether this is a consequence of the proverbial fear of economically empowered women, or that women’s ideas and definitions of what they desire in their partners are being asserted in media.

**Navigating dicey relationships.** The city of Accra is cast as a space where powerful, deceitful, cheating, older men take advantage of young women aspiring to make something of their lives. This is a world run by married men who spend their money on extramarital affairs – “mesmerizing women with expensive gifts.” The phenomenon transcends socio-economic status with a focus on the high-class women.
depicted in the series rather than the usual representations of women of lower economic status who usually fall prey to such men. Despite Nana Yaa’s high social status (education, family, travel) she was to an extent susceptible to men’s use of their position and power to coerce relationships with her. In describing the social terrain after agreeing to go out with Sade’s hook up, Nana Yaa (as narrator) mesmerized by Philip Ofosu’s display of extravagance says “My father was a businessman and a politician, so it was not a world I was completely oblivious to. But this was a world that seem to be distinctly and exclusively owned and run by men.”

Zainab takes the position that it is “more like the root of all of society’s problem. The politics of the sexes. Listen, men use their power and their money to get sex . . . and women feel so powerless that they end up giving in to that kind of system. It’s craziness.” Throughout the series, the main preoccupation of the women was determining the singlehood of men who lie about being married. For example, Zainab goes on a date with a man only to find out his status as married through accepting his Facebook request. Still wondering if the Facebook status was official, Sade responds “the other way around. If it’s on Facebook it’s official.” Critically, that the man in question clearly lies about his marital status without fear of the consequences points to the taken for grantedness and impunity that surrounds such behavior and how it amounts to male privilege. For though some women engage in such behavior, in the Ghanaian society with over 50 percent professed Christians doing so openly is considered taboo. Sade with experience in dating married and cheating men further adds, “when a man in Ghana says that he’s single it means that his wife is just in another country or in another city or the other room.” The
shocked Zainab says “he wasn’t even wearing a wedding ring” to which Sade replies “[p]lease girl there’s a reason those things come off you know. Half the men in the city don’t wear their rings you’ve been warned.” Still unclear about what happened on her date, Zainab adds “. . . we even talked about his family. All he mentioned was a brother and sister in J’oburg.13” Sade retorts “he meant a son and a daughter in J’oburg.”

Relatively, in episode 6, Nana Yaa announces to the other returnees that she’s just received a wedding invitation from Segun and Sade asks “wait, the traditional engagement or the traditional wedding or the wedding, wedding; like a white wedding with the dress and the church. Ngozi adds “All of this is confusing.” Sade’s suspicions overtake her thoughts, and she says

they do that on purpose so that men can continue to play around. If they had the traditional engagement, they tell other women that they’re not really married because they haven’t had the traditional wedding. If they had the traditional wedding they still tell women that they’re not really married because they haven’t had the real wedding – the church wedding.

Makena also offers “or that it was all ceremonial. That he and his wife haven’t signed any papers yet so they’re not really married. I’ve been reading about a lot of those cases. Terrible!” Zainab asks “but why is the Western one or the white wedding the real wedding? See that annoys me. A traditional African wedding is just as real as anything else.” Ngozi then asks Makena what type of marriage ceremony she had and she responds

13 J’oburg is short for Johannesburg
“all of them. Traditional Western and the divorce took a whole bunch of paperwork and three bottles of schnapps.”

The confusion and difficulty the returnees expressed alludes to common issues Ghanaians encounter with the legitimacy of marriage as it relates to men’s marital status a consequence of the different laws governing marriages and how they influence intestate and inheritance of women and children. This is compounded by the confusion about what marriage processes determine the legitimacy of marriage. In Ghana, it is common to have more than one marriage ceremony – the customary (traditional) and the religious one. This is a result of the mix (indigenous/local, colonial, state) of laws that “mainly co-exist, operate, and interact; but also in some small or large measure seem influenced by transnational legal systems” (Gedzi, 2014, p. 16). Before 1985, indigenous laws mainly governed interstate successions until the promulgation of the PNDC Law 111 in June 1985 that sought to secure inheritance for the surviving spouse and children of husbands who die intestate. The complexities of the varied laws (indigenous/local, colonial, state) interact to the advantage of men (Gedzi, 2014). Under customary law in Ghana, it is common for married men not to wear rings. While the origins are not clear, it is conventional under customary marriage that women wear rings. Again this colonial legacy that informs marital laws has left complications in Ghanaian marriage ceremonies which can have dire consequences for women. Various traditional marriages constituted under customary commonly called engagement are conducted by most ethnic groups in Ghana. However, there have been issues regarding their legitimacy vis a vis civil ones that occur in court houses or more commonly, in churches with legal backing. For
example, most Christians are compelled by religious laws to have a church wedding to legitimize the traditional one demanded by families “in the eyes of God.”

**Articulating Independence Through Sexual Expression**

The returnees also articulated their identities through heterosexual independence and expression demonstrated through sexual activity and objectification of the male body. All the returnees, but for Ngozi, talk about a number of past relationships. This signals sexual expression through frequency in sexual activities, a shift from the motif of the sexually promiscuous woman predominant in African women’s film representation. Additionally, the returnees expressed sexual independence by taking control of their sexual activities through ownership of dildos and sexual objectification (their capacity to discuss the sexual organs) of their male partners. Again the ownership of dildos while they signify control over when they had sex, it also can be read as not needing a man in the Ghanaian context.

Perceptions differed on the sexual expressiveness of the returnees with a major outcome being an overemphasis on sex. A female participant while agreeing with this view equated sexual activity and expression to economic independence and how it empowers women with agency to choose a partner and as a characteristic of the modern African woman:

These days, women who are “independent” can comfortably choose which mates and partners they want to be with. Because the old narrative has been the woman depending on the man for so many other reasons and the man taking advantage because the woman is not economically independent as she should be… back
home [Ghana], we know how sometimes a woman stays at home or can’t aspire as much as her spouse . . . the man who is the head of the family, the breadwinner. So more or less, your apron strings are attached to him so you can’t freely speak and act because you are afraid that’s your source of income. . . with this new wave of women who are empowered, who are in equally good paying jobs, . . . you can easily dispose of a man. He doesn’t pay your rent; he doesn’t pay your bills. So more or less, I hate to say this, but men’s roles have been reduced to dildos in one way or the other. (female 3, Athens)

In the Ghana focus group discussions, a male participant perceived the women’s sexual expressiveness as negative and falls short of the role-model standards expected of returnees:

To me, they portray a very negative picture when it comes to sexuality, especially sex in particular. Almost all of them, getting so many boyfriends, from one man to another . . . I don’t know whether that is the attitude Africans portray when they go outside [abroad]. But if that is the case then that is really a serious . . . cause for concern. But if that’s all that African ladies go out there to study . . . then they are creating an immoral society for us the future leaders, the young ones will not be willing to emulate such characters. (male 3, Winneba)

It is clear from the above that, women’s disposition to change partners was not welcome and considered immoral. Furthermore, it is also evident that, in one sense, there’s an underlying expectation of the returnees to be role models and consequently, bearers of the moral standards of society. While one female participant described the returnees’ sexual
activity as “sleeping around” another applauded them for being careful and saw it as a change compared to the usual shy Ghanaian woman who lacks agency in sexual activities:

…they place much emphasis on the use of the condom except for one of them…and she wasn’t even sexually active like the way the others were. It’s not the previous African woman who is shy about asking a man to use a condom.

(female 2, Winneba)

Another female participant had a bad impression of the sexual activities of the returnees:

“…all I saw was their sex-life and their sex-life, and they’ll change this man and go out with that man, and this one was not good enough…”

The articulation of sexual expression was also done through women’s open discussion of their sexuality among themselves. While the males in the Ghana FGD indicated that they do not discuss issues about sexuality with their male friends, the females’ opinion differed to the extent that women did have such discussions. One participant said, “Women do, men don’t.” In response to why she thought so, she said “hmmm, we [women], like sharing. Keeping things inside worries us, so we prefer to dump it onto our friends and then be free and be rid of that issue”. (Female 5, Winneba).

