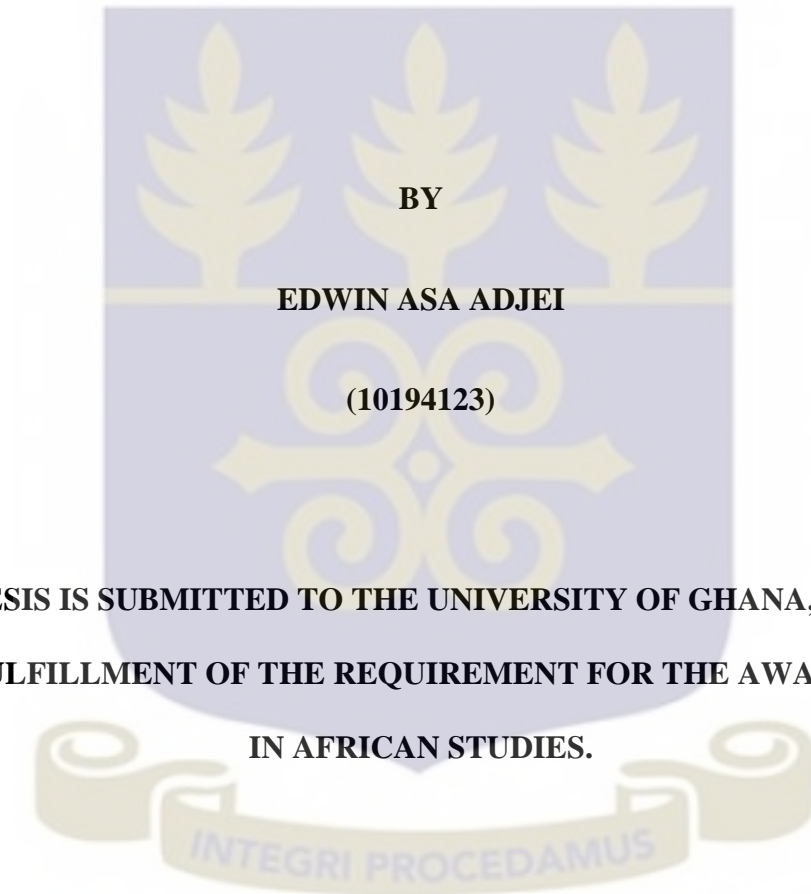


**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES**

**GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES IN AFRICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**



**BY**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil  
IN AFRICAN STUDIES.**

**JULY 2014**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. Where sources have been cited, they have been acknowledged. I have not presented this thesis anywhere in any form for another degree.

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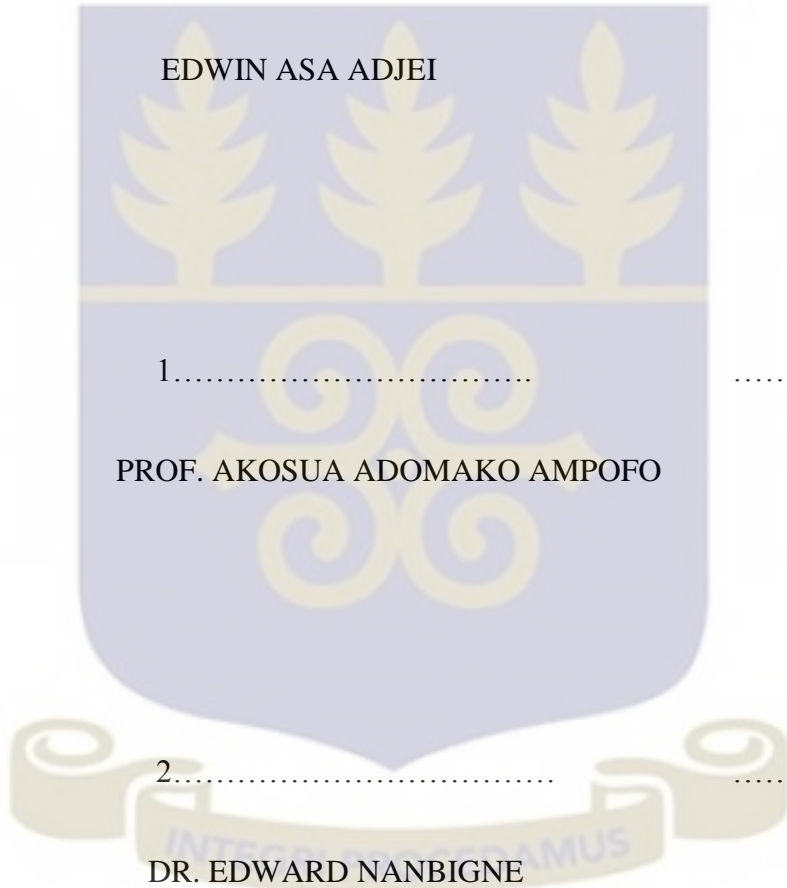
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DR. EDWARD NANBIGNE

DATE



## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, Dr Godwin Adjei and Mrs Irene Adjei, who had faith in me and invested so much to make me who I am today.



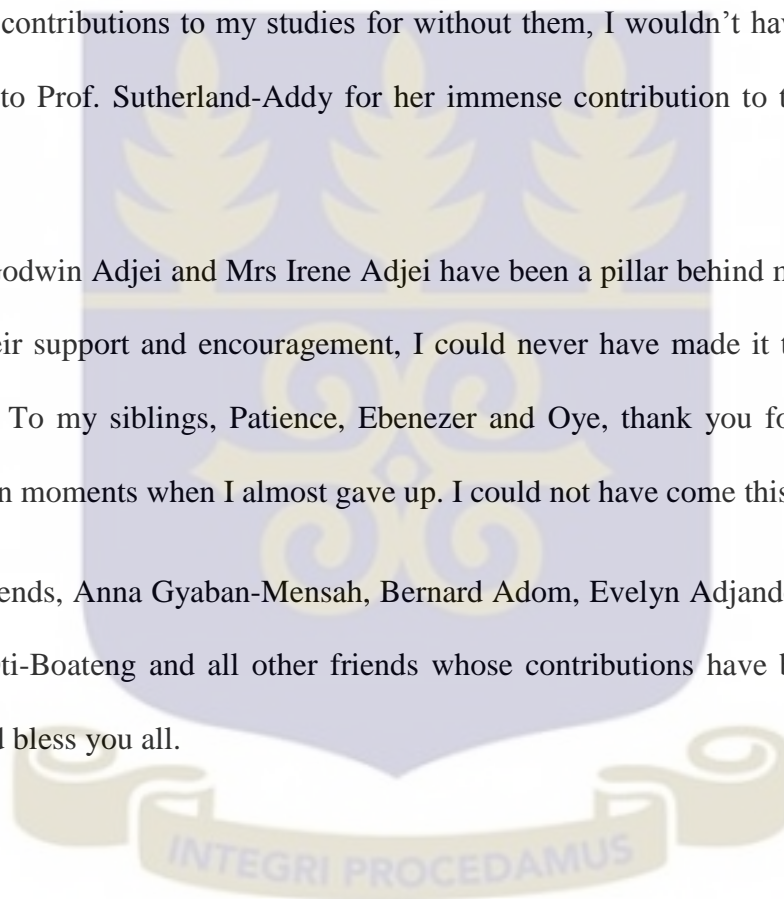
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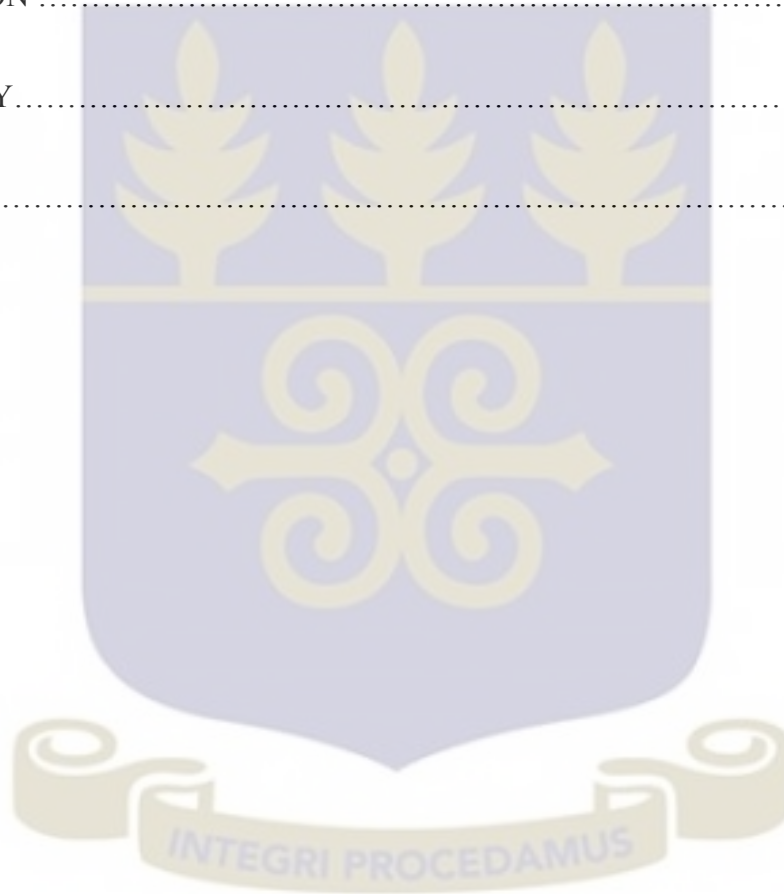
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOWAC : Ministry of Women and Children

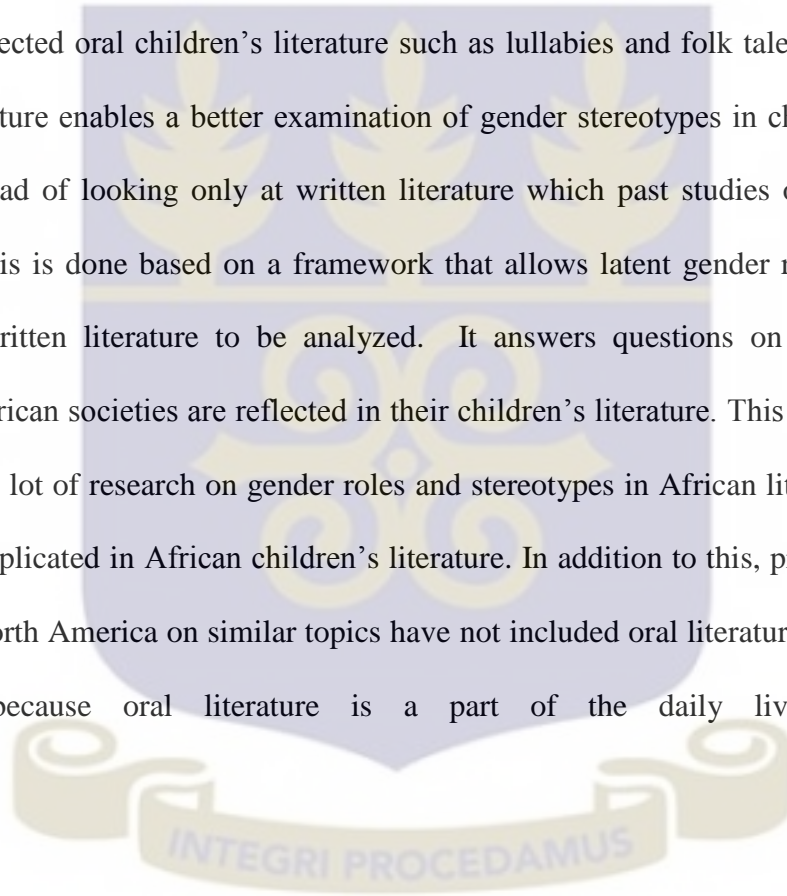
UNICEF : United Nations Children's Fund

GLSS : Ghana Living Standards Survey



## ABSTRACT

This study looks at the gender role stereotypes in African children's literature. It is conducted through a content analysis of the written works of several African writers of children's literature in addition to selected oral children's literature such as lullabies and folk tales. Looking at oral and written literature enables a better examination of gender stereotypes in children's literature as a whole, instead of looking only at written literature which past studies on this topic have done. The analysis is done based on a framework that allows latent gender role stereotypes in both oral and written literature to be analyzed. It answers questions on how gender role stereotypes in African societies are reflected in their children's literature. This work is important because despite a lot of research on gender roles and stereotypes in African literature for adults, it has not been replicated in African children's literature. In addition to this, previous researches in Europe and North America on similar topics have not included oral literature which this study has included because oral literature is a part of the daily lives of Africans.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature abounds in African societies and a life without any form of literature is virtually unimaginable in African societies. Whether through storytelling, lullabies, story books, work songs, play songs or riddles, literature permeates every aspect of the lives of adults and children in Africa. The impact of this body of children's literature on lives is tremendous but most people are not aware of the influence. Children are socialized in many ways: Through imitating the things they see adults do (modeling), the stories they are told, the books they read and in many other ways. Through socialization, children learn what it means to be male or female. Socialization influences children's gender ideology when they grow up. A lot of formal education on gender equality for adults has taken place over the past few years. Unfortunately, children have most often been left out of this education on gender. Although children have often been left out, they are socialized to perpetuate the gender ideologies that their societies hold. One of the ways that children are socialized for their future roles as men and women is through the literature they read and are exposed to. Through literature, children get to identify with characters and assume those characters' outlook in real life. The literature that children read or are exposed to is often not censured for being gender sensitive or not. This leaves children open to being socialized in ways that perpetuate the gender imbalance that exists in African societies. Children's literature is one way in which children get socialized and a way through which children's notions of gender can be influenced. This work sets out to find out the ways that gender is portrayed in African children's literature and if these portrayals of gender are stereotyped or not.

## 1.2 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Having explained what literature is, this section seeks to explain what children's literature is and distinguish it from adult literature. African children get introduced to both oral and written literature: oral literature first and later, written literature. Just like literature, there isn't a single accepted definition of what children's literature is. Huch, Helper and Hickman define children's literature as "books that have the child's eye at the center" (Huch, Helper, & Hickman, 1993: 8). A position that many people in the field take is represented by Hancock (2000: 46) which says, "Children's literature can be defined as literature that appeals to the interests, needs, and reading preferences of children and captivates children as its major audience." Another definition is that "Children's literature refers to books written for children up to twelve or thirteen years of age" (Schmidt, 1965: 61). The definition that also appeals to several people is, "Children's literature consists of texts that consciously or unconsciously address particular constructions of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation (for example, animals, puppets, undersized or underprivileged grown-ups), the commonality being that such texts display an awareness of children's disempowered status (whether containing or controlling it, questioning or overturning it) (Rudd, 2004: 39). I do not agree with these definitions as they all allude to children's literature as written text. As said earlier, literature includes lullabies, folktales, children's play songs, riddles, witticisms and other forms of literature they get exposed to. Oral literature is not written so defining children's literature to include only written text excludes all these as children's literature. With the knowledge that literature does not only consist of "the written product of the creative imagination", this work will look at African children's literature as the written and oral products of the creative imagination, targeted at children, which children in Africa get exposed to.

Picture books are a part of children's literature. Through the pictures, children are able to understand the message being sent out through the book. The pictures act as words to the child. In writing about children's picture books, Osa (1985: 752) writes that "the first form of literature that most children encounter is picture books. Where the child essentially discovers the world of literature is in picture books. Words in picture books are primarily for the adult or any other person who can read the text to the child; illustrations, the core of picture books, are for the children.

There are some contestations in the field of children's literature. These contestations are as a result of the difficulty in agreeing on a single accepted definition for what makes up children's literature. Some of these contestations according to Maybin and Watson are: "can the same judgment used in judging adult literature be used in judging children's literature, is what a child-reader thinks about a book more valid than what an adult literary critic might think?" Maybin and Watson also add that, "these difficulties are compounded by the sheer range of material that has at different times and places counted as children's literature. In addition to fiction, 'children's literature' might well encompass picture books, storytelling, drama, television, ballet and film, and the wide variety of nursery rhymes, ballads, and limericks typically found in poetry anthologies for children"(Mayin & Watson 2009:4).

The next debate in the field of children's literature is on who produces children's literature. Many assume that adults produce children's literature for children. This could have been true in the past but children now produce some literature for themselves and other children such as stories and play songs so assuming that children's literature is produced solely by adults will be an erroneous assumption. This debate on who produces children's literature is delved into by Hunt (2009: 13) and he asks, "Do these texts belong to children or they are simply aimed at

them?” Unfortunately, he does not give any answers. In adding their voice to this debate, Maybin & Watson (2009:3) write, “What children’s literature is remains an area for continuing debate, centered on the conception of children’s literature itself. The term appears to be an oxymoron: how can books which are written by adults, published and disseminated by adults and largely bought by adults be appropriately called children’s literature?” Rudd extends the target of children’s literature to adults as well. He writes that, “Adults are as caught up in this discourse as children, engaging dialogically with it (writing/reading it), just as children themselves engage with many ‘adult’ discourses. But it is how these texts are read and used that will determine their success as ‘children’s literature’; how fruitfully they are seen to negotiate this hybrid, or border country” Rudd (2004: 39). As said earlier, in recent years, children’s literature is not only produced by adults and in order not to look at only materials written or produced by adults; books written by children will also be included in the analysis of this work in order to have a complete analysis of works by both adults and children.

