

**THE GHANAIAN WOMAN AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE IN GHANA'S
DEVELOPMENT**



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DECLARATION

I, Doris Akyere Boateng, hereby declare that except for references to other people’s works which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my own research work conducted at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, Legon, and the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, under the joint supervision of Prof. Kwaku Osei-Hwedie, Prof. Donald Fuchs and Dr. Michael Baffoe. I also declare that as far as I know, this thesis has neither in part nor in whole been published nor presented to any other institution for an academic award.

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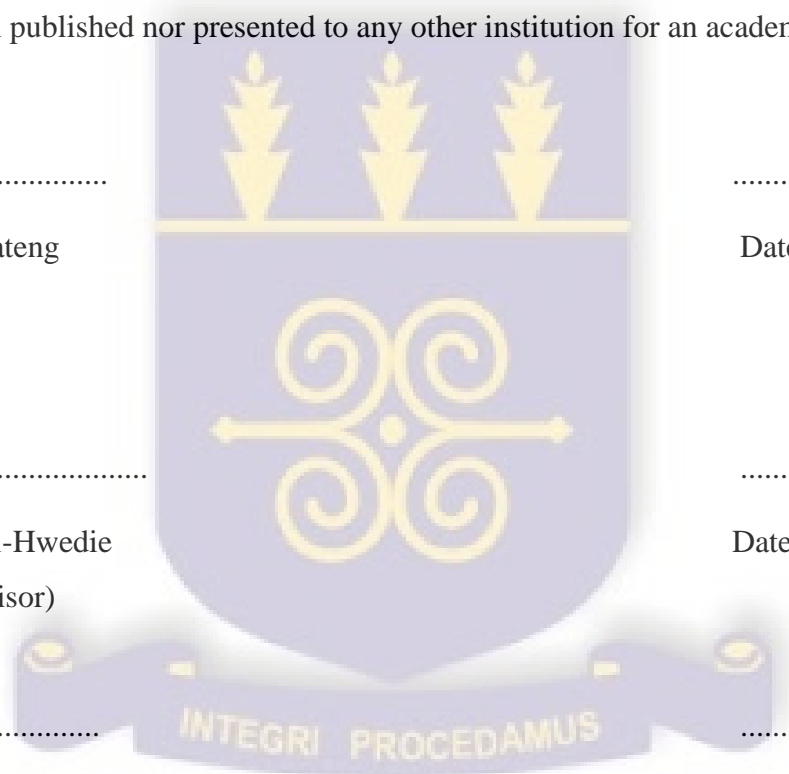
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Francis Kwadwo Boateng, whose dream was for me to attain the highest level of education, and to my brother, Nana Agyenim Boateng I (Amoamanhene) for ensuring that Papa's dream lived on. It is also dedicated to my husband, Frank Osafo-Takyi for supporting, motivating and pushing me to achieve the dream and to my children, Lyzbeth and Edmund, for the many sacrifices they made so that the dream could come true.



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In spite of the various assistance received, I am ultimately responsible for any lapses and misinterpretation of data that may be found in this thesis.



ABSTRACT

This study explores factors that contributed to the success of selected women in Ghana and highlights the strategies and motives of the selected successful Ghanaian women in empowering other women. Thirty women in academia, politics and trade were purposively sampled and interviewed on their lived experiences as they navigated their way to become successful women and agents of change in their workplaces and communities. A semi-structured, in-depth interview was utilised as the primary data collection method. Findings of the study indicate that like women all over the world, the challenge of combining domestic responsibilities with a career present Ghanaian women with serious constraints, but they find imaginative ways of successfully navigating their work spaces. In addition, the lived experiences of successful women in Ghana include having a happy childhood where they were allowed to explore their environments and develop their skills. Although others endured hardships during childhood, they were able to reconstruct the hardships as leverages to propel them towards success in their adult lives. Some also had to contend with pervasive sex-based discrimination and sexual harassment at the workplace. The study finds that when fathers are deeply involved in the lives of their daughters, it serves as a springboard to their future success. Finally, in serving as agents of change, the study found that women have three main motives for influencing change; working for the good of others, helping create better conditions for the next generation and giving back to society. In doing this, they employ strategies such as mentorship, active participation in their communities, pushing for female-friendly work policies and advocating for youth development. It is concluded that despite the vulnerable outlook with which discourse about women from developing societies are framed, Ghanaian women have and continue to work in phenomenal ways to bring development to their communities.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

“I believe that it is up to us women to create the spaces that will empower other women. We have been side-lined for far too long, and nobody will do it for us...so it is about time we got up to fight for our fellow women. We need to work in whatever way we can to ensure that every woman is empowered” – Study participant.

1.0 Introduction

Ella is a 60 year old mother, wife, leader of a political party and a former head of a public corporation in Ghana. She is one of the country’s first female engineers, especially in her field of specialization. She is one of eleven children of her parents, made up of five boys and six girls. She recounts that as children, they had periods where most of the afternoons were spent just telling stories, roasting plantain outside and playing games together as a family. Growing up, Ella’s parents instilled in her a sense that she could do anything she wanted to do, as long as she applied herself to it. Her father encouraged and supported her in her education and career aspirations. Her mother, whom she considers as her role model, was a hands-on person who would attempt to “fix” anything that was broken and would only bring in help when she was unable to fix it, but in most instances, she succeeded in fixing whatever was broken. After her university education abroad, Ella returned to Ghana to work and to “contribute her quota” to national development.

While Ella enjoys immense support and motivation in her family (both nuclear and extended), she has met many challenges right from the beginning of her career to the present day. As head of a public corporation, she faced many gender-based stereotypes, and was eventually asked to “proceed on leave”, a decision she contested in court, because she felt it had no basis. In the end, she won the court case, but that came after she had attained the age of 60 and had gone on retirement. Due to the challenges Ella faced, many of which she believes are the result of her being a woman, she is convinced that women have been “silenced for too long” and “need help” to be able to attain parity with men. She is of the opinion that “as women, we should make every effort to support any woman who is trying to do something, because we owe it to ourselves...we have to get up and we have to help each other. I think that is what will empower Ghanaian women”. This conviction has made her work to promote the cause of women wherever she finds herself. She was instrumental in instituting many female-friendly policies in her workplace when she became the Director General of her corporation.

Apart from this and her active political life, she is also deeply engaged in youth and children’s development. She has founded an NGO that promotes youth development, career counselling and is also involved in job placement for university and post-secondary graduates at no fee. Ella is one of many Ghanaian women who are working in diverse ways to bring change to their families, communities and country. This, they do by pushing for female-friendly programs and policies, helping to empower other women, serving as mentors and role models and engaging in programs that bring about change in their respective domains. It is important to bring out such stories because, for many decades,

issues and discourses about women from developing countries and the global south are focused on their challenges and deficits, without a commensurate attention paid to their successes and triumphs. In many instances, women are categorised as a weak unit in need of rescuing, irrespective of their achievements within their given societies. In this regard, Mohanty argues that:

In any given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the "sameness" of their oppression ... This results in an assumption of women as an always-already constituted group, one which has been labelled "powerless," "exploited," "sexually harassed," etc., by feminist scientific, economic, legal and sociological discourses ... The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as "powerless" in a particular context. It is rather on finding a variety of cases of "powerless" groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless (Mohanty, 1986, p. 338).

While Mohanty (1986) has succeeded in challenging this rather poor perception of women, especially, from developing countries, to date, women continue to be portrayed as victims of male dominance and passive onlookers of development processes. The time has come to draw attention to the triumphs of women and how they initiate, pursue and direct change in their families, workplaces and communities. Adopting a social justice practice approach, this study also presents the lived experiences of a selected group of successful Ghanaian women who have "not only experienced gender inequality but also live within historical networks of class, culture, and sexual orientation" (Parker, 2003, p. 273).

