

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE LIVES AND WORKS OF SELECTED
GHANAIAN FEMALE MUSICIANS FROM 1980-2010.**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN
AFRICAN STUDIES.**




JULY, 2012

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original and independent work produced under supervision. All authors, creative materials and resources that have been quoted have been acknowledged fully and that, neither in half nor its entirety has this thesis been published in any form or submitted to another University for the award of a degree

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo. Prof, thank you for your smiles and belief in me. I am eternally indebted to you for opening up a world of learning and research to me.

She sets about her work vigorously,

Her arms are strong for her tasks.

...give her the reward she has earned,

And let her works bring her praise at the city gate!

(Proverbs 31:17; 31)



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ABSTRACT

Ghanaian female secular musicians are underrepresented in the literature on Ghanaian music. This project fills this gap by focusing on the lives and works of some selected Ghanaian female musicians. The work concentrated on the lives of ten female musicians in the secular field. Using qualitative methods such as interviews and participant observations, the study sought to investigate music consumers' perception of who female musicians are and how they live their lives; the challenges female musicians face as women in a male dominated field and the themes that female musicians raise in their songs. The study also took its objectives further to take a comparative look at the lives and works of selected female musicians. The study thus grouped and selected musicians into two categories, the first group from 1980-1999 who are referred to as 'older generation' and the second group from 2000-2010 who are referred to as the younger generation. The findings indicated that consumers' perception of female musicians bordered on the negative. This is a replication of historical stigma which has always been present in the lives of women musicians who have taken to the stage as secular performers. However, the study discovered that such perceptions were as a result of ignorance on the part of music consumer's whose only access to the musicians is through information from the media. Perceptions however differed for older and younger musicians. On themes in the songs of selected female musicians, it was found that similar themes such as love which run through the songs of women from 1980-2010 were handled differently for the two generations. It was also found while themes like marriage and motherhood were present in the songs of older musicians, they were absent in those of younger musicians. In the same vein, emerging themes like fun were discovered in the songs of younger musicians but absent in songs of older musicians. This study will enhance our understanding of women's work in especially in male dominated field and how such spaces are negotiated. In general, it contributes as an addition to the literature on popular arts in Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background

Music is one of the most important forms of art that cuts across all spheres of human relationships. It cuts across race, gender, class and generations. It may mean different things to different people at different points in time and space, but its effects are similar (Vidzreku, 2002).

Music has the ability to enhance the emotional state of an individual while bringing people of similar and different backgrounds together (*Awake*, 2011; Savage, 2008).¹ Music and society have existed side by side since the beginning of the human race. Its value for individuals and societies cannot be underestimated. At an individual level, music soothes and enhances the emotional state of a person. It has been proven to be one of the best therapies administered to the mentally ill and the aged and it improves the learning processes of children and promotes the wellbeing of people in general (Adams & Fuller, 2006). At a group level, music has been known to facilitate group relationships and cultural and national identities (Waterman, 2002). This is achieved through its facilitation of communication which goes beyond ordinary words (Kirkegaard, 2002).

Music is a powerful tool for communication and its communicative power gives it the ability to create and challenge the existing social order (Adomako Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012). The power of music could be linked to the fact that it is a product of popular culture. It has been asserted that “popular culture is the site of

¹ See <http://www.prsfoundation.co.uk/.par>

a dynamic process—a zone of interaction, where relationships are made and unmade to produce anything from meaning to pleasure, from the trite to the powerful” (Cruz and Guins, 2008:11). The statement above is indicative of the powerful nature of popular culture to affect individuals as well as societies. Popular culture provides the platform for people to express and create meanings for themselves and to transmit such expressions and meanings with others. It is therefore important if not imperative for every society to pay critical attention to cultural products such as music. The power of music as a cultural product is not lost on African societies.

African societies have a strong tradition of music making. Music in Africa is considered as a “site of memory” (Vambe, 2011:2). This is because town and family genealogies, state histories as well as happenings in societies were and are still recorded in music. Music plays a very important role in life transitions of individuals in various African societies. Initiation rites, nubility rites as well as various secret societies and cults are organised with songs which may be communicated to only initiates or sometimes to the uninitiated (Sarpong, 1977; Quan- Baffour, 2009). Music in Africa is considered “as a social fact and occurs as an event in social life” such as birth, marriage and death ceremonies (Annan, 2011:1). Music is also performed for entertainment and recreation. Thus, music permeates every fabric of the African society and Ghana is not left out of this tradition. Music is however, created and performed in spaces and are sometimes gendered. For instance in Akan societies, nubility rite songs are the domain of

women while Asafo (war songs) songs are performed by men (Adjei, 2011).

The enduring nature of Ghanaian music traditions lie in the fact that all members of the societal fabric have the opportunity to create music that is meaningful to situations and contexts. There are many traditional spaces available for the creation and performance of music in Ghanaian society. Music is created for political, social, religious and even for entertainment purposes. Like many other African societies, different spaces are created for both men and women to perform music, although there are instances when both men and women perform music together in a communal way. The musical culture of Ghana has created room for the production and borrowing of other forms of popular music in Ghana. Such home grown popular genres include Highlife and Hiplife while borrowing new forms such as Jazz, Soul, Hip pop, Rhythm and Blues and other forms of music.

For the purpose of this study popular music will be limited to Highlife, Hip-life. These two types of music is patronized across generations, gender and class in Ghana. Although popular musicians are made up of both male and female artists, the industry is male dominated. Indeed, the few women who were the ice breakers in popular music in Ghana started as background vocalists, members of male dominated bands, mentored by male musicians or had men as their managers (Asante-Darko & Van der Geest, 1983).

Women's entrance into the popular music scene in Ghana started with their involvement in the concert party, where they were first recruited to perform on the stage (Collins, 2003). Hitherto, the church served as a breeding grounds for

the training of women as musicians. It was however, the concert part which gave them the needed public exposure which hitherto had been denied them. The 1960's saw an influx of women onto the music scene and this has continued to date, although the change does not appear to be significant (Fiagbedzi, 2010). But the consolation is that they have come to stay and although they may not be numerous in the secular music arena, they seem to reign in the gospel scene (Collins, 1997; Sutherland-Addy, 2006; Wright, 1995).

A critical look at songs by both men and women will show a difference in the themes and issues that they are concerned with. Indeed a lot of work has been done on men and their entrance into and participation in the secular popular music field (Collins, 1985; Collins, 1986; Yankah, 2012). However, much less attention has been paid to women musicians and their works. Women's entrance, sustenance in the music industry and lyrics are yet to be significantly analyzed in the light of their personal lives as well as the socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. Also, how these songs have changed or how similar themes have been handled differently over the years by female musicians re yet to be looked.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Feminist scholars especially have argued that globally, women's work has not been accorded the attention and value their work deserve (Kabeer, 1994; Folbre, 2001; NETRIGHT, 2009). This is because the kind of work performed by women

is normally viewed as an extension of their reproductive and domestic responsibilities. Due to this erroneous judgment, attention is normally not paid to the kind of work that women do in and outside the home as being productive. The assumption is that most productive work is done by men, with women “merely” supporting. Women are not recognised as major contributors to most productive enterprises, thus leaving their part of the story untold or under represented. The music industry in Ghana is no exception to this description. The term “musician” includes men and women with the only distinction being the type of music that they produce. The argument that is normally put forward is the fact that such terms as ‘musicians’ are gender neutral and could refer to both male and female musicians. However, due to gender biases in social constructions, the term secular “Highlife/Hiplife musician” normally conjures an image of a male performer, pushing women out of the picture, while their participation and contributions remain invisible because they are normally found in areas such as the Gospel genre.

Further, most of the works done on musicians also concentrates more on traditional Ghanaian Highlife music as genres of Ghanaian music as these have a longer history. Due to the fact that the development of Highlife is associated with men and described at its inception to be a 'mainly male affair' (Asante-Darko & Van der Geest, 1983: 135), the full participation of women in secular popular music in Ghana remains untold. The problem is not due to the limited number of women musicians in the secular arena but the lack of artistic attention given to their lives and work as worth studying.

There is very little published work on the lives and works of female musicians in Ghana. Collins (2003) takes a look at the factors that hindered the late entrance of women in popular music in Ghana. Sutherland-Addy (2006) also takes a look into the diverse ways in which women are presented and represented in popular products such as music and movies in Ghana. More recent works like Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) and Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo (2012) analyse the representation of women further by looking at the different ways in which alternative representations could be encouraged in popular music in Ghana. What seems to be lacking in the literature is a look into the lives of women musicians and what they sing about. In view of this gap, the study seeks to take a look at the lives and works of some selected female musicians in Ghana. The work will be centered on the lives of the selected musicians, that is, their lives as women and as musicians and the themes they highlight in their works. This research is interested in knowing about their entrance, consumers' perceptions, challenges and how they survive in a male dominated music industry. The work is also interested in the various themes and concerns raised by women over the years in their music. Finally, the work will focus on the differences and changes in themes if any, which have occurred over the years in the lives and works of selected Ghanaian female musicians.

1.2. Goals of the Study

The major goal of the study is two-fold. The first is to find out about the lives of the selected female musicians both as individuals and musicians, while the

second goal of the study is to unearth the themes in women's songs. The specific objectives are to understand:

- Consumers' perceptions of who women secular musicians are.
- Women's trajectory in the music industry.
- Some of the challenges that women musicians face and how that differs for older and younger musicians or how they survive in the music industry.
- The predominant themes in works of selected musicians and changes/similarities in themes over the years.

1.3. Methodology

The method that is used in this research is primarily qualitative in nature. This is because this study is basically a social study that looks at the lives of selected women and their experiences in their chosen profession and what they sing about. Data were gathered through primary as well as secondary sources.

1.3.0. Primary data

The primary data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. The years under consideration were broken down into two categories: 1980-1999 and 2000-2010. The year 1980 was chosen as a starting point because of the changes which the music industry witnessed in that year. After a breakdown of the music industry and an exodus of many Ghanaian

musicians abroad, the years 1983 and 1985 saw the formation of MUSIGA² and the promulgation of the Copyright Law respectively. Then in 1990, private stations were allowed to operate in Ghana. These factors led to a boom in the music industry in Ghana. Selected musicians in the 1980-1999 category are those who had started singing earlier but had become established and well known in the eighties through to the nineties and those who started in the eighties but had become forces to reckon with by the nineties. The selected artistes primarily performed the Highlife genre. In the second group, are those selected musicians who appeared on the musical scene from early 2000s up till a decade after in 2010. The first group I will refer to as older musicians and the second group will be referred to as younger musicians. These musicians from 1980-1999 (older musicians) include Awurama Badu, Naa Amanua, Paulina Oduro, Bibi Brew and, Akosua Adjepong.

The artistes in the 2000-2010 category were also chosen because they are at present the best known and popular. They belong to the Hiplife generation. They are Dorcas Adarkwa (Abrewa Nana), Belinda Nana Akua (Mzbel), Mildred Ashong (Eazzy), Jane Awindor (Efyra) and Rebecca Acheampong (Becca). The criteria for judging popularity was by asking the audience at random to mention seven most popular current female artistes, and the above five names always came up top out of ten. Music distributors were also questioned on the female artistes that most consumers patronized. Apart from Dorcas Adarkwa (who was out of the country at the time of the study) and Rebecca Acheampong, interviews were conducted with the above mentioned musicians at their residences to solicit

² Association of Ghanaian musicians.

answers on their individual entrance into popular music, challenges they face as well as the themes they focus on in their works. Selected musicians were questioned on their entrance into popular music, challenges they faced, themes they raised in their songs and perceived changes in themes in the years under consideration.

All the interview questions were open ended (see Appendix one). This was to afford respondents the opportunity to express views and concerns which the questions may not capture. In all instances, the purpose of the study and permission of the various respondents were sought before any recording was done. In addition to interviewing the musicians, three songs of each artiste were purposely selected for content analysis to draw out the themes and concerns raised in the songs.

The interviews were, however, not limited to the musicians. Music producers and composers, considering that they are mostly male and work in close contact with musicians were also interviewed in order to understand their views on what women musicians sing about. Open ended questions were used to guide the interviews conducted, (see appendix two for questions). Furthermore, music consumers were interviewed to solicit the perceptions they had about female secular popular musicians (see appendix three for questions).

The views of music consumers (audience) were also sought on perceived changes in the themes of these musicians. In all, twenty music consumers were interviewed for the work. Ten were selected from various shows the researcher

attended and the other ten were selected from the University of Ghana. Students who were interviewed were recruited from all levels (level 100-600). The ages of the audience interviewed range between 20 to 60 years.

Performances of selected musicians were attended where possible. The researcher attended the much touted *Redlipstick* musical concert which was held on the 29th October, 2011 at the Conference Centre. This was an all-female concert which was held to raise awareness on breast cancer in the country. Five of the musicians selected (Akosua Agyepong, Belinda Amoah, Jane Awindor, Mildred Ashong and Rebecca Acheampong) for the study performed at this concert. The researcher also had the privilege of attending other shows although these shows did not pull as much audience as the *Redlipstick* concert. In all, three shows were attended. The main focus was information on areas such as stage craft, songs which the musicians love to perform, the song of the musicians which receives a lot of cheers and approval from the audience and audience response to different musicians. This provided firsthand information on performer-audience relationship and informed the study on why women might sing about particular themes and the part audience plays in influencing such choices.

1.3.1. Secondary data

Because this work emanated from a broader project, the study also used data which were collected from earlier research. *The Changing Representation of Women in Popular Music in Ghana* is a broader project that seeks to bring to

light the negative ways in which women are represented in popular music in Ghana and how alternative representations could be encouraged. This study made use of the data which were collected earlier for *The Changing Representation of Women in Popular Music* project³. These include: two focus group discussion, one with taxi drivers and students (two important consumers of music who are in constant interaction with music). These taxi drivers were selected from the Legon taxi rank while the students were from the University of Ghana. Selection of these two groups was very appropriate because most of the taxi drivers had ideas of songs in the 80's because of their age distribution while students were familiar with songs from 1990s- 2000s. These drivers also have constant interaction with students because the taxis are mostly patronized by students who sometimes determined the kind of songs to play while aboard the taxi. Moreover, University students are one of those groups of people who have access to a wide range of music because of the fact that they have access to a wider range of electronic gadgets and the Internet. Students (young people in general) patronize, more than any group of people, night clubs, musical shows, various beauty pageants (where musicians normally perform live) and various parties that they organize in their various hostels or other places. Although the initial idea was not to organize the focus group discussions for the topic under consideration, the views shared in the discussions proved to be relevant for this

³ This is an on-going project carried out by The Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy with funding from the Uk Department for International Development. (CEGENSA) at the University of Ghana was set up in 2004 to conduct research, develop curricular, provide documentation, design policies, and carry out advocacy and outreach on gender issues. It also provides counseling for sexual assault victims and mentoring of junior faculty. (See Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu, 2012).

work. Finally, two workshops which were held for musicians and various music stakeholders were also used to tease out some of the issues that would be raised in this work.

Finally, secondary sources in the form of library documentation were used to aid the analysis of the primary data. Data collection took four months. Collected data were transcribed and translated into English to help with its analysis. Ideas generated from interviews and other data were organized into themes. Because the study is comparative; the themes derived from the various analyses were then compared to find out differences as well as similarities that have occurred over the years under consideration.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

The study does not intend to give a critical analysis of the lives of musicians but rather to present the everyday life of the musicians, how their consumers perceive them to live these lives and some of the difficulties they face as musicians as well as the predominant themes in their works. To this end, the study will not necessarily draw a connection between their personal lives and the themes in their songs although such passing references would be made where necessary.

Again, the study was not able to discuss the whole range of themes in the selected musicians' songs but rather concentrated on the dominant and recurring ones which were identified in the works. Moreover, the sample of ten musicians is in no way representative of the universe under consideration. The

unrepresentative nature of the sample size therefore means that the findings cannot be generalized. However, these selected women are not so unique from other musicians who were not selected for the study that the findings might not be relevant or applicable.

Some field challenges were also faced during this research. The first one was getting access to the musicians. As it turned out, the researcher had underestimated this very challenge and assumed that participants would be enthusiastic about the research since it will serve as a form of biography of their lives. Most musicians were willing to grant interviews when first contacted, however, their managers/producers proved to be a barrier between the researcher and the musicians especially among the younger female musicians. Since they were in charge of arranging schedules for interviews some proved to be very difficult and in some instances the researcher had to book appointments for months before she was granted an interview.

The second challenge was the fact that in most cases participants were initially not comfortable talking to the researcher especially when they were informed they would be recorded. This is because some of them have been victims of journalists who had interviewed them and manipulated or taken advantage of the information to the detriment of the musicians. They were therefore very shifty about talking to the researcher especially about their lives and in most cases their financial situations. To overcome this difficulty, the researcher had to postpone the interviews and keep familiarising herself with the musicians until they were comfortable to talk. The researcher also had to respect the wishes of respondents

who indicated that some information which had been provided was to be considered “off record.” Although such information was not included due to ethical reasons, they informed the outcome of the research. All these challenges, however, served as learning ground for this researcher and helped her to establish contacts with respondents in the field for future studies.

1.5. Significance of the Study

A study such as this is bound to add to the existing literature on the subject, especially when one considers the limited literature on women musicians in Ghana. The study will help us to understand the position of the Ghanaian female musician and how it differs from the male musician. It will also help to understand the societies in which they produce their art. This is because if indeed songs reflect the societies in which they are produced, then the study, by looking at the themes that these women tackle in their songs will give a better understanding of and especially the position of women in the society.

Recently, there have been controversies about the changing pattern of music by young artistes especially women artistes from the “traditional Ghanaian” form of music to the foreign. It is common knowledge that this is breeding antagonism between the generations. It is therefore my hope that this study will help consolidate the different dimensions of these songs as changes and not aberrations. This acceptance of change, it is hoped, will help to encourage young people to unleash their talents without fear of condemnation and rejection.

Lastly, the work will draw the attention of all the female musicians to the fact

that their individual or group work is important for discourse analysis. This might also improve and enhance their confidence and creativity and encourage them to do more work as individuals and as a minority that needs to unite to survive in their line of work.

Theoretically, this work will help to elucidate the power dynamics involved in women's participation in music and how such dynamics lead to consumer's perception of women musicians and women as a social category involved in the creation of popular products. The study will further extend our understanding to the causes of different issues raised in songs over time in the songs of the selected female musicians.

1.6. Organisation of Work

The work is organised into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on background to the study, statement of the problem, the methods used to carry out the research, goals of the study, the significance of this study and the lastly the organisation of the work.

Chapter two examines the literature and its significance for the study. The review of related literature takes a look at the historical development of popular music in Ghana, women's participation and contribution in both traditional and contemporary popular music. The literature from this point critically looks at the trajectory, survival and general context in which women musicians have had to produce their songs and how all these factors may have culminated in affecting what they sing about. The theoretical framework for the study is also included in

this chapter.

Chapter three provides a biographical sketch of the selected female musicians. This researcher attempts analyse aspects of their lives that have a bearing on the songs that they sing and *vice versa*.

Chapter four presents a discussion of the interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis of songs and all other data collected for the study. In chapter five, the work is concluded with summary and some recommendations.

This chapter has given the general overview of the study under consideration. It has suggested that the very essence of the work lies in the fact that there is a gap in the academic discourse that needs to be filled. This gap is the lack of a body of work on female musicians in Ghana, with specific consideration given to their lives and themes in their songs or its changing patterns. The methodology that was used in the collection and analysis of data, the goal of the study, its significance as well as the general organisation of the work have all been outlined in this chapter. In the next chapter, I explore the available literature on the study as well as provide the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part consists of an examination of the literature about Ghana. The second part of the chapter presents the theoretical framework for the work.

The concept music bares itself to a wide range of subjective interpretations. Music in general means different things to different people in different contexts. In the African context, music is performed basically for different specially designated occasions and can also be performed simply for popular entertainment. This work is mainly concerned with the popular aspect of Ghanaian music. The review will begin by delineating what constitutes popular music. The rest of the review will cover the following issues/areas; the historical survey of the development of popular music in Ghana, then narrow its focus to the participation of women in music in both Africa and Ghana including both traditional and contemporary music. Due to the limited work that has been produced over the years on Ghanaian female musicians, I will draw heavily on literature from other African countries and to a lesser extent, global instances to support this project. The concentration here is on the secular music in Ghana. The work will rely heavily on the works of Adomako Ampofo, Asiedu and Collins.