Similarly, Amarteifio agreed that women sharing stories about their sexuality is a real phenomenon she captured in the series:

I know that’s real . . . If I would go to get my hair braided right now and the women in the salon, whether it’s the customer or the hairdresser, they would be talking about men; who’s bad, who’s good . . . I think Ghanaian women are very
similar; their very open about it . . . or it could be an icebreaker. I mean . . . if we had just met it could be an icebreaker….by the end of the coffee, we would be best friends because there’s something in the experience that’s universal that’s connected us. . . (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, 2016).

Another female participant said they made sex too casual. The participants were of the belief that the display of dildo was not Ghanaian. Referring to a news story that covered the sale of dildos that had patronage by University of Ghana students, one female participant said the issue became news simply because it was an uncommon phenomenon and a Western one:

Recently, Adom TV got to know about a place where students from University of Ghana were patronizing these sex toys, and it became a big news. And I was wondering why this is news. What is wrong with them patronizing these sex toys? But It’s not predominant here as it would be in the West. (female 2, Winneba)

For the producer, in as much as she agreed with those who consider the returnees too sexualized, she asked “. . . who says what is too sexualized? Who determines that?” and added “. . . I think it also speaks about our culture. We do a lot of slut shaming. … we’re always telling women what’s too much sex; too little sex.” (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016). Her allusion to the enduring presence of the policing of women’s sexuality is clear.

Another aspect of the articulation of independence through sexuality bordered on sexual objectification of men. Sade, for instance, emphasizes the physical appearance of the men when she looks at some men passing by their table saying “And then there are
the men . . . Dark and chocolaty . . . so some of the men may be flawed. But if they come as fine as that, exceptions must be made.” The series presents a shift from African women portrayal as shy to be sexually expressive and taking charge of their sexuality. In comparison to the men portrayed in the series, this signals a shift towards gender role reversals.

**Proximity to the West: Pejorative Construction of Other Ghanaians**

The returnees articulated their identities through their proximity to the West through a contemporaneity of language, mobility, and education. Within the proximity to the West articulation, there is, at the same time, a distanciation from people and sociocultural issues within the Ghanaian cultural locality and concentration of interaction with locals of a distinctly lower class. Additionally, distanciation was attained through oppositional characterization that positioned the returnees opposite to locals with limited interaction with people of lower economic status, preserved exclusivity of space, and lack of fluency in local languages as a social marker of prestige.

The proximity to the West layer of articulation is informed by the returnees’ privileges that allows them to travel and live abroad, a privilege most Ghanaians and other Africans cannot access due to exclusionary migratory laws and visa prerequisites. As a returnee, one is conferred with wealth, enlightenment/refinement, modernity, affluence and expected to perform these attributes. These expectations are underpinned by ideas about a developed and rich America and Europe. For instance, in episode one Nana Yaa’s maid (obviously of a lower economic status) asks her if she bought her shoes. This is symbolic to the general expectations most Ghanaians have of returnees. Thus, the
symbolism of the returnee or “been to” drives the expectation and consequent performance of the assigned attributes.

Fluency in English language together with incompetency in some of the widely spoken Ghanaian languages work to produce and establish the proximity to the West articulation. Nana Yaa’s lack of fluency in Akan (displayed to prove she’s Ghanaian) during the brief interaction with the immigration officer at the airport produces a distinct moment that can be read in two reinforcing ways. In Ghana, the inability or lack of proficiency in local languages especially Akan (or speaking with a heavy western (American or British) accent) is a marker of living abroad that calls attention to the privileges and assumptions about the social capital that comes with living abroad. Thus, it is not unusual to find people who live in Ghana, never traveled to or lived abroad but speak with a locally acquired Western accent learned through exposure to ubiquitous Western media as a means to access the privileges that accompany living abroad. So for the returnees, their fluency of “authentic” American or British-accented English together with lack of fluency marks them as “been to’s,” diasporans, etc. who carry a special status of privileged positions that sets them apart from locals.

Proximity to the West articulation was done by establishing class distinctions through juxtaposing their returnee identities in opposition to people of distinctly lower class. The five returnee characters are all Western educated in top schools with connotations of elitism. The social class of the characters who interact with the returnees are obvious from the socio-economic status attached to the jobs they are seen to be engaged. Apart from the men that the five women were interested in dating (also Western
educated), Nana Yaa’s parents, Sade’s aunt Sefa (whose status can be determined from her visit to the restaurant), the estate agent, and Zainab’s boss, all of the other characters were of lower socio-economic status. They include customs officers, waiters and waitresses, maids or house helps, the Citi FM secretary, salon staff, shop assistants, police officer, and Sade’s security man. Some of these characters were dehumanized often reduced to their body parts, voices or their backs.

The returnees distanced themselves not only by the juxtapositioning of their status to locals through their proximity to the West but also through establishing exclusivity of space in the postcolonial city. For instance, in the opening scene, the establishing shot is that of Osu Oxford street, a suburb of the coastal city of Accra, the capital of Ghana. The camera quickly pans the busy Osu Oxford Street, capturing the bustling life of ordinary people. While a cosmopolitan area, Oxford Street is a space where both affluence and privation coexist. Similar scenes are occasionally presented as if to remind audiences and to re-establish the location of Accra. However, the returnees were not seen to be engaged with people in their environment. High-class restaurants and bars that resemble those in the West and symbolic of high economic status constitutes the spaces that the women spent most of their time. Local restaurants that serve local cuisine and street food, a communal and popular phenomenon in Ghana, was visibly absent. Whereas projecting a positive view of Ghana and Africa is central to how the returnees articulated their identities (depicted especially through promotion of Ghanaian creative industry), the distanciation thread in the series underpinned their relationship with the city of Accra and its people creating moments of non-correspondence. By so doing the women returnees
distanced themselves from the ordinary people of Accra unless they were providing them a service in the capacities of maids/house helps, security man, hairdressers, etc. This aspect of articulation of returnee identities were markedly done through what Garritano (2013) calls “deliberate obscuring and sanitizing of the social” (p. 107). These occasional reminders of Accra in contrast to the scenes of exclusive spaces where the returnees frequently wined and dined serves as an exploitation of the idea of Accra for the purpose of using “Africa” and for that matter, Accra “to think with” and not to engage (Keim, 2014 p. 13).

It is important to note that the social capital that accrues to returnees as a result of the specific markers (languages, food, affluence) they embody can also be appropriated by local Ghanaians. While participants agreed that the returnee lifestyle depicted was European, they also agreed to its existence in Ghana. As one participant indicated “. . . you have people who are living in Ghana who have never been in the West but can actually fit in the positions that they were. They can behave just the way they were behaving” (female 1, Winneba). Yet another participant said:

. . . they are showing us the European kind of lifestyle. And even now in the cities, especially in Accra that is how most people live. They go to expensive restaurants, buy expensive clothes, visit all the fancy places. Now you can get someone ordering all the fancy foods. It doesn’t have to be someone who has travelled outside. People have stayed here all their lives living very luxurious lives like in the Western world . . . I think it’s just the world that is changing . . . . And so, I don’t see any difference because there are people equally here who live
the same lifestyle. So you don’t have to be a returnee to live that lifestyle. (female 3, Winneba)

Here again while indicating the existence of the returnee lifestyle in Accra, the assumption is that it has Western origins. Hence the question that begs answering is how then is such a lifestyle defined as an evolving global phenomenon. It is also imperative to clarify that despite the existence of the returnee lifestyle in Ghana, it is limited to some main cities and a certain group. Indeed, all the focus group participants agreed that “They were not representing the whole African continent or the Ghanaian society. They were representing a certain kind of people” (female 4, Athens)

**Distanciation: Recreating the West in the postcolony.** The nature of returnee identities articulated in *An African City* formed another aspect of distanciation involving commentary and critique of Ghanaians and the socio-cultural context. While the critique and commentary refer to real conditions, they were underpinned by constant comparison of their lives abroad and Ghana and for that matter Africa. As a result, the returnees made judgment calls on the socio-cultural conditions in Ghana without providing an understanding of the underlying causes but rather did so based on the extent to which the locality allowed them to recreate the good parts of their Western experiences. Despite the fact that their lives in Ghana did not go beyond the city of Accra, their critiques covered the whole of Ghana and occasionally other African capital cities. In particular Zainab’s preoccupation with customer service in Ghanaian restaurants in comparison to the US, while in tandem with her character as the business person in the group, the particular issues that exemplified her frustrations (waiters always bring her lemon with coke, and
delays in getting bills) may well occur anywhere. While some participants in the focus group discussion agreed the representation of issues with waiters not getting orders right, they thought its repetitiveness was an exaggeration. Furthermore, it casts the Ghanaian as unintelligent and unable to follow simple instructions.