1.1 Background to the Study

At the turn of the new millennium, the United Nations outlined eight international development goals which its members agreed to achieve by the year 2015. These Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eradicating extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality rates, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development (www.undp.org). The third goal (MDG 3) has been identified as very important in ensuring the achievement of the other MDGs. Without a doubt, it is only through achieving MDG 3 – gender equality and empowerment of women – that the other MDGs will be met by 2015 and sustainable development attained. In order to meet the set targets for achieving the MDGs and vigorously pursue the post-2015 development agenda, it is crucial that the different ways by which women can be empowered are explored.

The widely held notion that the Ghanaian woman's primary responsibilities of child care and keeping the home (La Verle, 1994; Manuh, 1998; Tanye, 2008) have, in many ways, prevented her from engaging actively in the steering of the country's affairs. However, there is evidence to the contrary that women have played significant roles right from the pre-colonial times through the independence struggle to this day. Indeed, women have been playing varying leadership roles in Ghana's development since the country attained independence (Tsikata 1989, cited in Prah, 2004).

Tripp (2001) argues that women have been in leadership positions in Africa since the 1700s, although precedence for women conscientiously aspiring for national leadership positions began only in the 1990s. Over the years, these traditional¹ roles of women as carers of children and keepers of homes have been changing subtly but rapidly although the majority of these responsibilities still rest with them. Many women still do all the household chores even though they work full time like their male counterparts. While women's roles have changed significantly over the past decade, the changes are found mainly in traditions – cultural, legal and, to some extent, religious (Boulding, 1976).

These changes have come about as a result of individual, civil society and governmental efforts aimed at promoting women's empowerment. Although there are some works which highlight the contribution of civil society organizations and governmental agencies in this area, there is a dearth of literature on the ways through which individual women have driven development issues in Ghana irrespective of the barriers and challenges related to their gender. It is, therefore, important to highlight the ways in which women have and continue to influence the process of change and help empower other women in the Ghanaian society.

In light of the above, this study sought to report the lived experiences of a selected group of successful Ghanaian women in academia, politics and the field of trade. In this regard, a combination of phenomenology and narrative research methods were employed to

¹ Bearing in mind arguments that Ghanaian women in the pre-colonial era were not restricted to caring for children and keeping the home, the term "traditional" is being used in a more generalized way.

unearth issues of resilience, success and empowerment among the research participants. Using the strengths perspective of social work as the practice foundation and the social cognitive theory, narratives of how the research participants are influencing change in their families, workplaces, communities and the Ghanaian society at large are presented. The social cognitive theory, advanced by Bandura (1977) is the theoretical base for the study, as it helps to shed more light on resilience, self-efficacy, and motivation which are important precursors for attaining success and exerting agency. The concept of human agency is also interrogated and discussed, to help the framing of discussions on how women negotiate for and make use of power within the home, work settings and communities where they find themselves. These issues are central to the study, as findings are discussed in these contexts. The implications of this study for anti-oppressive and social justice based practice in social work are also highlighted.

1.2 The Status of Women in Ghana

Formed from the merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the Togoland trust territory, Ghana in 1957, became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. Like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana operates under a unique system of law which combines the civil with the traditional or customary. This makes it difficult to harmonise legislation and remove discriminatory practices. Much discrimination is related to inheritance and ownership rights, since husbands are often considered to be heads of households and women remain dependent on them for financial matters (OECD, 2010).

Traditionally, the Ghanaian woman's role has been primarily that of bearing children and keeping the home. "They were responsible for the care of children, the sick and the elderly, in addition to performing essential social functions within their communities" (Manuh, 1998, p.4). Due to these roles, some parents were hesitant to send their daughters to school because they were needed in the home and on the farms. Resistance to female education also arose because of the conviction that women would be supported by their husbands. In some cases, there was even the fear that a girl's marriage prospects lowered when she got educated. In most instances where girls were educated, most of them did not continue after receiving the basic education certification, while others did not even complete the elementary level of education. In addition, factors such as adolescent pregnancy, early marriage and girls' greater burden of household labour acted as obstacles to their schooling (La Verle, 1994; Manuh, 1998).

The low and often poor education of women in the Ghanaian society also translated into poor economic and employment prospects. While women in rural settings were predominantly farmers and fish processors, their counterparts in urban areas were mainly traders and retailers. Those in the formal sector often found themselves in low-paying careers, including administrative support, sales, service, nursing, teaching, and clerical jobs, reflecting society's persistent attitudes regarding stereotypical occupational roles for males and females (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

Also, cultural norms and values in the Ghanaian society upheld women's subordination to men. Marriage was deemed a great honour to women and their families, and a woman who

did not marry by a certain age was often looked down upon and scorned because she was regarded as unsuccessful in attracting a suitable husband for herself. A woman who is “humble”, submissive to men, and has good housekeeping skills, therefore, had brighter chances in getting a husband. Women were therefore socialized from childhood to defer to the men in their families when ‘important’ decisions had to be made (Manuh, 1998).

The country at large is increasingly recognising the need to involve women in all spheres of national development. Women are continuously attaining successes in the formal and informal sectors, as well as public and private sectors of the economy, particularly in the areas of education, politics and trade. Currently, the Chief Justice, government statistician and the head of the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), as well as heads of some ministries and public corporations are women. This is a significant shift from the roles that women were previously assigned to, about forty or so years ago.

1.3 Problem Statement

Studies of successful women and how they manage to locate their socio-political agency, especially, in Africa are few and hard to come by. Leroux (1992) argues that most of the authors who focus on female success often make use of male benchmarks, which compare women’s accomplishments with those of men and this may be the reason why women’s success does not receive much attention. It is also argued that anthropologists and other scholars have often paid more attention to traditional roles, especially, those of the chief (who was usually a male) and this may have resulted in many scholars not paying much

attention to women's achievements in the African setting (Aidoo, 1995, cited in Prah, 2004).

These factors notwithstanding, many women have defied the popular perception that a woman's place is the home and are making great strides in their various fields of enterprise. Women's groups and activists have been influential in the political, social and economic reforms in their countries across Africa. The changes that have occurred as a result of the activism of women have been enormous. In Liberia, women's activism was the main force that brought about the end of decades of civil war and returned the country to democratic rule (Fuest, 2008). Tripp (2001) reports of similar waves in Mali, Guinea and Niger which resulted in legislative and constitutional changes to reflect the needs of women in national policies.

In addition Sai (1995, p.72) suggests that women leaders act as role models for younger women and students.

Women who, despite the odds, have reached management positions in industry, manufacturing, academia and other fields are few and far between in many developing countries. As a result, the sight of women who have 'made it' and occupy positions of leadership and authority serves to motivate young girls. Female students, for example, would be more confident about aspiring to high positions when they see women in their communities who have done so (cited in Opare, 2005, p.92).

How exactly these accomplished women were able to achieve so much would however be outside the purview of these young ones; the struggles and challenges they overcame, as well as the strategies they employed to develop self-efficacy, would be lost on them if they do not hear of or read the complete stories. In this regard, this study sought to examine the lived experiences of a selected group of women who have succeeded in their fields of enterprise in Ghana by highlighting how such women have served as agents of change in their respective fields, such as how the women have empowered themselves and others in their communities and the work place, the challenges they faced and how they surmounted such challenges and developed resilience, as well as how they attained a balance between work and family life.