Children’s literature plays a part in the socialization of children. As Bosmajian (2009:127) says, children’s literature socializes the child to accept the values and symbolic structures of society. Through the power of story, the young reader is allowed to explore but always for the purpose of accepting or rejecting social communities that adults desire or fear. Stories could teach boys and girls through precept and example to be reasonable and civil human beings who could distinguish right from wrong.

The value of literature to African children can never be underestimated. Osa (2003:142) Notes that,

“Although neglected for too long as a subject worthy of scholarly attention, children’s literature in Africa has always been an

important part of African literature. For generations, Africans have told stories in their multitudinous indigenous tongues to children and young people, and to adults as well, in their social, informal, or formal gatherings. For the majority of Africans then, storytelling is not a new art, but one as old as the African continent itself. In the oral tradition, for example, African folk tales meant for education and entertainment abound on the continent. Handed down principally by word of mouth from one generation to the next, these folk tales still function as tools for teaching the African cultural heritage” (Osa, 2003: 142).

The earliest form of literature that children get exposed to in Africa is the lullaby. Lullabies are mostly sung by mothers to their babies even though they are sometimes used as a means of communication between a woman and her rivals or her husband or other people in the environment. This work focuses on the role of lullabies in children’s lives and so will focus on lullabies as a means of socialization for children. “Lullabies are children’s poetry composed with the understanding and appreciation of the child’s needs. They are among the earliest oral forms to which infants are exposed. They do not have a fixed performance location. Although they are usually performed to entertain or soothe a crying baby, lullabies also serve as media for socializing children. Mothers or any other adult performs them. A lullaby can either be slow, rhythmic, or sleep-inducing, depending on what the intention for it is. As a socialization tool, lullabies are used to introduce infants and babies primarily to the language of the society (Dube, 2004: 129).

The next form of literature most children get exposed to after the lullaby is the folktale. Folktales are told all over Africa and they play a very important role in the socialization of children.

“One of the earliest oral literature forms that children are exposed to is the folktale. Like lullabies, adults perform these to children in their earliest years, but some older children, under the supervision of an elder, perform the stories too. They are performed during the winter, and in the early hours of the evening. There is a taboo that if one performs them outside the stipulated restrictions, the performer will grow horns. Folktales are an important medium for socializing children in that they incorporate various other folklore forms such as songs, jokes, and riddles. They are also constructed in a manner that allows audience participation. Most of the tales targeted at children carry important moral messages, such as good behavior, kindness, respect, cooperation, and love. Some of the messages are contained in the titles of the tales, for example as in “The Greedy Dog” or “A Kind Woman” (Dube, 2004: 131).

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

A lot of research has been done on gender roles and gender stereotypes in adult literature and with the impact literature has on societies and especially children, research into children’s literature is also very important. Also, according to Montgomery (2009:19), “The scholarly study of children’s literature is a relatively new endeavour and it is only recently that a large body of critical literature has grown up around children’s books.” Scholarly studies of children’s literature in Africa are relatively scantier than occurs globally and so this study will contribute to the corpus of literature on children’s literature in Africa and also contribute to the debate on gendered representations in children’s literature. It will add new knowledge to already existing studies on gender roles and stereotyping in children’s literature especially concerning literature for children in Africa on which to my knowledge, little research has been done. Investigations into gender role stereotypes in children’s literature will make this study valuable for parents, educators and book writers as it will make these people conscious of what they are feeding into

the minds of children as they write or introduce children to literature. In addition to the above mentioned significance of this study, this study is useful because it will examine gender stereotypes in children's literature in Africa, which despite the researches on gender role representations in American and European children's literature, has not been examined. Also, it will contribute to the debate on gender role representation in children's literature and also add another dimension to the debate by adding oral literature for children.

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study will be analyzed based on a conceptual framework built upon the seven roles framework developed by Oppong (1980) which looks at seven roles women play during their lives. These roles, according to Oppong (1980) are maternal, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community and individual roles. In addition to these roles, this framework will add the religious and political roles. The framework will be expanded to look at the roles of both the masculine and feminine genders that is for boys and men and for women and girls. In order for the framework to be used for both males and females, the framework will for example look at parental roles instead of maternal roles as used by Oppong in addition to the other roles. Information to be collected will be based on the activities associated with a particular role and will be analyzed based on the stereotypical roles in which masculine and feminine genders are portrayed while they play these roles as they go through life.

In expanding Oppong's framework, I will look at some concepts of role that are related to my work, such as role contexts and social systems. After that, I will look at the scope of each of

these nine roles in the work and what each of these roles is supposed to include. This is further developed in the next chapter.

### **1.5 OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of this study is to find out how gender role stereotypes are portrayed in children's literature.

### **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions for this study will focus on the nature and extent of traditional gender images of characters presented in children's literature. The study will seek to find out what kind of social roles for males and females are reflected in children's literature. It will also seek to find out what kinds of stereotypes are reflected in children's literature. The work will also seek to find out if the portrayals of masculinity and femininity in children's literature deviate from traditional stereotypical presentations of gender or reinforce them. Lastly, the work will seek to find out if the representations in oral literature differ from or are the same as those in written literature.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGY**

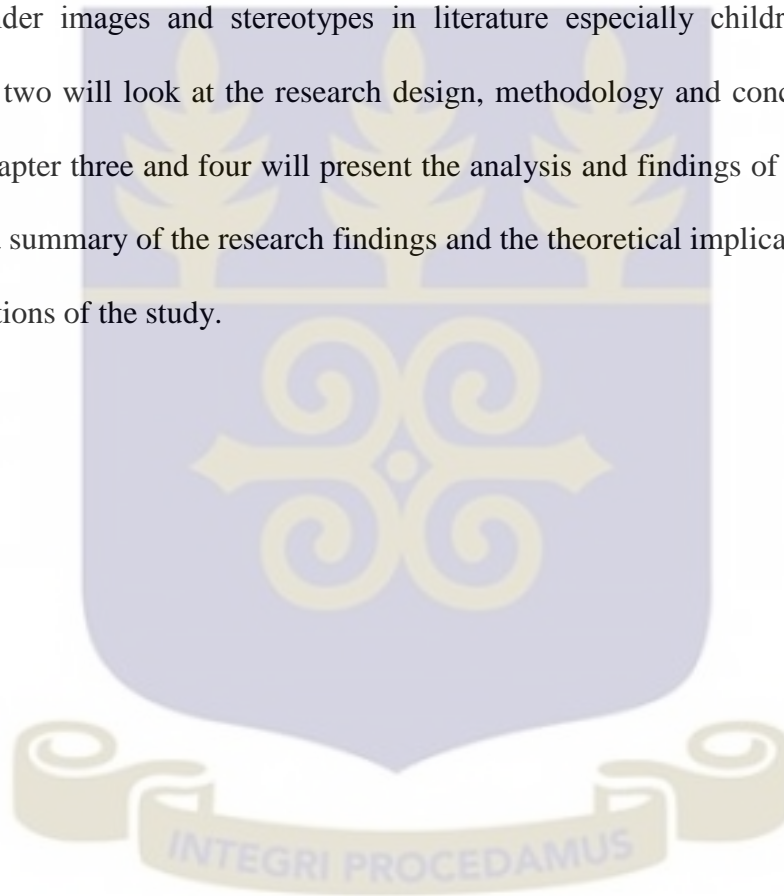
This work has a goal of sifting the gender stereotypical representations found in the literature children get exposed to because “children’s books (and oral literature) present a microcosm of ideologies, values and beliefs from the dominant culture, including gender ideologies and scripts” (Taylor, 2003:301). This study analyzes not only written literature for children but also looks at the oral literature children get exposed to. This is because even though written children’s literature is targeted at children, children get exposed to oral literature since most oral literature is not specifically targeted at children but it still has an impact on their lives since they are exposed to it daily. This will to a large extent show how far the canker of gender stereotyping has burrowed. As a result of them being an important mechanism for teaching gender roles, this work will be looking at whether they present these gender roles in a stereotypical manner or whether they deviate from traditional gender stereotypical roles. More on the methodology is discussed in the next chapter.

## **1.8 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

There were several limitations to this study. First, the results are limited in their external validity. The texts selected for this research were selected through a purposive sample and not a random sample. Because not all children’s literature was analyzed, the results of this study may not be generalizable beyond the selected texts. Also, only a certain amount of gender images and stereotypes were recorded based on the roles analyzed leaving many other stereotypes excluded from analysis. Lastly, my limitations in other African languages restricted me to only texts written or translated into English.

## **1.9 ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

Chapter one will contain the introduction to the study, aims and objectives, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and a brief introduction to the methodology and theoretical framework of the study along with the organization of the study. Chapter two will look at literature on gender images and stereotypes in literature especially children's literature. In addition, chapter two will look at the research design, methodology and conceptual framework for this work. Chapter three and four will present the analysis and findings of the study. Chapter five will look at a summary of the research findings and the theoretical implications of the results along with limitations of the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at literature on gender images and stereotypes in literature especially children's literature and also introduces readers to the research design, methodology and conceptual framework for this work.

“Childhood is generally defined either by physical and mental characteristics –size, development or maturity, and so on - which are common to all children or by local, cultural decisions. The second idea of childhood changes with time, place commercialism, politics and even with individuals” (Maybin & Watson, 2009:2). In this study, age will be used to define who a child is. “A child is defined as a person aged under fifteen” (GLSS 4). Africa has a large population of children and based on the role literature is expected to play in the lives of individuals, it can be seen that the kind of literature children get exposed to is very important since it exposes or reinforces societal notions of gender stereotypes to children.

There are several reasons why we should be interested, indeed concerned, about the current and future gender orientations of children and the literature they get exposed to. This is because, “Styles of gender and sexual interaction between males and females are ‘rehearsed’ during adolescence, and research carried out with and among adolescent boys around the world suggests that viewing women as sexual objects, use of coercion to obtain sex and viewing sex from a performance oriented perspective often begins in adolescence or even in childhood and may continue into adulthood” (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2007: 41). If the adolescent period is

the time when stored up memories are put into practice, then it is very important the kind of material that children get exposed to during their developmental years as the things stored up in their memories are bound to be practiced later.

## **2.1 ORAL LITERATURE**

Literature is made up of oral and written literature. Not all scholars accept that oral literature deserves to be called literature. Finnegan succinctly expresses this in her writing about oral literature. She says, “The concept however remains contentious. Some scholars reject oral literature as a self-contradiction: how could something defined as written (Latin *litterae*, letters) be simultaneously defined as spoken?” (Finnegan, 2004: 622) Okpewho outlines the various terms used to describe the subject of oral literature. Among these terms are “orature”, which emphasizes the oral character of the literature and then “traditional literature”, which puts emphasis on the fact that this form of literature comes from the past and is handed down from generation to generation. The flaw in this term is that, this form of literature is considered static and does not include anything new. Yet, another term often used to describe this field of study is folk literature. This characterizes the creators of this literature as uneducated common and rural, but this term is also inappropriate considering the classes of people who perform this form of literature. There are oral literary performances by people who have had university degrees and other forms of higher tertiary education. Folklore is also another term often used. The use of this term also in some way undermines the literary aspect of what the folk do. (Okpewho, 1992:3) The term which is most often used is oral literature. This term also seems contradictory considering the two words that it is made of: oral which is “something in a spoken form” and

literature “something in a written form.” Okpewho (1992:3) Scholars such as Albert Lord agree with the term oral literature. He argues that, a piece of work qualifies as literature not because it is written but because of its quality. This therefore suggests that we cannot just consider any piece of writing as literature unless it has attained some level of creativity. Hence Lord (1991:16) defines oral literature as “words heard when set in the form of art.” Okpewho also stresses on the importance of creativity or quality to make a work qualify as literature and not just because the work is in a written form. He agrees with the term oral literature and defines it as “creative text that appeals to our emotions” (Okpewho, 1992:2). These claims therefore suggest that there are other forms of work which although not written, still qualify as literature. This has meant extending the concept of literary expression to include many unwritten forms.

Oral literature is a society’s creation about its environment to satisfy the various needs and aspirations of the people in it. Some of these needs might be to entertain its members through the use of love songs, folktales, work songs and lullabies. Others console its members when they are in grief. An example of this is the dirge. Others instill positive traits in its members. An example is through the use of proverbs. Yet, others are also intended to recount the deeds of their heroes as a way of praising them and also calling on other members of the society to also contribute their quota in fighting the good course of the society. Examples are legends and epics. Oral literature has various types including narratives; these normally deal with the description of events. Examples of these are storytelling, epics, myths and legends. There are also poetic ones, which show high imagination and deep feeling. Among these are dirges, love songs, work songs and war songs. Besides, drama is also another type of oral literature. Examples of these are various forms of traditional drama and popular drama. Again, witticisms are also characterized as forms of oral literature. Among these are proverbs, riddles, and puns. Falola defines literature

as “an artistic form that uses language as its medium” (Falola, 2000: 286). Using such a definition then we can accept that literature is not limited to the written or printed word alone, nor even words alone since dance drama which mainly uses paralinguistic features to communicate to the audience is also considered literature. African oral literature has all the necessary qualities to be considered “literature” in the truest sense of the word. This idea is supported by de Graft Hanson (1991: 1) who says, “It is now generally accepted that literature need not in spite of its etymology always be the written product of the creative imagination. What is caused by man’s imagination without the aid of writing, and given expression by word of mouth and by the same means transmitted from generation to generation, also deserves the lofty designation of literature; in this case, oral literature”.

Kizza, writing about African literature writes that,

“The African oral tradition, has always been, and still is, a day to day communication and practical tool for ordinary people to share, archive, authenticate and validate their existence and experiences. It is still largely respected as such. Because it is a multipurpose genre, the African oral tradition attracts a wide, diverse audience in literary circles where it can be studied from a variety of perspectives such as a cultural tool, as a rich and most authentic historical source, and a significant literary aspect that gave birth to and is still anchoring the genre of modern African literature. Even those readers who are not seeking literary excitement and fulfillment can still appreciate the African oral tradition, because it is quite entertaining, it engages one’s imagination, and probably most important, the themes implicit in its literature highlight what makes us all human” ( Kizza 2010: 4).

Kizza goes on to add that,

“The significance of the African oral tradition cannot be overstated. Although there is a documented history of writing traditions among Africans, most of these people still

privilege their oral tradition over the written ones as a valuable and very practical multipurpose tool that enriches and gives meaning to their day-to-day communication. In addition to its entertainment value, the African oral tradition is also an encyclopedia of the various peoples' histories, cultural experiences, traditions and values; a record of their feelings, attitudes, and responses to their experiences and environment; and also a tool for preserving and disseminating that knowledge both internally and globally" (Kizza, 2010 : 5).

With the arguments made above, one may realize that excluding oral literature from the body of literature to be analyzed for this study will be an attempt to exclude the heart and soul of literature in Africa, an unforgivable exclusion that would result in the exclusion of the literature that has the most influence in Africa. I agree with Kizza who says, "As African literature scholarship surges, literary scholars are increasingly pointing out that no serious scholar, student or even one casually interested in this discipline can afford to ignore the African oral tradition which is the genesis of the modern written African literature." This work takes cognizance of the fact that both written and oral literature exist in Africa and therefore includes texts from both the written literature which is targeted at children and the oral literature which children are exposed to.

## **2.2 LITERATURE**

There is not one acceptable definition of literature. Despite this, the few people who have attempted to define literature have often defined it without cognizance to the oral literature. Many of those who have attempted to define literature have defined it as Widdowson does. Widdowson defines literature as written works, by which he means "works whose originating

form and final point of reference is their existence as written textuality.” According to him, literature must be “reproducible in print,” and a centrally determining characteristic of “the literary” is that it is realized in a tangible object which is readily present for close inspection or re-reading, and that it does not have to be performed (or pre-emptively interpreted) in order to be read for the first time as unmediated text (Widdowson 1999: 128). This definition regards literature only as written material and excludes oral literature which is predominant among Africans. Cuddon however sees literature as “a vague term which usually denotes works which belong to the major genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, short story and ode. If we describe something as “literature”, the term carries with it qualitative connotations which imply that the work in question has superior qualities; that it is well above the ordinary run of written forms”(Cuddon, 1999:472). Cuddon’s definition does not limit literature to written works only but expands the definition to include oral literature too.

### **2.3 GENDER**

Gender refers to “the social relationships between men and women and the way those relationships are made” (Aina, 2006: 1). “Gender and sex are not equivalent and gender as is generally accepted today is a social construction that does not flow automatically from genitalia and reproductive organs” Mead (1935) cited in (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2009:247).

### 2.3.1 GENDER STEREOTYPING

Stereotypes as defined by Silverman (2012: 372) “are overly simplified conceptions, images, or beliefs about individuals and specific social groups.” Stereotypes are defined by Lindsey (1997:2) as “oversimplified conceptions that people who belong to the same group or category share certain traits in common.” These oversimplified conceptions are extended also to roles and both the masculine and feminine genders are expected to play certain roles when occupying certain statuses. This oversimplification entails putting people into boxes into which they might not fit or might be detrimental to their future aspirations and achievements. “Stereotypes may serve as sites where models of behaviour (representation) become models for behaviour (warnings, advice), making narratives available for practical application to listeners’ experiences” (Barber, 1997; Newell, 2000) cited in (Adomako Ampofo & Awo Asiedu, 2012: 260).