Other examples include the commentary on the inconsistent provision of utilities – electricity, water, and telecommunication services. Like the realities of living in Ghana, the issue of “dumsor, dumsor” (Akan meaning “on, off; on, off”) – a term that is commonly used to describe electricity rationing forms part of the daily experience of the returnees. To deal with electricity supply problems they discussed the expensive alternative of buying power generating sets and a supply of diesel to keep them running. While the critique of provision of utilities shows an important commentary on conditions in Ghana and depicts how Ghanaians deal with power rationing, the discussion of buying generator sets speaks to their economic status given that very few Ghanaians can afford the cost of operating a generator set. Furthermore, in response to Ngozi’s inability to reach Sade on her phone because the networks were down, Zainab responds “These networks. Please remind me why I left the developed world for this.” Here Zainab privileges her experience abroad as evenly developed with Ghana’s as evenly underdeveloped. The returnees’ commentaries and critiques then act to reinforce their high-class status. One participant termed the priviledging of the West as “looking down” on Ghanaians, and another indicated “. . . in fact after watching it I was saying this people [returnees] are saying that those of us here are not literate enough or “our eye are
not open enough”¹⁴ here [Ghana]” and in a retaliatory manner added “and they too ‘their eyes are not open enough’ for us here” because of the returnees’ commitment of cultural blunders. Participants in the two focus groups raised concerns about the representations of local Ghanaians.

Furthermore, there is also an underlying theme of dependence on Western commodities used by the returnees to recreate and sustain their Western experience. For instance, Zainab asks friends traveling to Ghana for Pepto Bismal to help with stomach upset because she argues that all medications in Ghana are “fake,” from China and substandard. To that, Sade clarifies that Dannex, an indigenous pharmaceutical company is an exception. Here, Pepto Bismal acts as a metaphor for the dependence of returnees and locals on foreign commodities ranging from groceries to furniture. The general expectation of Ghanaians with family members living abroad is to bring them Western branded clothing items, electronic devices, etc. Additionally, when most returnees relocate home, they ship their personal effects (car, furniture, electronics, clothing) and groceries, to feed the acquired taste and relive the Anglo-American life. Reasons are often based on the inability to get the same quality of products in Ghana. Indeed, Sade was surprised at the availability of vibrators in most of the countries in the West African sub-region. Locals too consider products from the United States to be of superior quality, an orientation that fuels the second-hand clothing industry to the detriment of indigenous fashion industries. In this way, the series’ feature of Ghanaians designers and wax prints,

¹⁴ Meaning “not modern.” Most Ghanaian languages have this phrase that translates directly in English as “your eyes are not open.”
can be read as supporting the Ghanaian fashion industry. Second-hand electronic products from the West are also privileged engendering the import of used refrigerators and computers making Ghana and other African countries dumping grounds for electronic garbage causing environmentally deplorable disposal problems.

Distanciation also manifested in a critique of socio-cultural issues surrounding women’s bodies in relation to beauty – hair and skin color (colorism). The varying skin tones of the women serves the important purpose of equal representation in contrast to the overuse and privileging of light-skinned women in the Ghanaian movies/video and music videos. However, the distanciation thematic thread is also strengthened by the returnees’ critique of the popularity of bleaching that stopped at the accompanying social capital that made bleached women attractive to rich men and an activity that Ghanaians other than themselves do. Bleaching was demeaned without acknowledging its deep roots in the construction of the hierarchy of whiteness (Blay, 2011). To understand the culture of bleaching (now sanitized as toning), one needs to understand how it relates to white as the beauty standard – the lighter one’s skin is, the more social capital one accrues. In the same vein, mixed race are placed high on the scale of whiteness and are accorded the privileges that accompanies the position. While the links are not made in the series, it is symptomatic of how disconnected most Ghanaians are to this link and how it reinforces whiteness as the norm. That bleaching is common is not only the issue but its non-correspondence with the privileges associated with being white is what is at issue. Or that, the returnees’ (Nana Yaa Sade and Zainab) darker skin tones are augmented by their proximity to the West in terms their “been to” and socio-economic status. Beyond the
scene in episode five where Zainab is offered bleaching cream by a shop assistant, Ms. Amarteifio admits that she doesn’t know the full story about people who bleach their skin saying “. . . it’s not as easy as they don’t love themselves. It’s not as easy as they want to be white, they want to be like Westerners. Let’s really have a conversation instead of judging people” (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016).

The critique of socio-cultural issues pertaining to struggles with natural hair (unprocessed) signals inter-generational differences of opinion and distanciation from Ghanaians in general. In particular Nana Yaa’s differences with her mother over her natural hair, the lack of salons that handle African hair, and pressure from hairdressers sought to demonstrate the social pressure that Ghanaian women endure when they choose to wear their hair natural. Makena says “. . . I was natural when I came to this continent but six weeks in, I succumbed to all the perm pressure.” Sade adds, “. . . me too. I showed up natural now I’m all wigged up.” Although these women’s frustrations also reflect those of local women, the dynamics differ. Their critique epitomized in Nana Yaa’s rhetorical question “this is Ghana what do you mean you don’t do natural hair?” presents a moment that equals the alienation of the returnees from the realities of historical institutionalized policing of African women’s hair.

The politics surrounding African hair never ceases to emerge and has done so recently in the United States and South Africa (Mahr, 2016). The view that African hair is “untidy and un-ladylike” and not allowed in the corporate environment is common. Similarly, dreadlocks are usually read as un-Christian, fetish and associated with Rastafarianism (also equated with the use of marihuana) and institutionally not
acceptable in most workplaces. Ngozi’s dreadlocks, despite her Christian background symbolizes resistance to its unacceptance. For the returnees, the critique of Ghanaian women’s willingness to process their hair is informed by their consciousness about the politics of African hair gained through racialization as African migrants in the United States for instance. This consciousness resembles the awareness of the postcolonial condition that most Global South academics come to on arrival in the United States. For most Ghanaian women who grow up in Ghana, our hair is policed from primary and secondary schools where it’s low-cut and not allowed to grow out. So one grows knowing very little about grooming African hair. Rather, we looked forward to completing high school and the freedom to “perm” our hair – like a rites of passage. Consequently, most Ghanaian women lack the skills to groom their natural hair and are unwilling to endure the concomitant pain with having natural hair styled in comparison to processed hair. It is not that the use of chemical relaxers is not painful but the social marker of processed hair as maturity and refinement in contrast to natural hair as poverty and uncultured, perming one’s hair seems a welcoming accomplishment. It is no surprise that Nana Yaa (narrator) says she still feels “self-conscious about …[her] natural” that her mother thinks fall short of the standard of “being the glory of every woman.” It is important to note from the established sociocultural background of the returnees that they attended schools (expensive, private), especially in the case of Sade (who attended Ghana International School), where they were not subjected to the institutionalized hair policing that children in public schools were subjected to. Furthermore, that children of mixed race who attended public schools were allowed to grow out their natural is telling of the
particularity of race hierarchization in operation. It is imperative to also note that about a
decade ago, Ghana has seen a growth in the popularity keeping natural hair and
dreadlocks. However, the popularity has to do more with its consideration as a stylistic
trend and I suspect, consciousness about the health hazards of using relaxers than as acts of social resistance.

**Distanciation through stereotypes.**

*Only Africans take dumps.* The use of stereotypes characterized another aspect of
the distanciation thread. Nana Yaa’s use of Africa to describe Kofi’s response to nature’s
call suggests that non-Africans don’t take dumps. That she equates taking a dump with
Africa confirms this assertion and looks down on Africa as the continent where dumps
are taken and not “using the bathroom or lavatory.”