2.1. Ghanaian Music as Popular Product

The most important question that should be answered before attempting to look at Ghanaian music as popular music is, what constitutes popular arts or culture, including music? There is no easy or clear-cut answer to this important question. Barber (1987) states that popular arts can only be described or defined by “what it is not.” By this definition, popular art is seen as a creation that does not fit into the neatly defined traditional forms or the elite forms of arts. The traditional and elite arts are seen as the two most sanctioned and organized forms of art. Traditional art forms are identified as those art forms which are “communal, consensual, embedded in social and ritual practice, and produced according to rigid codes by highly trained, skilled craftsmen” (Barber, 1987:2). Traditional arts are readily recognizable by members of the society to whom these arts belong. Again, traditional art forms are not readily malleable and one needs apprenticeship of a kind in order to be recognized as an authority. Elite art on the other hand are those ones that have identifiable authors (who are self-conscious educated artists) and are mostly complex, with the trappings of mostly western education or exposure. These two forms are given the needed attention to help them flourish. Traditional art forms are highly patronized during official state functions and elites or high artists have the opportunity to exhibit their works at well-organized galleries or conferences. Somewhere between these two well-defined art lie popular art. It has adopted some characteristics of both the traditional and elite art, but also differs radically from both to an extent. Indeed popular art, including popular music, is sometimes seen in opposition to both

traditional and elite art. It mostly does not require any authority or apprenticeship and artists have a wide range of material to choose from. Hence, they twist and turn materials to suit personal taste or that of their audience. Popular art is indeed considered popular because “its sociological roots are not in the elite and/or privileged minority sub-cultures but rather in the intermediate and agricultural sectors and the working class” (Cole, 2001:2). Anyone who is a fan of popular art can have easy access to them because they are widely available and it flourishes with or without “encouragement or recognition, from political cultural bodies, and sometimes in defiance of them” (Barber, 1987:1).

According to Karen Barber “the most obvious reason for giving serious attention to the popular arts is their sheer undeniable assertive presence as social facts (1987:1).” This statement by Barber reflects the powerful nature of popular art generally and music particularly. Barber suggests that popular arts and for that matter music serve as a valve for voicing social issues and sentiments. They are more or less the mirror through which society reflects its values, norms and practices. According to Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo (2012) the ability of cultural products and popular culture to reflect and influence society therefore means that “these products cannot be taken for granted as they potentially have the power to shape the consciousness of society” (2012:1).

Popular music has been acknowledged as “the most potent, adaptable, transferable of arts and the only one to make a noticeable impact on popular

audience outside Africa” (Barber, 1997:1). Ghanaian Popular music which is one of the foremost products of popular culture has been identified by Collins (1985) as the type of music which has travelled the full cycle from Africa through the diaspora and returned to the Ghanaian. He explains this to mean that genres which are now recognized and acknowledged as popular culture are those sounds which were originally Ghanaian in roots but were taken to the Diaspora where they exploded and travelled back home and got synthesized with traditional African forms. Thus contemporary Ghanaian popular music is a synthesis of the more organised traditional forms with the elite forms of the western music due to slavery in the new world and brought back home again. But this time those who developed these genres were the ordinary men and women who found a way to provide a voice for their ‘voicelessness’. Thus popular music possesses all the characteristic of popular art and more. This is because unlike other forms of popular art such as drama or paintings, songs are easily accessible to all and hold the most potent power of easily affecting and influencing the thought patterns of society. A study conducted on the representation of women in popular music in Ghana reflects this assertion.

The Changing Representation of Women in Popular Music in Ghana, of which this thesis is an outgrowth, sets out to examine the ways in which women are presented in popular music in Ghana, and how those representations could be transformed if negative. The two papers that emerged out of this project speak to the nature and power of music as a popular art. The authors reveal that popular

music serve as a powerful tool to influence the thought patterns of both producers and consumers of music (Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu, 2012). Hence an important aspect of the study was its activist edge that sought to ‘marry’ research with advocacy by taking their research to town and holding conversations with interested stakeholders. This was in a bid to raise consciousness about negative representation of women in popular Ghanaian music and influence the production of more empowering images. In one of their advocacy efforts, a representative of the media personnel is recorded confessing: “I have never thought of music in such terms. This launch will make me more aware when I listen to music” (Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu, 2012:16). This power of music and musicians was acknowledged by the *Legon Observer* when it assigned a role to music and musicians, more significant even than historians: “but for our complete treasury of our collective human story in all its full complexity, we must also turn to the singers of our countless songs: our songs of joy” (*Legon Observer*, 2000:1-2, cited in Adomako Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012).

The second paper also revealed that the negative representation of women in popular music in Ghana was partly due to the fact that the industry was male dominated (Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo, 2012). An alternative representation of women in popular products, specifically music was suggested by the work as being possible through the introduction of more women into the music industry as performers and producers. Through the analysis of two songs by two artistes the authors show, however, that having women in the industry is not a sufficient

condition to impact representation and the roles assigned to women.

Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo (2012) contend that due to the male dominated nature of the music industry, if one wants to encourage alternative representations of women this means bringing men into the discussion. This is necessary because producers are typically men and they advertently or inadvertently produce songs about women that may be denigrating.

The power of music as a cultural product is thus undisputable. It embodies the totality of a peoples' lives and serves as "indicators of culture" (Yankah, 1980). It is a powerful medium for social change and continuity. It is therefore important that not only music, but its makers and performers are given the necessary scholarly attention in order to understand the relationship between their lives, their music and the workings of society at large. It is imperative that such scholarly attention is paid to the genres that have developed over the years, the cultural environment or context in which they were created and the personalities and lives of the creators as well. Therefore, in order to take a look at the performers, we should first pay attention to genres in which performers have created their music.

In order to understand the evolvement of popular music in Ghana, I will first look at the traditional music from which the popular music developed.

2.2. Traditional Ghanaian Music

Since the rise of anthropology as a branch of academic discourse, researchers of music have made it a point to define a particular combination of sound, rhythm, range, and words from some distant past as African music (Brusila, 2002; Kirkegaard, 2002). This idea of a branch of music that is African can be very deceptive. To describe a particular type of music as African presupposes a static, homogeneous characteristic of that music that makes it African. It has however been established that Africa is far from homogeneous and that what might sound the same has different if not minute differences that can only be identified sometimes only by natives or even natives who have had special training at it (Nketia, 1966). This being the case it would be expedient to look out for characteristics that are unique to music of Africa and for that matter Ghana.

In the words of Nketia (1966) African music is “music which has survived the impact of the forces of western forms of acculturation, and is, therefore, quite distinct in idioms and orientation from contemporary popular art music” (quoted in Agordoh, 1994). Indeed the above definition becomes a little problematic when one considers the fact that every aspect of Ghanaian life has been affected by foreign influence in one way or another. Content of music, costumes of performers and even the spaces for the performance of what is called Ghanaian traditional music may have fallen under` some of these influences.

Some of the major characteristics of African or Ghanaian music which are unique to it include that music is associated with dance; there is a close

relationship between music and language, performances, except in special ritual ones which are done in the open. Again, such music is relatively percussive, singing is normally in the call and response mode, hand clapping is considered a music instrumental, participation in some musical types require training. Musical performance is communal and there are allocated spaces for musical performances (Adjei, 2011). This list is inexhaustible. This “everydayness” of music in the life of Ghana is illustrated by the fact that a special type of music is performed for every space or occasion.

In Ghana just as in other parts of Africa, there are musical types that are produced in the political, social, religious, economic as well as the recreational space. The idea that anyone could operate in any of these spaces without the use of music is simply unthinkable. According to Agordoh (1994) songs draw both on political events, such as wars, the genealogies of rulers and the development of clan structures, and on topical events of living memory. Songs thus serve the repertoire of the Ghanaian experience and form of preservation of events which will have otherwise been forgotten (Yankah, 1984). This could account for the fact that African music has been described as communal or organized as a “social event” (Nketia, 1974). Because most songs express shared experiences, it is only natural that they are performed in a communal way. This does not however, imply that there is no individual innovation or creativity at work or the fact that individuals are incapable of producing songs on their own. In fact Nketia asserts that although the “group” performance is encouraged in Akan “...distinctions are made between different grades of performers on the basis of levels of

performance skill coupled with the knowledge and ability or skill in apportioning musical roles” (1969:8). Nketia goes further to drive the point home that there are indeed individuals who may choose to perform solo or in company of others. The talent to sing or make music is cultivated early in the Ghanaian society through formal or informal training. The Ghanaian child is lucky from childhood to be around music through lullabies that is sung to him or her by the family. As the child grows up, he or she is surrounded with music from all corners and spaces available for music production and is thus given the advantage to develop fully his or her musical talents by enjoying and participating in music production. Thus the Ghanaian society encourages the flourishing of individual talents and expression and it is in this environment of music that new forms of music such as the Highlife, Hip-life, Twi pop, Afro pop and all other Ghanaian engineered genres of music have evolved.

For the purposes of this work, more attention will be paid to the Highlife and Hip-life genres since they are the basis on which most of the latter popular genres build on.

2.3. A Historical Survey of Highlife

The subject of the development of popular music, especially Highlife has been fairly well documented by scholars. The one popular music in Ghana that is homegrown, developed and which has had influence on subsequent popular music in Ghana is the Highlife. Collins (2000) postulates that Highlife is a 19th and early 20th century fusion of three elements: the indigenous African, the

European and the New World music of the black diaspora. As the imported influences first came to West Africa via European and American ships, early popular music styles grew in the coastal areas, before moving inland. Agordoh (1994) also asserts that:

though based on gay rhythms of the African foundation, it began from the inspiration of Western band music which was admired for its noisy splendour and later the ballroom at which the thoughtful African never found favourable (Agordoh, 1994:171).

The Highlife music, a combination of traditional recreational music and western musical influences originated on the Fante coast in the 1920s and then spread to Ghana's interior as well as other cities in West Africa. In an overview of the history of Highlife by Collins (2000), Highlife can be seen to have grown out of three strands of music. The first hint of Highlife was in early *Adaha* music. *Adaha* grew out of the Brass band which had become common among the new soldiers recruited by the European in the castles who had set them up to play marching tunes. It was not long before the bands started playing local tunes. It was however, the arrival of Caribbean soldiers, who had be imported to help the British fight the Ashanti that helped *Adaha* to develop. Soon however, the Ghanaian soldiers started playing together with the brass-band, a corrupted version of Caribbean Creole Mentos and Calypsos, which the Caribbean soldiers had been playing during their spare time.

The second phase of the development of the Highlife was the Palmwine music style that developed around the early 20th century. This was a combination of

locally manufactured “instruments with portable ones of visiting seamen: the cornertina, banjo, harmonia and particularly the guitar” (Collins, 2000:2). The third phase of Highlife which actually gave birth to the name Highlife was the development of the Black elite dance and the early development of the concert party. Around the 1914s, a number of dance orchestras developed and these groups played European and Latin-American ball room music and ragtime's for the educated elite. The name Highlife was as a result of the class of people who patronized the clubs in which this type of music was played, coupled with concert party performances. Entrance fee was charged before one could enter these places and those who could afford happened to be the educated elite and petit bourgeoisie. Those who could not afford such places therefore described it as 'Highlife', hence the name of the genre (Collins, 2000).

Thus far, it will be convincing for one to reach the conclusion that Highlife music is a hybrid musical form from local music and Western music and became popularized as a result of urbanization and westernization (Brempong, 2000). Agovi however, warns against over stretching the argument by suggesting that “highlife is a modern invention, a post-colonial era product of urbanization, a social change, and rapid mobility” (1989:194). His argument is that though the Highlife maybe indeed modern, it “falls within the performance tradition of the African” (Agovi, 1989:194)). He further argues that Highlife songs depict characteristics such as the “use of proverbs, characteristic narrative density, metaphors” and other such characteristics that make Highlife reminiscent of African traditional performance. From another point of view however,

considering the development of Highlife as a genre, one would not be overstretching the argument by suggesting that the Highlife and even its name Highlife owes its existence to “modernity” and “urbanization”. The very beginning of Highlife has to do with the Ghanaians’ fascination for the brass band which according to Agordoh was “admired for its noisy splendor” (1994: 171) and not just its “verbal content” as Agovi asserts. Yankah (1984), also states that Highlife “composition is a multiplex of voice, melody, text, rhythm and instrumentation” and that “the source of a song’s appeal may not necessarily be its message (571). This immediately brings to mind some songs which have become popular based on their rhythm, but really have no message. At best, one could say that the Highlife is a synthesis of more than just one culture and as Agovi states, the strength and appeal of the Highlife “lie in the fact that it is a composite art form (1980:1).”

Since its birth, Highlife continues to be popular and has left its mark on Ghana as it's officially produced 'traditional' popular music. The popularity of the Highlife can be pinned on some unique characteristics which continue to influence other genres of Ghanaian music. One of the most important features of Highlife is its ability to be a valve through which public opinion is expressed. In traditional Ghanaian society, songs serve more than just tools for entertainment (Agovi, 1995). Songs are used for voicing concerns, to criticise and to praise individuals or institutions. The strength of the Highlife lies in its ability to appropriate that space as a musical form. Since its inception, the Highlife song has been used by

many artists to make political statements and comment on society at large (Barber, 1987). Indeed, the first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah was an ardent patron of Highlife bands in Ghana and used them to get his message across to the nation (Collins, 2000).

Again, Highlife still has a stronghold on Ghanaian musical scene because of its emphasis on live band performances, dance and a high audience patronage and its openness to various influences. This high audience patronage could be because of the fact that every Ghanaian can identify with Highlife and this is because the growth and development of Highlife cannot be attributed to one person or ethnic group in Ghana (Collins, 2007). It has become 'Ghanaian property' and assumed a communal ownership status, hence every Ghanaian's sense of ownership of the genre. Highlife is one of the genres which attracted both male and female popular musicians. Women started on the Highlife front as background vocalists and graduated to star and solo performers. It was indeed the Highlife genre that provided its platform for women to produce and perform popular music. Four of the female musicians selected for this study fall in the Highlife genres. They are Awurama Badu, Naa Amanua Doudu, Paulina Oduro, and Akosua Agyepong. The flexibility of Highlife to change and modification is therefore the result of new genres such as the Hiplife

2.4. A Historical Survey of Hiplife

Hiplife is probably the biggest home grown music genre in Ghana after Highlife. The story of Hiplife is a very recent one, dating back to the 1990s. Just like its

predecessor Highlife, Hiplife can also be described as a synthesis of many music forms. It is normally described as a blend or fusion of Ghanaian Highlife and Western music genres such as the hip hop, dancehall, reggae and other African diasporic music (Wikipedia.org, 2011; Dominik, 2011). The birth of Hiplife is normally attributed to one man, Reginald "Reggie Rockstone" Osei which has earned him the title 'God-father of Hiplife'. In the early 1990's Reginald "Reggie Rockstone" Osei, a Ghanaian-born and US-raised rapper descended onto the Ghanaian musical scene with his first album *Tsoo Boi* (Collins, 2000). It turned out to be a great musical success and this was attributed mainly to the fact that he was the first Ghanaian to rap in his native Asante Twi (Akwayiram, 2007). According to him, he had started rapping in Twi because "I came home, and in the clubs all the kids were listening to rap from New York, or LA-Snoop, Busta Rhymes, all of them-but not necessarily understanding what they're saying" (News.bbc.com, 2010). Thus, his wish to change things around led to what has now become Hiplife that is a blend of Hip hop and high life. It should be noted, however, that Hiplife had started as an underground development before Reggie Rockstone appeared on the musical scene (Wikipedia.org, 2011). The return of Reggie Rockstone was what gave the genre the exposure it needed. Reggie Rockstone, who had lived most of his life in the US was seen as someone who had all the necessary credentials to establish something like Hiplife.

The Ghanaian music community had started having what some have described as an underground "love affair" with American music, especially Hip hop. This is

explained by the fact that Hip hop as a genre has its roots in African music and once it was taken to the west it returned home again to Africa (Osumare, 2012). Writing on the reasons for the emergence of Hiplife, Oduro Frimpong contends that the development of Hiplife could be attributed to joblessness and general economic hardship in the country; like rap music in the U.S., Hiplife music might have been “a contemporary response to conditions of joblessness [and] poverty” (Oduro-Frimpong, 2006: 6). He further indicates that such instances of joblessness was a direct result of the introduction of the educational reforms by the Rawlings regime which had reduced the number of school going years and had admitted a lot of people into the educational system without a corresponding number of jobs after school. It is, however, quite difficult to agree entirely with such an assertion. Such an opinion rules out important factors such as artistry, creativity and ingenuity since one gets the impression that Hiplife developed purely as a result of people finding something to do or perhaps nothing to do. The development of any form of popular art is a result of many complex factors with joblessness being just one of those factors along with others such as urbanization, western education and globalization (Brempong, 2001; Collins, 2002). Judging from the history of Hiplife contemporary musicians such as Reggie Rockstone, one cannot say that it was unemployment that led him to hip-life. At best we can suggest the economic conditions of the country are but one of the catalysts that led to the rapid development of Hiplife.

Hiplife, however, differs from both Highlife and Hip hop in some basic ways

although it is a synthesis of the two genres and more as discussed above. Unlike Highlife, almost all Hiplife songs are produced in a studio with the aid of technology with “heavy emphasis on computer-aided composition, arrangements and production” (Wikipedia.org, 2011). This has led to most artists miming or voicing over their songs during performance, which has in turn been attributed to the low patronage of the Hiplife music in international market as compared to the Highlife (Wikipedia.org, 2011; Ghanamusic.com. 2007) This has also led to unemployment since most instrumentalists, who actually formed the bulk of a live band, have been put out of work. This is because one element of Highlife is the fact that it is performed with a live band whereas musicians of Hiplife are known for their mime shows. This means that instrumentalists no longer have roles to play in the Hiplife performance. Thus, those instrumentalists who depended solely on musical performances for employment are put out of work. Also, the element of live band production of Highlife is missing in Hiplife. This has come under heavy criticism and recently more and more Hiplife artists are being encouraged to perform with live bands. Hiplife also differs from Hip hop because though Hiplife is used to address political and social issues, it does not do so with the same anger and intensity associated with the African-American version. Again, although Hiplife in Ghana seems to be an influenced venture, it has ingeniously developed its own style which has given the youth a voice and something to relate to (Osumare, 2012).

Today, the Ghanaian musical scene is flooded with musicians performing all

forms of musical types although the Highlife and Hiplife genre dominate the field. However, women continue to be under represented in the secular musical scene. Indeed, surfing through the history of the development of both Highlife and Hiplife genres, women are conspicuously missing especially when it comes to the secular field, although they abound in the area of Gospel music. Women Gospel musicians borrow Highlife rhythms and change the words with focus on a new target audience. However, there is still a dearth in the number of women who perform in the secular music front. This leaves one big question unanswered; “Have African and for that matter Ghanaian women been consumers of music and not its producers and performers?” The next section of the review will take a look at the trajectory of women's participation in African and Ghanaian music scenes as composers and producers of music.

2.5. Women as Producers and Performers of music

Women’s participation in music both as producers and performers is not a new phenomenon. In fact women have been singing from the time they learned to talk. There is a long tradition of women as producers and performers of music across Africa. As musicians, women were allocated instruments that they played or spaces in which they could perform their songs.

Records from North Africa give a clear indication that there were instruments reserved for women for the performance of music. In a study of the Maghreb regions of Africa (modern Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) there is evidence of the historical performance of music by women. Professional women musicians of

these regions were known as the *Qiyān* which meant “slave girls” (Doubleday, 1999). They were chiefly responsible for singing and playing the *'ud* (traditional Arab lute). This required that such women were given education, a privilege that was denied the so called 'free' women of the empire. Indeed, a good *Qiyān* could be 'promoted' to the status of a “legal concubine” in the master’s house. Being a female musician was seen as a form of freedom which other women could not enjoy in the community. The *Qiyān* could transform herself into a self-employed professional musician who performed at weddings, private parties and taverns and led a 'respectable' life. Doubleday (1999) writes of women as traditional performers and the sole players of the *Frame* drum, the only instrument which is socially sanctioned for women to play. Female musicians and “dancers also provided royal entertainments” (Doubleday 1999:106). Women musicians were, however, regarded with disrespect as the instrument that went with it, the *Frame* drum, was associated with Gypsies who were social outcasts.