Etter-Lewis (2010:168) citing Thompson (2002) says, “In all cultures and societies, gender stereotypes begin from the moment we are born and are identified as either a boy or a girl. This label determines how we will be treated, how we are expected to behave and our view of the world.” With gender stereotyping being a part of the lives of individuals from the day of birth, it plays a huge role in the perception and actions of individuals. Laye (1954: 100) discusses how he and his age mates who are going to be circumcised are told by the men who perform the initiation that, “Now that you are going to become men, conduct yourselves like men; drive away your fears. A man is afraid of nothing.” Lindsey sums this up by saying, “The categories of male

and female are stereotyped such that members of the category are assumed to possess certain characteristics by virtue of their biological categories” (Lindsey, 1997:2).

### **2.3.2 GENDER SOCIALIZATION**

Several definitions exist for socialization. Adomako Ampofo and Boateng define socialization as “that process by which a society’s values are transmitted and learned in a lifelong process, and there are many important socializing agents including schools and training institutions, religious organizations, peers and the media” (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2009:247). This idea is supported by Assimeng (2007: 101) which says, “Socialization is the institutionalized process and procedure by which the human infant is brought up to become a functioning person in an ongoing society.” Assimeng adds that, “right from the time of birth, individuals are taught through socialization to play certain roles which society deems useful for the perpetuation of its institutional arrangements. Socialization, in this sense is the process of acquiring the ways of life of a society or culture so that a person can effectively function within that society or culture. It is the process by which individuals learn to become role-playing members of society. It entails the learning of the cultural norms, the cherished values, the group-shared expectations, and the do’s and don’ts of the community” (Assimeng, 2007: 103).

Sex is biologically determined while gender is culturally constructed. “While still contested today, it is generally accepted that the varied sex role assignments given to men and women in different cultures provide no evidence that the characteristics of maleness and femaleness are biologically determined. Rather, it is argued, these sex-based variations in behavior are borne out of cultural definitions of sex appropriate behavior” (Adomako Ampofo, 2001:197).

In order for societies to function well, people are assigned roles in societies based on criteria like sex, age and competence. As Adomako Ampofo aptly puts it, “Every society prescribes appropriate roles for females and males, and varying levels of sanctions for individuals who deviate from these norms... Ghanaian societies, like all others, have prescriptions as to appropriate male and female roles. These are expressed in community norms and values... A man who deviates from the appropriate male roles is called *banyan besia*, literally meaning male-female. Conversely, a woman who is judged to be too aggressive is referred to as *babasia-kokonin*, meaning male female” (Adomako Ampofo, 2001: 199).

The discussions above point to the fact that socialization is a process that begins from the very minute a child is born and continues throughout life. Literature for children is part of the socialization process and plays a part in the socialization of children and with its appealing nature, one can easily see how it could have a negative impact on the targeted audience if they assimilate poisonous content which can be secretly encapsulated in it or a positive impact if information that enhances equality and respect for the various gender is encapsulated in it.

### **2.3.3 GENDER IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE**

Children get introduced to literature the very day they are born through the lullabies that are used to lull them to sleep or to hush their feeble cries instigated by hunger or other forms of discomfort. Children’s literature is a way of socializing children. As Yenika-Agbaw (2008: 111) says, “Children’s literature, as many scholars and educators are aware, does not simply educate and entertain, but can also create possibilities for children. This is because images embedded in stories and illustrations can or do define reality for most children.” Vandergrift adds that

“Since children's literature is produced by adults for children, it reflects adult perceptions of what childhood was or "ought to be" at a particular time. Whether or not that literature was overtly didactic, and it often was, it reveals, at least to some extent, expectations of child behavior and relationships with adults. It also gives some indications of the social customs of childhood such as language, popular games and toys, school life, and even styles of dress. All of this information helps the contemporary student to see children and the literature created for them in a larger cultural context”. Vandergrift (1990: 79)

This is important as literature consciously or unconsciously presents or reinforces a society's ideals and gender role representations in children's literature could be a representation of entrenched forms of gender stereotyping which children are mentally assaulted with from the very day they are born.

A study of award winning children's story books by Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada & Ross (1972) in the United States of America found out that boys were portrayed as active and outdoors-oriented, while girls stayed indoors and behaved more passively. They also found out that in most of these books, men were leaders while women were followers. A replication of this research by Williams, JoEtta, Williams & Malecha (1987) found out that some improvements in roles for women had taken place and the characters in the books were portrayed as playing traditional gender roles. Research on the same collection of books by Crabb & Bielaswki (1994) found that women were portrayed playing traditional gender roles associated with the household and using tools used during housework. Other research work by Clark, Lennon & Morris (1993) suggested that the traditional portrayal of women in children's books is giving way to a more egalitarian depiction for both women and men. This certainly suggests that the issues are far from settled and require more research.

Taylor, after a content analysis of gender stereotypes in children's literature came out with conflicting findings. He said, “The book is only a book and we are reading too much into it.

Things have changed and more recent children's books no longer reflect attitudes about gender, especially for women and the books simply reflect reality" (Taylor, 2003:305). He also found out that "Children's preschool books are an important cultural mechanism for teaching children gender roles" (Taylor, 2003:301). He concludes with, "If language does shape and condition our perceptions of reality, then parents who desire equality for their daughters or egalitarianism for their sons ought to look more closely at what their children are reading" (Taylor, 2003:306). Finally, in his conclusion, he also said, "Until someone actually sits down and reads a book and analyzes every picture and word, you don't see the hidden messages or problems with inequality that kids are being exposed to" (Taylor, 2003:307).

Taylor further notes that, "given the assumption that language shapes and conditions reality, then it might be useful to ask what children might be learning about gender when they learn how to read" (Taylor, 2003:301). This assertion is further supported by Hunt (2009: 15) which says, "However, it cannot be denied that 99.9 percent of children's books are written by adults, nor that all these writers will, necessarily, have an agenda. Even those writers who claim to be nothing but entertainers have their own ideological stance their own ideas of what is right and wrong, their own way of seeing the world, and it is impossible that they should not in some way convey this in their writing manipulatively or not." The literature above gives credence to the fact that a study of gender stereotypes in African children's literature is very important as it affords one a wide spectrum through which to view the present and future of gender relations through the eyes of children as children's literature is supposed to give both adults and children who read it a gateway into the world of children.

It can be assumed then that literature is an arena which influences and can be used to influence children in their formative years, thereby leading to improved notions of gender in adulthood. As

deGraft Hanson(1991: 6) says, “In short, the world of our traditional literature for children is in a sense a microcosm of the world and culture of the children themselves.” Nanbigne (2003) and deGraft Hanson (1991) therefore portray how stereotyping in literature is a reflection of the reality of gender stereotyping in societies and how children’s literature can be used to shape children even as they begin to find their place in the gendered societies in which they live.

Unfortunately, as Silverman (2012: 373) says, “Stereotypes about gender and sexuality are the most prolific form of stereotyping.” Being the most prolific form of stereotyping, they are also the ones mostly found in both oral and written texts. To compound the problems of gender stereotyping in children’s literature, Duvall (2012: 33) says, “In addition to identifying gender differences in children’s preferences for violent content, researchers have argued that children gender – stereotype the content they consume.” If children gender-stereotype the content they consume, then stereotyping in children’s literature could go a long way to foreshadow a society’s future gender relations and roles.

## **2.4 ROLE BEHAVIOUR**

People in societies are not equal. This inequality in societies is a determining factor in how people are perceived and received. Lindsey describes statuses as the series of categories in which society places its members, which determines how they are defined or treated (Lindsey, 1997: 1). Assimeng defines status as “the position of dominance or subordination which is accorded an individual by the different members of his group or community” (Assimeng, 2007: 138).

“We acquire our statuses by achievement, through our own efforts, or by ascription as we are born into them or assume them involuntarily at some other point in the life cycle ... Acquired by ascription, the status of female or male is a master status in that it is one which will affect almost

every aspect of our lives ... The expected behaviour associated with any given status is referred to as role” (Lindsey, 1997: 1-2). Gender is therefore an important aspect of every individual’s life as it affects every aspect of a person’s life.

“Role refers to one’s performance as an individual within a particular social structure by virtue of the status the person occupies” (Assimeng, 2007: 138). As can be seen in both definitions of role, a person’s status comes with roles attached to it. Females and males, mothers and fathers, and daughters and sons are all statuses and all these statuses have different role requirements attached to them. Every society attaches roles to each status and these roles are not the same for all societies. As Nukunya (2003: 17) says, “The kinship system prescribes statuses and roles to people who are in particular relationships. It determines the rules, duties and obligations of individuals and groups in all aspects of life in which these individuals and groups interact.” “Gender roles are defined as those expected attitudes and behaviours which a society associates with each sex” (Lindsey, 1997: 3). This definition, although important, will not be used as it equates gender with sex. With the definition of gender given earlier and as explained, gender does not always map on to sex and so equating gender with sex will result in difficulties in analysis as certain roles will be assigned to the wrong gender.) Myers defines gender role as “a set of behaviour expectations for males and females.” Myers (2010: 181) This definition is in line with the definition of gender given and will be used as it does not equate gender with sex.

## **2.5 ROLE EXPECTATIONS**

Expected roles are what people in particular roles are expected to do and be and role expectations are what individual role players expect to do themselves and how they expect to be treated (Oppong, 1980:29). Societies have role expectations of fathers, mothers and children and it is

these roles that are often stereotyped. As Lindsey (1997: 2) says, “Generally, the status of mother evokes expected roles involving love, nurturing, self-sacrifice, and availability. The status of father evokes expected roles of breadwinner, disciplinarian and ultimate decision maker in the household.”

The delineation that is made when a child is born plays a very important role in the life of this baby because “every society has prescriptions for appropriate characteristics, behaviours, and forms of social intercourse of its members – the young and the old, nobles and commoners, black and white, married and unmarried, females and males, and all of these are under-girded by gendered expectations. These prescriptions and expectations are embedded in the societies’ institutions ranging from the family, through schools, to religious and political institutions and systems (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2009: 245). This argument is furthered by Thompson (2002) which says, “in all cultures and societies, gender stereotypes begin from the moment we are born and are identified as either a boy or a girl. This label determines how we will be treated, how we are expected to behave and our view of the world” (Cited in Etter-Lewis, 2010:168). Ramphele says that “identity formation in almost all cultures is modeled on ideals of what it means to be a man or woman” (Ramphele, 1997:1). This idea is supported by Assimeng ( 2007: 111) which says that in the Ghanaian society, “socialization was always conducted along sex lines. Girls were educated to take up their future roles as mothers and housewives, and boys followed their fathers on the various chores in hunting, fishing, farming or smithing.”

There are several theoretical perspectives that have generally been used to explain how girls learn that they are girls and boys learn that they are boys, and that certain traits and behaviours are accepted as appropriate for the one and not the other. The psychoanalytic theory of gender identification, which is known as the identification theory was popularized by Sigmund Freud.

According to this theory, female and male children identify with the same and other sex parent at different stages of their development, though not in the same ways. Freud's work valorized childhood experiences but has been criticized for constructing a permanent process that leaves little room for later environmental influences. Other theories that have been used to explain children's acquisition of gender notions are operant conditioning, reinforcement, observational learning or modelling and latent learning. "A critique of these theories is that they downplay the role of culture in children's constructions of their gender identities by portraying gender learning as something children do independently of environmental influence (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2009:246). Writers such as Assimeng (2007) and Adomako Ampofo (2001) have attributed this to the socialization process. The socialization process begins at home with the family and as the child grows, other agents of socialization such as school, peers, the media and books also influence the child's upbringing. The presentation of characters in folktales and other children's literature shapes children's views of gender unknowingly

## **2.6 IMPACTS OF LITERATURE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR**

Children's literature presents the society's ideals to children and by doing so, influences children's behaviour positively or negatively. As Huch, Helper, & Hickman (1993: 20) say, "Literature reflects life, yet no book contains all of living. By its very organizing properties literature has the power to shape and give coherence to human experience." They also say "literature has the power to educate both the heart and the mind". With literature educating both the heart and mind, it is important what kind of literature children are fed with since the consequences of the kind of literature they consume could be good or bad depending on the

experiences they have while growing up. The kind of gender roles and stereotypes portrayed in children's literature is therefore very important as it unconsciously teaches children about the roles they are expected to play in their societies and stereotypical representations will not augur well for their future as gendered beings in gendered communities. As the gender schema is the key around which all other information is organized, stereotypical materials found in children's literature could go a long way to influence children's outlook of the various genders and could influence relationships between the masculine and feminine genders in ways that could be difficult to change once they are grounded in the psyche of the child. Gender stereotypes in children's literature could lay the unconscious foundations for chauvinism and other forms of negative gender relations which will be detrimental to gender relations in the country. Children learn from an early age about sex and gender through many forms of socialization and modelling that goes on in their societies. Unfortunately, the socialization process is full of many stereotypical notions that have been held by societies for many years and an acculturation of these notions does not augur well for the future of these societies in terms of gender equality. "The beginning, as Plato observed, is the most important in any human activity, and consequently, these first experiences of the child are crucial for laying the necessary foundations not only for setting him in but also for identifying him with his cultural heritage and promoting in him further a sense of cultural awareness necessary for his future psychological development" (deGraft Hanson, 1991, p. 60).

## 2.7 GENDER IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES IN LITERATURE

Lots of researches have been done in relation to gender images and stereotypes in literature. According to Olupona (2000), a closer analysis of the explanation for gender issues in Africa can be located in the people's mythology, especially in cosmological myths; folktales and proverbs. Oduyoye furthers this argument by saying that "folktales in Africa contain norms, values and traditions which are gender based. Fictional texts are, however, not the mirror image of real society, but they might help us to be more aware of the roots of some problems within the society whose literary production is here under study" (Oduyoye, 2000:52). Thus, a study of literature among children could be a useful tool to finding out the ideas about gender roles which children are being fed with the knowledge that exposure to quality literature might correct wrong notions of gender roles or create wrong notions of gender which could affect future generations positively. Oduyoye says that "Folktales are woven with threads that specify gender roles to appropriately prepare men and women for their roles in society. At the same time, they reinforce it by serving as living parables. When a boy or girl shows signs of non-conformity, the telling of a story ensures that she or he does not become an example to be emulated" (Oduyoye, 2000:52). Kiyimba, writing on literature among the Baganda says, "The subject of masculinity in the oral literature of the Baganda is broad and complex, but three general trends emerge. First, the literature presents a glorified image of the boy child and assigns him a more elevated social position than that of the girl. He is the more welcomed child at birth and he is the leader even when they are children. Second, the system assigns the man enormous power over the women in marriage, politics and parenthood. Also, the man has superior physical strength and society sanctions his use of it to beat the women, especially in the relationship between husband and wife" (Kiyimba, 2010: 49).

Literature may therefore be an important source of gender stereotypes that children use to organize gendered behaviour. It can be seen therefore that literature plays a very important role in the socialization of children and a study of gender role notions in literature for children will be important as it will afford those in the teaching field and parents the knowledge of the implications of their choice of literature exposure for children in schools.

Ramphela (1997:102) says that “identity formation in almost all cultures is modelled on ideals of what it means to be a man or woman”. These ideals are often encapsulated in their literature as Oduyoye(2000) says. Nanbigne says, “Literature in any society serves both as an indicator of change and an arena where the change can occur” (Nanbigne, 2003:22). It can be assumed then that literature is an indicator of the changes in gender notions over the years and an arena which can be used to influence children in their formative years, thereby leading to improved notions of gender in adulthood. According to Gyekye (1996: 85) “Folktales are, in the traditional setting, an effective way of inculcating virtues in children. Also, many of the maxims dealing with practical aspects of life appropriate to children such as respect for elders and obligations to blood relatives are used to show children the acceptable standards of social behavior.” Kiyimba buttresses his point by saying,

It is also significant that many Luganda proverbs sound like general praise songs for them. Among them the following are particularly striking: *Nkoloansajja, egobaengo*( The cough of a man frightens away a leopard) and *Bassajjakyebalya, tekifabwerere* (What men eat is not wasted). These proverbs, along with several others, occur regularly in the speech of the Baganda and are powerful social signals. The suggestion that the cough of a man frightens away a leopard, however idiomatically concealed, loudly proclaims the notion of male strength and invincibility and is intended to contrast the natures of man and woman. These proverbs are an integral part of the cultural construction of masculinity among the Baganda, especially because they function as originators of social authority (Kiyimba, 2010: 41).

“Oral literature and proverbs are frequently used to explain and describe, and tend to hold in place stereotypes about women and men” (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2007: 43). “All literary works in an indirect or subtle way must reflect the society in which they are situated.”(Finnegan 1977:263)

A study of children’s literature therefore is a study of the world of children and the influence literature has on that world.

## **2.8 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Several theories have been used in the analysis of children’s literature. Below, I will write a bit about these theories and why they have not been used. Psychological approaches of various kinds are well recognized in the study of literature and art. Some of these theories are theories linking psychic and human/social development, often expressed in myths, interest in such questions as the psychological significance of fantasy and of symbolic representations (male-female representations or parent-child antagonisms in fairy tales, for example), the social psychological roles of story – telling, or the psychic power of myth in shaping action or imagination and interpretation of the content of folktales and myths in terms of sexual symbolism (psychoanalytic) or universal archetypes(Jungian).