*Bureaucracy and corruption.* The customs officer features in almost every
returnee’s life as most return accompanied by personal effects which must undergo
customs inspection for clearance from the port of entry (usually Tema or Kotoka
International Airport). Waiting for inspection of one’s belongings could stretch for
months and the unreliability of correspondence usually requires many trips to the customs
office - a situation most returnees must perpetually endure. More than just a problem with
the Customs Excise and Preventive Service, the customs officer and the Customs
institution is then a metaphor of the bureaucratic delays experienced in Ghanaian state
administrative institutions. Indeed, that the such delays have acquired the term “go and
come” in local parlance demonstrates the prevalence of the issue.
It is important to note the series’ representation of the customs officer refusing a bribe as destabilizes the stereotype of the corrupt official and Zainab cultural expectations about corrupt security officials. Then again, Zainab’s caution to Sade that the customs clearance delay of her personal items was “because they’re waiting for bribe” alludes to realities in Ghana. Anas Aremeyaw Anas, an undercover investigative journalist (also awarded the 2015 African Hero by the African Students Union at Ohio University) released a video on the corruption of Customs Officers at the Tema Port in 2014.

**Distanciation through double standards/double bind.** The returnees articulated their identities as double standard that sustain the distanciation thread. Throughout the series, Zainab is the ethical conscience alert to situations of corruption and nepotism. However, she fails to apply the same ethical lenses to her own dealings and that of her friends and family. To illustrate, Sade is late to meet her friends due to another delay at the customs office. In explaining she says “. . . anyway thanks to my last name, well, you know they figured out who my dad was.” Ngozi agrees saying “. . . it’s the last name that seems to save me in any situation.” Sade adds “Yeah and to boot my mother’s cousin’s uncle’s nephew was the police inspector so they let me go immediately.” Interestingly, Zainab response is “I love how in Ghana there’s always some cousin connection that saves the day,” and Makena adds “That’s so true. My mother’s always like oh don’t worry so and so is a cousin so and so is a cousin.” “Mine too” Ngozi adds. In contrast, Zainab is critical of others like Fidel Roberto, Nana Yaa’s new rich boyfriend, the Angolan president’s brother who has “homes everywhere like three in Angola, one in Dubai, two in Paris, London, New York and even here in Accra” saying “I’m sure that
the fact that his half-brother is the president has something to do with all that. All the
corruption and nepotism is disgusting.” Similarly, she doesn’t play the corruption and
nepotism card when Sade declares “. . . Government contracts, I’m looking, who’s giving
them to me?” to Nana Yaa when she mentions to her friends that “. . . Dad is now
minister of energy so, this is the time to be back,” also alluding to the benefits of her
father’s position that will accrue to her. The double-standards displayed through
entitlement and glorifications of their familial connections in government while
demeaning the same practices among others distanced and positioned the returnees on the
pedestal of morality worthy of pronouncing judgments on Ghanaians.

**Articulation Through Dress and Style**

Additionally, proximity to the West was established through obsession with
Western material culture and style. These were evidenced in the clothing fashion and
style that some argue is indicative of consumerism and consumption associated with
fashion industries. So that the prominence displayed through clothing sought to establish
a hierarchy of prestige (Martin, 1994). While the returnees’ clothes were mostly made of
Ghanaian wax prints and other textile products (African fabrics), synonymous with the
expressive dress culture of most African cultures, the style is distinctly Western and
mostly impractical for everyday wear – perhaps a reason for their confinement to
interiors (homes, restaurants, sparingly offices). On fewer occasions when they were
outdoors, their clothes were more practical. The overall effect of the images of women
high-fashionably dressed frequently seen in-doors reinscribes women’s association with
private spaces trope and in tandem with the images associated with the Victorian ideal woman.

For Amarteifio, the reasons for the style and fashion in the series was to showcase the best talent in Africa. According to her,

. . . when I was creating An African City, it was very important to me that all creatives had a platform. So if you’re a fashion designer, you had a platform, if you are musician you had a platform. If you’re a painter, you had a platform. I wanted to show the world, the talent that we have on this continent. . . When it comes to the fashion yeah, I wanted girls in Paris to go like oh my goodness I want an Ameyo dress. Which happens, you know. And I want a girl in Dallas to go like oh my goodness, I want Christie Brown. I want a woman sitting in London going like I want KiKi Clothing. We’re always talking about their clothing: the Gucci, the Louis Vuitton . . . I want the global buzz to be about African fashion (N. Amarteifio, personal communication, January 6, 2016).

Here, the producer’s intentions of promoting Ghanaian and African talent directed at African audiences in cosmopolitan cities provides exposure for the otherwise unknown Ghanaian fashion designers. Additionally, it constitutes a speaking back to the African Diasporas and the West. On the contrary, both US FGD participants had reservations about costuming and questioned their cultural authenticity. While the use of African prints was generally highly praised, they had reservations about the style and cuts of the dresses which they thought was not authentically African. One female participant observed
I liked the fact that they used African prints. But some of their styles were unrealistic … you think about the weather, you think about where you live in Ghana, the weather is so hot and I’m wondering, are they really going to work?

Another female participant also pointed out the effort to use African prints as a good step: they could have worn all those things in another material but they did them in print, something that is synonymous to Africa . . . I think they made an effort to portray that type of African dressing in the movies. Every scene or episode, it was there.

Yet another praise for costuming but critique of the show is that

The clothes on the show are beautiful, that is true but the show itself is weird. It’s like it is trying too hard. I get where they are going and I totally understand the message they are trying to convey but there is still something very off about it. that being said, it’s a good attempt. I think with time and practice it will get better and I am glad that an effort is being made, but there is a lot of room for improvement (chocol8thundr, 2014)

Similar views also emerged in the in the Ghana FGD. Participants in Ghana had mixed reactions. Despite the fact that they saw the fashion as a good portrayal of being African, they found the style as overdone. One female participant also praising the use of African fabrics noted that

Nana Yaa who wore, I don’t if it was a blanket or something covering the neck and all that. It’s not African. It was better that they were showing African prints.
Another female added “The fabric is African but the cut is not African. And so they were wearing all these tank tops and in African prints.”

In a comments section of Bella Naija blog’s story about the series, one of the comments reads

The attention to detail in this series is amazing. From the hair styles to the clothing . . . Their clothes and hair makes me believe that one day Africa will rise again. (nwanyi na aga aga, 2016)

Another added, “Now if they could create a page dedicated to the hairstyles and the clothes!!!!!!!… (tunmi, 2016)

The general view of the focus group participants was positive and commended the use of African prints as authentically synonymous with being African. However the history of African prints, often comprising wax prints in particular and batiks have a complex history that undermines its authenticity as purely African. An often obscured truth about Ghanaian wax prints is that its origins are not entirely Ghanaian nor African. They have a complex, mixed and culturally diverse history traversing, Indonesia, Denmark, Switzerland and Ghana (“#71 ‘African Fabrics,’” 2011). Wax prints became popular in the West Africa prior to colonial intervention (“#71 ‘African Fabrics,’” 2011). Wax prints, also Dutch wax began as cheap, mass-produced imitations of Indonesian batiks. Its popularity in West Africa has links with colonialists (English and Dutch) who are responsible for “. . . industrializing the batik production techniques and popularizing the resulting textiles in foreign markets” (“#71 ‘African Fabrics,’” 2011, para 3). More specifically, Ghana’s main textiles and wax print production company, Ghana Textiles
Printing (GTP) company, established in 1966 which started off partly owned by the Ghana government is now fully owned by Actis Group of UK a subsidiary of the Vlisco Group a company involved in wax prints in Africa for over 170 years. Consequently, an essentialist positioning of the “African wax print” as a culturally authentic and wholly African artefact as a tool to articulate resistance is problematic without knowledge or acknowledgment of its historicity.