It is important to note the way in which the type of instrument played by women emerges frequently in the literature on women musicians. This is because musical instruments are a representation of power in this region of Africa, thus while bigger instruments are associated with men, the smaller *Frame* drum is considered feminine (Doubleday, 1999). Further, musical performances of women in this region are relegated to the domestic space. There is also a strong link between music and sexuality. The *Qiyān* are normally seen as “sexually available” especially for their patrons or masters. Clearly, this is as a result of the

fact that female musicians used to be slaves and under the control of their masters. But as stated before, the stage also gave women musicians the chance to enjoy a form of freedom that were denied other women who were not musicians.

In a groundbreaking work entitled *Jelimusow: the Superwomen of Malian music*, Lucy Duran (1995) gives a very intimate look at the female griot of the Sahelian culture. This work comes as a refreshing note on the widely documented griot tradition of this part of Africa. The work proves that indeed the griots are not only men. Griots play a very important part in the Sahelian tradition. As the griot Mamoudo Kouyate puts it, “we are the memory of mankind” (Niane, 1960:1). They occupy important political, social and economic positions in their societies. Griots come from the most important caste of endogamous craftsmen, Koranic recitals and praisers. They have been in charge of singing the praises of kings and very important people in the society. The first historical glimpse of griotess we have is in the *Epic of Sundiata* when the sisters of the king sing the praises of the king’s new bride. Griotesses have carried on this tradition of singing to modern society. According to Duran, the Jelimusow are “the darlings of the Sahelian modern music industry” and the “unrivalled stars of the local music scene, particularly in urban centres” (1995:198). These women have made a profession of their praise singing and have recorded their songs which are sold in record stores and market places, a privilege that the *Jeliw* or male griots do not have. Indeed, individuals who hire them to sing praises for them and their families may show appreciation through various gifts. It is recorded by Duran

(1995) how some *Jelimusow* have been showered with gifts such as cars, houses and private jets. These women have access to very important people and places such as the presidents and ministers of state because they perform for them during private and public occasions.

Being a *Jelimusow* gives women a kind of leverage and privilege that is denied other women. *Jelimusow* can live independently without a husband and the recorded divorce rates among the *Jelimusow* are very high. Such an independent life is shrouded in rumours of the *Jeliwmusow* “preferring the company of other women” (Duran, 1995:204). In the words of one *Jelimusow* it is because men (her husband) cannot handle a very successful woman that is why there is so much divorce rate among the *Jelimusow*. Clearly, this is an indication of the context in which these women operate. In an environment where patriarchy is strongly woven into Islam, the idea that women can perform publicly, make their own money and live outside the control of a husband or any man is difficult for the Sahelian society to grapple with. Again, *Jelimusow* are notorious for skin bleaching, something that *Jeliw* in the society speak about with contempt. But clearly these women live and perform a stereotypical role. The fact that *Jelimusow* or any other female musician has to be physically or sexually appealing, a task which the *Jeliw* do not have to endure, questions the so called independence of the *Jelimusow*. The veiled contempt reported for these *Jelimusow* by the *Jeliw*, who believe that no *Jelimusow* could be a *Nyangya* (that is a master griot) smack of jealousy because of the privileged position of the *Jelimusow* over the *Jeliw*.

Hogans (2008) account of the role of songs in the lives of the women in Niger, Nigeria and Guinea is also very revealing. His work takes a look at songs by women in the afore- mentioned countries in the context of the Fulfulde culture and Islam. This article looks at the fact that women of Nigeria, Niger and Guinea question and affirm societal norms and practices through their songs. This is done in a complex context of Islam and traditional practices. This intermarriage of religion and cultural practices has prevented women from operating in public spaces, hence their voices have been curtailed. Women in these countries have found a way of navigating around culture through the performances of songs in their socially assigned spaces. Unlike women, men have the social permission to publicly criticize society without fear and can actually gain wealth and fame from opposing and questioning societal or religious norms through their songs or words. Women on the other hand have to find subtle ways such as the *Marchande* and *Maani foori* or political activism fronts to sing such daring songs. The *Marchande* is a “Songhoy-Zarma mock ritual performed by the senior wife in a polygamous marriage as a response to her husband's recent or impending marriage of a new wife” (Hogans, 2008:9) while the *Maani foori* is a song which praises the bodies of women, especially after harvest when there is enough to eat. These songs have over the years generated to “crude and sexuality explicit insults directed at the husband, his new wife, and their families” (Hogans, 2008:9). These are all- women spaces, and no man is allowed to be part of it. One therefore questions the efficiency of such platforms. Since it is seen as

their socially sanctioned arena, are they ever taken seriously? The effectiveness of the songs can be gleaned from the fact that both the family of the new bride and the husband detest the performances of such songs and avoid the grounds where such performances occur. It should however, be noted that such spaces give women the chance to vent anger which they would have had anyway without any means of expressing them. Such songs also serve as a unifying force and a sense of belonging for women who might be in the same predicament (Hogans, 2008).

The prevalent themes in women's songs performed during the *Marchande* and *Maani foori* are centred around praise, admonitions to the local community, eulogies for local and national figures and interpretations of current events as well as politically inciting songs like that of the Guinea women. As much as songs by these women are meant to confront and question patriarchy, some of the songs have the tendency to victimize other women or sometimes entrench stereotyping. This is because some of these songs affirm societal and religious norms geared towards the strict definition of womanhood such as motherhood and wifhood.

2.6. Ghanaian Women as Makers and Performers of Music

The tradition of song performance is not lacking among Ghanaian societies as far as recorded history provides evidence. Ghanaian women have been part of the music production. Ghanaian women have seized every opportunity to sing about themselves and their societies to the world. They have performed in the political,

social and religious platforms of their societies. *Momome* songs, *Nwonkoro*, *Adenkum*, *nsuie*, *nmane tora*, *avihe*, are some of the song types that have been strictly the traditional domain of women (Adjei, 2011). In this ‘women-only’ space, women sing to support their men at war, and to entertain themselves. As much as singing lullabies for babies are meant to put them to sleep, women have also used that as a medium to express their heartfelt concerns to husbands, co-wives and in-laws (Allan J.T et al., 2005). Their presences have been felt in all areas of the Ghanaian society. Dirges (*nsuie*) and nubility songs are performed by women to mark two important stages of life in of the individual, at death and initiation to adulthood respective. Themes in all these songs however, run similar. Evans (1981), records that themes in women's songs depended on whether they were performing dirges, puberty songs or recreational songs. Dirges normally revolve around references to ancestors, the domicile of the ancestors and messages for the deceased to other dead members of the family or community. Puberty songs raise themes on the responsibility of neophytes as women, as well as sexually explicit texts which are meant to educate as well as entertain the neophytes (Quan-Baffour, 2011). Recreational songs such as the *Nwonkoro* on the other hand often centred on loved ones, relations and local prominent citizens, though lately *Nwonkoro* has been appropriated into Christianity where praises are sung to God. Evans does not however, give an in depth analysis of the themes that she identifies in the songs. Aning (1964) basically discovered the same themes in *Adenkum* songs. He indicated that songs that were meant to praise people were originally

religious songs but had God's name substituted with that of various lovers although some of the praise songs actually were in praise of God or reflected religious beliefs. Some of the songs also derided other people in the society. An interesting discovery made by Aning was that some of the songs performed by the women reflected Ghana's political scene, including some in praise of the first president, Kwame Nkrumah. This discovery indicates politically conscious women who were active participants of the politics of not just their communities but their country at large. These traditional women only space for the creation of songs also afforded women the opportunity to create their own songs, play instruments (such as *donno*, *asratoa*, *don*, *koraa* etc) and to perform these songs both in their private as well as public spaces.

In their article *Kasena maiden songs: a genre on the wane*, Danti and Awedoba (2011) introduce the *Lenle* which is a type of song produced and performed by young women for purely entertainment purposes. The various themes raised by these young women open a window into their lives and their society. Lenle songs allude to concerns such as “sexual relationships; peer group relations and associations; the carefree life of the teenager the daily chores of the unmarried; as well as veiled criticisms of older women and husbands”. “There is also praise for hard work and achievement” (Danti & Awedoba, 2011:10). These songs also contain a “reasonable amount of eroticism” (p.10). This is understandable considering the fact that young women gathered at night to perform to entertain themselves without the supervision of an older person will tilt towards

naughtiness, hence their songs will be full of sexual innuendos or lewdness. Again, there is a hint of tension between the younger and older generations which is being explored here through the songs of these young women. What these young women are doing is to actually appropriate a long tradition of songs of abuse which the less privileged such as daughters-in-law, the young and women have used to make their feelings and concerns known to the power brokers in the society (Allan et al; 2005; Agovi, 1995)

The same themes are explored in Nanbigne's (2004) Masters' thesis. The musical traditional of the Dagaare society has opened up to women who through dirges are able to comment on their own lives, the unfortunate positions of women in society, and the society as a whole. What is most important and the core of this work is the fact that women have managed to play some instruments, for example, the xylophone which was initially considered a man's instrument. This development is not unique to women in Dagaare (an ethnic group in the northern part of Ghana) society although the instrument they play is different from women in other societies. In an article, Adjei (2007) also writes about the changing roles of women when it comes to the playing of musical instruments.

Adjei's two case studies are of women; Agnes Gokeh and Cecilia Abrokwa Nyameke who have taken up the drumming of *Fontonfrum* and the playing of the *Abentia* respectively. These are two instruments hitherto reserved for men with the taboo and fear of barrenness preventing women from playing them. These two women have defied society's barriers to perform in a space that was

originally considered male. But clearly the only reason why these women have been allowed to usurp these spaces was because of what one can only describe as divine sanction, because these women claim they believed the ancestors sanctioned them to play because they had no previous training in playing the said instruments. Such instances as that of the two women only prove the dynamic nature of culture.

On the popular musical scene, Collins records the inclusion of one Akosua Bonsu in George Williams Aingo's Fanti guitar and accordion recordings which were done by the Zonophone West African Record as early as 1929 (2003). Collins (2003) also makes mention of Aku Tawia in the 1930's who was subsequently taken to London to record some popular Ga songs. The Axim Trio is about the same time noted to have featured an actress called 'Lady Wilmot' although she was later replaced with a male impersonator (Collins, 2003:2). These women were exceptions to the rule. The entrance of women in popular music in Ghana is linked with the introduction of the Concert Party. Members of the Concert Party did not want to hire women and men were responsible for impersonating the female parts during performances (Collins, 2003). Again, it was noted that "comedians in concert parties were all men until recently, as being a stage performer is considered an unsuitable career for morally upright young women" (Bame, 1985:30) He further notes that impersonation was perhaps the order of the day because it was more hilarious for the audience to see a man dressed in a woman's clothes and behaving like a woman. Collins (2003) adds

that the traditional belief that a woman's menstruation could bring bad luck to the members of a band could account for such exclusion coupled with the fact that these bands were highly mobile and it was considered unsafe and unsuitable for a woman who in all moral and cultural codes is expected to raise a family.

Thus until the 1960's, Highlife was described as "mainly a male affair" (Asante - Darko & Van der Geest, 1983:135). This was not only a Ghanaian phenomenon. Collins records Omibiyi-Obidike's observation of the Nigerian popular music scene as "dominated by men" (Collins, 2003:1). However, from the 1950's onwards, women were introduced onto the musical and popular scene and they have stayed there and made their mark. Four important factors have been identified by Collins (2003) to have propelled women to the popular music scene. The first of these factors is the influence of foreign female stars that had emerged as early as the 1930s and, became the role models of aspiring Ghanaian female musicians. A second factor is that some inherent cultural practices allow women to operate in designated spaces both as makers and performers of music. Policies of African governments such as the formation of the workers brigade by the Ghanaian government which recruited both men and women as actors, actresses and musicians is a third factor. The last but not the least factor is the platform which the churches provide for women in the choir as both solo singers and praise and worship leaders. With these four factors working to their advantage, the popular music scene saw an influx of an appreciable number of women into its arena.

Cole (2007) indicates that the large numbers of women participating in the concert parties, also influenced their entry into popular music through the work of “one formidable woman,” Efua Theodora Sutherland otherwise known as “Auntie Efua,” playwright and founder of the *Kusum Agoromba troupe*. She is credited with having mentored many promising women actresses and singers. Her production of plays such as *Hena Bedi M’ade?*⁴ reflected women in a more positive light than had previously been done. This corroborates Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu’s (2012) argument that an increased number of women could help in creating alternative themes and positive representations of women in popular products.

However, women's entrance was not exactly welcomed with enthusiasm. Women musicians have had to fight perceptions of sexual immorality, drunkenness as well as drug abuse. Indeed, the only kind of women musicians who are saved from such reputations are those in the gospel arena. This accounts in part for the large number of women recorded in the Ghanaian gospel music scene (Collins, 2002). This phenomenon is not unique to Ghana. Mhiripiri (2011) notes that the Zimbabwe popular music arena, with emphasis on the *Sungura* genre is besieged by male artists, and this breeds misogynist lyrics. The writer argues that although the *Sungura* could be a breaking ground for women to present alternative representations of women, women artistes prefer to do gospel because of the fear of being branded ‘loose.’

⁴ Literally means ‘who will inherit me’

Women who have become famous as popular music performers also do not survive as long as men do in the secular music industry. Indeed the recorded number of women in Ghanaian popular music whose songs could be described as popular with the audience or who can be seen as forces to reckon with could be said to be very limited.

Wright's (1995) work about the music industry in Ghana and its musicians is important to this work. He notes that popular gospel songs by women normally revolved around "common feminine identifiable ideas (community and family for example)" (Wright, 1995:32). Wright however does not give explanations for this assertion and does not further the discussion on the themes raised by women in their songs. Collins (2000) also raises the issue of the generational strife prevalent in popular music in Ghana. He notes factors such as western education, urbanization, age difference as well as globalization as some of the important factors that may influence the growth and change of a popular culture. His work however, lumps both men and women together and tends to use almost all male examples.

It is in view of this gap that this work seeks to take a look at the lives of selected women musicians as well as the themes that have been raised in their songs over the years under consideration and the changes that have occurred over those years.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

This work is influenced by Feminism as a theory of female empowerment. It is seen in the movement empowerment of performing women like the Riot Grrl movement described in some quarters as third wave feminism (Belzer, 2000; Schilt, 2003). Feminism has gone through different waves since its inception in the mid-1800s. The Riot Grrl movement started as an underground pop musical band in 1991 by a group of women musicians who came to be known as the 'angry women in rock' with the aim of addressing sexism and racism in the rock music industry. The history of rock music was one that had men at the helm of affairs both as producers and performers. It was male dominated and attention was thus not paid to the small number of women in that genre. The rock music world thus thrived on misogynistic lyrics and representation of women. The movement thrived on the ideology that women needed to talk about themselves and their ordeals through their songs. It used swear words that have been used by men singers to describe women over the years and talked about abuses that women go through, thereby diffusing the power of such experiences to hurt women while encouraging young women to be comfortable with their bodies and sexuality. This 'attack' on society and its patriarchy was trivialized by the media who described them as angry women who only shared their personal life to make music and win the market and did not really mean anything about empowering young women.

The Riot Grrl movement metamorphosed into the Girl Power Movement which

was not a well organised movement as the Riot Grrl was. It started as a slogan that was adopted by the Spice Girls in the 1996. Spice Girls became famous overnight because their songs were considered empowering for young women. Their themes centred on women, relationships and staying strong and independent. Other female musicians such as Britney Spears and Beyoncé Knowles have followed this trend over the years with songs which have been considered 'empowering' for women, especially the young ones. This is because songs produced by these women encourage young women and women as a whole social category to be independent, speak against abuse in relationships and be willing to end abusive relationships.

However, women musicians have been blamed for using their sexuality to sell music, resulting in parents worrying that these are not good examples for their children. While there is an argument that they do not have to use their sexuality to bargain, a counter argument could be made for the Spice Girls. One could argue that just like the Riot Grrls, the Spice Girls were telling women to be comfortable in their skins. Before this, women were singing about issues which were considered the sole concern of women, the mention of so called taboo words were out of the question and women musicians who tried to go beyond the usual expectation were stigmatised. This is quite important and empowering for the self-image of young women whose society judge women by the size and shapes of their bodies. This also leaves one question really unanswered: does it mean then that songs of women musicians before then were not empowering for women or does empowerment mean the same thing to every woman at the same

time? Again, the fact that songs could be written by other people including men for these women to sing which would mean that these songs may not reflect the true 'voice' of women or that male producers may have influence on what women sing about. Indeed, the idea that some of these songs maybe just an economic gimmick may well be a very important thought to ponder.

In a world where access to music from other parts of the world is just a minute away, similar patterns in the music of Ghanaian female musicians might not be a far cry from the truth, when one considers the fact that some of these western female musicians serve as role models to some of the Ghanaian female musicians. It is expected that *per* this explanation, the songs of younger Ghanaian women musicians would reflect a pattern of songs produced by groups like The Spice Girls or Beyoncé. This would mean that women would sing about issues and explicitly mention words which are considered taboo and unmentionable. There could also be the possibility that these patterns are indeed absent in the songs of Ghanaian women musicians. This will also mean that the performance of younger musicians would be more sexualized than that of older musicians or that there should be such accusations or perceptions. This however, only helps to explain one part of the problem. The individuals involved in the production of these songs as well as other factors such as context and audience are lost in the argument. It is therefore important to situate Riot Girl in a performance.

The theory of performance or performance theory is crucial to this research.

Performance has been studied from many angles and from various perspectives. This work will treat performance as any piece performed orally before it is recorded or re-presented in alternative forms. Roselee Goldberg defines performance as a “way of appealing to a large public, as well as shocking audience into reassessing their own notions of art and its relation to culture” (2006:1) This definition considers four important factors: a performer, an audience, a context and the ability of both the performance and the performer to change the social structure through the audience. Bauman’s exposition on performance sums up the idea of a performance into the *what, who, where* and *the how* of an oral piece (Bauman 1975). He takes it a step further to talk about the power of the audience to affect a performance and the performer’s ability to change the social structure, as was noted by Goldberg (2006). To Bauman, the content of a performance depends on the context of that performance, where context includes institutions and events or scenes of a performance. According to Ruth Finnegan (1970) an oral piece becomes fully realized, “dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion” (p.272). Thus, a performance is the only way through which an oral piece is communicated to an audience. Finnegan gives us two important components of a performance, a performer and an environment. The last component is added by Okpewho (1992) when he names the audience as important in performance. In all these works and definitions cited above, the performer, the audience, the environment (context) as well as the kind of work being performed are key components in a performance.

In his work entitled “The Musician in Akan Society”, Nketia stretches our understanding of the performer to the “roles, functions and personal life of the musician may contribute to our understanding of his of [her] music both in respect of what it means to him and those who enjoy it with him” (1965:10).

Brian Longhurst’s work on music production gives a more in depth treatment of the subject from a broader perspective by putting all the above factors together to show how they affect the outcome of a performance or production of music (2010). According to Longhurst (2010), music production can be understood by three broad factors: production, text and audience. He looks at production at two levels: Social production and Macro level/ Globalization.

Social production: this category examines the subcultures of musician (such as cultural identities as expressed in the language use of young musicians), social background of musicians and the contexts in which they produce their products. It also looks at the kind of genre a musician performs, why they perform such a genre and its importance for the audience since for instance Pop is considered immature because of its perceived female audience.

Macro level/ Globalization: examines the effects of technology, the nature of markets for the products of that industry which may affect production, details of income derived from rights and effects of digitization. Cultural exchange, that is, the interaction between two cultures under 'fairly loose' forms is also considered under this category

The text factor includes structures, relative importance of words in the creation of musical meaning and the music and visual.

The audience factor looks at the different dimensions of the audience such as text/audience relationship and consumption of different parts of the audience.

These factors affect each other directly in making a performance meaningful.

The personality of a performer and his or her individual idiosyncrasies affect how a performance is delivered. The audience to whom a performance is being delivered can determine the kind of performance, the duration and the course it takes. Finally, the environment and history of the people (context) can greatly affect the kind and mode of performance, so that a dirge is not performed at a wedding.