1.4 Research Objectives

Generally, the study sought to assess the ways through which a selected group of Ghanaian women have served as agents of change in their families, workplaces and communities, the factors that have contributed to the success of such women and how the women have used their success to help empower other women. The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the lived experiences of a selected group of successful women in Ghana.
2. Draw attention to the factors that have contributed to the success of the women in Ghana.
3. Identify ways through which the selected women have guided and influenced the process of change in the country's social and economic development.
4. Discuss how Ghanaian women conceptualize success; and

5. Discuss the implications of this study's findings for social work practice, research and policy.

1.5 Research Questions

The research objectives were turned into research questions to guide the study as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of successful women in Ghana?
2. What factors have contributed to the success of women in Ghanaian society?
3. How have the successful women served as agents of change in their families, workplaces and communities?
4. What does success and empowerment mean to Ghanaian women, and
5. What are the implications of this study for social work practice?

1.6 Definition of Basic Concepts

The basic concepts under discussion in this study are agents of change, success, successful woman. The main categories of women who are targeted for the study are also defined here. These concepts are discussed and elaborated on, in order to clearly articulate the context within which they are used in this study.

- **Success:** In the Ghanaian context, a person is considered successful when he/she is able to accomplish a set target or aim. Similarly, a person who works hard and honestly to attain wealth, position, fame and/ or honour, is equally considered successful. In addition, people who may have faced certain challenges in their lives and are able to overcome such challenges are also considered to be successful. For the purposes of this study, success is defined as the combination of work,

achievement of goals and social recognition. This means that the woman should be known to have attained a high position in her field of work, should be recognized among her peers as a leader or pacesetter and must have received social recognition in her field for the work done.

- **Agent of change:** In the simplest sense, an agent of change is one who is in the position of affecting and guiding progress in his/her community. In this study, an agent of change and a change agent are synonymous and used interchangeably. Susak (2005) identifies agents of change as people who have made real impacts on their communities. He further identifies a change agent as someone who has a lot of influence in the issues of his/her community, such as successful political leaders or entrepreneurs who have risen to prominence, gained popularity and credibility in their communities as well as business people who run 'successful' enterprises. For the purposes of this study, an agent of change is defined as someone who is able to influence, guide and effect progress in her home, business and/or community.
- **Development:** It encompasses the need and the means by which to provide better lives for people. It includes both economic growth and human development.
- **Women in academia:** Women in academia are defined to be female academic staff of universities who occupy such senior positions as heads of departments, schools and faculties, as well as women who hold senior administrative positions such as deans, provosts and vice-chancellors. These are women academics who have risen through the ranks to hold such positions.

- **Women in politics:** Women in key government positions, heads of public institutions, and heads of NGOs that influence public policy as well as women in grassroots and mainstream politics such as members of parliament, ministers of state and leaders of political parties.
- **Women in trade:** Women engaged in trading activities such as wholesalers and retailers of general goods and providers of general services and entrepreneurs.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

In striving to maintain high ethical standards in the study, all participants in the study were provided with written and verbal explanations to ensure informed consent. As Tutty et al (1996, p.40) write, “the word ‘informed’ means that each person fully understands what is going to happen in the course of the study, why it is going to happen, and what its effects will be on him or her”. The consent form given to study participants included a description of the objectives of the study and the limits of confidentiality, as the main purpose of the study is to tell the stories of the participants. In addition, participants in the study were assured that information collected would not be used for any other purpose than what was expressly stated in the letter of introduction and consent forms. The researcher also ensured that high social work ethical standards were maintained, as no respondent was bribed, threatened, deceived or in any way coerced into participation (Tutty et al., 1996).

Study participants were also made to understand that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the interviews if they felt uncomfortable and did not want to continue with the interview. In addition, they were assured that the results of the study would be made accessible to all participants to confirm that the data are accurate and allow

the participants to benefit from the research. To protect the anonymity of the study's participants, no information that directly identified any participant were used in the report. All study participants read and signed the consent forms before the interviews commenced, and they were encouraged to ask questions about the study at any time during the interview process.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The study is organised into seven chapters. Chapter one provides a background to the study, presenting a discussion on the position of women in the Ghanaian context and highlighting the changing roles of women. This chapter also discusses the research questions and objectives, significance of the study, problem statement, the relevance of the study to social work practice and a conceptualization of the key terms used in the study.

Chapter two is dedicated to a review of the literature pertaining to women's roles in academia, politics and trade across the world and in Ghana in particular. Here, the strengths' perspective, which is the concept underlying the study is discussed. Albert Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, as well as a conceptualization of agency and how it relates to women's empowerment are also discussed. The third chapter addresses the methods used in collecting the data. The chapter discusses how participants in the study were selected, the reasons for their selection as well as the ways through which data were collected and analysed for the study and the justifications for them.

Chapters four, five and six present the findings of the study, while the final chapter, seven summarizes the key findings of the study and draws conclusions. Recommendations are also made to government, policy makers, civil society organizations and other researchers about how to harness the potentials of women to aid the development.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of scholarly works that have been done in the areas of women's agency, empowerment, resilience and success as they pertain to the African and Ghanaian contexts, as well as the conceptual frameworks that underlie this study. Particular attention is paid to the roles women play in academia, politics and trade, and how these roles translate into development in Ghana. The theoretical perspectives present sections on the development of resilience and self-efficacy. Also, success among women is discussed.

2.1 Roles of Women in Trade, Politics and Academia

2.1.1 Women in Trade

According to the last Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (2008), the service sector, with a growth rate of 10 percent, is the fastest growing sector of the economy as it contributes one-third of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Wholesale and retail business is the most important sub-sector, accounting for one-quarter of the sector's growth (GDHS, 2008). Amu (2005) further adds that women are mainly concentrated in this sector and their specific activities include food processing, rural non-farm activities such as soap making, traditional medicine, cosmetics and beadwork, and textiles and garment production.

The 2008 African Development Fund's (ADF) country profile of Ghana indicates that the informal sector employs as much as 80 percent of males and 95 percent of females and that although a very small number of women own medium and large-scale enterprises, many women are concentrated in the operations of small and medium scale businesses or micro-enterprises. There are also many women who operate traditional businesses like food processing-related activities, handicrafts of various kinds, and dress-making, in ways that often restrict their potential for growth. The majority of micro-enterprises owned by women are operated under sole proprietorship. The report also indicates that as many as 70 percent of women start their businesses with a capital of less than US\$ 100, while 90 percent of them started with personal or *susu* savings (ADF, 2008).

In the services sector women are concentrated in the wholesale, retail and repairs sub-sector. This sub-sector employs about 28 percent of working women in Ghana (Oduro, Baah-Boateng & Boakye-Yiadom, 2011). Prah (1996, p.413) also indicates that Ghanaian women are highly visible in activities involving sales or trading, arguing thus:

Women in Ghana are disproportionately concentrated in the informal sector of the economy, where they are generally self-employed. Their main activities in this sector are petty trading, food processing and marketing food crops. About 85 percent of traders in the major towns of the southern regions of the country [Ghana] are women. Though this arrangement makes women highly visible, women's businesses tend to be small-scale and loosely structured, with limited management expertise and weak infrastructural support.

Informal sector activities such as trading and farming were considered the preserve of people with low education (Darkwah, 2002). The past and traditionally low education of women accounts for the reasons why many women are into informal trading. Irrespective of the seeming limitations of women in informal trade as a result of their poor educational background, Prah (2004, p. 2) argues that “women in pre-colonial Ghana played various roles depending on the particular social organisation and historical circumstances of their society”. Women wielded so much influence in the country, particularly in trade, to the extent that Prah observed thus:

In the anti-colonial struggle, women mobilised mainly around economic issues...For example, as far back as 1917 - 1918, they were active in cocoa hold-ups, and their participation in those early protests stemmed from their work as retail traders. (Prah, 2004, p.3).