Indeed, the fashion and style depicted mimic those of Sex And The City and constitutes a “speaking back to the West” in resistance to the monolithic representation of African women as not only those “carrying pots on their heads.” This way, the clothing style in the series is only “An African-flavored” form of Western-style (Dabiri, 2014). Here, the parameters for resistance are predetermined and hence An African City’s articulations of resistance through dress are undermined and curtails the occurrence of any real dissensus that results in shifting the distribution of the sensible. For as Dabiri (2014, 2016) sought to distance herself: “. . . [the] whole lifestyle of Sex And The City feminism, cocktails, designer clothes, handbags, and shoes is not particularly liberating in an Anglo-American context, so I see no reason why we should transfer such models to Africa and declare it progress” (p. …). Rather, there’s a reinforcement of Western dominance. By so doing, the returnee women cast an oppositional colonial western gaze on Africa in general and locals in particular.

Navigating Cultural Differences in the Home Country Upon Reentry

Attachment to Western cultural meanings also informs the proximity to the West layer of how the African women returnees articulated their identities. Even though the
returnees understood the cultural meanings of being fat, they still kept count of the number of times any of them was referred to as such as way of dealing with the frustration they felt. This points to their unconscious attachment to some ideas about Western beauty standards. Again, navigating cultural taboos like not handing over things with the left hand to people came up in the discussion. Some of the focus group participants perceived this state as “cultural adulteration,” and “identity crisis,” or confused identities.” One FGD participant noted that “I realized when they were in the restaurant, one of them was giving money to the waiter and instead of using the right hand she used the left hand. In fact, it’s okay in America but not . . . in Ghana.” Consequently, there’s also an essentialist orientation towards what is Ghanaian casting returnee identities of being Ghanaian as a process of becoming, a state of incompleteness. In addition, Makena’s refusal to go Dutch when in Ghana, shows that returnees discard some foreign cultural norms, to fit the cultural expectations in the home country. Navigating cultural expectations then, are contingent on knowledge of the cultural expectations and personal choice to conform.

Perceptions of participants in the focus group discussions in Ghana also indicated that rather than the returnee’s need to replicate their lifestyle abroad in Ghana, it was a growing phenomenon that was not exclusive to returnees. Additionally, the participants agreed that transnational media landscape in Ghana accounted for the growing lifestyle of “living big”:

A lot of us are watching DSTv and and MTv and you know, so we want to behave like them, we want to dress like them, eat like them, we want to live like
them…so like this series, if you get someone watching it, children in Senior High Schools, they feel like “eeeiii (excitement) I want to go to the uni [university], grow up and be like this.” So I think it’s a lot [to do with] the content on television. (female 2, Winneba)

Hence, there arises the need to conceptualize media socialization as media culture to allow an understanding that does not fall into the trap of cultural essentialism.

**Intra-gender Relations: Women are Not Their Worst Enemies**

The returnees articulated their identities through a strong bond of sisterhood, friendship and support system. One online fan praised the female friendship . . . the portrayal of female friendships . . . I am just so tired of the way women are depicted in Korean dramas and Naija movies. Kilode [a Yoruba word meaning why]? It’s either we are competing for some men’s attention, or we are demeaning each other for small material possessions. I have amazing relationships with women: my mothers, close friends, mentors, classmates, etc. And I know many people do as well. So it is sad and disheartening that this is the single story when it comes to female relationships. (tunmi, 2016)

nwanyi na aga aga’s (2016) comment reads “Beautiful show. I love how they depicted a very healthy female relationship, where each woman had a life and was not competing over a man or something. I will still watch season 2.”

However, there were limited interactions between the returnees and other local Ghanaian women inside and outside of their socio-economic class. A participant in the FGD who attended a similar high school to those attended by the returnees and the
producer provides an insight into their lack of interaction with other Ghanaian women
drawing on her own experience:

After high school …half of my mates went to school outside Ghana. Over fifty-eight of us, only ten did their undergraduate in Ghana; everybody was in
London…and when they are here [Ghana] . . . they’re always together. I don’t see
them making friend with people who went to school in Ghana . . . they make
friends with . . . another Ghanaian who went to Yale . . . and when they come back to Ghana, they’re still the same…they keep within their circle which is nice.
But it’s nice sometimes when you are able to mix. Because I went to tech
(Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology] and then here [Ohio University], I have both worlds. I hardly mix with people from my high school
because I know our worlds will definitely clash…and they are all rich kids
too…so they stay within their own world and don’t learn what is really happening
in the normal Ghanaian setting. So that’s why they can sit and judge…they don’t open their world because they’ve been to the West, they’ve seen the best so that’s it.

Critically, the above perhaps explains Ms. Amarteifio’s limited representations of other
Ghanaians. As the producer herself indicates “. . . I wanted to write about what I know
for sure” and that the representations are very real” (N. Amarteifio, personal
communication, January 6, 2016).

Importantly Kuukuwa featured as the returnee’s conception of what the local
Ghanaian woman embodies. As a result, the exoticization of Kuukuwa represents
similarities to the western images/representations (stereotypes) of African women. In addition, Sade couldn’t fathom the fact that Segun chose Kuukuwa over Nana Yaa and attributed it to her use of juju on Segun. Again, this assumes that the returnee perceives herself as a better woman that her Ghanaian counterpart as suitable partner for the Ghanaian man.

Overall we see sisterhood reinforced in the season finale where Nana Yaa is faced with a “A big decision” to make regarding accepting to be with Fidel Roberto despite his small penis or Segun who was her first love for who she still had feelings. Nana Yaa is returning from the gym with Sade and finds Segun waiting for her. The conversation quickly moves from whether Nana Yaa is dating Fidel, asking Nana Yaa to help him (ask for Fidel’s help) land an oil business contract in Angola, to missing Nana Yaa when he’s with Kuukuwa and finally to “I still love you”. Nana Yaa briefly succumbs to Segun’s seeming confessions, and they kiss. But Nana Yaa recovers and withdraws from Segun and says “Go get married.” Nana Yaa walks off with Segun calling out her name. Nana Yaa’s voice comes over the music saying “My maternal grandmother also once told me that the sky is too big for two birds to clash. I didn’t understand that either. But it was in that moment with Segun that I understood that with all these sayings my grandmother was trying to tell me about one thing - love…” The scene illustrates the following important issues: The extent to which men will go to access capital and wealth and how women’s proximity to capital also shifts their social capital positioning regarding love relations. Nana Yaa’s reliance on her maternal grandmother’s advice also signals intergenerational maternal bond as well as Nana Yaa’s use of the advice by extending the
sisterhood bond to other women. Consequently, Nana Yaa’s refusal to cheat Kuukuwaa with Segun demonstrates sisterhood at another level, strengthening the sisterhood bond between the returnee and the local Ghanaian even if they have not interacted throughout the series. Conversely, the sisterhood is somewhat complicated because throughout the series Nana Yaa does not extend the advice to Sade to stay off other women’s husbands. This complication can be understood to be the level of individuality allowed within the returnee sisterhood especially when compared to Ngozi who stands in sharp contrast to the other four women.

**Defining the Ideal Women: Can You Cook Jollof Rice?**

An image of the ideal African woman emerges. On one hand, the series epitomizes the concepts of African woman returnees hold of themselves. On the other hand, the social context represented in the series also defines the ideal women through patriarchal, religious ideas. Similar to the reasons that informed men’s lack of social etiquette, gendered socializations accounts for the definition of the ideal African woman. The ability to cook not just anything but the typical Ghanaian dishes forms an important part of being the ideal African woman. On Ngozi’s date with Kofi, an old friend she met at Bible study he is preoccupied with what the pastor said about women’s culinary skills. Kofi proceeds to ask Ngozi whether she can cook red, red (stewed beans and fried ripe plantains), light soup with lamp and his favorite jollof rice and goat meat. The scene’s similarities with events in Ghana cannot be overlooked. In late 2014, a Youtube video (Mary Kay, 2014) of Dag Heward-Mills, the Bishop, and head of the Lighthouse International Church made rounds on social media. The video which is 3:19 minutes long
begins with the pastor saying “as many of you [women] don’t know how to cook. Even an egg, you cannot fry. Oh! What a shock. What is left of you? What is left of you? Oh Ghana girls, Oh Ghana girls, Oh Ghana girls, what is left of you, what is left of you, what is left of you” while starting to dance he continues “less than 10% is left of what we [men] want of what is left of you . . .” Soon another male takes over the lead, and the entire congregation breaks into a song and dance about the statements reducing the percentage of what is left of women who cannot cook to 5%, then to 2%. The new lead adds “you can’t cook Jollof; you can’t fry an egg . . .,” reduces the percentage to 1%” and proceeds to list other things. The expectation for women and not men to know how to cook is not new.