Freud proposed three systems of the mind: -id, ego and superego. The superego is the construct that Freud used to describe the individual’s internalization of social values. These values are instilled in the person primarily by parents, who teach which behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate in given situations. The superego thus represents a set of learned ideals.... He considered the id to be “the original aspect of personality, rooted in the biology of an individual and to consist of unconscious sexual aggressive instincts.... The ego, in his view is an organized aspect of id, formed to provide realistic direction for the

person's impulses. It comes into existence because the needs of the person require appropriate transactions with the environment if they are to be satisfied (Ryckman, 2004:39-41).

This theory will not be used because this study does not seek to replicate psychological studies which have looked at the internalization of social values but rather at the various ways that gender stereotypes are portrayed in children's literature. As Wilson-Tagoe (2012: 123) says, "By exploring how memories, perceptions and sensations of the unconscious impinge on our conscious thoughts and actions, psychoanalysis can reveal how ideologies and norms of gender are internalized and lived by men and women." This theory has been used by several authors in the field of children's literature and as, Wilson-Tagoe (2012: 137) says, "A framework of psychoanalysis, applied in a general sense, provides a strategy for reading how unconscious stirrings speak through ambiguities, gaps and silences of conscious speech." Despite its popularity, this theory will not be used because this work does not aim to uncover unconscious memorizations in children but rather the stereotypes in the literature children get exposed to.

The gender schema theory is another theory that has been used by authors in the field of children's literature. Schemas are relationships between information and social experience that constantly undergo change (Amason, 2012:148). "Gender schemas are described by Sandra Bem as the mental frameworks in which persons organize information concerning those attributes associated with being masculine or male and being feminine or female." (Amason, 2012: 148) "Gender schema theory states that once a child learns appropriate definitions of gender, this becomes the key structure around which all other information is organized." (Lindsey, 1997:61) This theory is useful because as Yenika-Agbaw (2008: 111) says, "Children's literature, as many scholars and educators are aware, does not simply educate and entertain, but can also create possibilities for children. This is because images embedded in stories and illustrations can or do

define reality for most children.” As the gender schema is the key around which all other information is organized, stereotypical materials found in children’s literature could go a long way to influence children’s outlook of the various genders and could influence relationships between the masculine and feminine genders in ways that could be difficult to change once they are grounded in the psyche of the child. “The beginning, as Plato observed, is the most important in any human activity, and consequently, these first experiences of the child are crucial for laying the necessary foundations not only for setting him in but also for identifying him with his cultural heritage and promoting in him further a sense of cultural awareness necessary for his future psychological development” (deGraft Hanson, 1991: 60). Gender stereotypes in children’s literature could lay the unconscious foundations for chauvinism and other forms of negative gender relations which will be detrimental to gender relations in the country. The literature above gives credence to the fact that a study of gender stereotypes in African children’s literature is very important as it affords one a wide spectrum through which to view the present and future of gender relations through the eyes of children as children’s literature is supposed to give both adults and children who read it a gateway into the world of children. Despite the popularity of this theory, it will not be used because this work does not aim to study the schema of children or to find out their thoughts on stereotypes but to study the stereotypes in their literature.

The reference to oral works as a reflection of a people’s way of life brings to mind the theory of reflection in literature. The reflection theory of literature states that, there is a relation between literature and society (Watt 1964; Finnegan 1977). According to Watt, all writing cannot but be a reflection of society since it contains many elements which are socially derived. Language, to begin with, is a social product and most writings, certainly most literature, are related to some established tradition or model of expression (Watt, 1964). This view of Watt is buttressed by

Finnegan who says, “All literature in an indirect and subtle way must reflect the society in which it exists” (Finnegan, 1977). This theory of reflection therefore confirms the idea that literary works such as proverbs are a mirror through which a society can be viewed. Gloudblom expresses the reflectionist view of literature further by pointing out that, this relation between art and literature is not simply a reflection in the sense of mirroring reality. Literary imagination should be seen as a continuation and an extension of the human experience. That continuation can be a ‘reflection’ of the social world, but it may also be a ‘reflection’ or expression of what people hope for, deny or fear (Cited in Nanbigne, 2008). This then suggests that, in these literary works, people might try to comment on the future looking at some of the recent occurrences.

Although many scholars agree on the reflection theory of literature, Watt (1964) criticized some aspects of this theory. To Watt, some of these literary works cannot be accepted as wholly true because the interest of the one who created them might influence what is being put across. Apart from that, in a bid to be creative, literary artist tend to influence the actual work they intend to project. These views rather confirm the theory of reflection because the interest of the individual is modeled by the society and so any view he or she puts across is as a result of what he has been exposed to in the society. Finnegan opposes Watt’s criticism of the theory of reflection in literature. According to her, the view of man is not forced upon him by the study of poetry but people actively mold the world around them. This is because in poetic institutions as in any other institution, people act within a social context (Finnegan, 1977). This theory will also not be used because the focus of this work is on how gender role stereotypes are presented in children’s and not on how children’s literature reflects society.

Role theory concerns one of the most important characteristics of social behaviour the fact that human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective

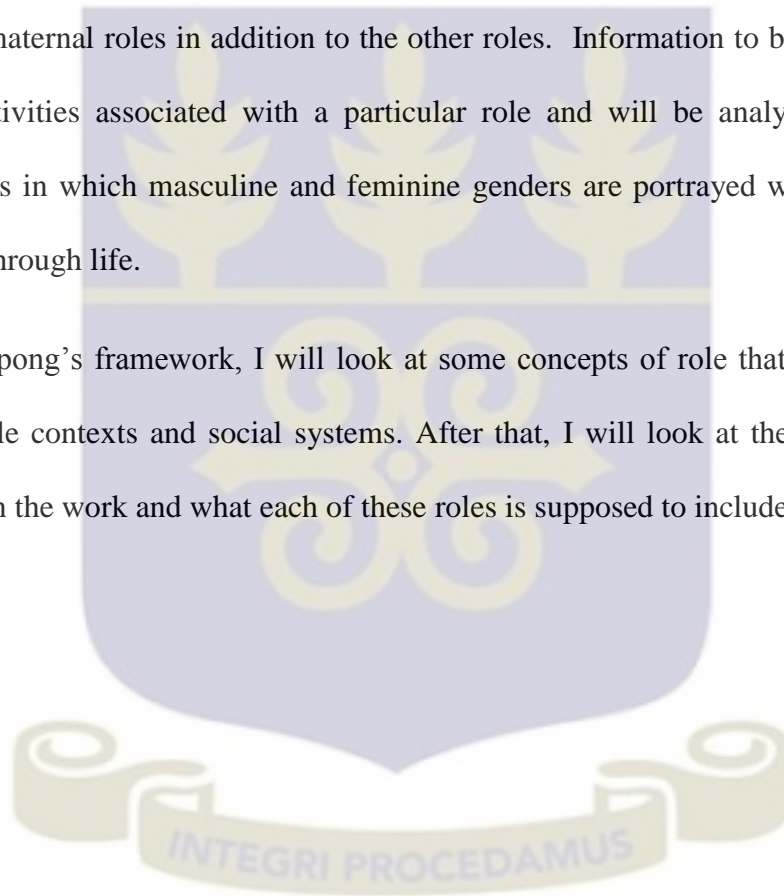
social identities and the situation (Biddle, 1986: 68). Thus role theory may be said to concern itself with a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviours, part or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behaviour that are understood by all and adhered to by performers. (Biddle, 1986: 68) Although role theorists differ in the assumptions they build into basic concepts, they are largely similar in philosophic orientation and in the methods used for their research. (Biddle, 1986:69) “Role theory is useful because it provides a set of concepts for categorizing items of behaviour and expectations, which link the individual actor or actress into the social or cultural system. For the concept of role focuses attention on the one hand on activities and on the other hand on expectations, which are characteristic of particular categories of people and relevant to certain contexts” (Oppong, 1980: 8). Despite its usefulness this theory will not be used because this study focuses on stereotypes in children’s literature and not just on roles. This work will therefore use a framework developed specifically to enable the study delve into all areas of the lives of men and women, boys and girls in order to have a holistic viewpoint of the lives facets of the lives of the masculine and feminine genders.

## **2.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

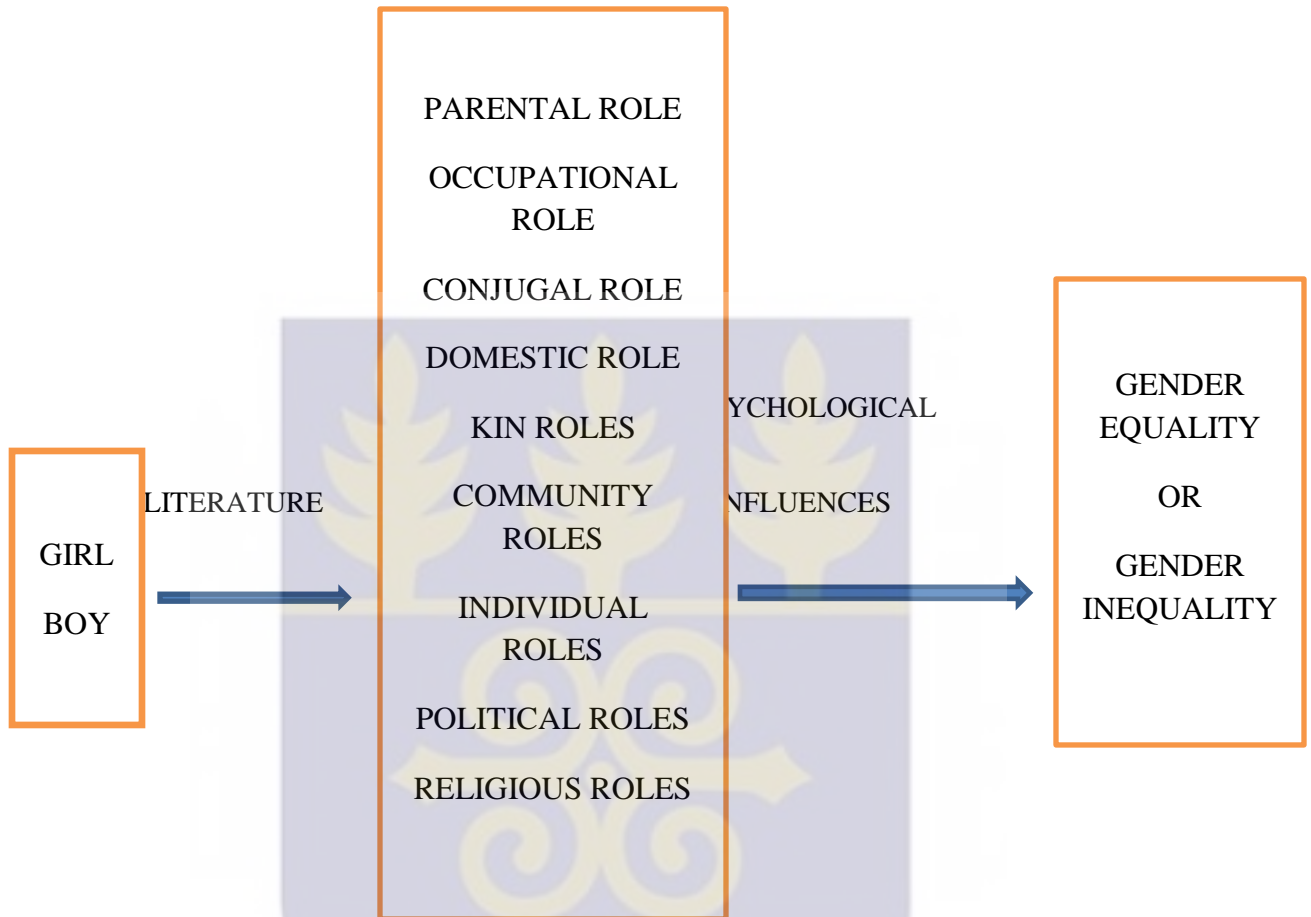
A framework or as Berg calls it, “a theory of action” is what “will define how the researcher expects an intervention, event or process to take a case from one situation to the next. In effect this theory of action will define the issues to be examined during the analysis, and thereby provide linkages between the research question, propositions and analytic criteria” (Berg, 2001:231). The study will be analyzed based on a conceptual framework built upon the seven

roles framework developed by Oppong (1980) which looks at seven roles women play during their lives. These roles, according to Oppong (1980) are maternal, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community and individual roles. In addition to these roles, this framework will add the religious and political roles. The framework will be expanded to look at the roles of both the masculine and feminine genders that is for boys and men and for women and girls. In order for the framework to be used for both males and females, the framework will look at parental roles instead of maternal roles in addition to the other roles. Information to be collected will be based on the activities associated with a particular role and will be analyzed based on the stereotypical roles in which masculine and feminine genders are portrayed while playing these roles as they go through life.

In expanding Oppong's framework, I will look at some concepts of role that are related to my work, such as role contexts and social systems. After that, I will look at the scope of each of these nine roles in the work and what each of these roles is supposed to include.



**Figure 1. DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF FRAMEWORK**



This diagram postulates that when children (boys and girls) read or are exposed to literature in which masculine and feminine roles are stereotyped, it is likely to influence their thinking and depending on the kind of reinforcement they receive from their societies, they could grow up with a stereotyped or enhanced mindset on gender roles and this could result in the continual perpetuation on gender equality/inequality in African societies.

### 2.9.1 PARENTAL ROLES

These are roles that the masculine or feminine genders are expected to play as parents. Opong gives examples of maternal roles and says, “The woman’s parental or maternal role focuses attention on women’s activities as bearers, nurses, and socializers of the next generation. Norms for maternal behaviour include privately held or openly expressed presumptions about what mothers should or ought to do, including the idea that mothers of small children should stay at home and look after them and not try to relegate responsibility to anyone” (Opong, 1980:15). A man’s parental role often focuses attention on him as a bread winner, decision maker, and protector of his family. The relationship between the child and the mother in traditional societies is very warm and intimate. The mother is in fact the child’s most important and first social contact and this is regardless of the sex of the child. The mother carries the child on her back or usually on the back of one of the numerous ‘siblings’ (Assimeng, 2007: 106). “Feeding exhibits the child’s dependence on the mother or the mother’s substitute. A child disobeys the injunctions of a mother at his own risk, since withdrawal of feeding can be used as a punitive weapon” (Assimeng, 2007: 107). These quotes above show the parental role that mothers are supposed to play in the lives of their children. “Each parent has a statutory duty to afford his child protection from physical harm or hazards. The parent is supposed to provide the necessities of health and life for the child. Parents also socialize their children to fit in to their societies. “It is the duty of the parent to see to the moral up-bringing of the child and from engaging in sexually perverse conduct” (Boateng, 1996: 1). As Nukunya (2003: 51) says,

“The role of parents in the socialization of their children is not left for them alone. When children are brought into the world, they must be trained in the accepted modes of behaviour in the society. This is the responsibility of the parents. Where they live together, it is expected of them to be directly involved in this exercise. However, whereas the procreation of parents is a responsibility conferred only on the parents, the training of the children is not exclusively theirs in the empirical life of Ghanaian families, there are numerous brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and grandparents who also serve to socialize the young.”

The quotes above show the expectations society has on each parent and how societies help parents in playing these roles.

### **2.9.2 OCCUPATIONAL ROLES**

The occupational role, as the others, may be defined in three ways, in terms of context, activities and functions. The context is broadly defined in this case as any place outside the domestic domain in which the woman studied carries out productive activities (Oppong, 1980). For this study, the context of the occupational role will be defined as any place outside the domestic domain in which men and boys, and women and girls carry out productive activities. This space of productive work has undergone some changes. Boateng (1996) asserts that, “Another dimension of the changing family in Ghana is the role of women. In the past, women who were considered merely as fit to be housewives and not producers are now featuring prominently not only within the family, but in national development issues”. When it comes to farming, Nukunya (2003: 52) says, “The clearing of the field and other tasks requiring great physical strength are undertaken by the husband while the wife takes over the less exacting ones like sowing, weeding, harvesting and marketing.” Adomako Ampofo (2001: 199) says that, “In the economic and social spheres males are more frequently allotted tasks that involve leaving home and the emphasis in their training is on public accomplishments, while a girl’s tasks are home oriented”. This assertion can be better understood when one considers the fact that, “Socialization was

always conducted along sex lines. Girls were educated to take up their future roles as mothers and housewives, and boys followed their fathers on the various chores in either hunting, fishing, farming, or smithing” (Assimeng, 2007: 111).

### **2.9.3 CONJUGAL ROLES**

The conjugal role is a positional role arising from a woman’s position as a partner to a male for a multiplicity of purposes which may include procreation, sexual satisfaction, domestic service, financial/material support, economic co-operation, companionship etc. The role relationship may involve the activities and related functions associated with all or some of these. (Oppong, 1980)

For this study, conjugal role will be looked at as a positional role arising from a man/woman’s position as a partner to the other sex for a multiplicity of purposes which may include procreation, sexual satisfaction, domestic service, financial/material support, economic co-operation, companionship etc. Nukunya, in writing about the duties of the wife mentions sexual fidelity and her domestic services such as a considerable share in the work of growing the food that the family consumes, obedience, kindness and respect for her husband. Nukunya (2003: 47)

Adds that, “General upkeep of the home is the responsibility of the wife, as is the preparation of food for the family and the caring for the children”. Sutherland summarizes the roles of a wife in her book, *The marriage of Anansewa*. In a conversation between two characters, Akwasi and Akosua, about marriage and marital expectations, Akosua refuses to play the role of wife to Akwasi because Akwasi has not performed the necessary rites required by society to make her his wife. Akosua says, “I’ve gained my personal freedom. Bye! Anytime you’re ready, bring my head-drink home to my parents. And after that, I’ll stop when you call. I’ll take care of your

house. I'll sweep, I'll scrub, I'll wash your clothes, and I'll quarrel sweetly with you to your extreme delight. Bye!" Sutherland (1995: 18-19)

Waliaula writes about the conjugal roles of the wife among the Baganda. She summarizes these roles in this poem:

"Care for him as though  
He were a very young child  
Who could not yet speak;  
Anticipate his needs and desires."