Manuh (1991) reports that market women often organized themselves into groups based on the type of commodity they traded in. It was these associations that rallied and threw its weight behind Kwame Nkrumah in the anti-colonial struggles and lead up to the country's independence in 1957. To underscore the importance of the traders in the anti-colonial struggle and the success of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), it was argued that “in the struggle for independence, one market woman...was worth any dozen Achimota graduates” (James, 1977, p.56, cited in Manuh, 1991, p.108).

Prah (2004) notes that women in the informal sector, particularly in business, organized themselves and did so well that they were viewed as a threat to male dominance to the

extent that during the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) era, the kind of political fundamentalism at the time viewed women's economic activities with resentment and wished to consign them to the home and the care of children. Many women traders suffered brutal assaults, vilification and degradation during the early 1980s, at the beginning of Rawlings' PNDC Era. This is corroborated by Darkwah's (2002) assertion that "state-trader relationships from the time of independence through the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by state neglect of the potential role of traders in Ghana's economic development and antagonism of various sorts".

The difficulties of the revolutionary period, notwithstanding, women in trade have continued to be influential in Ghana's past and present economy. Many women in the service sector are able to contribute equitably to household incomes towards the education and health of their children (Amu, 2005). Converse to the characteristics of traders in the past, Bowles (2013, p.2) notes:

there are new emergent categories of traders in Ghana; ... business women who successfully navigate international networks in ways that rely on hyper-mobilized movement garnered through dual citizenship, affluent economic status stabilized by educational experiences abroad, and social ties fostered within and across nation-states. The results are incredible economic successes that are often unparalleled among their peers in Ghana.

Women in trade are currently a strong force to reckon with, to the extent that in Ghana, any party that comes into power and is perceived to neglect traders is sure to lose the subsequent general elections in the country. Ghanaian women traders thus “defy the general idea of the oppressed third world woman that is sometimes evident in the literature on women/gender and development” (Darkwah, 2002, p.17).

2.1.2 Women in Politics

There is no denying the fact that participating in the politics of one’s community and having a say in the affairs of the community is a great empowerment tool for many women. Ghanaian women’s participation in the political processes of the country dates back to the pre-colonial period. In fact, as Sudarkasa (1986, p.91) argues:

Except for the highly Islamized societies in sub-Saharan Africa, in this part of the world more than any other, in precolonial times women were conspicuous in "high places." They were queen-mothers; queen-sisters; princesses, chiefs, and holders of other offices in towns and villages.

In the particular case of Ghana, Aidoo (1985) asserts that especially among the matrilineal Akan, women played complementary economic, social and political roles in the 18th and 19th centuries and enjoyed relatively high economic and legal independence. Restrictions on women were only more pronounced on communities with patrilineal descent such as the Konkomba, Kusasi and the Ewe, as these communities were much more male dominated, and have been influenced by Islam (Prah, 2004). Aidoo (1985) also records that

among the patrilineal Asafo² groups of coastal Akan, there were female captains and types of rear-guards who performed support services to men in war times.

Manuh (1991), however, asserts that it was during colonial rule that prevailing Victorian values were super-imposed on the traditional order, resulting in women receiving little recognition or remuneration, and being ignored in the provision of extended services. Women had no place in the formal political setting of the colonial period. This and other factors effectively eroded the complementary roles of women in the traditional social, economic and political setup of their communities.

In the lead up to independence, the significant roles women played in the anti-colonial struggle for independence cannot be overemphasized. It is argued that although women were not overtly taking part in running for offices and playing active roles in steering the affairs of the country, they were the forces behind the scenes who even funded the CPP to become the formidable party that led the country to independence in 1957 (Prah, 2004). Manuh (1991) has documented how women used to attend rallies of the CPP around the country, organising masses for the 'self-government now³' campaign and enrolling men and women into the party and into its Women's Section and Youth League. She adds further thus:

² Traditional warrior groups in Akan culture in Ghana

³ The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was formed on 4 August 1947 with the goal of bringing about independence for Ghana, but Kwame Nkrumah thought the UGCC's opposition to the colonial rulers lacked the necessary vehemence and urgency as he wanted immediate independence. He therefore broke from the UGCC to form the CPP with "self-government now" as the party's motto.

Inasmuch as independence sought to end colonial domination and create better conditions of life for the population in the form of more schools and hospitals, better drinking water and greater access to these amenities, women had more to gain from independence ... women were discriminated against in education, employment and family life, and they had fewer stakes in the maintenance of the colonial state as they were largely unrepresented in its political, social and economic structures (Manuh, 1991, p.114).

Across Africa, Tripp (2001) also argues that women's participation in church-related activities, savings clubs, income-generating activities and other self-help groups and networks have helped women to break out of the gender-defined roles into more formal roles of leadership in their communities. She further posits that civic education, commitment of political leaders to women's representation, leadership training fora and affirmative action policies have also accounted for more women taking up roles outside of their homes.

Paxton, Hughes & Painter (2010) argue that among the most significant trends in international politics in the last 100 years has been the ways in which women have entered into formal politics. This trend is also visible in Africa and Ghana where women's representation in the political sphere has witnessed tremendous growth. Tripp (2001) documents that Africa, which had the lowest rates of female participation in politics in the 1960s, has since seen the fastest rate of growth in female representation in any world region.

In spite of these, female political representation across the world is still low as women continue to be seriously underrepresented as candidates for public office although there is an improvement in the number of women holding office in parliaments worldwide (Zakuan, 2010). Coffé & Bolzendahl (2010) posit that though more women are running for, and are being elected to, national parliaments than ever before, and a record number of women hold executive positions within their nations' government, research on a number of Western industrialized democracies also finds a persistent gender gap in citizens' political participation, with women less politically engaged than men.

Since women make up more than half of the population in many countries including Ghana, it stands to reason that women should be equitably represented in their societies' decision making processes and in the affairs that affect them. In line with this view, Opare (2005, p. 90), argues thus:

... the ability of any group of people or their chosen representatives to participate in decisions affecting their lives not only puts them in a position to contribute ideas but also provides them with the tools and options for reshaping the course, direction, and outcome of specific programmes and activities which will determine their future. It is, therefore, critical to engage women in decision-making processes within the communities where they reside and obtain their livelihoods.

Allah-Mensah (2005) points out that women's political role in Ghana has grown and expanded steadily since the drafting of the 1992 Constitution. However, women's political representation still remains low. Between 2008 and 2012, women occupied only 19 out of

the 230 seats in parliament. After the 2012 general elections, this number increased to 29, but the number of seats in parliament also increased to 275. Government, political parties and civil society groups have, however, shown great commitment in getting more women into active politics at both the grassroots district assembly and the national parliamentary levels. For instance, in the run up to the 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) introduced a policy of fifty percent (50%) rebate in filing fees for female aspirants in its parliamentary primaries. This policy was to encourage more women to contest for seats in Parliament.

Women's participation in the political sphere has been seen to have many rewards for women themselves and the country as a whole. Caiazza (2005) points out that civic and political engagement are important since it is through them that citizens can articulate their needs and interests to the community at large and demand policy remedies. Those who do not participate are therefore less likely to see their needs addressed. This means that by participating in the politics of the nation, women are able to articulate their needs and get policies in place to address such needs. For the country, having women actively engaged in the running of its affairs brings accelerated development that cannot be achieved without the input of such a rich human resource base.