Later, when Ngozi shares her experience with the other women, Makena reiterates the cultural expectation “you are an African woman, the answer is yes” to the question “can you cook?” Makena also thinks that this cultural expectation is specific to only Africa. Recalling her childhood story about gendered socialization she says “my mother made it a requirement for all the girls in the family to learn how to cook. My brothers just sat there, eating.” Sade also recounts her father’s use of jollof rice to test her cooking skills: “the day I graduated HBS, my father asked me to make him jollof rice with goat meat. It had to be goat meat. Does anyone understand how difficult it is to find goat meat in Cambridge Massachusetts?” Nana Yaa adds, “no matter how successful women get it always boils down to whether she can fry plantain, boil a piece of chicken . . .” Additionally, Makena shares her experience of how she was dumped because she could not meet her partner’s expectation for her “. . . to cook three meals a day, every single
day,” adding “I’m not a full-time chef, I’m a lawyer and I may have returned to the
country as a jobless lawyer. But I’m still a lawyer.” African woman and Makena’s
unwillingness to cook that many times a day was understood to be Western acquired, not
Ghanaian. One participant with reference to Makena’s example said “… this are some of
the things that African women do incorporate when they come down here; they think
they’re still in America forgetting that there are some values that we seek to preserve.”
(female graduate student, Winneba). Inherently, women are still expected to take up the
responsibility of cooking regardless of the demands of their career and education.
Importantly, cooking was perceived as an important criterion for an authentic Ghanaian
woman. A male participant indicated that “We know as African or Ghanaians, we expect
that women should know how to cook. If you don’t know how to cook, then you are not a
perfect woman.” Another male participant, while noting cultural expectation also
admitted the changing trend of the expectation of women to cook and their willingness to
teach women. He pointed out that “We have examples now of women or girls who don’t
know how to cook. . . Some of us know how to do it so we will teach them.” It appears
that the willingness to teach women to cook is so that they can continue playing the
cooking role. Yet another male participant attributed women’s lack of culinary skills to
the modern lifestyle that leaves the household and care of children in the hands of
housemaids

As a result of social change . . . mama and dada are not at home, who is to teach
the kids how to cook. The house is left in the hands of the house maid. She
probably does almost everything. So the children will grow up not knowing how to cook (male 4, Winneba)

From the above perceptions, some men while still holding on to cultural expectations of women, they also acknowledge the changing trends. It is also clear that some women are holding on to the old expectations.

An important expectation men have of their female partners reflected in the series is to make them feel like men and this was embodied in Segun’s girlfriend Kuukuwaa, who in a moment of poetic justice later becomes his wife, in Nana Yaa’s words, represents everything she’s not – African. All the women returnees appear to fit the ideal, magazine body size and shape. The obvious absence of full body-sized women, but for Kuukuwa, presents her as the returnees’ idea of what an African woman looks like. Furthermore, the effect of this representation of an African woman resembles the image that Amarteifio critiques and which inspired production of the series.

**Religious Ambivalence**

The existence of male promiscuity in Ghana where about 50% of the population profess to be Christians gestures an unconscious ambivalence. In a classic example, in E7 (where credits indicate that the portrayals are based on real life events) Sade’s married boyfriend, Kwame kneels down to pray immediately after they’ve had sex in Kwame’s matrimonial bed. Shocked, and already suspicious that another woman other that Kwame’s wife has been in the bed, Sade asks “what are you doing?” he’s response is “Praying. Don’t you pray before you go to bed?” Sade’s response “No. We just had sex
in the bed you share with your wife, and you want to pray?” is a moment that captures the ambivalence of how promiscuity and religion coexist.

Participants in both FGD especially the female ones referred to the above scene as realistic and represented the religious hypocrisy in Ghana. A participant noted “That’s how Ghanaians are…Ghanaians are so holier than thou.” An online comment in reference to the same scene on a story about the series noted that it effectively portrayed social issues and “… how much Ghanaians use religion to serve various purposes, some negative, some positive . . .” (Efua, 2016).

**Empowering the Ghanaian Woman**

This section addresses the question whether the portrayals in the web series are empowering for African women in general and Ghanaian women in particular. Consequently, this section relies significantly on the focus group discussions as they best provide evidence of audiences’ perceptions of their lives as articulated in the show.

Overall, while some participants agreed that despite the overemphasis on sex, the portrayals were empowering for Ghanaian women, others thought they were not. For example, Makena’s resilience towards men who wanted to “date her” in return for jobs was seen as empowering. Furthermore, the women’s capacity to stand their grounds against powerful politicians over the use of condoms was perceived as examlary by the focus group participants. Additionally, the portrayal of independnet women was percieved as empowering. For example, a male participant indicated that women finding their own houses was an empowering example for women:
The fact that she didn’t depend on a man to say . . . I’m going to get married for my husband and I to secure money to buy [provide a house] . . . she’s not depending on a man . . . But this time she took the responsibility . . .

Another participant expressed the thought that Nana Yaa’s refusal to take Segun back even though he was about to be married to Kukuuwa as being independent minded and assertive of her needs:

. . . I realized at a point in time that . . . Nana Yaa, [when] her boyfriend kept going and coming about their relationship . . . it took a lot of effort for her to decide that she would not allow him to use her to get the contract in Angola. . . As much as she liked the guy, she had to let go. Because she had to think and focus on what she wants. And it made her a better person. . . . she improved on herself; on her identity as a Ghanaian [by] trying to learn the language; . . . she had natural hair and she was always in African prints. She had to work extra hard to be the Ghanaian that she wanted to be.

Further more, it can be deduced from the above the ideas that constitute being a Ghanaian: fluency in the local languages, natural hair and wearing African prints.

In contrast, other participants were of the view that the representations were disempowering as a result of the returnees’ focus on sex:

What I had a problem with is that they were just focusing on sex; I will live without this man . . . I don’t see anything that they were taking to the Ghanaian society to empower the women . . . I was struggling with the empowerment . . . Is it just to go and speak like they are Americans? (female 1, Athens).
Here, there’s also an expectation for returnees to be role models. Again, the returnees high education and travel was thought of as empowering and has potential to encourage women to be open to new experiences.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings based on analyzing data comprising An African City web series, an interview with the producer and transnational focus group discussions. The articulated identities are those of highly educated elite women who live in-between worlds despite their physical location in Accra. The returnees articulated their identities through contradictory assertions of independence through house ownership, expectations for men to meet their needs and navigating a patriarchal society to access social capital. The articulation was also informed by the returnees to define an ideal man, a position enhanced by the economic independence. Inherently the complications that arise from the independence articulations engendered symbiotic tensions of relinquishing sociocultural expected gender roles. As a result, articulating forms of independence was inter-gendered thereby require a conceptualization of independence that accounts for the interrelations.

This chapter demonstrated how returnees articulated their identities through independence, navigating gender relations, sexual expression, sisterhood and strong female friendship, proximity to the West as well as distanciation from Ghanaians and Africans. The returnees articulated their independence through their navigation of gender relations which overwhelmingly concentrated on asserting independence from men while figuring out how to have relationships with them. The reasons for the nature of the
articulated identities were explicated through the producers’ positionalities of being elite and returnees within the constraints of media production processes that marginalize women. The strength of ties of objects in between the articulations in the media texts through making connects between transnational focus group discussion to reveal moments of correspondence and non-correspondence. An image of a complex empowered elite African woman returnee emerges who will strategize through agentive transactional behavior to access social capital. In contrast, the series presents limited portrayals of men who fall short of the standards set by the women returnees resulting in role reversals in terms of the impact of economic power on agency.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter draws on the findings and analyses and makes interpretations on issues detailed in chapter four. It also evaluates the new trends in communication and identity research in general and diasporan African woman returnee articulations in general. In conclusion, the chapter will acknowledge the limitations of the study and outline issues for future research. This chapter will, finally, provide recommendations for media representations of diasporan transnational African women.