Waliaula adds that, "The poem prescribes in detail how a wife must take care of her husband like an infant, indulge his whims and be submissive. It has been regarded as the defining statement on femininity in the Swahili world" (Waliaula, 2010: 20). Nukunya (2003) lists the duties of the husband as ability to satisfy his wife sexually, treating his wife with love, kindness, understanding, giving regular gifts to his wife and taking responsibility for all her troubles including debts. Gyekye (1996:77) puts "fulfilling marital responsibility particularly in providing for the material welfare of a wife (or wives) and children" as the most important role of a man in marriage

Paramount among the duties of husband and wife is their ability to bring forth children. This duty is so important that a marriage without children often ends up on rocks. "In the African view, the whole or ultimate purpose of marriage is procreation- to produce children who will continue with the heritage and name of the family, so that the family does not diminish or disappear. Barrenness and sterility are considered a threat to the continuity of human life and existence" (Gyekye, 1996: 83). Although a woman's childlessness is equally painful, it is an individual concern. For a man, childlessness is seen by society –and is represented in oral

literature- as a betrayal of his forefather's lineage, as captured in the following Lugandan proverb: *Nabazaaya, omufiirwaazaayabajjabe* (I will exterminate you; the way an impotent man exterminates his ancestors [by not begetting heirs for them]) (Kiyimba, 2010: 46).

Ghanaian societies expect all men and women to marry and have children by a certain age. As a result there are several proverbs which pass off as conventional wisdom in relation to marriage. Unfortunately for women, they bear the brunt of most of these proverbs as they are expected to marry earlier than men and they are the ones most often blamed for the absence of children in marriage. (Women's manifesto for Ghana: 42) Despite the pressure to have children being on either the man or woman depending on the society, one can see that all African societies see having children as one of the most important reasons for marriage and pressures married couples to have children whether they want them or not or are ready for them or not.

#### **2.9.4 DOMESTIC ROLES**

By this label, we refer to all the behaviours within the space of a domestic domain – a house, a compound, a set of rooms, a home. The activities may include some of those associated in some instances with the roles of mother, wife, kinswoman and individual (Oppong, 1980:16). While agreeing with the definition of domestic domain by Oppong (1980), the activities to be looked at in this study will involve those associated with the roles of parents, kinsmen/women and individuals. Children are expected to play several domestic roles at home. This is an undeniable fact in African homes as it is a part of their socialization. “A child is under a duty to render services to its parents within the household” (Mensa-Bonsu & Dowuona-Hammond, 1996:15) citing Sarbah (1898). “Children are expected to be humble and respectful of their parents, who

brought them to this world” (Gyekye, 1996: 86). According to (Mensa-Bonsu & Dowuona-Hammond, 1996) “Such services are not considered to be child labour, but a necessary part of the process of socialization.” Since children are socialized to take on gender-specific roles in adulthood, the domestic chores expected of them are divided according to gender. Girls are assigned most domestic chores, such as fetching water and sweeping, while boys work alongside their fathers outside the home. Childcare is also considered the exclusive domain of girls, even for those as young as six. .... This early childcare is an informal process of training the girl child for her future role as mother. (MOWAC & UNICEF, 2009, p. 6) Adolescent girls are basically trained to take up marital (domestic) roles. While girls receive training in domestic chores, boys are prepared to take up the roles of fathers (ie. Leadership and professional roles) they will head the family, and be responsible for taking major decisions, including reproductive decisions (Adomako Ampofo, 2001: 198).

From an early age boys and girls in both the matrilineal and patrilineal communities learn that males and females have clearly defined roles, and that the fact of marriage entitles a man to certain (domestic) services from his wife (Adomako Ampofo, 2001: 204). “The gendered division of labour in Ghana means that household tasks are performed by women, and even if not the ‘mothers’ then by other females” (Adomako Ampofo, 2001).

Some of the main responsibilities of wives are the general upkeep of the home, preparation of food for the family and taking care of the children (Nukunya, 2003: 47). Rungano (1984: 385) sums up the domestic and conjugal roles of a woman in Zimbabwe in this poem:

## THE WOMAN

A minute ago I came from the well  
Where young women drew water like myself  
My body was weary and my heart tired.  
For a moment I watched the stream that rushed before me;  
And thought how fresh the smell of flowers,  
How young the grass around it.  
And yet again I heard the sound of duty  
Which ground on me-made me feel aged  
As I bore the great big mud container on my head  
Like a great big painful umbrella.  
Then I got home and cooked your meal  
For you had been out drinking the pleasures of the flesh  
While I toiled in the fields.  
Under the angry vigilance of the sun  
A labour shared only by the bearings of my womb.  
I washed the dishes; yours  
And swept the room we shared  
Before I set forth to prepare your bedding  
In the finest corner of the hut  
Which was bathed by the sweet smell of dung  
I had this morning applied to the floors  
Then you came in,  
In your drunken lust  
And you made your demands  
When I explained how tired I was  
And how I feared for the child-yours; I carried

You beat me and had your way  
At that moment  
You left me unhappy and bitter  
And I hated you;  
Yet tomorrow I shall again wake up to you  
Milk the cow, plough the land and cook your food,  
You shall again be my Lord  
For isn't it right that a woman should obey,  
Love, serve, and honour her man?  
For are you not the fruit of the land?

In this poem, the roles of the woman listed are: to cook, fetch water for use in the house, wash the dishes, prepare the bed, satisfy her husband sexually, milk the cows, plough the land, carry the man's children in her womb and take care of his children. Domestically, a woman is expected to cook, wash the dishes, fetch water for the house and prepare the bed. Bâ in recounting the duties of a woman to her friend Aissattou while talking about her in-laws who think she does no house work because she has two house helps says, "Try explaining to them that a working woman is no less responsible for her home. Try explaining to them that nothing is done if you do not step in, that you have to see to everything, do everything all over again: cleaning up, cooking, ironing. There are children to be washed, the husband to be looked after. The working woman has a dual task, of which both halves, equally arduous, must be reconciled" (Bâ, 1981:20).

### 2.9.5 KIN ROLES

People in societies are related in many ways with some of these relationships being considered more important than others. “Kinship refers to social relationships derived from consanguinity, marriage and adoption” (Nukunya, 2003: 17). “Kinship is the broad term that anthropologists use to describe this general constellation of relationships. Some of the most basic of these relationships are those between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and grandparents and grandchildren, etc. (Assimeng, 2007: 74) As people in social relationships, roles are assigned to everyone. Nukunya (2003: 17) Says, “The kinship system prescribes statuses and roles to people who are in particular relationships.”

In Africa, family is often used to refer to a bigger pool of people than the nuclear family. As Gyekye says, “It is a matter of common knowledge that when one speaks of the family in an African context, one is referring, not to the nuclear family consisting merely of husband, wife, and children, but to the extended family, which comprises a large number of blood relatives who trace their descent from a common ancestor and who are held together by a sense of obligation to one another” (Gyekye, 1996: 75). The kin roles women play as sisters, daughters, grandmothers, nieces and so on are assumed to be basically important for their life courses in terms of resources opportunities and support available to them, as well as for many of the expectations and constraints governing their lives. The array of behaviours associated with kin roles is likely to be varied and to encompass activities ranging from participation in life crisis rituals such as namings, funerals and weddings to provision of resources and sharing of domestic tasks and responsibilities including chores, house care, etc. (Oppong, 1980) Men and women play several roles as brothers/sisters, fathers/mothers, grandmothers/grandfathers, nephews/nieces and these

roles are very important for their lives as they play a huge part in how their lives shape up depending on the societies in which they find themselves.

Gyekye (1996) lists some burdensome demands by lineage members on a couple as general financial help, assistance in looking for school for relative's children (and in some cases, paying the tuition bills), and assistance in looking for employment for relative's children, to endless contributions toward defraying funeral expenses. Bâ (1981: 6) Talks of contributions made in cash and kind by kinsmen after the death of Modou and adds that "it is a debt to be repaid in similar circumstances."

"Today, many Ghanaians, especially those most intensively exposed to the factors of change, would limit their responsibilities to their children and spouses. Those who go beyond these would not like to go further than parents, siblings and sibling's children. But this is not as easy as it sounds. While literates, urban dwellers and others of their kind are doing their utmost to divest themselves of their extended family obligations, the wider family members are not taking this development lightly. Studies of this phenomenon seem to suggest clearly that there is, at the present, quite a contest going on between extended families and those of their members trying to renege on their obligations to them." (Nukunya, 2003:149)

This contest between the extended family and the nuclear family is being won by the nuclear family as more and more people seem to focus their energies on providing for their nuclear families due to the economic challenges of the times.

### **2.9.6 COMMUNITY ROLES**

A community is a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds which are not necessarily biological who share common values, interests and goals.... Communal values are those values that express appreciation of the worth and importance of the community, those values that underpin and guide the type of social relations, attitudes and behaviours that ought to exist between individuals who live together in a community, sharing a social life and having a sense of common good (Gyekye, 1996: 35).

The role of community member is defined in terms of context, where she happens to reside at a particular point in time. For a mobile person, account needs of course to be taken of past community residence and a woman may in addition retain a significant role in communities in which she does not currently reside including her hometown (defined in terms of residence of paternal or maternal kin or birth (Oppong, 1980). Human beings play several roles as members of their communities and this role is important as it identifies people as social beings and not as antisocial beings living in seclusion. This study will look at this role in terms of where a person resides at a particular point in time.

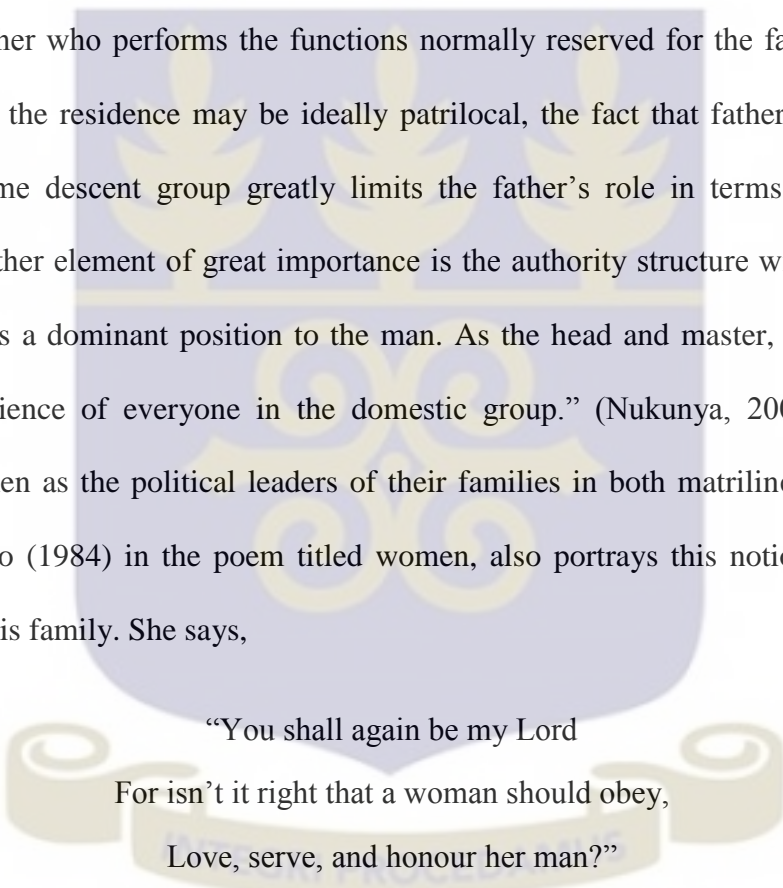
### **2.9.7 INDIVIDUAL ROLES**

The individual role encompasses that aspect of a person's activities relating to personal development, self-expression, a sense of individuality, use of leisure, time and opportunities for privacy (Oppong, 1980:17). In this study, men and women will be looked at as they partake in activities related to their personal development, self-expression, use of leisure, time and opportunities for privacy. This role is important as it portrays individuals as they plan their lives in ways that they want their lives to be.

### **2.9.8 POLITICAL ROLES**

The political functions of family consist in the maintenance of law and order in the family. "In patrilineal societies, the father is the disciplinarian. His duty is to make sure that his children, especially the sons, are brought up in a manner commensurate with the norms of the society.

Although he loves his children and gives them all the necessary parental support and care, it is the disciplinary aspect of the relationship that is emphasized. The mother, on the other hand, is not so much concerned with discipline. Love and care for the children are her main considerations” (Nukunya, 2003: 32). This is contrasted with the matrilineal society where it is the uncle who disciplines the children but in both cases, it is men who are in charge of the discipline of children. Nukunya (2003: 34) says, “One important aspect of matriliney is that it is the mother’s brother who performs the functions normally reserved for the father in patrilineal societies. Though the residence may be ideally patrilocal, the fact that father and child do not belong to the same descent group greatly limits the father’s role in terms of authority and discipline.” “Another element of great importance is the authority structure within the domestic group which gives a dominant position to the man. As the head and master, he commands the respect and obedience of everyone in the domestic group.” (Nukunya, 2003: 48) All these instances show men as the political leaders of their families in both matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Rungano (1984) in the poem titled women, also portrays this notion of the male as political head of his family. She says,



“You shall again be my Lord  
For isn’t it right that a woman should obey,  
Love, serve, and honour her man?”

The place of the man in the woman’s life in this poem is very important as he is placed in a position of reverence and almost deified. Kiyimba aptly captures this thus: “The chief, who is the king’s representative in every locality, is given almost as much reverence as the king himself, except of course in the king’s presence. For the ordinary Muganda, who might never even see the king in his lifetime, the chief is the most real authority that he knows. The point is that this power is exclusively male. Indeed, the word for chief in Luganda (Mwami) also means

‘husband’. This has the psychological impact of further entrenching male authority in the home. This is because, for the married woman, the first ‘chief’ is the husband” (Kiyimba, 2010: 48). It was observed earlier that the creation myth of the Baganda serves as an important frame of social reference because its legitimacy permeates most of the structures of society. ....the man is the leader of the home and this is not debatable. But the society makes certain demands of him, because of his being male. He must be strong and able to hold the home together. This demands intelligence, physical strength and courage. Likewise, the obedience of the wife to the husband is one of her responsibilities to the marriage and to her husband (Kiyimba, 2010: 41). “Women are expected to submit to their husbands irrespective of the issues at stake and their submission is reinforced by religious doctrines.” (women’s manifesto for Ghana:43)

In terms of decision making within marriage, women are disadvantaged by the norms which designate men as heads of households and therefore the principal decision makers in matters concerning household resource control and use, and the number of children to be born and their maintenance”. (women’s manifesto for Ghana: 43)

These tales are part of the mechanism that society uses to create and entrench notions of femininity and masculinity and to make statements about the power relationship between men and women. The overall message of these tales is that a ‘real man’ must demand the obedience of his wife, even if this means beating her (Kiyimba, 2010: 42).

## **2.9.9 RELIGIOUS ROLES**

This study will look at the roles that men, boys, women and girls play in the religious setting of the family.

Religion may be described as the beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural. Africa's traditional religious heritage traces its origins to the human quest for meaning and self-understanding. The same questions which every people have asked about themselves and the world in which they live since the dawn of human consciousness— African folklore how was the world created? How did human and non-human forms of life come to be? What is the meaning of life, and death?—were also posed by our African forebears, and the answers given to these questions came out of their own unique experiences and reflections. The answers, pregnant with philosophical and theological meaning, took the form of myths and stories, and it is clear that these myths and stories would not have come about if people had not asked questions about their existence. (Opoku, 2004: 780-781)

“Throughout Ghana and indeed in Africa as a whole, the law derives its authority and legitimacy from religious beliefs. The same applies to the political authorities and legal functionaries who interpret and enforce the law” (Nukunya, 2003: 86). This shows that as stated earlier, with men being the political leaders of their families, they are also the religious leaders of their families.

### **2.9.9.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This section contains information on the research design and methodology employed to conduct the study, including a description of the content analysis used, and an explanation of the sample selection, coding procedures, and unit of analysis and study measures used. Furthermore, it gives

a representation of the validity and reliability of the research study. The study consists of a content analysis of six children's written literature, two lullabies and four folk tales which represent oral literature. Qualitative data obtained will be used to examine character's physical appearance, social roles and behavioural attributes and to determine in what ways and to what extent, the sample of books used stereotypical gender images of males and females in relation to the attributes of masculinity and femininity.

### **2.9.9.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Content analysis represents the most appropriate methodology for obtaining and classifying the data related to the stereotyping of male and female characters featured in children's literature.

Krippendorff (2004: 18) says, "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". This content analysis will focus on the analysis of major and minor characters in a sample of six books, four lullabies and two folk tales. The analytical areas to be explored are physical appearance, social roles and behaviour.