The rewards of having a fair representation of women in public participation have been recognized by government and civil society groups in Ghana. Since the 1992 general elections, there have been conscious and concerted efforts by political parties and gender advocacy groups within the country to encourage women's participation. During local and

district assembly elections, *Abantu for Development*, a local gender advocacy group and other such groups run numerous television and radio adverts to call on women to contest for seats in their areas and on the populace to vote for women candidates. In addition, this organization has over the years organized training programmes geared at building the capacity of women to effectively participate in the civic affairs of their communities. Currently, the Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF Ghana) has been working with three partners to implement its “We Know Politics” project with the aim of increasing women’s participation and representation in decision making in local and national government structures and ultimately contributing towards the equitable representation of women in decision making in Ghana.

2.1.3 Women in Academia

The importance of education for anybody, especially women at all levels cannot be over-emphasized. Ghana as a developing country needs to educate its females and encourage them to pursue higher education so that their human capital can be effectively tapped as a resource to drive the development of the country. The benefits of education to any individual, group or society are enormous. As Riddell (2004, p.1) argues:

Education has numerous consequences for individuals and society. For many people, there is some ‘consumption value’ from the educational process. Human beings are curious creatures, and they enjoy learning and acquiring new knowledge. Education also has considerable ‘investment value.’ Those who acquire additional schooling generally earn more over their lifetimes, achieve higher levels of employment, and enjoy more satisfying careers.

Education has been identified as the best tool in poverty reduction, and it transcends all aspects of a woman's life. A well-educated woman is able to find a well-paying formal sector job, thus, breaking the poverty cycle and is able to contribute to discussions and decision-making in the home. Mainstreaming gender in education, therefore, promotes empowerment and participation of women in their families, community and country as a whole. This then translates into sustainable development (Gyimah, 2009).

For a developing country like Ghana, education becomes even more important, as it is seen as the main vehicle that will spur the nation towards the achievement of its developmental goals. It has also been argued that through education, non-traditional gender role attitudes are encouraged and prejudice discouraged, with the belief that "education is a conduit to change for both sexes. Learning about other people, places and times expose students to views that challenge...their traditional ways" (Klein, 1984, pp. 110 – 11, cited in Kane & Kyyro, 2001). This means that through education, women are not only able to empower themselves and contribute to national development, but also, men are exposed to women's capabilities and influence that may change their traditional perceptions about women's positions in the society. This way, they will not condone and contribute to existing prejudices that perpetuate women's subordination, but will rather seek to promote gender equality.

Educating the Ghanaian woman has been identified to have both "private and social returns". Increased income, which translates into better quality of life and becoming "more informed and socially involved citizens", is the direct result of education for every woman

(Riddell, 2004). Studies also suggest that women who are educated enjoy longer lives than their uneducated counterparts due to “higher family income, greater employment opportunities, better access to health care services, better understanding of health and, therefore, better habits of life (lifestyle) including better nutrition and adequate physical exercise” (Timiras, 1995).

According to Sinha and Nayak (2008, p.333), “the benefits of education need to be experienced by both men and women in a fair and equitable way”. Society also benefits from educating women because educated women play critical roles in sustainable development and poverty reduction. Thus, education enhances the potential of women for contributing to the social, economic and political aspects of national development. In spite of the many barriers to women’s education in Ghana, the government, private sector and the country’s development partners as well as donor agencies are putting in a lot of efforts to give access and opportunities to women to pursue their educational goals. To further underscore the importance of education for women, the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (2008) draws strong linkages between the level of a mother’s education and child survival. The report indicates that:

Mothers’ education is inversely related to a child’s risk of dying. Under-five mortality among children of mothers with no education (102 deaths per 1,000 live births) is substantially higher than under-five mortality among children of women with middle/JSS level education (68 deaths per 1,000 live births). The direct association between level of education and under-five mortality is also seen in

infant mortality. Children of women with no education (61 deaths per 1,000 live births) are much more likely to die in the first year than children of women with middle/JSS education (46 deaths per 1,000 live births, GDHS, 2008, p.141).

The infant mortality rates decrease further as the mother's level of education increases. It is imperative, then, for the country to focus on educating the girl-child and ensuring that policies that stimulate easy access to higher education for women are ardently pursued.

Women's efforts in academia are being recognized by government, universities and society at large. The University of Cape Coast had its first female Vice-chancellor between 2009 to 2012, while the University of Ghana had its first female Pro Vice-chancellor between 1996 and 1998. Other faculties and departments across universities in Ghana equally have women as deans and departmental heads. The very institution of academia was once considered a terrain solely reserved for men (Romito & Volpato, 2005; Webster, 1989), but that is no longer the reality in Ghana, as more women are now found in this sector.

In terms of the numbers, women are yet to achieve parity with men in academia, but the past few years have seen a tremendous growth in the number of women appointed as academic staff across tertiary institutions in Ghana. It is reported that between 2008 and 2010, 69% of academic staff hired at the University of Ghana were women (Tettey, 2010). Female postgraduate enrolment at the University of Ghana has increased considerably from 33.4% in the 2007/08 academic year to 38.4% in the 2011/2012 academic year (UG/IRP

2011). Table 2.1 below shows postgraduate student enrolment by gender at the University of Ghana.

Table 2.1 Postgraduate Student Enrolments by Gender - UG (2007 – 2102)

Gender	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	999	33.4	1,360	34.9	1,813	35.2	1,732	36.0	1,904	38.4
Male	1,994	66.6	2,532	65.0	3,339	64.8	3,075	64.0	3,055	61.6
Total	2,993	100.0	3,893	100.0	5,153	100.0	4,807	100.0	4,959	100.0

Source: UG/IRP, 2011

Sackey (2005) draws linkages between education, fertility and development and concludes that education tends to reduce women's fertility rate which also translates into rapid development, as development is often accompanied by higher female participation, higher levels of schooling for girls and lower fertility rates for women. It is, therefore, deemed crucial that women are encouraged to pursue higher education since it "serves as the portal to the improvement of the status of women in Ghanaian society" (Adusah-Karikari, 2008).

Women in academia are a valuable resource in the Ghanaian society. Apart from the knowledge they impart to their students, they serve as role models for many girls and women and in various ways motivate them to aspire to attain higher education for

themselves (Sai, 1995). In addition, women in academia are known to play diverse roles in their communities, serving on boards and taking active part in the day-to-day affairs of their communities. According to Jackson (2009, p. 6), “USA companies which had more women on their boards of directors had better financial performances than those with fewer than three women board directors. Companies with the highest representation of women board members out-performed those with the least number of women by 53% on the return on equity, 42% on the return on sales and 66% on the return on invested capital measurements”.

2.2 Women and Success

In societies the world over, there are qualities that are ascribed to males and females, as well as behaviours that are expected of them. These qualities and behaviours are so pervasive and embedded in the culture of the societies that when a person of one sex is seen to be exhibiting behaviours or qualities “reserved” for the opposite sex, s/he is considered to be odd. When a person or a group is evaluated unfairly based on the label attached to the group rather than the behaviour or qualifications of its individual members, that person or group is said to experience prejudice (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This same prejudice is what leads to gender stereotypes in societies, as males and females are evaluated on the premise of what they are expected to be like, rather than what every male or female is actually like. In fact, evidence suggests that there is an inadequate representation of women at the top level of organizations because gender biases in evaluation and the “glass ceiling” phenomenon present an impenetrable barrier at certain points in a woman’s career (Heilman, 2001, Garcia, 2008).