The study sought to explore identity articulations of Ghanaian returnee women in an online web series by 1) identifying how identities are articulated in *An African City* to examine how they empower and/or disempower African women; 2) discovering the reasons for the producers’ choices for the identities articulated; 3) analyzing the perceptions of audiences in the American Diaspora and Ghana towards the identities articulated; and 4) determine the strengths of the ties, and the differences that the articulations try to ignore or cover up (i.e., overlapping perceptions among women in the American diaspora, Ghana, and the producers).

This study is positioned within transnational media flows that systematically exclude women in general and African women in particular from equal participation in media production, a domain dominated by rich powerful men. The emergence of the Internet has provided marginalized women an alternative media space to create counter narratives through self-representation. Additionally, the limited monolithic homogenizing representations of African women on one hand and the exclusion of elite women returnees regarding the lack of consideration of their cultural work as politically engaged
and consequently as cultural brokers underpinned this study. A framework of in-betweenness – an assemblage of hybridity, conviviality as intempestivity enabled an examination of identity articulations as comprising several objects of correspondence and non-correspondence in *An African City* web series. Also, how women have aesthetically performed resistance with respect to navigating gender relations in transnational patriarchal societies and how the tensions that characterize such interactions gain traction to circulate and reconfigure are issues that informed the framing of this study. Again, the potency of a media text that appropriates a dominant cultural representation to create a cultural text that constitutes dissensus in the distribution of the sensible as it pertains to media and the creation of new identities as a count is demonstrated.

**Summary of Findings**

*(re)Framing female independence and dependence.* The diverse and sometimes contradictory forms of identity articulations of independence presented the African woman returnee as a complex, empowered, subject navigating her way to power and social capital on the shoulders of men who have all the power. Consequently, the need for redefinition of what it means for women to be independent and dependent is required in order to depart from the framing of women’s strategies of accessing social capital as always dependence.

**Development and Diasporan Studies**

The study shifts from the bifurcation of African development studies on one hand and African diasporan studies on the other to one that bridges the gap between the two areas to locate African women returnees whose potential human resource as cultural
brokers must be tapped for development. The continued separation of these areas of studies undermines consistency in addressing gendered issues circulate and re-configure in projects of developing Africa.

The findings indicate an emergence of African women returnees who live between two worlds (Ghana and West) or rather a localized diaspora in Accra. Through varying forms of distanciation, the returnees articulated identities that support the position that returnees don’t return but live in-between the many cultures they encounter. The contingency of behavior demonstrated by “going Dutch” for example, supports Kim’s (2002) intercultural transformations of the returnee with a reconsideration of belonging to multiple homes to existing in-between homes simultaneously. Furthermore, Kim’s (2008) dynamics that emerge from returnees’ acculturation and deculturation upon living in-between ‘homes’ is supported by similar processes that participants in the FGDs identified as “identity crisis,” and “confused identities.”

Additionally, media’s enablement of opportunities to experience representations of aspects of a culture without necessarily living in the associated geographical space remains and presents critical opportunities to achieve balance between reality and representation in media products. The manifestation of distinct behaviors that mark returnees as “been to(s)” (language – lack of fluency in Ghanaian languages and fluency in Western accented English language), cuisine, lifestyle which can be learned and assumed by locals redirects attention to ways in which media culture aids acculturation and departs from the equation of nation-state to a distinct culture (Haluanani, Mendoza, & Drezewiecka, 2009). A focus on media as a site of culture specific to identity
formation has the potential to decentralize and neutralize conceptions of culture that privileges the West and demeans the Others. This approach is in tandem with Hao’s (2012) stance to study cultural reentry beyond nation-state.

Distanciation in their varying forms positioned the returnees as enactors/enforcers of the “the civilizing mission to civilize Ghanaians and Africans. The constant comparison of life in Ghana and abroad engaged by the returnees suggest a longing for their former lives abroad towards a recreation of that life in Ghana. The overall effect of distanciation through proximity to the West re-inscribes the West as the center and Ghana and Africa as peripheries despite the fact that they live in-between both worlds. Identity articulations through proximity to the West resembles Dabiri’s (2016) explication of Afropolitanism. Consequently, issues of exoticism, tokenism as attributes of branding constitute a disavowal in order to create “new” identities.

Additionally, conflicting expectations were projected onto the returnees. While it emerged in the focus group discussions that some people living abroad return home because they failed in the West, it was also the expectation that returnees demonstrate that they “know better” and be role models. While the expectation is logical, it feeds the construction of the West as always better unless it confronts socially held ideas about being Ghanaian.

**On Feminism**

While interrogating feminisms did not form part of the objectives of this study, questions regarding what feminism is and its origins quickly became discussion points in the focus groups. Ms. Amarteifio did not conceptualize her work as a feminist project and
as discussed earlier, is aware of some feminists’ dislike for the series. Amarteifio’s distancing of herself and work from feminism is similar to other African women filmmakers like Senegalese Safi Faye for example. Overall, there were deeply engrained ideas that feminism is foreign to Ghana and Africa and saw articulations that used objects that confronted gendered power relations as an affront on masculine social expectations. Feminism and gender is often understood to be women wanting to take over men’s roles. As the findings show, this understanding then stands to discourage efforts for women’s equality and disposes women to eventually take over patriarchal power in the light of their unrelenting rising economic power. The “fear” of women taking over men’s roles then stands to be fulfilled if men and the structural masculine status quo fail to accord women equal status and be part of feminist projects with the understanding that humanity benefits from feminisms and women’s equality with men in all spheres of social life.

Interestingly, feminism and awareness of gender issues were equated to development. Hence the idea that it originated in the West positions the West as developed. Consequently, this is a reinforcement of a conceptualization of the West as uniformly developed and Africa and Ghana as uniformly underdeveloped. Furthermore, the lack of awareness of empowerment articulations or African feminisms like those discussed by Aidoo (1985) among Ghanaians both at home and abroad despite the many studies on African women suggest a problem that deserves further examination to uncover the reasons for this state of affairs to advance women’s empowerment.

Additionally, the limitations of women’s empowerment that does not credit women for their hard work in public (work and career) and takes credit for women’s
independence articulations especially in familial spaces stands to undermine women’s positions as full human beings. Relatively, the returnees’ disinterest in marriage and children together with the evidence from the focus group discussion is in tandem with the nature of assertiveness articulated as a result of the economic power that accompanies higher education and increased social capital on one hand and sexual expression on the other. Indeed, men have always articulated this type of independence (multiple partners, provider role) with ease and women of predominantly lower economic status have accepted it. Gender role reversal signaled by women’s economic power and their search for perfect men shifts the power dynamics in favor of women taking control and expressing their sexuality. However, while the implications for women having expectations of men results in their being alone/men leaving, we don’t see what the outcomes are for the men. Additionally, while men in the focus group discussions held on to some gender role expectations, the women also held on to some aspects of dependency. Thus, there are tensions on the part of men accepting these articulations of independence from women and women themselves being comfortable with the articulations and the social sanctions they engender. The symbiotic tensions that characterized independence and dependence calls for a reframing of the concepts that accounts for the relationality of what it means to be independent specifically as it relates to women’s empowerment efforts.

The gendered etiquette depictions essentially point to uneven and differential socialization given male and female children. Considered together with the various efforts to empower women, the resultant production of gendered parallel growth patterns
potentially ill-prepares the modern man with the necessary social skills to equally partner the modern woman depicted in the series and discussed in the focus groups as the reality. With no economic induced pressure, women feel no need to fulfil enduring roles of being married, mothers and caretakers especially if they perceive their potential partners as ill-prepared to provide any benefits in a relationship. Considered another way, the average modern man is not ready for an economically independent and sexually assertive modern woman. On a larger scale, there’s the need for societies to be more open to women’s expressions of independence that are uncommon to curb the gendered role reversal that produces women with all the power that estranges them from men.