This helps bring home the argument that if the above mentioned factors indeed affect the outcome of the product called music, then it can equally be reasonable factors to facilitate a change in the music of the years under consideration.

Furthermore, situating the Riot Grrl and the Girl power in performance will help to put all the pieces together by interrogating the personalities and the context in which they produce and perform their music. This helps to give credence to the feminist and performance theories employed in this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF SELECTED FEMALE MUSICIANS

3.0. Introduction

This chapter will provide biographical sketches of the selected musicians under study. This is basically a trajectory of their musical careers and some aspects of the lives of the women musicians which have a bearing on their musical professions. This is important since a look into the lives, views and beliefs of these women will help understand the relationship between the musician and the issues they raise in their songs. In the words of Edward Ives, taking a biographical look at singer (musicians) helps to “see the relations that exist between their lives and the songs they sang and learned” (Ives, 1971:71). The first five women fall under the 1980-1999 category which I label as “older musicians” and the last five fall within the 2000-2010 category which I label the “younger musicians.”

3.1. Older musicians

3.1.0. Awurama Badu ⁵

Awurama Badu was born in 1964 and became popular in the 1980s for her ever classic *Medofo Adaada me*⁶. Born into a family of musicians, Awurama Badu wanted to sing from childhood. She had started singing as a child but had to go to school. But she kept singing while she was in school. After her education, she went to work as a nursing assistant when she had to wait to rewrite her A levels

⁵ Interview with Awuram Badu On 18th January, 2012.

⁶Means “my lover has deceived me.”

because the exams in 1970's had been cancelled. After school, she worked and had all her four children before joining the police force.

She was recruited into the police force as a typist at the rank of grade two. When she later found out that the police service wanted band members, she immediately joined the band. She said carrying out her regular duties as a typist in the police force and singing as a band member soon became too much. Although she travelled to play with the band, she always had to come back to a pile of confidential documents to type. This proved to be too tedious for Awurama who eventually quit the police service to be a full time musician although she continued to play with the police band.

She describes her days with the police band as phenomenal because according to her, some of her best songs were produced during that period. Indeed that is not far from the truth when one considers the fact that the songs which she produced still have the ability to attract new and very young audience anytime the songs are played. She said she drew inspiration and themes from everyday incidents and experiences and occurrences in her life to write her songs. To her, it was due to the fact that she drew from peoples' and her own life to sing that is why her songs still endure because people can relate with those experiences that she went through. To her, the best part of being a musician was the travelling around the world and the fame associated with it.

Awurama Badu believes that the music which is being produced now is not worse or better than what it used to be, but simply the development of a new genre. The musician is however, of the view that Ghanaian music could be better

if the younger generation will learn from the past and the older ones and build on their songs. She also recommends a remaking of old songs so that they could still appeal to younger generation and these songs would not be boxed and labeled as ‘old’ and ‘forgotten,’ which is why she did a remix of her songs with Omanhene Pozo⁷ in 2000.

3.1.2. Mary Naa Amanua Doodo⁸

Born in 1950, Naa Amanua was lucky to have identified and developed her talent as a musician at an early age. “As a child, my wish was that I could grow up and sing like Mariam Makeba, she was my role model” (Doodo, 2011). It was while she was in primary school that she realised she could sing. She attributes this realisation to her singing in the church harvest celebration and her nights out with the other children of her village while the adults enjoyed the music of bands that used to play in her village. She also started singing in her school choir. Naa Amanua was recruited to sing in the Burma Camp⁹ St Georges Anglican Church which at the time needed people who could sing to build up their church choir. She was thus a chorister for a very long time before joining the band later.

After completing her first cycle education, she joined the Accra Tema City Council (now known as the Accra Metropolitan Assembly) as a city guard. Through conversation with a co-worker, Dadson, she got invited to join the *Wulomei* group, which was still in its formative stages, as the leading female vocalist. She later left the *Wulomei* group and joined the *Suku* group. The

⁷ Name of a Ghanaian male musician.

⁸ Interview with Naa Amanua on 9th November, 2011.

⁹ A military camp located in Accra, Ghana’s capital city.

songstress again left she *Suku* and formed her own band known as the *Odomankoma* band.

Although she did not write any of the songs that the bands sung, she claimed that she could put herself in the position of the character in the song. Because music was her passion, she could deliver it as easily as if she had written the songs herself. Moreover because most of the songs bordered on universal human experiences she could thus associate with whatever issue she sung about. Most of the songs she sung were about “advising people, marriage and ridiculing people in society about their deeds” (Doodo, 2011)

Although Naa Amanu is no longer an active musician, she performs when invited to so at occasions. She currently runs a preschool, *Nissi International School* with her sister in Labadi¹⁰, a suburb of Accra.

3.1.2. Bibie Brew¹¹

Bibie Brew was born in 1957. Born into a family of artistic performers, Bibie was introduced to her profession at the early age of fourteen. Her destiny as a professional musician was carved when in 1971 she entered a reality show which was organised by the Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation, and won. As a daughter of a diplomat, she said she benefitted from a lot of influences because her family basically travelled all over the world. It is no wonder then that her career as musician was based in France and not in Ghana. Her travels afforded her the opportunity to learn many languages and become very fluent in French which led

¹⁰ Labadi is a suburb of Accra, Ghana’s capital city.

¹¹ Interview with Bibie Brew on 9th February, 2012.

her to produce most of her works in French.

Bibie prides herself as having helped in putting Ghana on the French map as long ago as the early 1980's. Hitherto, Ghana which was a British colony was not popular, in terms of culture and music, to the Francophone including neighbours Senegal or Ivory Coast which had been French colonies. She said she made a conscious effort to identify herself as African and Ghanaian everywhere she went ; "I kept on saying I am Ghanaian, I am Ghanaian, I am African, I am African (sic), I come from West Africa, am African" (Brew, 2011). Bibie notes that her music was greatly influenced by the musical culture of her time. In the 1970's when she was a young adolescent she was surrounded by the "rich musical heritage" of the era when Ghanaian music was at the apogee of its development. She remembers listening to King Bruce¹², who happened to be her uncle, and all his six bands and the various guitar bands of this era. Later in 1974, she played with the *Boombayp* Band¹³ in London before going solo. Today, Bibie is permanently settled in Ghana although she travels to France to see her family and still performs occasionally. Bibie also runs a centre, *the New Morning Studio*, which gives young and up and coming artists the opportunity to practice music and act. She sees this as very important because according to her one of the major problems which musicians face in Ghana is infrastructure and the lack of hard work and dedication which they need to apply to their chosen profession. Providing such a centre will therefore give them a platform to perfect their talents while she acts as the coach in helping to polish their raw talents and instill

¹² Name of a famous Ghanaian male musician

¹³ Name of an Afro beats band.

hard work in the young artistes

3.1.3. Paulina Oduro¹⁴

Known mostly in Ghana for the duet hit song *Tsena me nkyɛn* with Papa Yankson, Paulina Oduro remains one of the best voices in the Ghanaian music industry. At the tender age of six, little Paulina's musical versatility was recognised by her parents who encouraged her to sing. Indeed she was taken through formal tuition for music as well as lessons in classical piano. She, however, realized along the line that her main interest in music was actually singing.

She started her professional music with the *Cassanova* Band and the rest according to her is history. Paulina has in her professional portfolio the privilege of having worked with great bands such as: *Calypso King Mighty Sparrow*, *Soca Favourite Arrow*, Lord Kitchener, Alexander O'neal and the Trinidadian singer David Rudder. She also performed with some important Ghanaian bands such as *Western Diamonds* as well as renowned musicians such as Paapa Yankson and Felix Owusu. She trained as a Jazz singer due and to her versatility she can perform Soca, Calypso, Soul, Blues, Reggae and Highlife. She attributes this versatility to her western exposure. As the child of diplomats, Paulina had her formal education in England and travelled around a lot in her adult life as a performing artist.

Aside performing as a professional musician, Paulina serves as the judge in

¹⁴ Interview with Paulina Oduro on 16th February, 2012.

TV3's¹⁵ reality shows *Talented Kids* and *Mentor*. Both shows seek to unearth talent in young performers and to train and mentor them further. The need to train young performers to exhibit and develop their talents is a project which Paulina feels is very important because it “helps to keep our culture.” Paulina noted the training of these young ones have become necessary because young musicians do not see the need to build their culture. To cap it, Paulina also has acted in two major movies *Adams Apple* and *The Ties That Binds*.

3.1.4. Akosua Adjepong¹⁶

Akosua Adjapong was born in 1969 to Mr and Mrs Adjepong. She had her basic education at Harold International School and later continued to Holy Child Secondary school where she had her second cycle education.¹⁷ After her second cycle education, Akosua continued her education at the NRC *Computer training* school for a year. It was at this point in her life that she decided to take up singing as a profession. In 1990, Akosua Adjapong released her first album *Frema*¹⁸, with the help of Nana Ampadu. The song was an instant hit. She then joined a trio group with Nat Brew (whom she later married) and Rex Omar which they called *Nakorex*. *Nakorex* released their first album *Panlogo Ye De*¹⁹ in 1992 which till date remains a hit album. The group broke up after sometime and so did Akosua's marriage to Nat Brew, which produced four children.

¹⁵ A private television station in Ghana.

¹⁶ Interview with Akosua Adjepong on 22nd August, 2011.

¹⁷ Holy Child is one of the secondary (now senior high) schools in Ghana.

¹⁸ Name of a woman.

¹⁹ literally Panlongo, (a type of dance) is sweet.

Although Akosua took a break from music, she bounced back in 2000 with a gospel album. This came as a surprise to many Ghanaian's who attributed this switch from secular to gospel music to her marriage to a Pastor. Akosua, however, denounces this perception. According to her, many Christians are uptight and will not listen to any song that is not gospel, even when such songs clearly had important messages for the society. Her switch to gospel was therefore her way of getting the support and attention of Christians. She confessed that this has produced tremendous effects since she could now sing her supposedly secular songs in some Christian churches after she performs her gospel songs.

Apart from music, Akosua has two movies to her name and has a restaurant which she has been running since 1995. She also has a show dubbed *Girls Girls* which airs on Saturdays and is geared towards advising people, especially women and young girls, about living "decent" lives

3.2. Younger Musicians

3.2.0. Dorcas Darkwa (Abrewa Nana)²⁰

This artiste is normally credited as being the fore runner of women in Hiplife in Ghana. Born to Mr. Issac Darkwa and Juliana Blankson in 1980, Dorcas was introduced to Hiplife while she was in Polytechnic. Her stage name Abrewa Nana which in the Akan language means "old woman's grandchild" was adopted partly because she was named after her grandmother. Figuratively however, the

²⁰ She was not available for interview at the time of the study. Please see www.ghanaweb.com/GHANAHOMEpage/People/person.php?ID=602 or en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abrewa_Nana . Accessed on 27th March, 2012.

name was to reflect the themes that she was to raise in her songs. Grandmothers and old people are seen among the Akan and in Ghanaian society in general, as the embodiment of wisdom. Thus for her to call herself Abrewa Nana, meant she had learnt and acquired the wisdom from an older person and is thus sanctioned to sing, say and do wise things.

Growing up, Dorcas idolized, and her role models were, Mariah Carey and Ailayah. After her second cycle education in Aggrey Memorial²¹, Dorcas continued at the Takoradi Polytechnic and it was here that she was introduced to Hiplife and started writing lyrics to that effect. She was outdoored to the Ghanaian music scene when she joined the *Saas Squad*, a singing group, and released an album with the group. Dorcas Darkwa however, became popular when she released her own album *Sagaa* in 2000. The album became a hit and she was nominated for female artist of the year, rap song of the year and artist of the year awards.

In 2001, Dorcas won the Hiplife song of the year award and was named the best female vocalist in 2002. The year was a good one for the musician who released her second album *African Girl* which became an instant hit. The following year, she was again named the Best Female Artiste of the Year at the Ghana Music Awards UK. Her third album *Maba* hit the market and has since remained one of the classic albums produced by Hiplife genre.

After this period of back to back release and successes, Dorcas Darkwa vanished from the musical scene and reappeared to the surprise of all Ghanaian as one of the judges for the *Idols West Africa* show which was held in Nigeria. Although

²¹ Name of one of the senior high schools in Ghana.

the musician has not been an active performer and singer, the legacy of the musician is very active. Indeed many Ghanaians attribute to her the title of the fore runner of Hiplife and rap music in Ghana. Her songs are seen by many as lasting because of the issues and themes that she raises in her songs and the style and media in which they were presented, that is by her heavily choreographed videos and dancing moves. The musician is said to be working on a new album and one wonders if she will stick to her style or be swayed by the new wave of music styles which now abound on the Ghanaian music scene.

3.2.1. Belinda Nana Akuah Amoah (Mzbel)²²

Growing up, Nana Akua had no dreams of becoming a musician. Her dream was to become a dancer and to dance to the tunes of Deborah Cox, Toni Braxton, Mariah Carey, and Jennifer Lopez (J Lo). Her dream was to be as great a dancer as Akosua Agyepong. If her dreams of being a dancer failed, then her backup plan was to become a newscaster or a radio presenter. Born in 1982 and the last of seven girls, the last thing Nana Akua dreamt of was to achieve fame through music but since 2000, Nana Akua popularly known as Mzbel a shortened form of her name Miss Belinda has become synonymous with fame and controversy in Ghana.

While she worked in the newly established *Hush Hush Studios*, she would go around the recording studio whenever there was an engineer in the studio. Due to the fact that the studio was a new one and was not patronized by many people, the establishment would ask the employees to sing and test the efficiency or

²² Interview with Belinda N.A. Amoah on 26th April, 2012.

otherwise of the recording equipment. When it was realised one day in 2002 that she had recorded about twenty songs, Daniel Adjei, the manager of the studio decided that the songs were good and released them. Thus Nana Akua had a photo shoot, video clips to her songs and before she knew it, she had joined the pool of musical stars that she claimed to have admired so much while working in the recording studios.

At the age of twenty two, Nana Akua released her first album *Awoso me* which stirred the music industry and caused an immediate reaction from the general public. The songs were heavily tinged with sexual connotations and appeared to be a rude shock to the ‘morally sensitive’ ears of many Ghanaians. From that time till now, most of her songs, coupled with the music videos, have been described in the same light (Akese, 2012).

In an interview held on one of Ghana’s private television station (the *Delay Show*), Mildred Ashong confessed that she had so much respect for Nana Akua because she did not think she could have survived the scandals and criticisms that Nana Akua had survived and still make music. This statement is an allusion to the problems Nana Akua has faced since 2005. In 2005, Belinda was invited by the students of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology²³ to perform as part of their annual week celebration dubbed “fun city”. However, the event turned into a disaster for the Belinda when some students sexually abused her by pulling her off stage, tearing off her clothes and allegedly fondling her breast and private parts²⁴. Just about a year later in 2006, she was attacked by

²³ Popularly known as KNUST, it is one of the public Universities in Ghana.

²⁴ See www.google.com/search?q=mzbel's+abuse+by+the+students&ie=utf-

armed robbers and it was alleged that she was raped with some other young women of her dancing crew who were with her that time although she denied that any of the women with her at the time were sexually abused. Then in 2011, five years after the robbery attack, she had an unfortunate encounter, this time with a police officer. The story which ran in the newspapers and media was that the musician had physically assaulted the police man, who had tried to book her for a traffic offence (Akese, 2012).

In all these incidents, the reaction of the general public was mixed. While some thought that those responsible for assaulting her, i.e. the students and armed robbers should be severely punished, majority of the public thought that she actually deserved what happened to her. Their justification for this stance was the fact that Nana Akua had been portraying and parading herself as a sexual icon in Ghanaian entertainment cycles both in her songs and stage performances. Most people saw these incidents as punishment meant to teach her a lesson to be 'decent.' According to the musician, who is also a mother of a nine year old son, these incidents, coupled with criticisms from the public affected her psychologically almost led her to give up her music career and venture into video editing which she had been professionally trained to do. However, the words of well-meaning Ghanaians kept her going. However, for one reason or another, such controversies and unfortunate incidents have helped to popularize the musician and her music. Indeed, any show that has her name on the bill is bound to pull crowd and any newspaper that has an article on her sells that day. Perhaps people want to know what she would wear for her show or what it is she has

done this time around. Belinda is however, unhappy about the fact that she should be popular because of the above negative incidents, which according to her dent her positive contributions to society (Akese, 2012). In the meantime Belinda Nana Akua Amoah is aiming for an international award. To this end, she is gradually introducing new elements to her songs in order to get an audience outside. She has therefore added dancehall, crank and rock to her Hiplife stock.

3.2.2. Rebecca Akosua Acheampomaa Acheampong (Becca) ²⁵

Born in 1984, Rebecca Acheampong has been singing since her infancy, having been born into a musical family. Rebecca Acheampong who is popularly known as Becca, started her musical career in the church as a member of the choir and a member of a church group which composed their own songs.

Although she had dreams of becoming a musician, her parents thought it important for her to first acquire an education. After her second cycle education at Wesley Girls High School²⁶, she continued her education at the Croydon College in London where she trained as a child psychologist and worked as a child care giver.

Rebecca's jump onto the Ghanaian musical scene was under controversial circumstances. In 2005, she entered a newly outdoored musical television reality show known as *Mentor*. *Mentor* was introduced by a private television station in Ghana, *TV3*, and it was meant to discover and groom young men and women

²⁵ She was unavailable for interview at the time of the study. See showbizpeacefmonline.com/music/artist/becca/biography for more information.

²⁶ One of the senior high schools in Ghana.

with musical talents. The Mentor reality show recruited three contestants from three regions in Ghana, namely greater Accra region, Ashanti region and Central region. Rebecca was among three contestants who were chosen from the Ashanti region.

Just twenty four hours after the contestants had been settled in their competition house, Rebecca Acheampong pulled out. It was later relayed to the Ghanaian public that the contestants of the reality show had been made to undergo HIV/AIDs test “without any prior notification or counseling”, a scenario which is illegal and breaches the very basic human rights of the contestants since such medical exercise are voluntary and participants must always have full knowledge of such medical procedures. She filed a law suit against the television station²⁷. This issue was indeed very sensational in the Ghanaian entertainment industry. Rebecca was therefore not really in need of publicity when she released her album.

The boldness exhibited by Rebecca by taking on a private television station was new to the Ghanaian public. In a country where people do not know their rights and are quiet about such breaches of their rights which might be considered as minor and irrelevant to call for legal action. Rebecca’s action was considered really new, especially if one considered that previous contestants who might have gone through the same procedures had kept silent and those of Rebecca’s group had also not objected, probably because of their strong wish to be part of the competition.

²⁷ See <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomepage/audio/artikel.php?ID=192793>.

Two very important reasons could be attributed to the path which was taken by Miss Acheampong. Rebecca may be described as someone who had more knowledge of her rights and the psychological implications of the abuse of such rights than the ordinary Ghanaian woman of her age. As a psychology student who had also been a social worker, her knowledge is understandable. Further, before she entered the *Mentor* reality show, she already had a manager in her producer. Mr Kiki Benson, a seasoned music producer and manager was not going to stand aside and watch his client being taken advantage of, a privilege which the other contestants lacked.

Rebecca Acheampong's first album *Sugar* became an instant hit. The most famous of Rebecca's song which won her many awards was *You lied to me*. Subsequent songs such as *Daa ke da* which has basically the same storyline as *You lied to me* were enough to seal her reputation as a musician whose songs carried a 'real message.'

An accomplishment that seems to put Rebecca Acheampong ahead of her peers is her collaboration with internationally acclaimed musicians. Her maiden and only album, although she has some singles, features the likes of Mac Tontoh of Osibisa and Hugh Masekela who it is said has "tipped the young musician for major success." She also has an NGO which holds concerts in aid of "needy and unfortunate children whose parents cannot afford to pay hospital bills or purchase drugs for them²⁸."