Gender stereotypes consist of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women. They are the beliefs about what masculinity and femininity should entail (Brannon, 2004). Not only are gender stereotypes unhelpful and counter-productive, they are seen to be closely linked to social roles and unequal power relations between males and females, and tend to perpetuate the status quo (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Gender stereotypes are distinguished into two broad categories; descriptive and prescriptive (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Descriptive stereotypes describe what males and females are typically like. For example, it is believed that females are more nurturing, and males are typically ambitious. On the other hand, prescriptive stereotypes describe what males and females should be like, for instance, a man should aspire to make something of himself, while a woman should be sympathetic (Garcia, 2008).

Since the introduction of the Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI, 1981), which categorized traits that were considered socially desirable for males and females, and provided a framework for conceptualizing prescriptive gender stereotypes, recent studies have proven the persistence of these stereotypes to date (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). In the BSRI (1981), females were characterized as being affectionate, cheerful, child-like, gullible, sympathetic, and yielding, among others, while males were seen to be aggressive, cheerful, competitive, athletic and willing to take risks (cited in Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

These socially desirable characteristics of masculinity and femininity also go a long way to determine how males and females are perceived in all spheres of their social lives. To this extent, in many instances, women are ridiculed, abused, and even rejected when they are seen to be exhibiting characteristics and qualities deemed masculine. Indeed, studies prove that women who venture into male dominated fields and excel are often “sanctioned and disliked” (Fiske, 1998, p. 378, cited in Parks-Stamm, Heilman & Hearn, 2008) by their fellow women as well as men. The punishments often take the form of name calling, receiving low evaluation rates at work, and outright rejection as being ‘un-feminine’.

Added to these stereotypes are the much-talked about domestic responsibilities of women, which often “force” them to enter into careers that will ensure that they will be able to manage both the home and the work space. White (1995) argues that these responsibilities often compel many women to become job-oriented, instead of being career-oriented. As a result, women themselves, when choosing a career, would frequently go for jobs that would give them the space to effectively meet both requirements. It is little wonder, therefore, that women dominate the services sector and low level management positions. The argument is that irrespective of how well women do in any given sector, they feel the tug of other responsibilities, and would usually be seen taking a break from work to have a baby or focus on building a family, before re-entering the job market.

In her book, titled “Successful women, angry men: backlash in the two-career marriage”, Campbell (1987) asserts that in dual-career marriages where both the man and woman work full-time, the wife in many cases, is expected to take care of the household, care for the

children and prepare the meals. She further asserts that even when the women juggle to balance the expectations of both the home and the workplace, the men often resent their wives' professional success and complain that their spouses devote too much time and energy to their jobs when they should be catering to their man's emotional and sexual needs. These factors have accounted for the low numbers of women found at the top-levels of their organizations and in their fields of work (Heilman, 2001).

In politics, gender stereotypes have been documented to influence parties' choice of candidates, sponsors' decision to invest in a particular candidate and people's voting decisions (Dolan, 2010). Here, the stereotyping could be either positive or negative, as people who believe that women should be represented more are likely to invest in, and vote for, female candidates, while those who believe politics is a man's field will continue to invest in, support and vote for male candidates. As is seen to be the norm, rather than the exception, political parties themselves have tended to be "an obstacle that women must overcome" (Sanbonmatsu, 2010), as in the past, they have appeared to show apathy towards recruiting, nominating and supporting women candidates.

On the other hand, irrespective of the double jeopardy of domestic and career constraints, some women have moved on and attained the successes, maintaining a healthy balance between work and family life and appear to "have it all". White (1995) documents that having a strong commitment to work, a stable and close relationship with parents in childhood and meeting challenges early on in one's career, among other factors, contribute to success among women.

In her study of women scientists from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, Beoku-Betts (2000) asserts that familial support and family sizes have an influence on the success of women. She argued that women who came from large families tended to succeed because it afforded them the emotional stability they needed to stay focused on their work. Not only that, but also, although parents of the participants in her study were not highly educated, or in most cases not educated at all, they fully appreciated the value of education and were willing to make the financial sacrifices needed to see their daughters through school. White, Cox and Cooper (1997) also argue that within families, first born children tend to excel and become successful because they were the sole recipients of parents' attention for a while which fosters a secure environment for such children. In addition, first born children are given responsibilities for younger siblings and thus develop skills quite early on in life to help them gain self-confidence and competence.

Leroux (1992) and other scholars (Northcutt, 1991, Froggatt & Hunter, 1985) document that self-esteem, mentor relationships, and the ability to effectively combine career and domestic demands among other factors, go a long way to promote success among women. It is acknowledged that women who develop and nurture mentoring relationships with other people, who provide career and emotional support and coaching are more likely to overcome stereotypes and succeed in their careers than those who do not (Snow 1996; Peus & Traut-Mattausch 2008; White, Cox and Cooper 1997).

In a bid to promote success among women, especially in Africa, it is important to make visible the pervasive gender stereotypes that impede women's aspirations and progression

beyond certain levels of competence, so that such hindrances can be done away with. At the same time, there is the need to advance the factors that serve to motivate and ensure that women develop their self-confidence, competence and efficacy to do well in any setting in which they find themselves.

2.3 Conceptualizing Agency

The ability to make critical life choices for one's self is often advocated for by development practitioners the world over. Psychologists, such as Bandura (2001), argue that the capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life is the essence of humanness. According to the World Bank (2014, p. xv), agency is "the capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desirable outcome, free of violence, retribution or fear". In most instances, the world over, it is women who are often disadvantaged in terms of their ability to exercise agency in many spheres. These range from the ability to take part in decision making at the household level through asserting their sexual and reproductive rights to active participation in the political processes of their societies (World Bank, 2014).

Agency has often been thought of as an expansion of empowerment due to the fact that one can only be said to be empowered, if one is "free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important" (Sen, 1985b, p.206, cited in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). Kabeer (2011) also identifies the "capacity to exercise strategic control over one's own life and to negotiate better terms of their relationships with others" as one of the processes of conceptualizing women's empowerment.

Balungile (2010) also draws linkages between agency and empowerment, arguing that enhanced agency leads to empowerment, which in turn feeds back into increased agency, resulting in further empowerment. She further notes that people can be agentic as individuals or as part of a collective at different levels within their social systems and the set of skills required for the exercise of agency at each level is different, though some skills may be transferable. Alkire (2008, pp. 3 – 4) suggests that “when people are not able to exert agency, they may be alienated from their behaviour, coerced into a situation, submissive and desirous to please, or simply passive”. According to Samman and Santos (2009), agency refers to the ability to make choices, while empowerment is the realization or effectiveness of the choices made.

Kabeer (1999, p.438) argues that agency “can take the form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. It can be exercised by individuals as well as by collectivities”. This goes to say that, empowerment is not enough in itself, but rather, some change should be reflected in people who are beneficiaries of empowerment programs. This change will be manifested as a possession of the cognitive abilities to bargain, manoeuvre and resist, as well as to reflect on disempowering conditions and be able to do something to cause a change, whether on one’s own or through working with some people.

As Tsikata & Darkwah (2009) point out, an empowered woman is one who can help herself and others, who has a job, knows about herself and her environment and her community.

A lack of agency, therefore, can serve as a hindrance to a woman's access to a wide range of services, including education and healthcare (World Bank, 2014).

Bandura (2001) asserts that there are four key features of human agency; intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Intentionality connotes the conception of a future course of action to be taken. A person can only be said to be an agent if s/he planned to undertake a certain course with an expectation of a certain outcome. By forethought, Bandura (2001, p.7) explains that "people set goals for themselves, anticipate the likely consequences of prospective actions, and select and create courses of action likely to produce desired outcomes and avoid detrimental ones".