**Becoming Ghanaian**

Relatively, the question of who is Ghanaian and who is African came up. Regarding women, articulation of identities through connectedness to one’s roots, and an ability to speak the local language or mother tongue comes with some capital in terms of being authentically Ghanaian. With the moral compass of the women falling within two definitions of Sade and Ngozi and those of the others in-between, the articulations humanize the returnee African woman specifically and the African woman in general as the articulation complicates the general dominant representations of African women.

Reflecting on the on the focus group discussions, there was initial resistance to the “Ghanaianess” or “Africaness” of the returnees being unless deeper questions like “Do you see Ghanaians who have never lived abroad behaving similarly?” was asked. In all instances, the participants then agreed that there were people (returnees and non-returnees) in our societies who bear close semblance to returnees in the web series. So,
what accounts for the initial resistance to the portrayals? My initial reaction to the web series was similar to those expressed by the focus group participants. In as much as we accuse the Western media of mis-representation of Africans, we also hold on to the same old predominant Western images of ourselves that permeate our institutions (media, education, administrative). And so, to see new emerging images on screen about identities we encounter in our daily lives and yet which are at odds with the predominant Western images we are used with all its imperfections can be momentarily destabilizing. While the returnees in the series do not represent all Ghanaian and African women, they do indeed represent some returnees and so to discount this web series as non-Ghanaian reduces being Ghanaian and African to a state of stagnation and similar to the orientation of Western media. The role of media in recycling old images must not be lost in the light of a growing media culture that uses limited representations and engenders a media lifestyle. Inadequacies of media culture calls for media literacy that focuses on media production practices.

**An African City and Bechdel Test**

While subjecting the web series to the Bechdel test did not form part of the objectives of this study, its traction as an indicator of the treatment of women agency in film and scrutiny of other works of fiction. The test asks the following questions:

- Whether at least two women or girls are featured
- If they women or girls talk to each other
- And if they talk about something other than men or boys
The series passes the first two questions but somewhat fails the third on the surface. It is important to note that while the returnees talk about men all the time, it is to enable them navigate dicey relationships. Consequently, there’s a need a configuration of the test to include a question about what the women discuss about men or boys. To stop at whether the women speak to each other about something other than men risks losing sight of complexities that characterize representations of women’s agency in navigating a patriarchal world.

**Limitations of the Study**

This research sought to explore returnee African women’s transnational representations of the self in media. The study did not seek to compare two different cultural texts: *An African City* and *Sex and the City*. The women under study fall within highly educated elite group and does not cover all female returnees. Furthermore, data collection through focus group discussions with graduate African and Ghanaian students in the U.S. diaspora, and Ghanaians graduate students in Winneba. The approach for audience selection was purposive and provides an in-depth understanding of the returnee identity articulations.

The findings must however be seen in the light of the following constraints: time and resources. Time constraints prevented the inclusion of the second season of *An African City* web series as they were longer and had more episodes. This presents an opportunity to track the differences and similarities in participants’ perceptions over time and to conduct a comparative analysis of the two seasons. Consequently, there would be the need to conduct at least two focus group discussions on
season two in Ghana and the United States and to include web documents published about the series. Furthermore, an in-depth interview with the show’s co-producer Millie Monyo would have deepened the understanding of the articulations from the producers’ perspective. Future studies could take ethnographic approaches through prolonged onsite observation of production processes to deepen understanding of the textual analysis. Interviews with the cast will also enrich the data since they bear similar positionalities with the producers. Additionally, a focus group discussion with a different demographic of lower educational levels has the potential to provide further audience insights about web series.

Conclusions

As a result of the historical interaction of peoples (particularly, of Global West and Global South), in the same way that is virtually impossible to enact resistances within a system whose parameters for resistances are predetermined and forecloses resistances it is also impossible to discuss African issues without comparison to the West. This is because without drawing on prominent and the relatively powerful ideas like Sex And The City to create An African City, Amarteifio could not have caused re-configuration of the distribution of the sensible, considering the presence the show has gained in media. The argument that women’s cultural work as returnees is serious and politically engaged and must they must be considered as cultural brokers is also supported as the series is aesthetically political and produces a representation that constitutes dissensus in media distribution of the sensible.
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Appendix A: List of *An African City* Episodes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Return</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sexual Real Estate</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An African Dump</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Customs Emergency</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Belly Button Test</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>He Facebooked Me</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Condom Etiquette</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>An Ode to Saturdays</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>#TEAMDADE, #TEAMNGOZI</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A Big Decision</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix B: In-depth Interview Guide

Title of research: Diasporan African Women Media Articulations: Reconfigured Shifting Subjectivities of Returnees

In-depth Interview guide

- Please tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about the motivation for this web series.
- What is the importance of authenticity to you?
- Why did you focus on the African woman returnee?
- Tell me about the lifestyles represented in the series
- Can you tell me about the constraints for producing the web series if any?
- Tell me about the gender roles represented in the web series and how they relate to gender roles for women in Ghana and the United States.
- Please talk about costuming, other production choices and logistics.
- Would you say you are a feminist?
- Tell me about your choice of distribution outlet.
- What has been some of the responses to the web series?
Appenidix C: Recruitment Text for In-depth Interviews

Dear Nicole Amarteifio,

I am a Ghanaian PhD student in my third year at Ohio University researching women’s representation in media. I saw your web series An African City and would like to conduct further examination and research. As part of data for analysis, I would like to have an interview with you and the co-producer at your convenience. I am in Ghana till the 10th of January and would be grateful if you can find some time for an interview. Between 30 minutes and an hour should suffice.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you

Benedine Azanu
Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Introductions: Please introduce yourselves to the group? We’ll go round the table.

2. Kindly name identities being represented in the series. This can include other characters apart from the five main characters.

3. How would you describe these identities (for example, how are the identities Ghanaian or not)

4. How would you describe the representations? / What is the nature of their representations?

5. How empowering are the representations for African women?

6. How disempowering are the representations?

7. Do the representations represent African women returnees in Ghana? Why or why not?

8. Do you identify with the representations? Why or why not?

9. Let’s discuss the gender roles represented.

Probes for Discussion:

- Salary Probes for discussion
- Clothing
- Education
- Sexuality
- Food
- Lifestyle
- Marriage
- Male partners and relationships
- Gender roles
- Cultural authenticity
Ending the discussion: That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us.
Appendix E: Consent Form

Ohio University Adult Consent Form

Title of research: Transnational Media Articulations of Ghanaian women: Mapping Shifting Returnee Identities

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being conducted to meet requirements of dissertation for a Doctorate in Communication. This study is to find out how Ghanaians perceive the web series and the specific identities that are represented. We also hope to gain understanding in enriching research on stereotypical portrayals of African women. If you agree to be part of the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group. You should not participate in the study if:

1. You are under 18 years
2. Do not speak English
3. You are not a student at University of Education Master of Communication Program

Your participation will last between 45 minutes to one hour.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated. The study seeks your perceptions about the representation of African women in An African City web series.

Benefits

While there are no immediate personal benefits, your participation is important and valuable. Your contribution will help researcher’s gain deeper understanding of perceptions of media representation of African women in general and Ghanaian women in particular. The study will contribute to available information resource for communication and media studies researchers, gender activists, international development agencies and society at large.

Confidentiality and Records

The information you give us is completely confidential, and we will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group. Data collected from focus group
interviews will be collected on digital voice-recording device and then stored in a password protected file on a password protected computer. Once the information has been obtained, it will all be transcribed, and the recording deleted immediately. Identifying information will be removed during transcription.

To ensure that information is kept private and confidential, we ask participants to respect each other’s confidentiality.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep the study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;

* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

* Representatives of University of Education, Winneba (UEW)

**Compensation**

No compensation will be provided.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Benedine Azanu, ba101612@ohio.edu or 7402743363 or the advisor Dr. Steve Howard, at howard@ohio.edu, or 740 593 1834.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
• you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
• you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
• you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
• you are 18 years of age or older;
• your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
• you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature ________________________________              Date ______________