²⁸ See www.ghanamma.com/news/2010/03/10/becca-launches-charity-fund-march-20/

3.2.3. Mildred Ashong (Eazzy)²⁹

To Mildred, music started as a secondary school entertainment. Born in 1986, the musician had the dream of becoming a marketer when she was growing up but was to find herself later in the music industry. She noted “I know how people have a whole lot of stories that they love music from infancy and stuff like that, I was totally not a music girl. You will not find me singing or dancing at any party or of that sort” (Ashong, 2011). As a first year student of Mfantiman secondary school³⁰, Mildred was forced to go through what has come to be described in Ghana as *Nino’s night*³¹. She was dressed up as a man and made to perform a Ja Rule song. According to her, she did it so well that she realised she had more than just an accounting talent. From then on, she spent most of her study time writing lyrics and performing songs during school entertainment time.

Fortunately for her, she began to appreciate and love music and although she did not perform actively after secondary school she would go around the recording studios and ‘play around’ with the recording instruments. It was during one such visit that she struck up a friendship with her future producer Richie of *Lynx Entertainment*. She furthered her education at the Institute of Professional Studies and moved on to the Chartered Institute of Management in England where she finally graduated as a professional accountant. After achieving the certificate, she was now at liberty to venture into music.

²⁹ Interview with Mildred Ashong on 24th January, 2012.

³⁰ Name of one of the Senior High Schools in Ghana.

³¹ Nino’s night is a night when all first year students of Senior High Schools are expected to perform and exhibit any talent they have. Sometimes students are dressed into different characters by their seniors and are expected to assume silly roles and performances to humour their seniors.

Mildred Ashong launched her musical career and announced her presence on the Ghanaian musical scene in 2010 with her debut album *Twinkle*. The album became an instant hit especially songs such as *Bo wo nsem maame*³² and *bend down low*. The album won her five nominations that same year in the Ghana music awards although she did not win any of the categories she was nominated for. It was not long before Eazzy became a household name and the ‘newest thing on the block.’ In my estimation, three factors combined to thrust her into fame.

The first of these factors was that Mildred appeared on the Ghanaian music scene at a very opportune time. This is because the music scene, in terms of secular female artistes had been “hijacked” by Nana Akua (Mzbel) and Rebecca Acheampong (Becca) and the Ghanaian audience were gradually becoming used to their style of music and presentation. She was therefore seen by many as a burst of fresh air. With her “mix of playful banter and party-like style”³³, and catchy refrains such as *Bo wo nsem ma me* and *Wengenze* she was bound to be the next big thing in Ghanaian music.

Secondly Mildred’s stage craft and performance was quite different from what Ghanaian audience had been experiencing from their female musicians. People switched on their television one day and saw a beautiful young lady dancing to a fast paced beat. To the older generation, it was the usual show girl dancing on television as usual, but this time there was a difference. She showed her midriff but at the same time she was not really “naked”, and she was dancing and

³² This translates, ‘clap your hands for me.’

³³ www.reverbNation.com/eazzylynx Accessed on 6th September 2011.

shaking her body alright but with a Ghanaian flag tied around her waist and a smock as well as a trousers and an afro styled hair. The older generation could associate with that. For the younger generation, she fitted a Ghanaian version of an American Beyoncé. Here she was, in another music video having just arrived from London, wearing long hair extensions, glittering show girl costume and dancing in high heels. Her musical videos, when juxtaposed with Beyoncé's had not a single shred of difference and she was rapping in English about girls and boys having fun in clubs! The youth could identify with that.

The last factor, although not the least that worked to project her to the public was her production team, which she aligned herself with. The year 2010 witnessed the sudden entry of a production company which came to be known as *Lynx Entertainment*. These were a group of young men who had started a recording company together. The main face of the company was Richie, a musician himself. The first songs which were produced by this group of young men became immediate hits and Lynx entertainment became sensational. It was in this hyped and highly touted scene that Mildred Ashong got signed on as a musician and released her first album. She was therefore seen as the only woman among the men. In other words, the fame of the company rubbed off while she also rubbed off the company by contributing her youthfulness, style and gendered presence. All these factors on helped in propelling her career to a higher plane.

This, however, does not mean that the singer did nothing to deserve her success. Indeed, all the songs on her album were penned by her and as stated earlier, she

had been singing and been dancing since her secondary school days. According to her, hard work, coupled with education has been the bedrock of her success and she recommends that every child should have the right to education and should take it seriously.

3.2.4. Jane Awindor (Efya)³⁴

For Jane, music and singing was part of her growing up process. At an early age of six, she took to singing and joined the church choir and has not stopped singing ever since “I started singing in church, I was in the choir so it got to a time where something has to be done and I enjoyed doing it and it makes me happy so I didn’t think of it as a profession so I entered into stars of the future, a lot of people voted for me and I was one of the best artists” (Awindor, 2012).

Jane’s singing ability was encouraged by her parents especially her mother, who is herself in the entertainment industry as a presenter of a show known as *Greetings from Abroad*. Her singing talents were harnessed through her school days in Yaa Asantewaa Secondary³⁵ where she was the entertainment prefect. After secondary school, she joined the *Starts of the Future* reality show. The show was to scout for singing talents and groom them. She emerged as the first runner up of the show and collaborated with the winner, Irene Logan, to release their first album *Unveiled*. However, after sometime together, the duo split up and each of them became a solo performer. Jane further sharpened her talent by enrolling in the University of Ghana to study performing arts, a fact for which

³⁴ Interview with Jane Awindor on 3rd February, 2012.

³⁵ Name of one of the Senior High Schools in Ghana.

she claims to have greatly enhanced her performing skills. The musician also plans to further her education and acquire a master's degree in music.

One remarkable thing which has come to be the hallmark of Jane Awindor is the kind of music and her unique style of presentation. It has become difficult to pin the songs produced by this woman into a neatly well-cut genre. While her songs are described in popular media as an Afro Pop, her songs range from Rhythm and Blues to Pop to Jazz and sometimes even Hiplife. Indeed Jane herself sees her music as “a potpourri of Afro-beat, soul music and a little pop” (*Graphic Showbiz*, Thursday, 27 May- Wednesday, 2 June 2010). Jane has earned herself ‘the bad girl’ image as a result numerous speculations about her drug addiction. It has recently become common knowledge that musician is an incessant drug addict, although she denies it vehemently. She has however, confessed that she is a cigarette smoker and has been smoking for a long time. This has not done any good to her already ‘bad girl’ image. In a society where the yardstick for judgment is peoples’ own conviction of moral do’s and don’ts, it would take a very long time for people to divorce the songs and profession of the musician from her smoking habits³⁶.

Obviously, the free spirited nature of Jane Awindor is not perturbed about such sentiments and is only waiting for an opportunity to become an internationally recognized artiste (Awindor, 2012).

³⁶ See entertainment.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/1_201202/82112.php or <http://www.ghanacelebrities.com/2012/022/21/efya-hits-back-saying-i-do-not-do-drugs-i-only-smoke-cigarettes-and-no-weed-too>.

This chapter has given a brief biographical picture of the ten selected female musicians of my study. It introduces the personalities whose songs and lives are analysed in the next chapter. Similar as well as different trends emerged out of the chapter. Issues such as opposition to the choice of music career by parents or society, run for seven of the women musicians under study. There also seem to be an interesting trend in women's entry into the music industry. One older women musician and to younger women musicians entered music through talent show discovery, while four of the five selected older musicians and one of the younger female musicians serve as permanent judges or host judges on music talent discovery show. It is also interesting to note that four of the female musicians started their singing career from their churches before diverting to secular whereas one female musician started in the secular but had diverted to gospel music. The next chapter will take a critical look at the lives and an analysis of their selected songs.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LIVES AND WORKS OF SELECTED MUSICIANS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part of the work will take a look at the lives of the selected musicians. This part will take a look at issues such as music consumers' perceptions of women musicians, the challenges women musicians face, and the extent to which the choice of profession has affected their lives. These issues will then be discussed comparing female musicians from the 1980s to 2010 to ascertain if there have been changes over the last three decades.

The second part of the chapter will then analyse the prevalent themes in women's songs, how similar themes have been handled over the years and as well as the changes that have occurred. The female musicians are put into two categories. 1980-1999, representing the older musicians and 2000-2010 representing the younger musicians. The real names of the selected musicians are used in the work while pseudonyms are used for other respondents

4.1. The Lives of Female Musicians

4.1.0. Consumers Perception of Women Musicians

One of the most difficult aspects of an individual's life is living under public scrutiny. Such an existence stifles an individual's options to express his or her choices especially if he or she is considered to be a role model or have the power to influence society. His or her life is shrouded in mysteries and rumours and all forms of speculations. In the case of musicians, especially female musicians, the perceptions that surround them are mostly negative. In a work by Collins (2003)

it was discovered that female musicians are considered as never-do-wells who are idle and so while away their time by singing songs while they lead morally loose lives. In my field research respondents were very quick to make comments such as:

I once mentioned to my father that I wanted to be a musician. All he said was ‘wasted efforts and misplaced dreams.’ I was even joking o! (Christy, 25 year old woman).

When I see them, but you know. I feel like don’t mind them, they are ashawo, abi you know. The guys they have swagga but the women, nah (Nana, level 200 male student)”

A 63 year old man, Kwabena, had this to say when I entered a conversation with him about female musicians:

K: I really think that they have a lot of marital issues. Who would really want to marry them? They just end up with one or two bastards.

Interviewer: oh don’t say that. It might not be true.

K: hmm, well that is the way we always think of them. You know they don’t really go to school or do anything good, you know.

Interviewer: Most of the ones I know have tertiary education and are professional nurses, accountants, performers and so on.

K: ei, is that so. Really, I see. I didn’t know o.

Another female respondent, also had this to say:

Will you tell your mum that you want to be a musician and she will agree, no! Way back it was kubolors³⁷, school drop outs, people like that who did music. But things are changing except that we still have the old mentality (Maabena, 27).

³⁷ Slang for school drop outs or truants.

However, some more qualified responses which tended to be positive were solicited from audience whom the researcher had conversations with. Some of the responses run:

They make money oh; it is good, they make money and that is the most important thing (KK, 25 young male).

Like, they are strong. They don't bother about anyone, like they are 'not correct'. You know like at the extreme bar. But you know my favourite musician is Mzbel, oh I like that woman. (Kofi, 32 young male).

Hm, oh what they do is not easy; I feel they do good, a fellow woman standing in front of a crowd, ei! (Becky, 27 year old woman).

Indeed such perceptions came up often from music consumers when I entered conversation with people about the female musician's work or interviewed them. Although some music consumers swore that these women were moral failures, drug abusers, sexually loose and unintelligent, they did not have proof but pinned the accusation on some friend whose friend had been told by another friend that he or she knew a female musician who led such a life. But most of these proved to be just unfounded gossip; it is almost as if people found it superior to know something secret about a musician, especially a woman musician. Indeed, what I made of these accusations was that most Ghanaian music consumers cannot make a distinction between the professional lives and private lives of the musicians. Mostly, the phrase that came up was "don't you see how they dress up in their music videos?" This indeed goes to prove the point that what is put out there through the media goes a long way to influence the thinking of many of people. Although these perceptions are negative, one can understand from the

point of view on the position which these women musicians hold in the society. As producers of popular culture products who have the ability to create and recreate society, and have a lot of influence on the thinking of the general populace, there is the tendency for society to take profound interest in what women musicians do with their lives. Kirkegaard puts it better when she notes that musicians hold the ambiguous position of “being needed and respected and at the same time deeply feared and mistrusted (Kirkegaard, 2002:10).” In the case of women musicians, apprehension about the freedom they have to flaunt their sexuality and to use their lyrics to challenge social institutions such as patriarchy is a real but unexpressed fear for many people in society, especially men. Some respondents noted that women musicians wielded more power than even male musicians because of the attention on their bodies whenever they performed.

As for you women your bodies are enough to cause trouble. You can therefore imagine what happens when a woman is on stage shaking it. It is dangerous o, especially if the song too has some sexual underpinnings, you can do something right now, ei it is true papa. I will only listen or watch a woman performer not because of the music per se but the body and all (kwadjo, 35years).

Twenty year old male respondent also noted:

Me, I really don't think women are talented but I listen to the songs because of what they are wearing and how they look.

Interviewer: how, could you please explain a little bit?

Oh, like their bodies, when they are shaking it. But that can also be dangerous oh, hahaha. Very dangerous! (Kwame, 20 year old male)

Indeed throughout the field research, both musicians and consumers of music were clearly aware of the power that women musicians wielded on the public as a whole. This corroborates what Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) report that respondents (students, Taxi drivers, musicians in focus group discussions and workshops) considered music as a powerful tool, capable of influencing behaviours. In a focus group discussion, a taxi driver noted that as old as he was, he was careful of the kind of lyrics he listened to since the words and ideas were powerful tools to influence his thinking.

He noted: I strongly believe that songs have a great influence on people. There are certain songs when being played; you feel the words cannot help you positively. There are others too when played, everybody joins in singing because the words are encouraging. For this reason, there is the need to have leaders who would frankly come out to say the words in a particular song are bad and would influence the youth negatively (A male Taxi driver).

Jane Awindor, who was interviewed for this research also confirmed the power of music and how powerful musicians can be:

The thing is people don't realise how powerful music is, but it is powerful...what do you listen to? Music. When you are at work, during lunch, music, in your head phones, music. People will listen to music till they sleep. Who do you want to go and sing that song for you if we all sat down and kept our talents in a shell? You know the melody would be lost. *Some of the most powerful people in this world are musicians. Jay zee, Michael Jackson; let's not even go there because they open their mouths and sung. That's all they did* (Emphasis mine) (Jane Awindor, aka Efyra, younger musician).

Another musician also had this to say:

The thing is that music is powerful and people believe what they hear and see. So whatever message you put out there is strong, it's powerful. It does not matter how old or how young you are in the industry (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, younger musician).

This fear and apprehension about Ghanaian female musicians is not new and agrees with what Collins (2003) noted as the reason why women were not allowed onto the stage for a very long time and men rather impersonated them in performances. Indeed, this apprehension manifests itself in the response that female musicians got from their immediate families when they first announced they wanted to perform music professionally.

Out of ten selected female musicians, seven confirmed that they had an opposition of one form or another when they decided to do music, especially secular music as a profession. Respectively Awurama Badu, Akosua Adjepong, Paulina Oduro, Mildred Ashong and Jane Awindor report:

When I started music, some women in my community went up to my mother and queried her. They wanted to know why my mother had allowed me to enter music because at the time it was considered shameful for a woman to be in music (Awurama Badu, older musician).

It's not easy coming out{sic} because my mum thought those days musicians were wayward people who will not be respected and a whole lot. So I had to go to nana kwame Ampadu who is one of our old time musicians and what happened was that Nana had to make sure he convinced my mother because he was one of my mum's favourite musicians then (Akosua Adjepong, older musician).

My parents wanted me to get a more professional job first. So I trained as a nurse and then finally went into music (Paulina Oduro, older musician).

After secondary school, I felt like I wanted to do music professionally, but there again my parents were there to put me into the right channel again saying you are not doing music (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician).

You know people will say (sic) stuffs because I came from the church, why don't you want to sing in the church any more. I believe that's what am doing, that's what I did, so it doesn't mean if I grow nothing everybody will say is not going to get at me (Jane Awindor, aka Efya, younger musician).

Another reason offered for this low or negative perception of women musicians was the fact that the society does not often see music as a profession like any other professions. At best, music is considered as something to look for when needed and be discarded when serious matters need attention. In the words of Bibie Brew (older musician):

You get the impression that it's just a distraction and nothing else. You get the impression that ok what, a dancer, a musician, a model, you know, designer, you know these are fun things and not as professional as lawyers. We have roles in the society, we tell the tales, we tell the stories ... yes it is difficult to be a woman musician here because the perception of what we are is not fully understood.

In her statement, the above cited musician assigns the role of storytellers to musicians and also indicates that they serve as the repertoire of our shared

experiences. This same role of musicians was acknowledged by the *Legon Observer* (cited somewhere in this work). According to this musician, it is not just the negative perception of women that is the only problem, but rather the refusal or perhaps ignorance of society to understand or grasp the totality and importance of the work of musicians which troubles her.

Among the female musicians interviewed, five out of the 10 women had tertiary education, three had post tertiary education, one up to secondary and one had basic education. Five of the women whose musical careers fall in the 2000-2010 era had tertiary education, three of the 1980-1990 group had post secondary education, one had second cycle and one had up to basic education. Clearly, the idea that these women are ideal and have no other means of survival is untrue since at least nine of these women could secure employment with their certificates. These women choose to sing not because they do not have options but because that is what according to them “they love doing.” While some of them discovered that they could and wanted to sing since childhood, others discovered their talents later in life and have been working to develop these talents. Unfortunately, these positive parts of their lives are lost to the general public and one wonders who should be blamed for the negative perceptions about the women musicians.

Some young musicians still had the interest to go back to school, and others insisted that education had actually made them better musicians and opened up a world of different choices and different ways of performance for them.

You need a whole lot of education to understand branding. You need to understand some marketing techniques. I would urge all ladies out there to take their education very seriously, music is fun, having the fame is fun but it will not be fun if you don't know your left from your right exactly (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician).

In an interview with Jane Awindor, I commended her for her splendid performance at the *Redlipstic concert* held to raise awareness of breast cancer. I thought she deserved the commendation because she had actually been the only performer who had informed the audience about the importance of the concert. She noted that she had actually received similar commendation from other people and commented that she thought she owed such performance and communication skills to her lecturer at the University who had been responsible for teaching her a course titled *Theater for Development*. She thus knew how to use the stage to carry information across to her audience. Naa Amanua insisted that education should not be ruled out of the life of any aspiring musician. Clearly the negative perceptions which mar the existence and reputation of these women are mostly unfounded and unproven.

On the other hand, however, one cannot gloss over these perceptions by tagging them as negative and unfounded. As much as most of these perceptions may be untrue, one needs to interrogate the root of such allegations and their significance on the work of these women musicians. First of all, the lives of most if not almost all of these musicians are very much shrouded in secrecy and rumours. This leads to the social reality of the 'fear of the unknown'. The only time that the general public has access to musicians is when they are on television or on

stage. In all their appearances, they are mostly clad in foreign-looking, exotic costumes and expensive designer clothes, shoes, accessories and make up. Considering the effect of the media on the world view of most people, music consumers are quick to believe as factual what they hear or see in the media about these women:

Until somebody meets you personally they think you are a bad person, you are a call girl. This is because of what they read on the internet and in the newspapers (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, younger musician).

People judge you base on the music you do out there. If I come out with a song and am saying am sleeping in a hundred dollar house, am driving a fifty thousand car, someone who hasn't seen my house and my car will believe me. The person will believe Eazzy is rich oh, that girl, don't play with her. Words that we use in our songs affect a lot (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician).

When they appear on stage or even in their musical videos their dress codes and dance styles, especially that of the younger musicians are seen as a direct replica of the European and American musical icons, a phenomenon which has always been a source of worry and apprehension to the Ghanaian society.

Interesting though, this idea of 'westernization' of the Ghanaian music runs through for both male and female musicians. But the case of women is considered more worrisome than that of men. As noted elsewhere in the literature, Wright (1995) has stated that Ghanaian women, like women everywhere, are considered "sentinels of the morality"(p.32), values and culture of their society and are expected to carry these on to the next generation.

Interestingly, one music manager also held the same sentiments and had this to say:

The kind of thing a man plays, a woman can play too but women look bad playing it. If a man does fraud, it's bad and shameful, if a woman does the same thing it's worse. Yeah, because it's because like, in socialization women are in the center of our virtue. The kind of things I can do, if my partner does the same thing, I will feel like, it's bad (Jimmy, music manager).

As already discussed in this work, women who have taken to the stage have had to deal with negative perceptions. Collins record that the low regard for women performers manifest in the reluctance of bands to recruit them (1995:1). Collins, writing about women in the 1960s indicated that the fear that women might become promiscuous, menstrual taboos and society's low perceptions for women performers among others were cited as reasons why women were not hired as professional performers. Indeed one such women, Vida Oparabea who toured with the Okutiekus' group was called names like "ashao" (prostitute) and her parents had her locked up in a police cells to prevent her from performing (Collins, 2003:2) Sutherland, who wrote about women performance in the 1970s, had this to say "a girl on stage would be branded as a girl without moral" (1970:15, cited in Collins, 2003:2). In the 80s through the 90s Awurama Badu and Akosua Adjepong revealed through their interviews that women musicians at the time were not respected. This trend does not seem to be broken according to responses that this research gathered.