### **2.9.9.3 SAMPLE SELECTION**

Six children's story books reflecting the African setting will be selected based on purposive sampling in addition two lullabies and four folk tales for children. Purposive sampling is done when "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about a group to select subjects who represent this population" (Berg, 2001: 32). The researcher selects a sample that exemplifies

certain characteristics of the population to be studied. Since the role of this study is to find out gender role stereotypical depictions in children's literature, a purposive sample is best suited for it. The internalization of social expectations for male and female behaviour and characteristics plays a significant role in children's literature. Children's literature offers children a wide array of fictional images to identify with. The books chosen are for age five upwards. Children also produce literature for other children. Selassie Mensah's *The Broom* which was written when she was fourteen years is used as part of the sample to reflect children's portrayals of gender roles. The remaining texts analyzed are made up of texts by men and women so that the ways in which men and woman portray gender roles can also be analyzed. The following books comprise the study sample: *The Broom* by Selassie Mensah, *A Song for Jamela* by Niki Daly, *Kwajo and the Brassman's Secret* by Meshack Asare<sup>1</sup>, *Chipso and the bird on the hill* by Meshack Asare<sup>2</sup>, *Sauna to the rescue* by Dan Fulani and *The Danso Family* by Isaac Boham, Kudjo Ehorkes, S. A. Tekyi, Paul K. Essandoh and Thomas Cudjoe. These are books with familiar story lines and ones which children can see themselves in. Also, they are by people who are known all over the continent for their dedication to producing literature for children. In addition to these books, two lullabies: *who did my baby wrong* by Mariam Gaye and *Hindatou* by Maman Ibrah will be analyzed. Lastly, four folk tales for children will be added. These folk tales are: *The ancestor tree* by T. Obinkaram Echewa, *The lion and the hare: an east African tale* by Steven Krensky, *Chinye: a West African tale* by Obi Onyefulu and *The marriage of the mouse in The Fire on the Mountain, and other stories from Ethiopia and Eritrea* by Harold Coulander and Wolf Leslau.

#### **2.9.9.4 APPEARANCE, SOCIAL ROLES AND BEHAVIOURS**

To examine gender images in the sample, data on appearance, social roles and behavior of all male and female characters will be collected. Most of the masculine and feminized stereotyped appearances, social roles, and behavioural traits selected for this study are derived from Amoah (1991) as cited in Adomako Ampofo (2001). Amoah (1991) cited in Adomako Ampofo (2001:198) lists female characteristics as modesty, dignity, perseverance, obedience, submissiveness and conformity; being caring, kind and generous; being dependent and needing protection, being weak and emotional; greedy and envy; and quarrelsomeness. Male characteristics include virility, strength, authority, power, and leadership qualities; ability to offer protection and sustenance; intelligence and wisdom; ability to bear physical and emotional pain.

**Table 1. STUDY MEASURES FOR SOCIAL ROLES AND BEHAVIOURS**

	Social roles	Behavior
Masculine	Career Hero Leader Explorer Military	Angry Athletic Brave Competitive Dominant Independent

		<p>Intelligent</p> <p>Rebellious/troublesome</p>
Feminine	<p>Follower</p> <p>No career</p> <p>Victim</p> <p>Submissive</p>	<p>Caring/loving</p> <p>Crying/whining</p> <p>Fearful</p> <p>Scared</p> <p>Dependent</p> <p>Fearful</p> <p>Modest</p> <p>Obedient</p> <p>Envious</p> <p>Quarrelsome</p> <p>Physically weak</p> <p>Emotionally weak</p> <p>Greedy</p>

#### **2.9.9.5 VALIDITY**

This content analysis for six children's written works for children in addition to two lullabies and four folk tales provides a sound methodology to answer specific research questions. The concepts of validity and reliability are important parts of the research instrumentation. Validity indicates the extent to which the data collection instruments and procedures measure what they are intended to measure. The question is: "Are we measuring what we want to measure?" (Neuendorf, 2002:112). This study collects data on several measures, including characteristics related to appearance, social roles and behavior patterns, which have been associated with traditional gender-role stereotyping. Content validity is established by an extensive literature review of gender stereotypes presented in literature.

#### **2.9.9.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Literature is one of the most pervasive agents of gender socialization. The attainment of life's roles, rules, norms and values is an important process in a human being's life. Through the exposure to literature, children's understanding of male and female behaviour, roles and expectations is shaped by fictional characters and storylines they encounter. Previous studies in other parts of the world found portrayals of gender in traditional stereotypical ways. Gender representations in the popular culture reinforce the stereotyping of norms related to masculinity and femininity. Men are characterized by traditional gender roles of dominance, power and status and are cast and shown in a diverse array of roles, and women are characterized by beauty, attractiveness and nurturing, and have a very limited range of "appropriate" feminine roles.

Stereotyping in literature can affect children who learn about social roles and behavior from their observations of characters and patterned behavior in the literature they are exposed to. In spite of maintaining stereotypical images of males and females in the mass media, there have been progressive changes in African societies, particularly the growing visibility of women and the improvement of women's representation in literature.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ANALYSIS OF ROLES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter begins with an overview of identifiers which present information on the sample in general. Findings on the three main analytical areas of the study, appearance, roles and behavior are reported and examined in terms of stereotypically masculine or feminine characteristics. Examples of images that deviate from traditional gender representations are also presented. The final section of the chapter includes a qualitative analysis of “private roles”. By private roles, I refer to the roles which men, women, boys and girls play at home. The roles which will be discussed in this chapter are domestic, conjugal, political, individual and parental roles. Public roles will be discussed in the next chapter. By public roles, I refer to roles which men, women, boys and girls play outside the home. For this work, these roles include kin, community, occupation and religious roles.

#### **3.2 GENDER STEREOTYPES**

To answer the question on stereotypical portrayals in African children’s literature, the ways in which men and women, boys and girls are portrayed in the literature which was reviewed will be looked at.

### 3.2.1 APPEARANCE

The appearances characteristics of male and female characters are ways in which stereotypical images are portrayed. Often, when the physical characteristics of men were presented in the data collected, the men were presented as strong. For example, in Asare<sup>2</sup> (2012:30), readers are told that “the other (man) reached out with a strong arm to Dambudzo.” The use of the word strong emphasized strength. In Asare<sup>1</sup> (2012: 29) Kwajo is told he must be brave and wise. While strong was often used to describe men, beautiful was often used to describe women and girls. Most of the women in “*A song for Jamela*” and “*The Broom*” are described as beautiful. Appearance is presented as so important to women that after dressing, Eyram asks her husband in “*The Broom*” that how do I look? No man was described as beautiful while no women were described as strong in the sample. The only male described as beautiful is the white mouse in *The marriage of the mouse* and he happens to be an animal. These descriptions reinforced masculine and feminine physical appearances. Beautiful was often associated with physical weakness and vulnerability. Women are often spoken of as the weaker sex. Most often, their emotional strength is neglected because that is not visible to most people. The emphasis when women are spoken about is often on their physical strength which is deemed as inadequate. Asare<sup>2</sup> (2012: 14) Presents an example of this when Chipo asks for Dambudzo’s help to see the bird on the rocks. Readers are told that, “Dambudzo began thoughtfully, can you climb?” Chipo as a girl is supposed to be weak and unable to climb rocks. Dambudzo therefore helps Chipo as they climb rocks during their search. Incidentally, it is Chipo who slips and gives their location away just when Dambudzo is curiously observing the sacrifice by the king and his entourage. In chipo and the bird, we are told that “nearby, men wrestled with the cattle around the corrals.” The emphasis

on the word wrestled indicates a show of physical strength and courage. This portrays a stereotype of men as strong and brave.

### **3.2.2 SOCIAL ROLES**

#### **BEHAVIOUR**

This section analyzes behavioral traits by looking at the ways characters in the selected texts behaved in every situation. In examining behavioral traits, this study found that the most common behavioral traits among male characters were angry, dominant and rebellious/troublesome. Other prominent behaviours included brave, athletic and independent. The behavioural traits of intelligence and wise were often attributed to boys and men. Female behavioural traits found in the text included caring/loving, crying, dependent and fearful.

### **3.3 WHEN A MOTHER COW IS CHEWING GRASS, ITS YOUNG ONES WATCH ITS MOUTH<sup>1</sup>**

This proverb sums up the findings on domestic roles. The proverb means that children learn and later practice what they see their parents do. Both genders are portrayed as playing several roles in children's literature. In the illustrations in the texts, the domestic roles of women are therefore presented as cooking, caring for babies and children and providing water for their homes. No man is depicted as playing any of these roles. For example in *Chipo and the bird on the hill*,

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<sup>1</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Achebe (1958:50).

pictures on page 6 and 7 depict women cooking, women with babies at their backs, women carrying food. Pictures on page 11 of the same book depict women carrying pots and a woman with baby. In "*Chinye a West African folktale*", the picture on the last page shows a woman carrying a baby at her back and another carrying a pot. Girls are portrayed in the illustrations as their mother's assistants in their domestic roles. For example, the picture on page 4 of *The Danso family* shows Mrs Danso cooking and Ataa washing the dishes. The only exception in the illustrations is in *Kwajo and the Brassman's secret* where Kwajo who is a boy is depicted as pounding fufu on page 14 of the book. This is however not surprising as it is a common occurrence in Ghanaian societies since pounding fufu is physically demanding and boys are often tasked to do this. Men are illustrated as playing domestic roles that demand a lot of physical strength. For example, in *Chipo and the bird on the hill*, men are depicted as taking care of cattle. Boys are depicted on the same page as helping their fathers with the cattle. The words used to describe the men taking care of the cattle shows how the society sees taking care of cattle. In the book, readers are told that, "nearby, men wrestled with the cattle around the corrals." This shows that the society sees taking care of cattle as a dangerous activity that demands physical strength and courage. Just as in the case of women and girls, boys are portrayed as helping their fathers in their domestic chores. Men are not illustrated as playing domestic roles in many of the data examined. Probably, this is as a result of men and boys not being expected to play many domestic roles. The data examined often portrayed the women in the confined space of the home playing domestic roles. In the written text, women were often portrayed as playing the same domestic roles that the illustrations portrayed them as playing. In *A song for Jamela*, women are presented as cooking in the kitchen.

In *The Broom*, we are told that some women were pounding fufu in the kitchen and other women were preparing the soup and stew. In “*The Danso family*”, we are told that “Mrs Danso goes to the market. She cooks for the family.” We are told “she is cooking for the family. Every day she cooks for the family.” This presents cooking as the sole preserve of women. If everyday Mrs Danso cooks for the family, then there is no room for her husband to go to the kitchen to cook. We are told that “Ataa cleans the house and washes the dishes. She also helps her mother to cook. We are also told, “Ataa is washing dishes. The family will eat from the dishes. Everyday Ataa washes dishes.” Ataa is her parents’ daughter. Even though she is the same age as Ata because they are twins, she is portrayed as helping her mother to cook. Ataa also washes the dishes and it is a chore she has to do every day. This presents cooking and its associated chores such as going to the market and washing dishes as the preserve of females, both young and old. Men are not portrayed playing domestic roles as said earlier. The only males presented as playing domestic roles are Kwajo in *Kwajo and the brassman’s secret* and Ata in *The Danso family*. Readers are told that Ata has to fetch water for the family. Fetching water is a chore which is portrayed in all the other texts analyzed as a chore for women and girls. In *Kwajo and the brassman’s secret*, we are told Kwajo goes to help his sister and mum who are already cooking. “Later, Kwajo left the workshop to help Maame and Akosua to prepare supper.” P14. Apart from these two boys, boys are not portrayed as playing domestic roles. As future men, they are more often portrayed as helping their fathers with the difficult and strenuous domestic tasks.

Both boys and girls are expected to be obedient to their parents. Jamela obeys when her mother sends her to her auntie. The baby boy in lullaby two is told to be obedient so that he will reap God’s richest blessings in this life and in the life to come.

### **3.4 THE PERSON WHO HAS CHILDREN HAS PROSPERED<sup>2</sup>**

This proverb means that having children is the best kind of prosperity. A marriage without children in Africa is one that faces a lot of challenges and often ends up in divorce. This is because one of the main reasons for marriage in Africa is to procreate. Not many conjugal roles are presented in the data collected. Despite this, the conjugal role which is viewed as probably the most important reason for marriage is portrayed. In *“The ancestor”*, Nna-nna had no living children so he would not have an ancestor tree planted for him when he died. We are told “we cannot plant an ancestor tree for Nnna-nna because he is not an ancestor. He has no living children.” The issue of having children in marriage is portrayed as so important that without it, one cannot be an ancestor after death. One conjugal role portrayed in the data collected is that of men taking care of their wives and children. As a married person, a man is expected to provide for the upkeep of his wife. We are told in *The Danso family* that Mr Danso looks after the family.” As a man, he is portrayed as the caretaker of the family. Of Mrs Danso, the book says she cooks for the family every day. The role of feeding the family is ascribed to Mrs Danso as a married woman. Nowhere in the data gathered is a man portrayed as attending to the nutritional needs of his wife or family.

### **3.5 IF THE WIFE DOES THE HUSBAND’S BIDDING, ALL PROBLEMS DISAPPEAR<sup>3</sup>**

This proverb means that domestic bliss depends on the wife’s obedience of the rules and instructions of the man. The proverb sums up the findings on political roles. The political roles portrayed in the analyzed data present men as leaders wherever they are. In *Chipo and the bird*,

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<sup>2</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Owomoyela (2005:282).

<sup>3</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Owomoyela (2005:303).

When the children got lost, Dambudzo's father said, "Wait here, you maidens." (p15) There is no mention of the maidens disobeying him or refusing to wait as the search takes place and as the story progresses, readers are made aware that only men took part in the search which shows that the maidens obeyed him. Dambudzo, who is a boy, is also portrayed as playing a leadership role. The picture on page 20 of the book shows Dambudzo holding Chipo's hand and showing the way. He is holding her hand just as a father would hold a child's hand even though they are both children. This in my view shows that boys are expected to lead just like their fathers and are expected to take over from the leadership roles their fathers played when their time is up. In terms of punishment, men are portrayed as punishing their children. When Dambudzo's father discovers that Dambudzo has disappeared along with the princess, he says, "If I find that little devil of mine, I shall weave him into the cloth". No woman is portrayed as ever punishing anyone, not even their children. In The Danso family, we are told that Mr Danso looks after the family. This portrays Mr Danso as the leader and head of the family. The lion and the hare story sums up the political roles of men in the data collected. In The lion and the hare story, the lion, who is male says he is king. The other animals ask what does that mean? The lion responded, "It means I am in charge." Said the lion. "Therefore you must do whatever I say."

The other animals did not want to obey him but the lion had such sharp teeth and claws. What else could they do?" African societies place political power in the hands of men, and women and children are forced to obey even when they don't want to because men have also been giving the power to punish those who don't obey them. In *Chipo and the bird on the hill*, the king and elders wait for the priest to make the sacrifice. The king is the community's secular leader and the priest is the community's religious leader. Both are male. Nothing is said about a woman playing a leadership role in any of the texts analyzed.

### **3.6 UNTIL IT MATURES, THE YOUNG BIRD IS FED BY HAVING FOOD PLACED IN ITS MOUTH <sup>4</sup>**

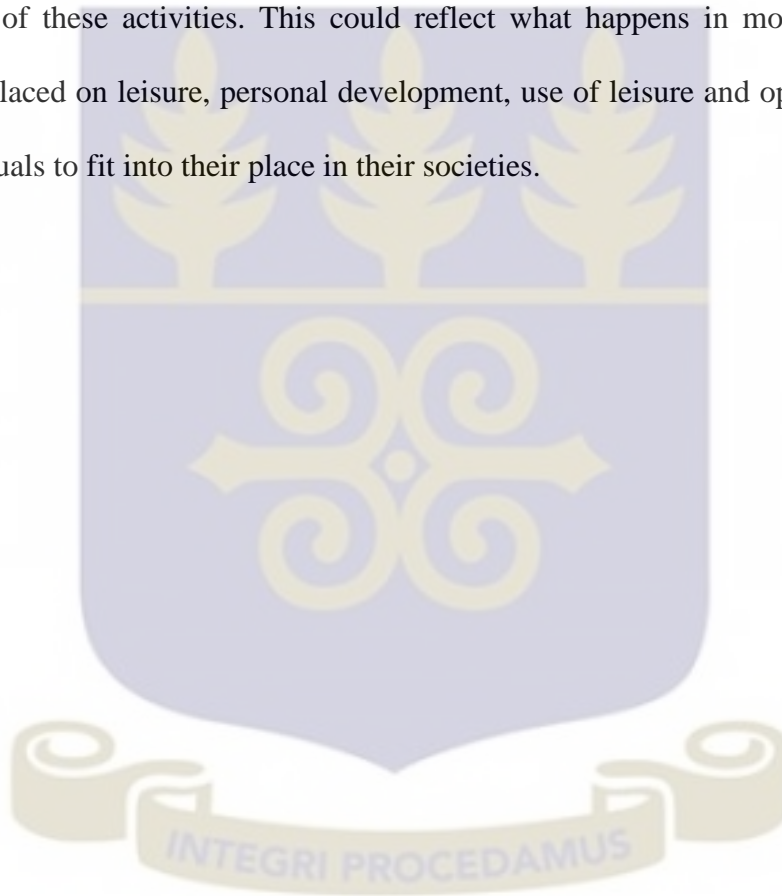
This proverb means that people have the responsibility of taking care of their dependents until they are able to care for themselves. The parental roles males and females are supposed to play in the materials analyzed are many. Mothers are presented as socializing their daughters to play their part as daughters and as future wives and mothers. Ataa is seen with her mother in the kitchen as she cooks. Most often, when daughters are mentioned, they are with their mothers helping them as they play their roles. Mothers are also presented as being anxious about their children's well-being. In the ancestor we are told "mothers came to drag their children to bed at night." Part of the parental role of mothers is to cook for their children. We are told in *The Danso family* that Mrs Danso cooks for the family every day. As a mother, one of her roles as presented to readers is to put food before her children daily. Fathers are also portrayed as anxious about the safety and well-being of their children. When Dambudzo disappeared, his father left his work went to search for him. Dambudzo's father also teaches him to weave as a way of preparing him to take care of his wife and children in the future. As a father, it is Dambudzo's father's duty to punish his children in order that they do not stray so when Dambudzo disappears, his father threatens to punish him when he is found. The boys in *Chipo and the bird* are with their fathers as their fathers round up the cattle. This is a way of socializing them. Both male and female parents are therefore presented as actively participating in the socialization of their children. Mothers are presented as socializing their daughters while fathers are presented as socializing their sons.