Self-reactiveness involves whipping up the needed motivation to execute the action for the anticipated outcome, while self-reflectiveness is about evaluating their motives, values, and the meaning of one's life pursuits. Thus, the ability to "reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one's thoughts and actions is another distinctly core feature of human agency" (Bandura, 2001, p.10).

2.3.1 Measures of Agency

While there is consensus among scholars on the importance of locating agency in empowerment discourse, there appears to be divergent views on how agency can be measured. One school of thought argues that agency should be measured in terms of the person's individual assets and capabilities of all types: human, social and psychological as

well as the collective assets and capabilities, such as voice, organization, representation and identity (Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland, 2006; Narayan, 2005). Another school of thought criticizes the use of assets as a measure of agency, as individuals with the same assets may exercise different levels of agency (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005; Kabeer, 1999), or that one person may exercise different levels of agency within different contexts (Alkire, 2008).

Those who criticize the use of assets as a measure of agency advocate for more direct measures of agency itself (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). According to Jejeebhoy (2000), indicators such as economic decision-making; child-related decision-making; marriage-related decision-making; freedom of movement; power relations with husband; access to resources and control over resources are more common direct measures of agency than one's ownership or otherwise of individual and community assets.

Also, Alkire (2008, p.21 – 22) concludes that in measuring agency, four categories need to be taken into consideration. The first measure of agency is in respect to one or several domains of capability, which include health actions, work and livelihood, children's education, marriage, politics, etc. The second is that effective measures of agency must include both *direct control* by the person or group as well as *effective power* which the person or group possesses. Thirdly, it must be borne in mind that agents usually advance their own well-being and that of their family; yet responsible agents may advance other goals which do not necessarily expand their own well-being. The final category agency

measures is fundamentally interested in two questions, whether people are able to act on behalf of things they value, and whether they are able to act on behalf of things they are perceived to value.

It is worthy of mention that much of the literature on agency, especially as it relates to empowerment has been concentrated on how it translates into poverty reduction (Balungile 2010; Alkire 2008; Ibrahim & Alkire 2007; Narayan, 2005; Kabeer 1999). However, the World Bank (2014) identifies four thematic areas as specific expressions of agency. These are: freedom from the risk of violence; control over sexual and reproductive health and rights; ability to own and control land and housing; and having a voice and influence in society. These expressions of agency, once measurable, will in turn translate into a measure of agency.

Of particular importance to this study is the last expression of agency; having a voice and influence in society. As this study focuses on successful women who occupy high positions in their fields of endeavour, it is even more pertinent to make visible how such women conceptualize and express their own agency and how they also help others to attain agency in their societies.

2.4 Women's Empowerment and Agency

It is believed that when people are empowered, they will be able to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth (Eyben, Kabeer, and Cornwall, 2008). Kabeer (1999) asserts

that empowerment is about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability. But empowerment is not an end in itself; what do people do with the acquired ability; how do they make choices to influence or enhance their own lives and that of others; how can one tell when this ability is acquired, etc, are important factors that are worth considering in the empowerment discourse.

According to the empowerment principles of Paulo Freire (1973), people are able to empower themselves when they acquire knowledge about the conditions that oppress them. Freire (1973) believed that when people think critically about their education it would allow them to deeply examine their reality. He therefore advocated that through empowerment, people should be able to “build skills, confidence, and opportunities for individual and collective action” (Delp et al., 2005, p. 273). With education – not necessarily formal, classroom education, but by giving access to information – people can empower themselves if they use the critical view afforded by that education to gain an understanding of existing social, economic, and political forces that affect their lives and take the necessary steps to change their circumstances.

The World Bank (2005), however, emphasises that empowerment is more than participation in decision making because ‘it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions (cited in Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, seeking to empower women, in whatever form it would take – be it in giving them access to participate in decision making or to credit facilities, or even in income generating skills – without seeking to make fundamental

changes to the cultural and structural barriers that exist in their societies becomes a fruitless exercise.

Karl (1995) explains that empowerment is a word widely used but seldom defined. To her, long before the word became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives and particularly in the decisions that affect them in the home, the community, government and in the international development policies. She defines empowerment as “a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making, power and control and to transformation action” (p. 13). Empowerment, and for that matter women’s empowerment therefore, is about creating awareness about oppressive conditions, helping women to acquire the needed tools to overcome the oppression and building on that to transform their own lives. Empowerment should not be understood as one person or group giving power to another.

In an effort to conceptualize empowerment, Kabeer (1999) asserts that it is the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. She explains that empowerment therefore entails a process of change, in that a person who hitherto did not have the ability to make critical life choices should experience the *change* that now affords him/her the ability to make such choices. In this regard, a person can be said to be empowered if he/she acquires or expands the ability to make strategic life choices within a context where they had been previously denied. Empowerment, therefore, cannot be reduced to a single aspect of process or outcome but rather, on how women are able to exercise choice, and the outcome always depends on the individual, class, time and space.

Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988, p. 383) define empowerment as “a process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and the larger society”. In this perspective, empowerment is not characterized as gaining power to dominate others, but power to act with others to effect change.

2.5 Empowerment, Agency and Development

Without a doubt, women’s empowerment and agency are precursors to development. This has resulted in many governments and development agencies prioritizing women’s empowerment programs in national development projects (Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010). Sen (2001) also draws linkages between development and freedom, arguing that “freedom is both the primary objective of development and its principal means” (p. 506). When people are free to make decisions about and pursue things which they consider to be of value to them without fear of retribution or violence, they are said to exercise their agency. Sustainable human agency is without a doubt the most powerful engine of development (Sen, 2001).

Since the early 1990s when governments around the world began implementing what was known as the Washington Consensus, there has been an accompanying pursuit of the principles of human freedom and dignity, perhaps as an unspoken admission that without freedom and dignity, every effort at development will not succeed. However, as Kabeer (1999) point out, empowerment is not merely about giving power to a group of people who are otherwise disempowered, but is rather multidimensional. It involves both the personal

and public aspects of women's lives: their sense of self-worth and social identity, as well as the ability to exercise agency within their given societies. It is after women have achieved these that the country can boast of attaining gender parity and empowering its women.

Ghana as a country has also pursued its own development agenda, with different efforts aimed at empowering women and attaining gender parity. Since the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, all government policy documents such as the First Medium-Term Development Plan (1997-2000); the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I, 2003-2005); the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II, 2006-2009) and the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA, 2010 – 2013) have statements that affirm the governments' commitment to pursue and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Admittedly, the government of Ghana in its Strategic Implementation Plan of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (now Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection) accepts that a major source of women's subordination in Ghana are "the social constructions of womanhood centered on reproductive roles which restrict women's access to productive resources such as credit, land, training and education, and also to decision-making processes" (Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010, p. 268).

To become fully empowered, many women need to have the burden of productive and reproductive responsibilities reduced, access to higher and quality education and health,

make decisions on their sexual and reproductive health issues and fully participate in the civic affairs of their societies. In addition to these, women also need access to credit and safety nets to be able to compete favorably with men and remove the unequal sources of power and ideologies that perpetuate women's subordination (Kabeer, 1997).

The literature reviewed above have been geared towards highlighting issues that will situate the study within the broader context of discussions about women's empowerment, success, agency and development. Efforts have been made to give global, regional and national perspectives to the issues identified. In the next section, the theoretical perspectives that help to conceptualize and analyze various themes in the study are discussed.