When you are a musician, you are exposed to the whole world. So people think that men have access to you. Men who have money, like you are cheap (Belinda Amoah, aka

Mzbel, younger musician).

Clearly, the position of the Ghanaian woman secular musician has not undergone major drastic positive changes even though they have been allowed the platform to perform. Although women musicians might produce good songs and perform on the same platform with their male colleagues, the moral standards and societal expectations are not the same. Some women musicians, however, refuse to be pushed into a different moral category where they are expected to be the paragons of the moral norms of their society. Such rebels are sometimes the sources of some societal conflicts and misunderstanding. The life story of Miss Belinda Nana Akua Amoah is a point in case. Her refusal to conform to society's fashion *etiquette* has done nothing but to earn her contempt from much of the population, especially the older population.

Such negative perceptions also serve as a window into the society in which Ghanaian secular women musicians produce and perform their art. Just like almost all human societies, men and women are socialized into different spaces. As noted by Adomako Ampofo and Boateng, (2007), boys are expected to be socialized into the public space by their fathers whereas girls are to be socialized into the domestic space by their mothers. Thus different operational spaces are created for both men and women at an early stage with clear cut roles and responsibilities. Such spaces are present in the music making culture of Ghana where different spaces are allocated to both men and women to operate. This culture is present in the music industry in Ghana which from its inception was described as male dominated. Carving a feminine space in such male dominated

space could result in generating some of these perceptions. A Twenty seven year female respondent sums it thus:

Most people think that you being a woman musician you are going to deal with men and they would want to go out with you and stuff. But they do not know that you can really stand on your feet to stop men from sleeping with you and all that. Even if it's true (that no one is sleeping with you) nobody will believe you so long as you are there, they think it's the order of the day. But somebody will be a Lawyer and maybe even sleep with people but nobody will really think that. But once you are a musician you are exposed to everyone, so that is it (Portia, 27)

It is important to interrogate the role of the media in propagating such perceptions. The mushrooming of radio stations in Ghana, coupled with various private Television stations and numerous newspapers has provided the public unprecedented access to information. There are various entertainment programmes that deal with interview celebrities such as musicians. Indeed some television station such as *Crystal TV* (a private television station in Ghana) devote most of their air time to playing songs. Some newspapers feature stars especially musicians by writing things about their career and other incidents in the lives of these stars. For most part of the Ghanaian populace, this is the only time they get to 'meet' musicians. Unfortunately, most people take what they read, watch or hear in the media to be authoritative and form their perceptions based on those news items. The musicians, especially the younger ones noted that sometimes such news items skew music consumers' idea of who a musician is:

Sometimes the newspapers want to sell. They want your

attention so they write something about you and they say it comes from a reliable source. Me like this, I wouldn't react so most people think that's who you are (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel)

4.1.1. Challenges of Female musicians

Women musicians complained that the major problem they face was being a minority in the music industry. Although it had its commercial advantages, they always felt as if they were accessories to male musicians and are sometimes made to believe that they are usurping the man's space. This generated comments such as "wouldn't you marry?", "you should be at home helping with the grand children" and other such uneasy and insensitive comments.

Female musicians also indicated that the lack of infrastructure such as spaces to practice or meet and share experiences was one of the challenges they face. Thus although they are in the minority, they do not have a united front because the only time they meet is when there is a performance and they meet on the same stage.

Further, the issues of financial support came as one of the challenges that women musicians face. They noted that because there is no state funding or financial support available, women musicians have to seek funding themselves and producers and music promoters who happen to be mostly men use this to demand sexual favours. Indeed some women who had musical subsequently lost the opportunity to build a career because a male producer who later becomes a lover does not want his woman to be

on stage for fear that other men will be interested in her:

I have seen girls who could sing. They are pretty; I mean they have everything that it takes to be a star. But then they approach somebody to help them, one single, one video then they become that person's girlfriend and the next minute they do not want you to go up there and perform because then another guy will see you and offer more and you are gone. So then they 'sit' (prevent) on you (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, younger musician).

The musicians also noted that companies prefer to invest more money in male musicians than they would invest in a female musician. This they noted did not encourage women because it sends the signal that their works are not as important as those of the male musicians. Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel (younger musician) expresses it such:

There are companies out there who would support a male musician, put money in the (invest). Do whatever it takes to put them out there, when you are a female musician and you take a proposal to them then you find that some bad guy in there wants to have a relationship with you. If you don't agree then that is the end of you. It is a problem and I don't know how this problem is going to be solved. I have even reported to MUSIGA that why would company A do this for a male artist and not the female artiste.

4.1.2. A Comparative Look at the Lives of Female Musicians

Although all female musicians may have some similar problems, the way in which they are regarded by society is quite different. The research revealed that music consumers had respect for older musicians or thought that older musicians deserved respect than the younger musicians. A respondent noted:

The older ones, yeah they really deserve respect. They have done a lot and their songs are decent (Adwoa, 30 year old female).

Another also shared the same view:

I adore musicians like Awurama Badu, Paulina Oduro, Akosua Agyepong. Even some of the younger ones like Becca. But I think I am biased towards older musicians. My biases are due to content and personality, some of these young musicians smoke. I can forgive a man musician who smokes; but not a woman musician who smokes, they have a moral obligation (Fui, first-year Mphil male student)

According to Akosua Adjepong, an older musician, one can only earn respect if they carry themselves well, she stated:

It depends on the respect that you put on you. Yɛ wo Twi bia yɛ ka sɛ ma wo boɔ nyɛ den (i.e you should make yourself expensive) . Ok but if you think that I want to be a musician so because I want to make it and anybody who comes in with money that I can push you so let me sleep with the person, that's very serious. Hmm instead of the producer coming out to help us facely (sic) (genuinely), they will tell you, you are very beautiful. Meanwhile, the person has gotten a wife. So you should tell yourself that I would only be used. Because the person will not leave the wife and marry you .And even if the person leaves his wife and marries you, he can leave you when he sees somebody prettier. So I think it's about time we talk to the young ones coming into music. Because when you even look at some of their dressing, our young musicians, our young girls which I have told myself I will be on their neck. The way some of them dress is so sad, so sad. It's not about you being famous, but it's about carrying respect and it's one of the best and major things that a woman needs to do.

This sentiment is shared by almost all the older musicians and most music consumers. What is considered 'respectful' from this statement or sense is a woman who does not sleep with just anyone, especially married men and a woman who dresses decently. Unfortunately however, no one is ever able to

define what 'decent dressing' means although from the descriptions offered decent dressing implied covering up parts of the body such as the breast and the thighs. This view is interesting because if one was to cross check the literature, one would note that this view of musicians is a not a new phenomenon as discussed above. However, once they have crossed over and become 'older', women's sexuality is no longer seen to be threatening, and are seen to have integrated themselves into the society by getting married or becoming sobered by age, then they can gain the respect of society. The fact that the older generations of women musicians see themselves as bearing the responsibility to pull the younger generation onto the path of morality and discipline epitomizes the generational antagonism which is present in all human societies. This generational antagonism is not new in the music scene. This is indeed in conformity with what Collins (2002) identifies, that the early musical scene was fraught with such generational conflict. These older veteran musicians show their frustration at what they consider as the younger generation's refusal to listen to advice:

As for today, they can do anything on stage, when you tell them they wouldn't listen. When you tell them this is how we used to do it in the olden days, in order to get respect then they respond that your time has passed. So some are doing well but some are not disciplined (Naa Amanua, older Musician)

The other side of the argument, which is put forward by the younger generation of women musicians interviewed for this thesis, is that people who raise the argument of fallen standard of musicians' morality and quality of music are

oblivious of the time frame in which these two generations operate. As one of them argues: “the times have changed slightly, so have different performances” (Jane, aka Efyia). Indeed, one can argue that the commoditization of everything and the nature of today’s market, coupled with factors such as globalization are responsible for these perceived changes. A counter argument that was offered was that the pressures of the market were no excuse for abandoning one’s conscience of what is right or wrong. Indeed, one older musician was of the view that the cause of all these forms of so-called indecent dressing and lifestyle was as a result of the young artistes’ eagerness to make money and gain fame, which she warned was transient: “fame is ephemeral; there is nothing about it which lasts, your work last but not the fame” (Bibie Brew, older musician). Clearly, the younger generation faces the difficult task of negotiating their life between their own personalities, trying to be role models and at the same time trying to be like or better than their predecessors. Some of them acknowledge this pressure, although they had something to say about this:

Now we are finding ourselves. They should give as a few (sic) time, we will fix it (Jane Awindor, aka Efyia, younger musician).

When I started doing music, I have been listening to Akosua Adjepong and the rest so I tried to, you know, follow their steps but after a while I realized it doesn’t work that way anymore (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, younger musician).

The important question that needs to be asked in all these is are claims made against these younger musicians legitimate? One cannot overlook the fact that the entertainment industry harbours some forms of dangers for young women

who enter the industry. As made evident elsewhere in this work, some important factors cannot be overlooked if one wants to really understand the nuances in the changes which have occurred over the years in female musicianship. The first of these factors would be to take a dive into the personalities involved. Often, individual idiosyncrasies and preferences are lost in the argument when one considers change. One is tempted to look out for changes in the entire musical scene without simply interrogating the roles of individuals involved in the creation process. A look at the younger generation of women selected for this study suggests some underlying commonalities that could easily be some of the causes for the perceived changes. These women have higher levels of contact with the West with some of them having schooled there. Again, the musicians have mostly foreign musicians as role models. They therefore typically model their music and videos to be like their role models. Here one can sympathize with these women, for though there might be numerous African role models there are indeed a few of them in Ghana and even then, their songs and videos are not readily accessible. One glaring example of this can be gleaned from the content of their songs and the names which these women call themselves. While a woman singing in the 80s and 90s will call herself by her name, women in music now have 'show business' names: Nana Akua is called Mzbel, Jane Awindor is Efya, Rebecca Acheampong is Becca, Dorcas Darkwa is Abrewa Nana and Mildred Ashong is Eazzy. This naming phenomenon is also common among young male Ghanaian musicians and seem to be modeled after western musical icons who have 'showbiz' which the youth can easily identify.

Another difference cited between the older and younger generations is the fact that younger female musicians have turned the music platform into sexual scenes. Such arguments in my view are fraught with a romanticization of the past since it appears as if the songs which were produced in the past were devoid of sexual innuendos. Sex in music and the 'sexualization of music' has always been part of the music industry all over the world with Ghana not being an exception. However, the difference is in the overt ways in which sex is now presented in music. Indeed words, terms and imageries which would have been considered taboo twenty years ago are now mentioned in songs with seeming ease. Here, one agrees with the school of thought who argues that sex will sell anything from second hand cars to classic music (Adomako Ampofo and Aseidu, 2012). Realizing the marketing capability of sex and the fact that women's bodies are normally seen as the shrines of sexuality, female musicians bank on these ideas as strategies to push their career. In the words of some female musicians:

You know one thing between the women and the men, sex. It sells in movies, in music, in entertainment world, sex sells. Put a half-naked girl on a playboy magazine, everybody is going to buy it. Put a half-naked celebrity on magazine, everybody's gonna buy because guess what she is naked and she is popular. Oh my God. Sex sells (Jane Awindor, aka Efyia, younger musician).

Sexuality sells honestly. I will tell you the same way controversies sell... I use sexuality to brand myself sometimes, show my belly sometimes very short on my thigh but then I don't overdo it (Mildred, musician, younger musician).

She however, believes that there is a limit to which even sexuality could be applied as a marketing strategy:

...there is a level to everything... but if you do it moderately you know it works well. If you over do you might just have the guys calling you a shashiwowo³⁸ artist instead of a nice secular artist (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician).

The issue of sexuality cropped up many times in the field work and happens to be the top reason for the stigmatisation of female musician. In a society where sex is covertly discussed the public display of younger musicians sexuality, as epitomized by the costumes, poses a threat to many in the society. This apprehension about the display of women's sexuality which cannot be controlled leads to some of this sentiment. One female consumer who was interviewed puts it better:

It is our culture. If I wear something short I might not be doing anything but people will think otherwise. But I can wear something long and be doing something bad, but nobody will suspect me. We are uncomfortable seeing women wear something short, it's like you are copying the west and showing your body. In our culture, we cannot accept that (Ako, 26).

Indeed the sex accusations are thrown at both male and female secular musicians. The difference, however, is that male musicians are mostly accused of producing lewd lyrics whereas the women are mostly accused of the costume and suggestive performances or videos (Collins, 2003). While male musicians might be heavily criticised for employing sexuality in their songs or performances, women cannot be forgiven for doing the same thing.

³⁸ Slang for prostitute.

A glaring example of a female musician who has been under heavy criticism for employing sexuality in her songs and performances is Belinda Amoah (Mzbel). Her sexually suggestive songs and performance as well as costume have led to a lot of controversies and criticisms from some section of the public. She however, noted in an interview that she is not the first musician to use sexuality to sell music in Ghana but she has received so much attention because she is the first Ghanaian woman to use sexuality. In her defense, she claims that she is getting so much attention and bad press because she is a woman who uses and sings about the so called taboo words and issues. She cites Daddy Lumba among other male musicians who use and sing about such taboo issues such as sex, but who does not fall under the same sea of criticisms because he is a man. She stated:

Before I started singing, Daddy Lumba and some male musicians were singing about sex, but nobody bordered because they are men. I'm not the first woman to do secular music. From my generation, Abrewa Nana was singing before I started but she was considered as one of the boys because of the way she dresses. But I started and people say ei she is a bad person!

The changing nature of the music industry and society as well as external influences which has indeed led to the change of the musical environment serves as a breeding ground for some generational differences. Some music consumers took such changes into recognition when discussing the difference in the lifestyles of the selected musicians:

Way back you will not see them, say Awurama Badu dress like we do now, like mini skirt and other things. But now you can get Eazzy (Mildred Ashong) wearing mini clothes. People have to know that things have changed (Abena, 27 year old female)

One glaring difference between the lives of the two groups of women considered for this study was the financial benefits made out of their musical careers. The benefits which the older generation of musicians made from their career as professional musicians are meager compared to what is being made by the younger generation. Indeed, the music industry itself has progressed from being mere entertainment tool to a multimillion ground in just some few years all over the world. Moving from the musician at the top to the producer, manager, makeup artist to the disc vendor on the street, the music industry feeds into all parts of the economy. The globalization and free movement of goods and services as well the easy access to materials has made music one of the most profitable industries in the world (Longhurst, 2007). The worlds of fashion, cosmetics and automobile is to a very large extent affected by what musicians wear or drive. This profit making nature of the music industry has not left the music industry in Ghana behind. Ghanaian female musicians of today thus make a lot of money out of the music they produce as compared to their sisters who made music 10 to 30 years ago. It is, however, very interesting that the younger women musicians should make more financial gains than the older ones since the music which were produced 20 years back was highly patronized beyond the borders of Ghana because it was considered “authentic” Ghanaian Highlife music as compared to the Hiplife which is considered to be a hip hop miniature. Again, the highly advanced technologies of today’s world also influence a high level of piracy, a problem which musicians complain leads to people not buying original CDs but pirated ones. I am, however, persuaded that the fees which

women musicians charge today for one show appearance, be it sing along performances or live band (which cost higher) make up for the losses they make in other quarters. Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, confirms this assertion:

Now we depend on gigs (live performances). You have to do shows to make money because nobody will buy Cds. You make Cds and someone makes more copies of yours (pirate) and keeps yours somewhere and is selling his (pirated version) or puts it on the internet and people start downloading.

Aside music, younger women musicians enjoy contracts such as featuring in adverts, singing sound tracks for movies, featuring in movies as well as posing as ambassadors of multimillion telecommunication companies which fetch them more than enough monies. For instance Jane Awindor is one of the selected faces of the Globalcom Communication Network (Glo) while Mildred Ashong models adverts for Milicom Ghana Communication Network (Tigo).

The musicians, especially the older ones themselves have an interesting way of explaining their inability to make as much money as their younger successors are making. They claim that unlike this generation, their generation produced music just for the love of it and not the material gains which emanated from singing. In the words of Naa Amanua (older musician):

In our time, even you are happy that you are performing or singing or Wulomei is performing and tomorrow you are on TV so that even if they don't give you money you don't care. Oh, sister you don't care at all. Even when we travelled and came back (her troupe-Wulomei), the money that was to be given to us was not given to us. When they didn't give it to us after a few persuasions we stopped but if it were to be children of today they would have gone to court but we let it go because we were happy to have even travelled abroad and come back. So even if they didn't give you were not bothered, it was nothing... indeed we did not make any money from it at all.

In an interview with Awurama Badu, she also reiterated that the older musicians are not as economically strong as the younger ones and that it was necessary for institutions to note their contributions to society and give them financial support because they were not financially strong. She said:

You should provide us with loans from time to time. You see we have contributed a lot and you know we used to have money but now we don't have again so you should show case what we have done and provide us with some financial support.

However, Mildred Ashong from the younger generation who has moved out of her parent's home and bought a house of her own noted that "now you will be financially sound if you are a musician, if only you manage well." Indeed all the younger women musicians who were interviewed for the study indicated that they were financially comfortable. It would seem as if older musicians suffered from naivety and were thus cheated out of what should have been their reward for their work done. Indeed, the joy or opportunity to travel from place to place especially to the West, a privilege which was the preserve of a few was a bait used to cheat them out of their wages. It is therefore understandable that the younger musicians have male managers who negotiate all their financial dealings on their behalf, a strategy which was lost on the older musicians. However, the older musicians who were entrepreneurially inclined have survived such financial difficulties by plying other trades alongside their musical careers. For instance Akosua Adjepong has been running a restaurant for the past fourteen years. Ghanaian women musicians who used to ply their profession abroad for

the most part of their career like Bibi Brew and Paulina Oduro did not complain of such financial constraints.

Another distinctive difference between the older and younger musicians is the fact that older musicians are not given the same opportunities that the younger musicians have to perform regularly. The musicians contend that it was not just about the fact that their ‘times have passed’ but the fact that once a woman hits forty years and above, she is expected to be confined at home “helping with the grandchildren.” This, they complained does not happen to older male musicians who are considered authorities and consulted to perform at state and more sophisticated functions and are therefore mobile. This factor, to them, is one of the reasons why older women musicians are totally wiped out of the music scene although they still possess their talents. Clearly as women, it is expected that after forty they should have married a long time ago, had some children and look forward to helping with the grandchildren.

4.2. Themes in Women’s Songs

Songs that have been produced over the years have mostly been about the issues which were the predominant topics of the day. Some have also been about the issues which were personal favourites of the musicians but through singing has been able to make them issues of the day. Whichever way one wants to look at it, songs have almost always been about the day to day issues that engage societies. Much of the literature indicates how songs have represented the mood of a

particular generation or how songs typically may depict the state of the society at a time a song is produced (Barber, 1987; Agovi, 1995). By studying the music of a particular era therefore, one can construct the history of that era. Musicians in this sense can be qualified as historians and commentators of the society (*Legon Observer*).

Three major themes were generated from the songs which were selected for analysis. These themes are Love (Sweet and sour love), marital issues and songs about women. As already stated in the methodology section, thirty songs were selected for the study, with three songs each from the selected musicians. Out of the thirty songs, eighteen were categorised under love, six were categorised under marital issues and six under songs about women.

Through the field work, it became obvious that a lot of music consumers consider some issues that women sing about as issues that cut across generations. It also became apparent that some of the themes are different on generational basis and similar themes were handled differently from generation to generation while new themes emerged in the songs under consideration.

4.3. Love

4.3.0. Sweet Love

The most common and outstanding theme prevalent in Ghanaian women musicians songs is love. All the musicians interviewed for the study noted that love was an ever present theme in their songs:

Most of my songs advise people, advising young ones.
And then I also sing love songs. The love songs are not

profane. I advise people in the love songs (Akosua Adjepong, older musician)

I talk about situations like er... social issues in my songs, there are love songs sometimes and you can talk about love in so many different ways but most cases they are social songs, socially inclined. I sing about women too, what we go through, our struggles and how we can improve ourselves (Bibi Brew, older musician).

I sing about love (Belinda Amoah, aka Mzbel, younger musician).

I mean love, hate, anger, feelings, life, I mean every day, about me, my life stuff that happened to me. (Jane Awindor, aka Efy, younger musician).