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<sup>4</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Owomoyela (2005:307).

### 3.7 INDIVIDUAL ROLES

For this role, this work set out to find out how men and women, boys and girls partake in activities related to their personal development, self-expression, use of leisure, time and opportunities for privacy. In all the text analyzed, no man, woman, boy or girl was found engaging in any of these activities. This could reflect what happens in most societies where emphasis is not placed on leisure, personal development, use of leisure and opportunities but on preparing individuals to fit into their place in their societies.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The remaining four roles mentioned in the framework will be analyzed in this chapter. These are roles that are deemed to be played most often outside the comfort of one's home even though there are times when some people play these roles in their homes. The roles to be discussed in this chapter include kin, community, occupation and religious roles.

### 4.2 AN ANIMAL RUBS ITS ITCHING FLANK ON A TREE BUT A MAN ASKS HIS KINSMAN TO SCRATCH HIM <sup>5</sup>

This proverb means that whereas animals do not have relatives to help them in times of distress, human beings rely on their relatives in times of need. Every human is born into a family and this family is supposed to be there for people in both good and bad times. In Africa, the extended family plays a part in socialization and helping a person to find his/her feet in the society. The extended family plays such an important part in the lives of individuals that it is almost impossible to neglect them. Only one kin role is presented in the materials analyzed. In the "*The marriage of the mouse*", readers are told that "so as is the custom, three older people in the family were chosen to visit God."(p19) This presents the kin role of elderly relatives finding suitable marriage partners for their younger kin or accepting marriage proposals on behalf of their younger kin or performing marriage rites on behalf of their children. The sex of the elderly kin sent to negotiate marriage for the white mouse is not identified. They could therefore be both male and female or either sex but whatever the sex, the story makes us understand that one of the

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<sup>5</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Achebe (1958: 119).

roles of elderly kin is to negotiate marriage agreements for their younger kin. The boy in lullaby 2 is told to seek the affection of his kinsmen and not to get them angry. This implies fulfilling his duties to his kinsfolk so that they will be happy with him.

#### **4.3 ONE DOES NOT STAY FOR LONG IN A TOWN AND REMAIN UNINVOLVED <sup>6</sup>**

This proverb means one must live as a part of one's community. In living as a part of one's community, a person has to play a part to be considered as part of the community. Communal roles depicted in the data analyzed were similar to domestic roles. Roles that were related to leadership or seen as dangerous or needing courage were assigned to men while women were assigned roles like cooking and sweeping. *In Chipo and the bird on the hill*, when the princess and Dambudzo go missing, a search party made up of men led by Dambudzo's father is dispatched to search for them. In the same book, the king and priest who are both men are depicted as making a sacrifice to the ancestors to ensure the well-being of the community. The king is the secular leader of the community while the priest is the religious leader of the community. *In The Broom*, before a durbar is organized, a group of girls sweep the durbar grounds. Sweeping is a chore that girls normally do at home as often the cleanliness of the home is left to girls and women. In the same book, when there is a gathering for family members, the women are presented as cooking. No man or boy is presented as cooking or lending a helping hand to women and girls as they tidy up communal spaces or prepare communal meals and no woman or girl is presented as playing a communal leadership role or engaging in a communal role that is deemed as demanding lots of energy or dangerous.

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<sup>6</sup> The proverb used as heading is from Owomoyela (2005:300).

#### 4.4 OCCUPATIONAL ROLES

In the data analyzed, boys are often depicted as learning their father's occupation. In *Chipo and the bird on the hill*, Dambudzo helps his father to weave the king's cloth. Even though Dambudzo would have preferred to be a cowherd, he is forced to weave with his father because it is seen as more important. Readers are told on page 12 of the book that, "what he would very much have liked to have been was a cowherd. Then he could take his animals all over the plains but now Dambudzo was expected to become a more important person-a weaver like his father."

Dambudzo wants so much to be a cowherd that a potter made four clay cows for him and he calls them his cows. He sees them as real cows. Despite his desire to be with cows in the open fields, his future occupation is imposed on him as he is forced to learn his father's occupation. In *Kwajo and the brassman's secret*, boys are depicted as helping their fathers weave and make patterns in adinkra cloth. Kwajo, the main character in the book is depicted as helping his father in the workshop to work on gold objects. In *Kwajo and the brassman's secret*, boys help their fathers to weave and make adinkra patterns in cloths. In this book, the men are depicted as iron smelters just as in *Chipo and the bird on the hill*. In *Sauna to the rescue*, all the coup plotters, arms dealers and army members are depicted as men. Only one man is depicted as gainfully employed in an occupation which most often employs women. In *A song for Jamela*, one man is presented as a hair dresser. All the other workers in the hair dressing salon are women. Jamela, who is a girl, and the main character in the story, is seen helping out in the salon. In *The Danso family*, readers are told that Mr Danso is a farmer but nothing is said of his wife's occupation even though readers are told that she helps her husband on his farm on Saturdays. Readers are told that

when going to the farm, Mr Danso and Ata hold cutlasses while Mrs Danso and Ataa carry baskets. This implies that Mr Danso and Ata weed the farm while Mrs Danso and Ataa carry foodstuff home. For training for future employment, Ata and Ataa attend the same school and study the same courses. This portrays a belief in the equal academic abilities of both girls and boys. Despite this, one can see a contradiction when the children are portrayed during craftwork. Readers are told that Ata molds a car while Ataa molds a pot. This is indicative of the things that as male and female, is supposed to be priority for them. It is as if the writer says that Ataa will be mother and will be cooking while Ata is expected to grow up and own a car. As an Ibo proverb says, “A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches” (Achebe, 1958:47). In this story, the child that is expected grow up to own a car begins by moulding and playing with a toy car so that one can see that he has ambitions of owning a car in future. In the same book, readers are told that Ata and Ataa’s teacher teaches writing, Mathematics, bible knowledge, science and other subjects. Mathematics and science are mostly male dominated so for a female teacher to be portrayed as teaching those courses shows a belief in the abilities of the female teacher to venture into these male dominated fields. In the first lullaby, the baby is told that “father can drive a car, father can pilot a plane.” These occupations are assigned to the father since such tasks demand a certain level of expertise to do which women may be deemed not to be able to acquire.

#### **4.5 RELIGIOUS ROLES**

Not many religious roles are portrayed in the data that was analyzed. In *Chipo and the bird on the hill*, the priest who is male is depicted about to make a sacrifice to the ancestors of the

community in order to ensure the prosperity of the community. The priest is the religious leader of the community. In *The Ancestor*, Nna-nna is confirmed as an ancestor at the end of the story. As an ancestor, he is supposed to make the town prosperous and protect the town. In *Chipo and the bird on the hill*, the king and his elders who are presumably male are waiting by as they await the sacrifice by the priest. No woman is depicted as being at the scene of the sacrifice. Boys and girls are also not portrayed as playing any religious role in any of the texts analyzed.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a summary of results. Also, images of masculinity and femininity are summarized and discussed. Socialization, internalization and modeling are also discussed in relation to the findings. Recommendations for future research are suggested so that researchers can continue to develop and extend their efforts on gender representations in children's literature.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

This study examined stereotypical portrayals of male and female characters in children's literature in Africa. Appearance, social roles, and behavioral traits of male and female characters were examined to determine if males and females were being portrayed playing masculine or feminine stereotypical roles and ways in which they were being portrayed playing these roles. The nature and extent of deviation from those traditional gender images was also examined.

This research found that African children's literature reflects a high diversity of images, roles, characteristics and behaviors for male characters than female characters. However, even though male characters were still shown in some gender-stereotypical ways, they were sometimes portrayed in ways that are not traditionally masculine, such as expressing emotionality and affection. In contrast, female characters lacked equal representation in African children's literature, limiting the opportunities for female images to be more diverse. Within the limited representations, there was some diversity in the nature and extent of female roles and behaviors,

which were often characterized by traditional feminine attributes, leading towards some range of positive female images for young girls and boys, men and women.

### **5.3 IMAGES OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY**

Male and female equality is a goal that is yet to be achieved in African societies. Gender stereotypes are still widespread in children's literature. In this study, it was found out that male and female characters were mostly portrayed in gender-stereotypical ways; even though there were a few times where the images portrayed deviated from traditional images of masculinity and femininity. For example, no female characters were shown as physically strong, which endorsed the feminine stereotype of being physically weak. Only two women, Miss Mensah and Aunt Beauty were depicted as working adults. Female images of physically strong female characters could have offered young girls and boys pictures and stories of powerful women who could serve as positive normalized standards for young females to imitate. The physical characteristics of looks were found to be stereotypically depicted. Several women and girls were described as good looking. Apart from the white mouse, which is an animal, no male was described as beautiful or described based on looks. Men were often described based on strength. The portrayals of female characters in this research reinforced the traditional feminine stereotype in African societies. Such portrayals send girls and boys messages emphasizing a woman's ideal appearance and the overall importance of appearance to their lives. Furthermore, beauty standards sometimes mediate fatal self-concepts to young girls who have the potential to internalize this perfect body image (Kilbourne, 1999). This internalization can lead to serious

personal consequences such as the development of insecurities and eating disorders (Wolf, 1991; Pipher, 1995; Bordo, 1999).

Social roles are insightful when analyzing the positions of male and female characters. This study found some interesting patterns in the nature and extent of role portrayals by male and female characters. Male characters were often portrayed as leaders, with a career, heroes and reflected a high variety of social roles in the literature, while female characters were often shown as followers and without a career. Only two female characters, Miss Mensah and Aunt Beauty were portrayed with a career. Most often, men in this sample were portrayed as leaders, being in charge or telling other characters what to do. The portrayal of men and women is an endorsement of the traditional stereotypical feminine role of subordination and male role of superiority. This supports the findings from a previous study by Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) who found that males were more likely to show leadership. Most men were portrayed as employed. No man was portrayed as unemployed or without a mention of a source of income. The role of hero was more common among male characters. *Sauna to the rescue* had two male heroes while *Chipo and the bird on the hill* had one male hero. No female character was portrayed as a hero. Most of the female characters were portrayed playing a domestic role while no man was portrayed playing a domestic role. Apart from Kwajo in *Kwajo and the brassman's secret* and Ata in *The Danso family*, no other boy was portrayed playing a domestic role. Men are portrayed as dominant, while women are often portrayed as subordinates. This, I believe is a result of the patriarchal systems which permeates the very fabric of lives in most African societies. Despite the shift in women's social positions, most women are shown in the home and not at the work place. This very visible representation of female characters offers young girls a negative image of women to

identify with and does not inspire them to aspire to achieve greater heights. Young boys see these same images and are also impacted by their presence and absence.

The findings on portrayals of females might show that in addition to not being portrayed in positions of power, they still do not occupy the roles of heroes and explorers. While male characters were portrayed in a higher variety of social roles compared to female characters, they were also more often portrayed as heroes. The ever-present male hero and the absent female hero can have a cultivating effect on children (girls and boys), who might associate heroic behavior exclusively with maleness. The findings on behavioral traits showed that male characters were often portrayed as angry, dominant, rebellious and troublesome, and brave, conforming to traditional masculine stereotypes. However, there were a few times when boys were also shown portraying emotions that are most often not associated with masculinity. They were portrayed as scared, and fearful. An example can be found in *Sauna to the rescue* when Sauna and Sani are portrayed as terrified and afraid when they realize they have been kidnapped. These images show that males are not limited to masculine portrayals, moving away from the stereotypical image of males of being tough. This gives young boys the potential to identify with emotional characters who are not only expressing anger and dominance, as they traditionally have, but also feelings such as fears and sensitivity. Young boys are still exposed to a limited set of emotions but there has been improvement for boys in telling them that they do not need to hide their feelings behind a tough façade but rather show what they feel, if happy, sad or scared. Furthermore, young girls internalize the literary images of powerful or emotional males and also develop expectations related to masculinity. They therefore grow up thinking boys and men who show certain emotions are less masculine.

In this research, female characters were often shown caring/loving, happy, scared, and crying/whining, fitting into traditional feminine stereotypes. A few females were however also shown deviating from traditional feminine portrayals. They were portrayed as angry, independent, and intelligent. These few images and stories of females as smart provide positive messages to young boys and girls. Furthermore, young girls who observe these few positive images and stories of female success and achievement may feel empowered, by identifying with the character. When identification occurs, internalization takes place in which the child takes on the characters' attitudes and roles and internalizes them, making them his or her own (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In addition, young boys see portrayals of intelligent females and not exclusively passive, subservient female characters, which expose them to a more diverse set of attributes as appropriate and normal for females.

#### **5.4 THE OLD VERSUS THE NEW**

The old versus the new is simply a comparison between the old folk tales and lullabies and other forms of oral literature which are considered so old that an exact time frame cannot be given for them and the relatively new form of written literature. Comparing the two reveals that the stereotypes in the oral literature have found their way into written literature despite the perception of advancement that is believed to permeate all aspects of modern society. Gender advocates have been sensitizing people for years but this sensitization has not found its way into written children's literature as the same forms of stereotyping that can be found in oral literature can also be found in written children's literature.

## 5.5 CHILDREN VERSUS ADULTS

Children versus adults look at whether there are differences or similarities between literature produced by children and those produced by adults. Comparing the two revealed that there were no differences between male and female portrayals. Child authors portrayed masculinity and femininity in the same way as adult authors. Despite the perception that children are young and naive and have an innocent mind, children portrayed masculinity in similar ways as adults, thereby portraying that children learn at an early age societies' expectations of males and females and this is reflected in their work. A look at *The Broom* by Selassie Mensah reveals similar representations of masculinity and femininity. Selassie Mensah wrote *The Broom* at the age of fourteen. Despite her young age, portrayals of domestic and community roles reveals that she has already learnt what roles are “appropriate” for the genders.

## 5.6 MALE VERSUS FEMALE AUTHORS

Male versus female authors looks at whether there are differences in the portrayals of masculinity by male and female authors. This revealed that there were no differences in the portrayals. In the two lullabies which are by women, men are expected to be pilots and own cars but nothing is said of what is expected of women. In *A song for Jamela* which is written by a woman and in *The Broom* which is written by a girl, men and women are portrayed playing stereotypical roles just as in the other texts by men. This shows that gender stereotypical portrayals in children's literature is present in children's literature whether it is produced by a male or female. One would have expected that females would present themselves in a more

positive light in children's literature but as is reflected in literature, societies' portrayals of gender influences both men and women and this is reflected in the literature they produce.

## **5.7 SOCIALIZATION, INTERNALIZATION AND MODELLING**

The development of identity is one of the most important features of childhood. Children are impacted by literary images, stories and ideals that help them shape their own unique personality. Literature plays a significant role in the gender socialization of children. Gender images in children's literature could serve as standards of identification for young boys and girls, who internalize the images and behaviors, values and norms of the literary characters. Children copy and model the behaviors and actions of people around them (Mumme & Fernald, 2003). As suggested by social learning theory, if a child identifies with a character he or she might be more likely to internalize and model the behaviors shown in literature they get exposed to. Social interactions and emotions of characters in literature are observed by young boys and girls and could serve as models of identification. Identification with social roles or behaviors might lead to the modeling or the internalization of roles (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). A steady exposure to these patterned, repetitive gender images may result in cultivating effects (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001).

Many of the gendered images are archaic and no longer reflect reality, especially for women, but children are unaware that these are lingering stories from the past. The findings show that stereotypical gender representations in children's literature occurs and sometimes deviates from traditional gender images by portraying males in less traditional masculine images such as afraid and emotional. Females are also portrayed as intelligent which deviates from traditional notions

of females as less intelligent than males. Gender images in children's literature can have a powerful socializing impact on children's behaviors and values. "Visual imagery plays an important role in socialization, specifically in how we extract and apply meaning from everyday experience, and therefore in how we construct social realities" (Dill, 2009:96).

A communal Swazi wedding song recorded by Sarah Dupont-Mkhonza in 1993 and translated by Thulisile Motsa-Dladla sums up the consequences of gender stereotyping and the effect of what children are taught through stories from childhood.

Song nine

Here is the man killing me!

(Beat her man.)

Here is a man stunning me.

He has been misinformed.

(Beat her, Man.)

Here is a man killing me!

He has been informed.