Mainly my theme is more about fun, class, life and women empowerment. I like to boost them in petty, petty ways you know I like... and then the third theme you find in my song is love...that's something every woman goes through and that's why I collaborated with Richie who is like the ladies' man. We came over (sic) with this song one girl (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician)

Some music consumers also had these to say about the themes in women's songs:

Usually, women are mostly likely to sing about love and gospel songs (K.K, male student)

Women generally sing about love, marriage and also their songs are about women (Adom, national service personnel)

Love, their bitter experiences, men who cheat in relationships and now sex (Adwoa, female student)

Indeed, that women sing about love is not exclusive to Ghanaian women

musicians but to Ghanaian male musicians as well. Collins (2000) has already noted that from the themes in Highlife songs from the 1980's onwards bordered mainly on romantic love. Love themes range from the nature of love, searching for love and disappointment in love.

Those songs which I put under this category were songs which defined love or described the kind of love that the personae in the song experiences at the moment. In all cases of songs which were put under this category, love is described differently by the different musicians to the end that love is beautiful and the most pleasant experience that make people do the unthinkable. Lovers are described as 'sugar', 'my lord', 'my love' while the experience itself is described as everlasting, killing and beautiful and Lovers are willing to do favours for their loved ones. Indeed, the personae in these songs are willing to elope, kill, forsake all advice or even make the ultimate sacrifice of death in order to be with their lovers. Perhaps these singers show so much love because their love is reciprocated by the lover in question. Different women musicians define or describe their love differently but to the same end, it is the best love ever! Love is described as sugar, little things, while lovers are described as lords, father, king, mother, friend etc. love is sweet, it is beyond comparison, it surpasses all other emotional experiences and the almighty God is to be thanked for providing such love. Lovers are forever basking in the feeling called love.

Although songs which were put under *sweet love* category all exhibited the characteristics in the definition of love and the nature of love, the trend over the years is worth attention. In the 1980s through the 1990s the definition or nature

*Otherwise the next time you hear from me
It will be at my funeral.*

The love for the lover is so intense that the singer wonders if the lover has used medicine (magic) to bewitch (wode adoro bi na aye me) her into loving him.

The perfect lover is understanding (ɔte ma seɛ) protects his woman (bɛma sunsum kata ɔbaa so) not a trouble maker (ɔmpɛ ne ho asem), respects himself (obu ne ho paa) and respects his love and makes her happy (ɔma mani gye).

What the women expect from these lovers is for the lovers to love them back.

On the other hand songs from 2000-2010 (younger musicians) define love and what they want in a brazen manner. Lovers are described as handsome, Igwe³⁹, father, Julius Caesar, sweetness, baby, partner, star and twinkle. Lovers have to be rich (a credit card is preferable), he gives her peace of mind, he respects her, he does not starve her, he anticipates her needs (provides her needs before she defines them) he thinks like her and most of all he satisfies her sexually. Some of the songs run:

*Never seen a guy quiet like you
You're special you're the exception to the rule yeah
You're my star, mi twinkle
And I love the way you kiss all my dimple (Mildred
Ashong, aka Eazzy, One girl, 2010).*

*When you say, cook the food, let me wash the bowls
Come here baby, let me touch your toes
When you suggest, wash the clothes, lemme clean the house
It's the little thing that you do that makes me love you
more (Jane, aka Efyā, little things, 2010)*

We talking about the things we do when we're in love

³⁹ Igbo name for king.

*Midnight calls, lunch in the park, head way up in the sky
We're talking about the things that we do when we're in
love*

*Hey, making love all night. (Jane, aka Efyia, moment's
notice, 2010)*

*He gives me sugar
My Julius Caesar*

<i>Ode ma me anopa ne awia</i>	<i>he gives it to me morning and afternoon</i>
<i>Anadwo de oreku me</i>	<i>he kills me at night with it</i>

(Becca, Sugar, 2007)

The most striking feature of these songs is the various ways in which the experience of love is described and the terms of love are clearly defined. There are walks in the parks, watching the stars, midnight calls, kisses and sexual gratification. There are clear elements of new ways of love experiences which are absent from the songs of older musicians. The most extreme ones are the midnight calls and kisses, these experiences are representative of how love affairs are organised in today's Ghanaian societies. The influx of numerous telecommunication companies in the country has led to high competition for customers. This has led to these companies introducing many incentives to attract customers. One of such incentives is the introduction of free night calls. Thus anyone willing to make calls but being cautious enough to save some money would have to forfeit a good night's sleep to make use of free calls, typically after midnight. Lovers, especially young ones, are willing to make such sacrifices hence the persona's experience of numerous midnight calls. It has however, become common knowledge that unless a lover has a genuine excuse

to call at midnight, most lovers especially women may refuse to answer midnight calls since they consider this mode to be a cheap way for men to woo them.

Again, the fact that sexual activities could be and are described overtly with words such as ‘love making all night’ without the use of idiomatic expressions or euphemisms could be uncomfortable for some part of the Ghanaian society. Indeed such songs are described as the ones ‘spoiling the children.’

Another interesting point that cannot be overlooked is the clearly defined terms about what lovers have to do in order for their love to be reciprocated. Although they might be willing to die or elope with lovers, the fact should not be lost that they are “partners” and must “think alike” in the relationship. To this end, the man should be able to help with some domestic chores, a domain which is considered to be for the woman. When she ‘cooks’ the man should help with ‘the washing of bowls’ and ‘clean the house’ while she ‘washes the clothes’. The partner is not to command but to ‘say’ or ‘suggest’, for it is these ‘little things’ that makes her love him more. The singer’s description of these chores as ‘little’ does not necessarily suggest the quantum of work although traditionally such domestic chores are considered as little things done by women. It however, shows an initiative on the part of the partner to help in chores which are considered to be for women and are so trivial that they do not need the men to help. It is because the partner takes these things into consideration that leads the singer to confess that the “way he farts makes her love him more.” Again, the man should be financially sound in order to provide and even anticipate the

lover's need. Indeed, a man with a credit card is preferable since it shows a certain class and financial growth especially in an environment where most people do not have an idea of a credit card or even possess one. The said man should also have some basic lessons in pampering and petting such as 'rubbing of feet' and 'kissing of dimples.' Finally, sexual satisfaction is part of the deal. The love making sessions are 'all night' affairs, it should be 'mind blowing' (ode mpa so agoro reku me) 'anopa, awia na anadwo' (morning, afternoon, evening) or it should be 'dew papa' (it should be very sweet). Evidently, these songs are defining in their own ways but to the same end, their own brand of masculinity. That younger musicians express love in such an overt manner might not be surprising when one considers the contexts in which these songs are produced. As noted in the theoretical framework, a lot of factors combine to influence the final outcome of any song. These factors include the personality of the performer, audience and context. These three factors seem to be at work here. The personalities of the younger musicians selected for this study have been shaped one way or another by higher levels of formal education. As already indicated all the women musicians who fall into this category have tertiary education either in or outside the country. This is not to categorically state that a woman who does not have a formal tertiary education will not sing about such issues. But there is empirical evidence to show that formal education, especially at the highest level such as those attained by these women, have the ability and the power to influence and change their thinking patterns, especially by challenging the set out traditional modes of doing things (Dolphyne, 1999).

Again, the music audience has changed over the years with the highest number of the audience population encompassing the youth age. Contents of songs might therefore change to suit the audience. Moreover, the context or environment in which these songs are also produced should be taken into consideration. These songs are produced in both local and global spaces where taboo words and issues, such as the overt discussion of sex, are gradually considered mentionable. Locally, the increasing significance of the small nuclear family and the appearance of the notion of ‘romantic love’ as the basis for marriage could lead to the predominance of songs which focus heavily on romantic love. Again, the gender discourse in Ghana has over the years enjoyed some changes in the positive direction, especially in the so called millennium years. As noted by Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) “in many ways today's Ghanaian woman enjoys greater opportunities and freedoms than her sister of the 1930s” so also the Ghanaian woman of 2000-2010 enjoys “greater opportunities and freedoms” than her sister of the 1980’s. These changes in gender relations could also provide women some space to sing about issues which they might not have been able to sing about publicly in the past. Although Julie Okine’s *Nothing but a man’s slave* which is an assertive song about a woman who would rather be free than be a man’s slave was done in the fifties, she was a lone voice in the wilderness. The 1990s also saw international attention paid to transformation of gender relationships, catalysed by the now famous Beijing Conference held in 1995. Indeed, the Grrl power to Girl power theory has been considered in some academic quarters as part of third wave of feminism. One of the strategies of the

theory is for women to consciously use swear words, taboo words and derogatory words hitherto directed at women in the music of male musicians as a weapon to shock the moral sensitivity of the population in order to draw the needed attention. Although Ghanaian female musicians may not be conscious or even have any idea of this theory and its significance for their work as musicians, the fact that they have access to western music and have some western women musician icons as their role models, who may have ideas of this theory and may make songs to reflect it, suggests the music of these Ghanaian female musicians are bound to be affected. Again, the growing sense of individualism and personal freedom which the theory encourages could also create some changes in what these women sing about.

This is, however, not universal. Indeed some of the songs defy generic characteristics of particular years as explained above. Paulina Oduro's (older musician) *Killer lover*, produced in the early 90s is a clear indication of this point.

In this song, the persona articulates why she is so much in love with the 'killer lover' although women are cautioned he is 'extremely dangerous' since 'nothing survives' wherever the killer lover has been. She narrates that:

*You know what I need at night
You know how to turn me on
You know how to make me kasa
You know how to make me smile (Paulina Oduro, Killer lover,
1999)*

This song can clearly not be excluded from those ones in which women clearly state their sexual satiations in songs. This song however, goes to suggest that fact the personality and context in which a song is produced has a huge impact on the finished product. Considering the biography, of Paulina Oduro, the environment in which she was nurtured, educated and produced her songs (that is the fact that she grew up and was educated in England), it is understandable that she is able to raise such issues. She confirms the fact that her exposure to the western world indeed has a lot of influence on her songs:

Definitely, definitely. In Ghana here, I mean it's either we sing about gospel or we limit our lyrics because we don't want people to talk about us or taboos that we don't talk about. So, me (sic) living or having my education outside gave me the opportunity to sing or say what I feel, what I believe in. So I am very grateful for that.

4.3.1. Sour Love

If there is any theme that always has an audience it is sour love. *Medofo adaada me* by Awurama Badu, *Da ke da* and *You lied to me* (both by Rebecca Acheampong, aka Becca) are classic representation of love gone sour. Normally in the songs, sour love is as a result of the fact that women are bitterly disappointed because their trust has been breached and hopes dashed.

In *Medofo adaada me* for instance, the woman tells her story of utter disappointment because her husband had decided that it was time to discard her. While they suffered together her supposed bad luck was lost on the man. As soon as there is money, he sends her packing under the excuse that her bad luck might

lead to his losing the acquired wealth. This is clearly a pretext to send his wife away and replace her with another woman. Unfortunately for the woman, she is solely dependent on her husband and predicts her impending doom because of the break up:

<i>Medofo adaadaa mea aa</i>	<i>my lover has deceived me aa</i>
<i>Odo adaadaa me oo</i>	<i>my lover has deceived me o</i>
<i>Medofo agya me awarehow aa</i>	<i>my lover has left me in sorrow</i>
<i>Agyegye mea koku me</i>	<i>he has led me to death</i>

(Awurama Badu, *Medofo Adaada me*, 1989)

<i>Meye no atantande</i>	<i>he treats me like an ugly thing</i>
<i>Menye ne so baa one me bebo bera</i>	<i>he doesn't regard me as his partner</i>
<i>Da biara ntokwa ne</i>	<i>there is fight everyday</i>
<i>awereho ahyε m'akoma ma</i>	<i>I am full of sorrow</i>
<i>nesuo nkoa na me te</i>	<i>I am full of tears</i>

(Becca, *Daa ke da*, 2010)

You lied to me
You betrayed my love
You broke my heart
Ei, ei e baby boy, hey ah you lied to me (Becca, *You lied to me*, 2007)

Daa ke daa by Rebecca Acheampong (younger musician), describes the kind of emotional pain and psychological abuse the singer is going through because her expectations of what marriage or love should be have been terribly crushed by her partner's refusal to requite her love. She narrates that she has tried to be what a 'good' wife should be and was willing to go to extremes even to "stopped breathing if you told me to" to make things work. However, the marriage is besieged with fighting on daily basis and the woman feels that she is being treated as a 'dirty or worthless thing' and fears that the pain will be enough to send her to her grave. She tells the man eventually:

daa ke daa keda
kosomo mi ka tse tsui

day by day
if you don't love me, don't break my heart

You lied to me also by Rebecca Acheampong (younger musician) also provides the story of a woman who provides everything including financial assistance to her lover but he turns to cheat on her. In the end when he is caught, he is sent packing.

The ways in which the women in the three songs above handle the failed relationships are different. In the first song (*medofo adaada me*), she is totally devastated and is only waiting for the end to come. In the second (*daa ke da ke daa*) one however, the woman intends to prevent the fate of the first woman befalling her and so asks for divorce before it's too late. She is conscious of the fact that she is a human as the man and also belongs to a family. She is also aware that she is a part of a whole, a member of an extended family thus draws on this knowledge to remind her partner that she is 'someone's child' and deserves to be treated as an egg lest she falls and break' (dies) by implication, she has a family which will be too willing to accept her back into their fold. It is the fear that she might eventually 'break' psychologically, spiritually and physically' which leads her to suggest to her partner to divorce her if he is no longer interested in her. She states:

Menso meye obi baa
So me mu te se kosua na ma fri wo nsem amɔ
Na se wo ntumi a
Gyae me ma me nkɔ oo

I am also someone's child
treat me like an egg,
lest I break
if you can no longer do it
then let me go

In the third song (*You lied to me*) the woman is the provider in the relationship,

she is able to call the shots. She sends her cheating lover packing and tells him “no more money from your honey”. In the full version of the song, the man is heard begging for forgiveness. This is indeed in consonant with studies that show that when people control resources in a relationship (mostly the man) and the other is dependent (mostly the woman) they decide which way the relationship tolls (Manuh, 1999). In the instance of this song it is the woman who provides financially for the man and so she sends the man packing once she finds him cheating. This is clearly a subversion of cultural norms. Here the woman is the controller, rather than the controlled.

4.4. Marital Problems

Marriage as a theme is essentially the preoccupation of songs which fell under the 1980-1999 period. Unfortunately however, the songs selected for the study do not reflect the good part of marriage but mainly highlight its ugly aspects.

One of such is the practice of long distance marriage as depicted in Akosua Agyepong's *ɔdo me ma me so nkɛ*⁴⁰. The song portrays women who marry men who leave them here in Ghana and travel to stay abroad for years. Such women are left here all alone and may not have any idea of what their husbands are up to or what is happening to them and suffer sleepless nights. As it mostly turns out, such men have travelled to seek greener pastures and do not have any legal documents to help them stay abroad and work as citizens. Neither are they able to bring their wives and children to live with them. In order to prevent being

⁴⁰ Means “my love should come and take me along.”

repatriated by the homeland authorities, these men resort to marrying women both Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians, but especially non Ghanaians who can provide the legal status to cover the legal residence of the man. In such cases, men are also unable to bring their wives to stay with them but have to visit them in Ghana and the distance from one visit to another could take years. This is the dilemma of the woman in the song. She is unable to live with her husband and it has also taken the husband years to visit; she is also aware that the husband is married because he needs the documents to stay abroad legally. She, however, implores her husband to come home and have a look at his children since he has acquired a stay permit. The woman also expresses her regret at choosing such a marriage. Thus while she stay at home missing him and sexually deprived for years and can only have clandestine sexual activities, the man can have an open sexual union on the pretense of acquiring a stay permit. This song captures a type of marriage arrangement which is still ongoing in Ghanaian society. Some women prefer to marry men who have stayed or continue to stay abroad because of the perception that such men are better off financially than those at home. They also harbour the hope that they will one day be taken to live overseas where that grass is greener. In the end they suffer the fate of the woman in the song:

You know that song, these guys from Holland and Italy they come and engage these ladies, marry these girls and they go back leaving them here, five years, six years, they will still be waiting for them and they will be up there. And you cannot tell me that if a man is even up there for a year, he can stay without a woman, but we the women we can stay for that long (Akosua Agyepong, older musician).

The next marital problem has to do with the relationship between husband and wife. One aspect has to do with a husband's inability to provide for his family and the burden the wife has to shoulder because of this inability. Husbands are normally envisaged as the major providers in the home while the woman is often seen as complimenting the man's effort. In this case, however, the man refuses to work but rather chooses to sleep at home every day. The wife therefore has to go out, work and bring money home. However, because the woman's income is not enough to support the family, they end up borrowing and are thus surrounded by debt. The pathetic part is when the debtors call at home for their money; the man hides and pushes the woman to face the consequences. When she can no longer bear it, the woman laments that indeed the debts are too much for her to pay. According to the musician, the issue was so prevalent at the time because women had then started taking loans from banks to work with and so they were considered by their husbands to be rich. The husband helped spend the money but refused to help in repayment. She noted: *I have so many women coming out saying that their husbands were doing what I was singing about. So many women were calling to thank me.* For these numerous women, the musician was articulating their collective problem and thus giving them a voice.

The second issue was with women being thrown out of their marital homes by their husbands. Women in these instances are sent packing by their husbands for the least provocation such as the suspicion of bad luck and by extension

witchcraft on the side of the woman. Of course this is a pretext to divorce and cheat her out of their acquired properties and to eventually replace her with another woman. This is a real life experience of most women and according to the musician (Awurama Badu); she wrote this song as a of her own life experience. In an interview she recollected that when she first did a live performance of this song in a pub at Adabraka a suburb of Accra, a woman cried and said the song was a reflection of her life story.

Another marital issue that is clearly the lot of many married women is conflict with in-laws. *Nkye me wo bi*⁴¹ by Paulina Oduro narrates the unfortunate incident of a woman who is unlucky to encounter a mother-in-law who does not like her. If most married women were to sing, they would probably sing about troubles with in-laws. This is normally prevalent because of the fear by family members who assume their son is spending all his money on his wife and children. In the advent of the breakdown of the extended family system and urbanization, people are gradually moving away from traditionally assigned responsibilities and the attention on the nuclear family to the disadvantage of the extended family is increasing. Thus the apprehension exhibited by mothers and sisters to perceived neglect is real, except that the victimization of the wife as the cause of such neglect is most often misplaced. Therefore the scenario of in-law tension as depicted in the song is very real and can sometimes escalate to full blown hatred and open confrontations. Indeed this theme, among others such as broken homes, inheritance disputes and the predicament of the orphan, is a reflection of the

⁴¹ Means “if not for one reason or another, I would also have had one”

predominant theme of Highlife songs and Concert Party plays from the 1950s through to the 70s.

Marriage as a theme is however, almost absent from the songs of younger women musicians except when a woman is expressing her desire to be the wife of a love, the issue of marriage does not arise in their songs. Perhaps, the reason for the absence of marriage as a theme in the 2000-2010, reflects the changing patterns of societal norms and women's position in the society. Marriage it would seem, no longer ranks high in the list of factors that defines a woman in the society.

4.5. Songs about Women

I labeled these songs as such because they are basically reflective of experiences of women and are basically women centred. These songs are about motherhood, advice on what women should be and do advice against sexual abuse and encouraging women to have fun.

Yei

We congratulate you

We congratulate you for this nine months journey

Nine months of tribulations

(Naa Amanua, *Yei*, 1999)

A mother is calling her children 2x

Emilia ei, Kate ei

Papa Kwame tell Caesar mother is back, 2x

I have come so come for your gifts.

(Awurama Badu, *Obaatan fre ne mma*, 1989)

The song *Yei* by Naa Amanua (older generation) congratulates and praises the institution of childbirth and motherhood, so does Awurama Badu's *Obaatan fre ne mma*. The first song recognizes the pains and difficulties a woman has to go through in her bid to become a mother. The tribulations of carrying a pregnancy for nine months are outlined in the song. There are headaches, vomiting and sleepless nights and if a woman is unlucky she might end up dead; give up her life for another life. They are therefore congratulated for this effort. The second song on motherhood is found in Awurama Badu's *Obaatan fre ne mma* which depicts 'mother is home' scenario. A mother who returns from her trip calls her children to come for *kwanso adea* (gifts from the trip). She starts by making enquires of the whereabouts of each child and tells them to come and receive their gifts. She assures them that she and their father are forever going to provide for all their needs and therefore they had no reason to be worried. Thus, the song assures the children of security and provision from their parents.

Akosua Agyapong's *Meye Obaa* is a song about women which appreciates women while at the same time prescribing the kind of life women should lead. The song's chorus identifies the musician who proudly proclaims that she is a woman and together with other women they were created well. The song then goes on to itemize the do's and don'ts for women. In the end, the song that had started boldly on an assertive note ends up conforming to or reflecting socially prescribed roles and responsibilities of the so-called respectable woman. I think that this song still remains a classic because it sanctions and endorses the cultural spaces allocated to women, hence it did not meet any criticisms or opposition

when it was released, to date. What is apparent, however, is the fact that in comparison with current songs by younger musicians, the song's definition of womanhood may not fit neatly into the modern definition of womanhood.

Meye oba *I'm a woman*
Meye oba *I'm a woma*
Nana Nyame bo me baa, obo me yie *God created me, He created me well*

Me nua nom maa *my fellow women*
Mo ma yen hwe ye ho yie *let's take care of ourselves*
Mma yen nye mɛmaa sɛm *we should not jump from one man to another*
...yɛn sua aduane noa *...let's learn how to cook*
Na sɛ yɛ ware, yɛ ho yɛ *so that when we marry, we will know how to do it*
 (Akosua Adjepong, *Meye Obaa*, 1990)

Paulina Oduro's *Woman Power* (1999) starts with a powerful statement of warning to misogynistic and chauvinistic men to give the woman room to operate:

Alright
Right about now
I want all the men to go back and let the women them move forward
See
Let them know we've come here to stay
We don't want no trouble
Just want show them woman power.

The song presents the voice of a woman who is not ready to kowtow and take instructions from any man. She warns that she is very capable of running her own life and does not need a man to tell her how to run her life. She questions society's arrangement where men think that they can always have their way because they are men. She retorts that this time around, things must change because women are also human, have rights and are very competent to run their own lives and affairs. She states: *it's once again trying to tell men that am an*

individual woman and I don't need you to come and tell me what I should do in my own home.

This need for a voice and independence is heard in Nana Akua's (Mzbel's) *16 yrs* (2005) song. This song depicts a warning against sexual abuse of women and children and at the same time the power of women to enjoy their sexuality and bodies. The first part of the song and the chorus warns that although young woman might be in short skirts and tight blouses, it is no excuse nor does any man have the right to sexually abuse such a woman:

*I bi 16 years
I go dey bi like this o
If you touch my thing o
I go tell momi o*

This song has generated a lot of controversy for allegedly encouraging indecent dressing among young women in Ghana especially when the costume of the musician herself has been described in words such as 'tiny, seductive and suggestive.' However, the idea is not to encourage immorality or indecency but to rather make the point that a grown up man's insatiable desire which leads him to rape a young woman should not be pinned on the victim's dress code. The song runs thus:

*I no dey cheap, so make you try back off
You dey hear me, oga boys, go back off
Gidigidi, mepene, I be innocent
Mehwe me jeans ne me skirt, free style, I am aware⁴²
Brother hwe me back, ne me chest
Wei ye TV, but you for know say*

It also drives the point home that just like their male counterparts, young women

⁴² A type of dressing prevalent among young women where the backside of the person shows.

have the right to express their sense of fashion without fear of abuse and any man who does not heed this warning might find himself in the grips of the law:

Oh police go catch you
Catch you pe staright to the WAJU⁴³
WAJU nso oho no wana na wobeyi wo

Interestingly though, the very song that has been demonized in Ghana as encouraging sexual immorality and indecent dressing was selected for an award in the *Minnesota African Women's Association* (MAWA) in the US for singing about issues which are considered to harm the African woman and child. Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo (2012) noted this song was empowering for young girls and women in general since it educated them on the need to seek legal redress once they are sexually abused while at the same time diffusing and discussing the explanation that young women are sexually abused by men because the women dress indecently (Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo, 2012). This clearly shows the difference in the moral code of the two nations and also the different ways in which empowerment has a contextual meaning and significance.

The last song I selected in this category provides an alternative view of a way of life for women, namely having fun. The first line of the song announces who the song is meant for:

*This is just for the ladies
You know what it is, Eazzy baby!
Where my girls at?
If you're a girl
And you got sexy clothes and you got sexy shoes, put your hands
up for me*

⁴³ Women and juvenile unit now known as DOVSU.

Bo wo nsem ma me

And if you know, you've got a lot of ass, the real thing, put your hands up for me (Mildred Ashong aka Eazzy, Bo wo nsem ma me, 2010)

The song's representation of women is a rather radical one. One could almost say that perhaps this is the definition of a 'modern urban girl'. The song calls on girls who wear 'sexy clothes and shoes' and 'got a lot of ass, the real type' to clap their hand for her. So should all the 'hot girls who will be flexing and the big girls who will be wearing skinny dresses' join in the fun. The song encourages women to realize that being big is beautiful and that big girls can equally wear clothes that are meant for slim girls who are considered more beautiful. It also promotes the idea that there is nothing wrong for women to wear the so called sexy clothes and shoes and have fun in clubs. Of course this cuts out a section of the women population who are unable to afford the clothes, shoes or club fees. It, however, goes without saying that in a society where women are normally victimized and branded as morally loose for doing all the above, this song can be seen as quite revolutionary. In an interview with her, the musician said she did such a song because:

Let's just say that amount of hhm, the number of songs that comes out there, the amount of songs that comes out lately against women, I think they are a little more than ones that come out for women empowerment and like you said we females need to step up the same ways. I did *Bo wo nsem ma me* for girls, if you are just a lady. The same way some other artist can do other songs for ladies and the more we have it, the more we have empowerment. When we put ourselves on platforms where we are respected because we sing about each other, you can imagine every single artist out there singing a song or making a song to represent girls then the guys will feel like hhm ok women

are really powerful, now to get their target audience, you need to sing something good about them so there would be no 'shashii' and nick names against them there would rather be good things said about them (Mildred Ashong, aka Eazzy, younger musician).

For this musician therefore, it was about setting the records straight. She envisages that indeed if a lot of women artistes make a lot of good songs about women, it would counter or at least reduce the number of negative representations of women in popular music in Ghana (Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo, 2012). It may also be noted that all the songs about women are positive and may be considered empowering, although on different levels and at different periods in time.

Over the years, the songs about women by women have gradually moved away from conservative themes such as motherhood and morally upright women to rather radical and revolutionary concepts such as, fashion and fun and speaking against abuse. The concept of who a woman is and what a woman is supposed to do in songs in the 1980s is in opposition to the new concepts of 'womanhood' especially in a cultural situation where fun girls are considered irresponsible and improbable for roles such as motherhood. Indeed this could account for some of the tensions that exist between the older and younger musicians, the fact that younger musicians are singing about issues that are considered averse to the instituted norms of society. Thus while the younger musicians hold the view that they are only carrying the mantle from older musicians with little touch a here and there, the older ones insisted that things have changed and wanted to disassociate themselves from the music of younger musicians.

Yeah, yeah, there is a vast difference, don't bother yourself, our time as I told you, we used to sing songs that change one's life. But if you look at what's happening now, hmm! (Akosua Agyepong, older musician).

As a researcher, however, I recognize that while some themes remain the same, they have been modified and some have undergone drastic changes while new ones have emerged. Thus while women for all these years have been singing about love, the language used, the terms of love and the ways in which break ups are handled in their songs have seen modifications. Again, new concepts and definition of for instance love and womanhood have also changed. Another important theme that is, however, missing from the songs of younger women but prevalent in songs of older ones is marriage while there are emerging themes like fashion and fun which is also absent in older songs.

However, in looking at the themes that are raised by women, the role of composers and music producers must be taken into consideration. This is because these two groups of people have a lot of influence on what is churned out as music. Music composers may write songs for women to sing and such songs might become hits. Since songs are attributed to musicians because after all it is their voices that consumers hear and they are the ones who are always on stage, one hardly takes the works and influence of composers and producers into consideration when dealing with the songs of women. In such instances therefore, where men write songs for women to sing then one wonders if men's view about the world is not being projected through women. Between the two groups of women it was discovered that apart from Naa Amanua who was a

member of a male dominated band and most of the songs were written by other male members, all the older female musicians wrote their songs. However, among the younger musicians three out of the five confirmed that one or two lyrics were sometimes written for them by men. Most of these songs were hits and some of the songs were considered to be empowering for women. Although the extent of such influence could not be determined by this study because it was not one of its focuses, it will be important for future research to examine this dimension of women's music and see how such an influence weaves into, for instance, songs which are considered empowering for women but which were written by men.

Music producers also play a role similar to that of the music composers. However, unlike composers, whose lyrics could be rearranged or sometimes substituted with other words, producers can have an influence on the total outcome of the lyrics. In the words of one music producer:

Every producer is actually what you hear. What you hear from any song is the producers taste or producer's identity. The producer decides on choice of tones, the structure of the song, final sounds, choosing engineer, the style of the vocal delivery, erm the target audience and all and so basically whatever you hear on the CD is my taste or my choice. Like I recorded a song with a female artiste (name withheld) we taught her how to sing, sing it this way, your jaw has to open this way (Mark Okraku Mante, music producer).

Thus if he/she who pays the piper calls the tune, and the above statement is indeed reflective of the music industry, then the influence of producers/managers and composers on what women sing about is real. Again, the reality of the music

industry may not always be about what people really want to say but what will sell. However, from the field research conducted so far, I am inclined to believe that songs that women write themselves do not suffer much from the editing of music producers. It is, however, sections such as arrangements, beats and much more technical aspects which the women musicians do not have much control over, but the core themes of the songs in most part remain the same.

Another interesting trend which emerged out of the field work was the fact that women hardly sang songs about the political activities of the country. This is rather intriguing since the literature indicated that there were political spaces traditionally assigned for women to create music about the political order of the day. If literature on gender relations also indicates that women have more room to operate than their foremothers and grandmothers and have grown bolder, then the fact that women are not making 'political songs' but have practically left it to men needs more research to understand the reasons and cause for this inconsistency.

This chapter has discussed analyzed the findings of my field research. The findings revealed that the lives of female musicians are clouded in negative perceptions and speculations about who they are and how they live their lives. It was, however, also observed that there were different perceptions held by the music consumers about the older and younger musicians.

As a minority in a male dominated music industry, it was disclosed that female musicians face peculiar challenges such as financial sponsorship, lack of

infrastructure and lack of respect for what they do as equal to male musicians. Although a comparative look also indicated that although female musicians may face the same challenges, there are some challenges that are associated with either older or younger musicians.

Finally, the analysis also revealed that women sung about similar issues such as love and also about women. However, the way the issues are discussed or presented in songs may differ from one age group to another. It was also discovered that while themes like marriage are prevalent in older musicians' songs, emerging themes like fun were in the songs of younger musician

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0.Introduction

The work sought to take a look at the world of female musicians and their work. Its main specific objectives were to unravel people's perceptions and ideas about who female musicians are and how they lead their lives, discover the challenges that women musicians face in their line of work, and to identify the themes that women raise in their songs. The work then used a comparative analysis to establish the changes or changing patterns of the lives and works of the selected female musicians.

The findings revealed that while negative perceptions are still a part of the lives of female musicians, it differed from one generation to the other. The perception of how the older musician led their lives was different from how they perceived the younger ones to and this has resulted in breeding some kind of antagonism between the older and younger generations. It also appeared that while female musicians may have some general challenges, some specific problems were more associated with older musicians than younger musicians and *vice versa*. Finally, the study revealed that some themes in songs sung by women have become constant and runs through the songs of all selected musicians. However, there were instances in which similar or same themes were handled or discussed differently and some themes were associated with either older or younger musicians.

5.1. Summary of Major Findings

The study's relevance was based on the gap that was identified in the literature of female musicians. It was noted that most works on Ghanaian popular music mostly concentrated on the development of popular genre such as the Highlife. Works that has been done on musicians did not pay much attention to female musicians. It was realised that works that dealt with the lives and works of female musicians were lacking. This work therefore sought to fill that gap. The study was designed to unravel consumer's perceptions of female musicians, the challenges, the themes they raise in their songs and how they differ from 1980 to 2010. The findings of the research were revealing.

The study disclosed that the lives of female musicians are steeped in negative perceptions. Such perceptions included their use and abuse of drugs and alcohol, their being sexually and morally loose and are mostly academic failures. Fieldwork however, proved that consumers did not have concrete evidence for such allegations and insinuations. Interestingly, older musicians who were selected for this work blamed younger musicians for being responsible for such perceptions. However, available literature proves that such negative perceptions have existed since women's entrance into popular music in Ghana. I also noted that musicians were aware of the fact that such perceptions exist because consumers do not have access to musicians and the only time they see them is when they are in their glitz and glamour and playing particular roles in their music videos. Again, consumers access to information about female musicians

are the ones they read, hear or see in the media which may sometimes peddle any news just for commercial purposes regardless of its authenticity. However, the negative perceptions differed for older and younger musicians. The older ones are seen as more deserving of respect than the younger ones.

With respect to the challenges faced by female musicians, the study reveals that although both older and younger musicians faced challenges such as the lack of infrastructure, lack of financial support and lack of necessary respect as that which is given to male musicians, the musicians in different age group faced different challenges. It was however, also realised that some challenges were rather associated with either the younger or older musicians. Thus although all musicians suffer from negative perceptions, the older ones are considered to deserve more respect than the younger ones. However, unlike the younger, most of the older artistes who are no longer in active singing face financial problems although the same cannot be said for those older ones who plied most of their profession in the west. Again, older female musicians find that age is a glass ceiling that curtails their profession. Thus, although older musicians may still be of good stance and willing to perform as musicians, the opportunities provided them are rare, with the excuse that they should be helping at home as mothers or grandmothers.

It was also discovered that many of the female musicians do not network adequately. This is a major shortcoming, especially when one considers that the need to form a block of female musicians is imperative. Networking will provide women a stronger and unified front and help to push their grievances to the

appropriate authorities instead of acting as individuals.

Female musicians also indicated that the lack of infrastructure such as spaces to practices or meet and share experiences was one of the challenges they faced. As such, the provision of such facilities will go a long way to relieve them from the burden of searching for non existing practices spaces.

The study also unraveled that while the bulk of the themes in women's songs are similar; the ways in which they are presented and handled are different. In the same vein, some themes are prevalent in the songs of older musicians while emerging themes are prevalent in the songs of younger musicians.

The research concludes from the evidence gathered from the field that the lives and themes raised by Ghanaian women musicians from 1980 and that of women musicians in 2010 do have some similarities as well as some difference. These similarities are as a result of their gender as women in a male dominate field places in a position where they are more than likely to have shared experiences. On the other hand, the times and years in which these women operated and operates are enough forces to bring about changes in their lives and works. However, the fact that some themes are considered the domain of women is indicative of the fact that women's position in the society has not changed very much. Nevertheless, these women can find paths for themselves and actualizing their hopes and create new images in society. The work also suggests that the fact

that the personality of the individual musicians and their exposure to environments outside Ghana has a lot of bearings on their work. The work also noted that some of the women musicians, especially the younger ones, may have their lyrics written for them to perform. In such instances, the influence of composers and producers on these songs cannot be overlooked. Thus to understand the lives of Ghanaian women musicians and what they sing about, one should take all the above mentioned factors into consideration.

5.2. Recommendations

Considering the importance of music to the society and its ability to control public opinion, it would be of immense benefit to everyone if careful consideration is given to the producers of such a popular product, especially the female gender. The first way to achieve recognition for female musicians is by whipping public awareness about their profession as ‘normal’.

Throughout this research what became apparent was the fact that apart from what the media report about these musicians the public had no concrete evidence or knowledge of their lived lives. The researcher also suffered from the same perceptions until this work was started and she had a one on one interaction with the selected musicians. This is not to suggest that consumers or the public have a one- on- one relationship with the musicians. It is however, recommended that workshops, documentaries and sometimes purposely designed interviews with the musicians should be organized from time to time by the media. Such programmes should endeavour to elicit information that reflect the true

personalities and true lives of musicians and reduce the ones which seek to project the character the musicians assume in their songs or with whom they are having an affair. Although it behooves on musicians to take personal lead in such educational programmes, such awareness should be the responsibility of all stakeholders such as the Musicians Union of Ghana, the media and the government.

Again, considering the fact that we now live in the age of technology; it would be beneficial for musicians to make use of this technological advancements. Female musicians can increase their visibility by creating personal or corporate websites and blogs where they provide information about themselves and their music. This will not just provide accurate information, it will also serve as a platform for women musicians to advertise themselves and their music.

Politically, there is the need for the government to provide financial support for musicians especially female musicians considering the fact that they are a minority. This is indeed one of the clarion calls of all musicians but especially women who complain that mostly it is male musicians who are considered for financial support and promotion by multinational companies. Although the government has designated funds for the creative industry, it could do more by setting one aside just for music and also by paying particular attention to minorities like secular women musicians.

Socially, there is the need to pay attention to the issues that women raise in their

songs. If indeed music is reflective of a society then anyone who wants an insight into some of the most prevalent social issues and also some of the problems that women face should give considerable attention to the work of female musicians. The fact that some themes are recurrent while there are emerging ones might be reflective of the society. It will also be prudent for female musicians to become politically conscious and discuss socio-political issues more, so as to contribute to the ideological development of the youth and the public in general.

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APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MUSICIANS

Name:

Age:

Marital status:

Educational level:

How did you get into music?

Why did you choose to do music as a profession?

How was/ is it like for a woman to be a musician in Ghana?

How do you think music consumers perceive you and your fellow musicians and why?

What are some of the things/ issues you sing about and why?

Do you think their generation sung/ sing about different things and why

APPENDIX TWO: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MUSIC PRODUCERS/COMPOSERS /MANAGERS

Name:

Sex:

Occupation:

Why would you compose/produce/manage or do not produce a woman musician?

How do you perceive the women musicians you work with in relations to their personal lives?

What to the best of your knowledge do women sing about?

Do you have any influence in what women sing about and how?

Do you perceive any changes in the themes that women raise in their song?

APPENDIX THREE: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MUSIC CONSUMERS/AUDIENCE

Sex:

Occupation:

Who is your favourite female musicians and why?

What is your perception of who a female musicians is, especially their lifestyles?

How do you come by such perceptions and do you think they are true?

What does she sing about?

Do you think she sings about different things from those before or after her?

PHOTOGRAPHS OF SELECTED FEMALE MUSICIANS.

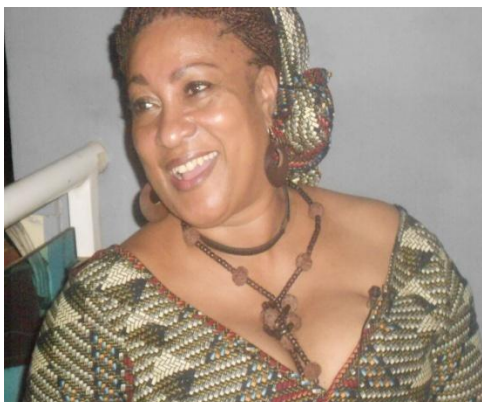
OLDER MUSICIANS



Awurama Badu



Akosua Adjepong



Paulina Oduro



Mary Naa Amanua Dodoo



Bibie Brew

YOUNGER MUSICIANS



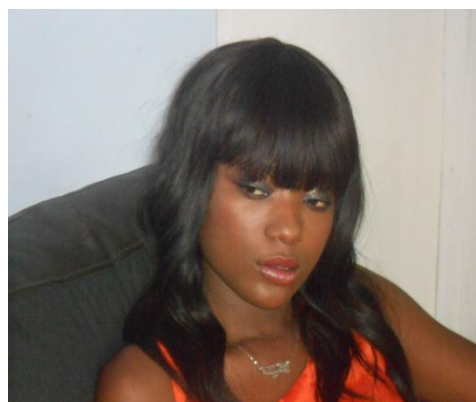
Dorcas Adarkwa (Abrewa Nana)



Mildred Ashong (Eazzy)



Belinda Nana Ekua Amoah (Mzbel)



Jane Awindor (Efya)



Rebecca Acheampong (Becca)