(Beat her, man.)

I have tried to plead and beg.

Here is a man stunning me.

He has been misinformed.

(Beat her, man.)

Help! Help! Women.

The man is beating me.

He is killing me.

(beat her, man.)

He has been misinformed.

He was told in bed.

He is fed with stories in bed, on a pillow.

He is killing me.

(Beat her, man.)

Every day, I shield myself from big canes.

Here is a man beating me.

(Beat her, man)

I shield myself from big canes.

The man beats me everyday.

(Beat her, man.)

As cited in Sutherland-Addy & Diaw (2005)

The man in this poem has taken to beating his wife daily because of the misinformation he receives from the stories he listens to from childhood. As the poem says, “he was misinformed; he was fed with stories, in bed, on a pillow. He has been misinformed.” This man has been misinformed about wife beating from the bedtime stories he has been listening to from childhood and this has resulted in him thinking wife beating is a part of being a man and a husband and has resorted to beating his wife daily. This paper makes the argument that just like this man has been misinformed through stories from childhood and has grown up to become a wife beater, gender role stereotypes in children’s literature results in gender inequalities as children are fed with erroneous knowledge which has negative implications for male and female relations when these grow up.

## 5.8 FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

This study adds to the existing body of literature by analyzing a sample that in my view has not been given much attention and illustrating that male and female characters are indeed still shown in some stereotypical ways. Male and female characters are sometimes shown deviating from traditional images of masculinity and femininity, offering young boys and girls improving images. This can lead toward more gender equality in various areas such as the classroom, work place and in politics.

Challenging traditional stereotypes of males and females in children's literature should be a priority in African societies. This will in the long term lead to positive changes that improve the position of women and men in African societies, and offer girls and boys a wider variety of gender images, stories and ideals which reflect the ever changing reality. Children's literature provides a steady presentation of images that constantly reinforce attitudes, behaviors and expectations of males and females. Consequently, the images become normalized and ordinary by constant reproduction and promotion of similar messages. Story writers must therefore be thoughtful and deliberate in portraying male and female characters in children's literature. This is because gender-stereotyping has to be reduced to offer children a better and more diverse picture of male and females in children's literature. Future studies on children's literature will be valuable to parents, educators as well as writers and editors of these books, because they are the ones who can try to make a change by minimizing and eliminating negative gender portrayals.

## 5.9 FURTHER RESEARCH

Research on the prevalence of gender stereotyping in children's literature is important for constant but slow progression toward gender equality in society.

Deeply concerned by the serious problem of the influence exerted by children's books and textbooks on the development of sexist attitudes and behavior in young people, in 1981 Unesco embarked on a series of national studies on the portrayal of men and of women in textbooks and children's literature, with a view to determining the causes of that influence, arousing awareness in the minds of the general public and the national authorities, and proposing appropriate solutions. The prevalence of sexist stereotypes has been confirmed by all the studies carried out under this project, in countries throughout the world (Michel, 1986:20).

This shows that the challenge of gender stereotyping in children's literature is a worldwide problem which needs a lot of effort to be tackled. This study has brought the research and debate on gender stereotypes in children's literature into the African terrain and provided insights of gender images portrayed in African children's literature. Furthermore, the inclusion of texts from oral literature could increase the understanding of patterned gender images in children's literature and might generate a fuller and more accurate picture of the representations of gender images in children's literature.

Other interesting themes for future research might be gender role stereotypes in televised programs for children and gender role stereotypes in the assignment of duties to children in schools. More studies should also be done on future upcoming literature for children to investigate their portrayal of gender roles to ensure that a positive portrayal of both genders is enhanced. Interviews and focus group studies with children on African children's literature may also be informative to find out if and how the gender images in children's literature affects children, their identities, and their social behavior.

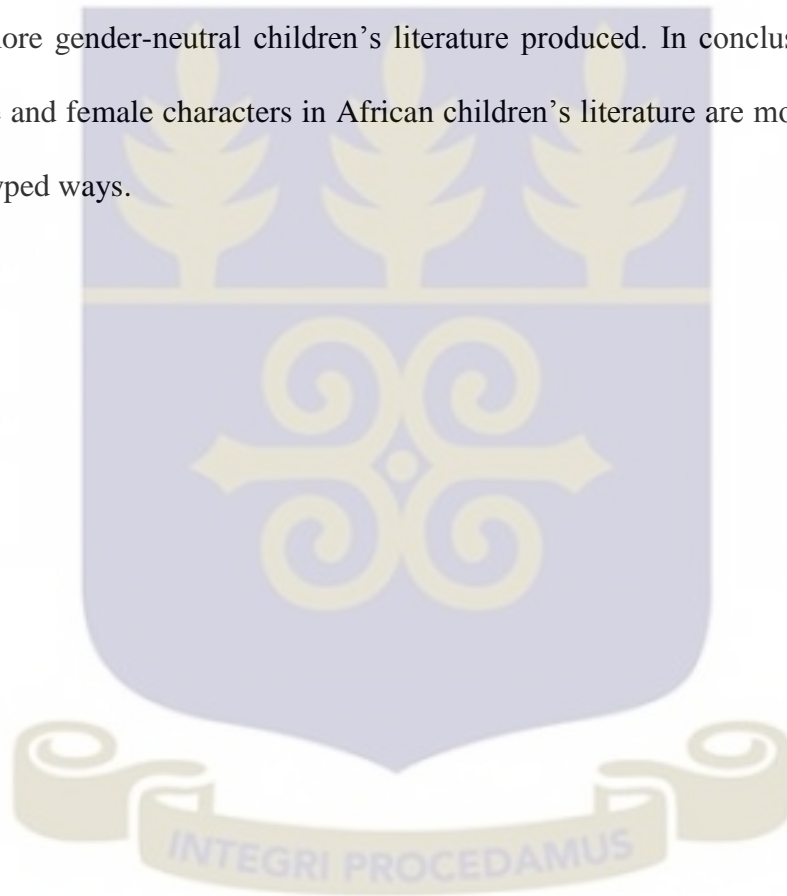
### 5.1.0 CONCLUSION

This study gave an overview of representations of male and female characters and representations of masculinity and femininity in African children's literature. Based on the research findings, there is a lot of stereotypical portrayal in African children's literature even though there is some positive representation of male and female characters. The role of females was limited and they were often portrayed as followers, dependent and weak. Male characters were presented in diverse roles. They were often portrayed as leaders, heroes, strong, brave and with a career. Some of these portrayals are still considered stereotypically masculine. Some males were portrayed as afraid and weak, thereby offering positive traditionally feminine images for boys to identify with.

Female characters were often portrayed as beautiful, caring/loving and weak. Female characters were portrayed in just a few roles which were mostly stereotypical. Today, children are heavily influenced by the literature and media they see, hear and interact with. Nevertheless, children's literature may not be the primary source of children's perceptions of males and females in African societies. Children who spend a substantial amount of time reading story books along with a lot of exposure to their oral literature can be influenced by their images, stories and messages. "Gender images and depictions can have a powerful impact on children's perceptions of males and females and influence the way boys and girls interact with each other and form their identities and personalities" (Fischer, 2010:78).

Male representation in children's literature is dominant. Because males are represented in high numbers, they are also portrayed with more diverse roles and behaviors. Female roles and

behaviors are less diverse and more traditionally feminine, but there is a disparity in representations which necessarily limits the range of images and stories. Progress toward more gender-neutral roles and behavior requires more female representation. While male and female characters are still portrayed in several stereotypical ways, there is some positive portrayal of masculinity and femininity, presenting new attitudes on gender, and offer young children more gender neutral images and stories. It will be interesting in future to see these few positives multiplied and more gender-neutral children's literature produced. In conclusion, this research showed that male and female characters in African children's literature are most often portrayed in gender stereotyped ways.



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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

**Authors, title of books and setting.**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Book Title</b>	<b>Setting</b>
<b>Folktales</b>		
Obi Onyefulu  Illustrated by EvieSafarewicz	Chinye: A West African  Folktale	West Africa
T. Obinkaram Echewa  Illustrated by Christy Hale	The Ancestor tree	Nigeria
Steven Krensky  Illustrated by  Jeni Reeves	The Lion and the Hare: An  East African Folktale	East Africa
Harold Coulander  Wolf Leslau	The marriage of the Mouse	Ethiopia and Eritrea
<b>FICTIONAL TALES</b>		
Selassie Mensah	The Broom	Ghana
Isaac Boham	The Danso Family	Ghana

KudjoEhorke		
S. A. Tekyi		
Paul K. Essandoh		
Thomas Cudjoe		
Dan Fulani	Sauna to the rescue	Nigeria
MeshackAsare	Chipo and the bird on the hill	Zimbabwe
MeshackAsare	Kwajo and the Brassman's Secret. A tale of old Ashanti wisdom and gold	Ghana
Niki Daly	A song for Jamela	South Africa
<b>Lullabies</b>		
Maman Ibrah	Hinda Hindatou	Niger
Mariam Gaye	Who did my baby wrong	Senegal

Appendix B

**LULLABY 1**

Hinda, Hindatou

Niger, 1998 Hausa

Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou

Father can drive a car,

Father can pilot a plane,

Please stop crying.

Never mind, never mind.

Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou.

Please stop fussing, Hindatou.

Please stop crying, Hindatou.

You're growing like a well-watered sprout, Hindatou

Even the sea cant harm you, Hindatou,



Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou.

So, please stop crying, Hindatou.

Let them shun us, let them chase us,

Our roots here get deeper day by day,

Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou.

Oh, don't cry for me Hindatou,

Daughter of Moussa, daughter of Fassouma,

Balki's child, Fassouman's child,

Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou.

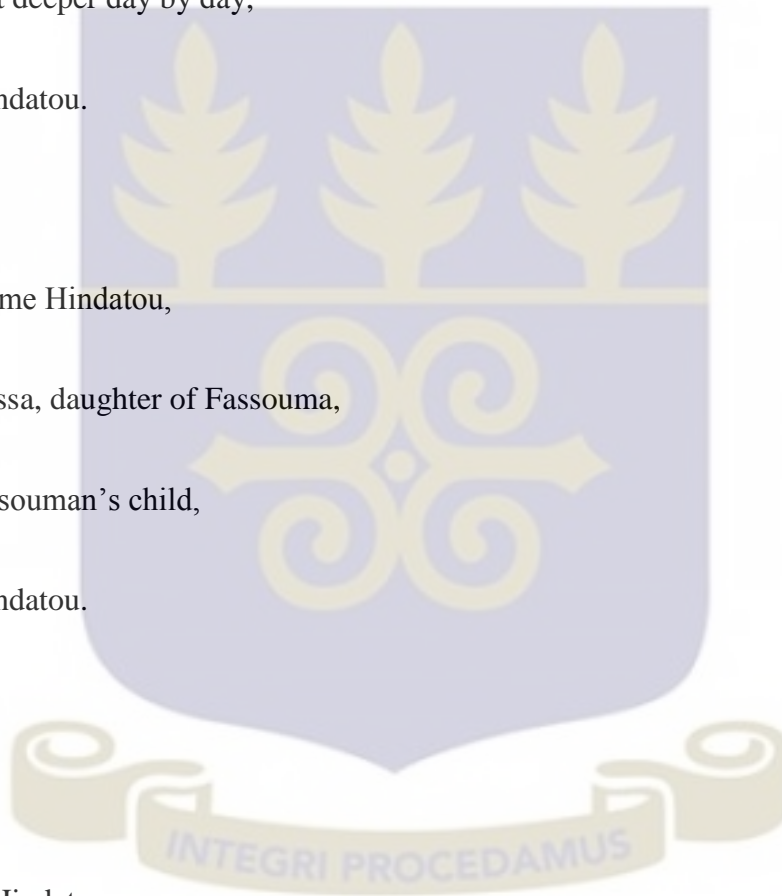
Ay, ay, Hindatou,

O, my daughter, Hindatou,

Please stop crying, Hindatou,

Hinda, Hinda, Hindatou.

Esi Sutherland –Addy and Fatimata Mounkaila. cited in Sutherland-Addy and Diaw A. (2005:153)



Appendix C

**LULLABY 2**

Mariam Gaye, WHO DID MY BABY WRONG?

Senegal 1950 Wolof.

Who did my baby wrong?

The drum is far away in Ndyaan

Oh, but the drum does not cry if it is not beaten!

Who did my baby wrong?

The euphorbia does not weep if it is not broken.

Oh, my baby, my dear child,

Long may you live

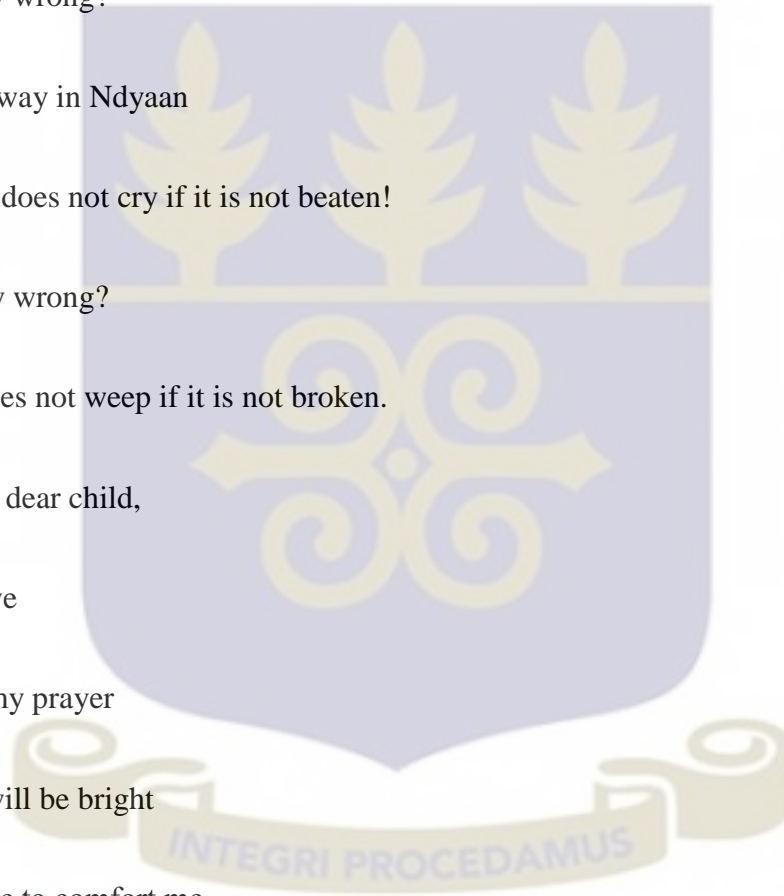
May Allah hear my prayer

Then my future will be bright

For you'll be there to comfort me

Oh, Mademba,

Long may you live, as long as your father



So, all your life your work will honour me

And you'll be there to dry my tears

Oh, my son, honor your parents above all

And you'll reap God's richest blessings

In this life and in the life to come

A grateful child reaps God's richest blessings

In this life and in the life to come.

Oh, be humble, be thankful

Seek after the affection of your kinsmen

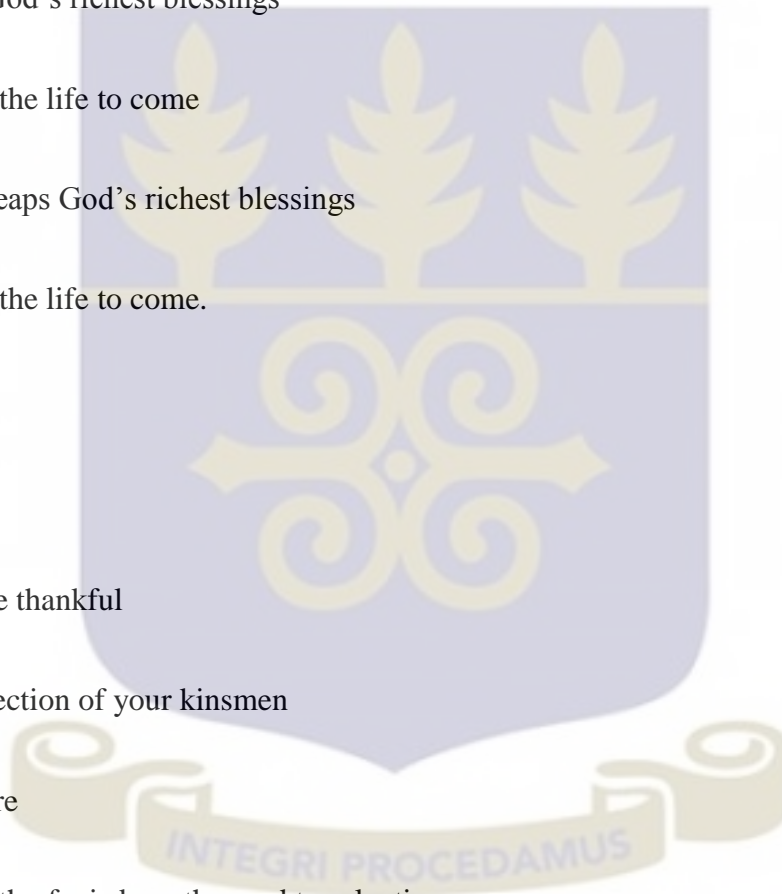
Do not stir their ire

For such is the path of wisdom, the road to salvation

Oh, Mademba

Cry not, my baby

Do not cry



cited in Sutherland-Addy & Diaw A.(2005:153)