2.6 Theoretical Perspectives

This section presents the theoretical perspectives that underpin the study. Due to the fact that this study is about the ways through which a selected group of Ghanaian women have served as agents of change, the social cognitive theory (previously called the social learning theory), advanced by Albert Bandura (1977) has been identified as one of the theoretical frameworks that can be utilized to achieve the study's objectives. This theory is "based on the principal assumption that psychological procedures, whatever their form, serve as means of creating and strengthening expectations of personal efficacy" (Bandura, 1977, p.193). The theory is argued to have an agentic perspective, in that it helps to identify different ways by which people can be said to have served as agents (Bandura, 2001).

Also, the strengths perspective of social work practice is selected to complement the social cognitive theory to help discuss issues of access to resources and community membership which people make use of to develop their self-efficacy and attain success.

2.6.1 Social Cognitive (Learning) Theory

According to Bandura & Locke (2003), the “social cognitive theory is rooted in an agentic perspective in which people function as anticipative, purposive, and self-evaluating, proactive regulators of their motivation and actions” (p. 87). Agency denotes the ability of a person to play a part in self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times (Bandura, 2001).

The theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: personal agency exercised individually; proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and collective agency in which people act in concert to shape their future (Bandura, 2002). Bandura (2002, p. 270) notes:

In personal agency exercised individually, people bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and their environment in managing their lives. In many spheres of life people do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional practices that affect their everyday lives. Under these circumstances, they seek their well-being and valued outcomes through the exercise of proxy agency. In this socially mediated mode of agency, people try to get those who have access to resources, expertise or who wield influence and power to act at their behest to secure the outcomes they desire. People do not live their lives

autonomously. Many of the things they seek are achievable only through socially interdependent effort. Hence, they have to pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances, and work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own.

Martin (2004, p. 136) advances that agency concerns the “capability of persons to make choices and act on these choices. If framed as free will, such agency assumes that persons themselves determine their choices and actions”. Women who have succeeded in the Ghanaian society functioned in one or a combination of these agencies to attain the success they currently enjoy. In serving as agents of change, they would equally act as proxy for others who do not have access to the required resources, expertise or influence. Thus, this theory addresses issues of empowerment and change for the women themselves as well as others under the ambit of their influence.

At the core of the social cognitive theory are self-efficacy beliefs, the judgments that individuals make about their capability to accomplish tasks and succeed in activities (Pajares & Miller, 1994). Kristonis (2005) argues that behaviour change is affected by environmental influences, personal factors, and attributes of the behaviour itself. To this extent, the individual must possess self-efficacy and must believe in their capability to perform the behaviour as well as perceive that there is an incentive to do so. Efficacy in dealing with one's environment is not a fixed act or simply a matter of knowing what to do. Rather, it involves a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioural skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve innumerable

purposes (Bandura, 1982). Bandura (1977) again asserts that one's expectations of his/her self-efficacy determine how much effort s/he will expend and how long s/he will persist when faced with obstacles and aversive experiences. Therefore, stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts will be.

High self-efficacy is, therefore, required before a person can attain success. As they attain success, they are empowered and in turn motivate others to develop resilience and empowerment. Self-efficacy, therefore, makes a difference in how people feel, think, behave, and motivate themselves. In this regard, "the higher the level of perceived self-efficacy, the higher the levels of goals people set for themselves, which leads to a higher level of commitment to the goals" (Zulkosky, 2009, p. 94).

Efficacy is only functional when it is used to execute an action or effect change (Bandura, 1982). If one has self-efficacy skills and does not use it to achieve anything, there is no advantage in having that skill. Studies (Hoyt, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, cited in Isaac et al., 2012) have found that women with a high sense of leadership self-efficacy were more resilient to the negative impacts of stereotype threats. It is, therefore, important for women to develop their self-efficacy skills in order to counter the stereotype threats that are pervasive in society.

It is also worthy of note that, people's judgement of their efficacy (whether accurate or faulty) makes them take on tasks that they perceive are within their capabilities. This

judgement also determines how much energy will be expended in accomplishing a task as well as how much time they will spend in tackling a task or an obstacle (Bandura, 1982). Women who judge themselves to have high efficacy skills, no matter what challenge they are faced with, are able to overcome it, because they feel that they have the capability.

Self-efficacy is developed through education, training, and acquisition of new skills or gaining of new information. Social experiences, are also known to precede the development of self-efficacy (Zulkosky, 2009), as the things people go through have the tendency to either positively or negatively impact on their perceptions of their abilities to perform and accomplish certain tasks.

Bandura (2008) also identifies four ways of developing self-efficacy: development of a resilient sense of efficacy; social modelling; social persuasion; and reduction of stress and depression. In discussing these four ways, he asserts thus:

The development of a resilient sense of self-efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort such that people can manage failure so it is informative rather than demoralizing ...competent models convey knowledge, skills and strategies for managing task demands ...seeing people similar to themselves succeed by perseverant effort raises observers' beliefs in their own capabilities. If people are persuaded that they have what it takes to succeed, they exert more effort than if they harbour self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise. People also rely on their physical and emotional states to judge their capabilities. Efficacy beliefs are strengthened by reducing

anxiety and depression, building physical strength and stamina, and changing faulty interpretations of one's physical states (Bandura, 2008, p. 1397).

2.6.2 The Strengths Perspective

This study is situated within the strengths perspective of social work practice which is identified as a significant approach for social work theory and practice (Tong, 2011). The strengths perspective is selected because it is known to have a broad applicability across a number of practice settings and a wide range of populations, but more especially, for use with vulnerable groups (Cox, 2001). Although in Ghana, women are considered among vulnerable groups (UNDP, 2007), this perspective is being used to draw attention to the fact that, irrespective of all the challenges that make women in Ghana vulnerable, women have been able to draw on their capabilities, resources and resilience to attain growth and success in what they do. Also, since social workers have been calling for a shift away from problem-focused approaches to strengths, empowerment and capacity building approaches (McMillen, Morris, & Sherraden, 2004), it is important that this research also adopts the strengths approach in order to complement practice with research and knowledge generation.

The strengths perspective in social work is presented as a challenging alternative approach to practice, as it marks a shift away from a problem-focus to one that is possibility focused and therefore challenges social work's historical overreliance on deficiencies and problems (Saleebey, 1997, p. 3, cited in Oko, 2006). According to Weick et al (1989), the strengths-based approach, assumes that everyone has a wide range of gifts, capacities, skills,

resources, and aspirations, which they can make use of to attain growth if their positive personality and abilities are highly concerned. The perspective, therefore, aims at uncovering the client's strengths and hope, and putting them into action, as opposed to the traditional deficit-focused approach (cited in Tong, 2011). This framework is being used for the research because in studying ways through which Ghanaian women have attained success in their fields of endeavour, the many processes they have gone through to overcome their challenges, develop resilience, as well as to empower themselves and others come into the spotlight.

Cowger, Anderson, & Snively (2006) argue that the strengths perspective integrates concepts related to resilience, empowerment, hope, healing, and meaning construction. As a result, rather than focusing on deficits and problems, social workers acting from the strengths perspective are concerned with resources, connections, skills, and gifts (cited in Gleason, 2007). In using the strengths-based approach, Saleebey (1996) identifies resilience, empowerment and membership as the key principles. To him, resilience refers to the skills, abilities, knowledge and insight that accumulate over time as people struggle to surmount adversity and meet challenges. Gleason (2007) defines resilience as a successful adaptation, an ability to exploit positive features of the environment, and the positive ways people respond to stress, it refers to individual, familial, and environmental characteristics that modify risk and allow people to thrive despite at-risk circumstances. In effect, doing well in the face of adversity or challenge is called resilience (Patterson, 2002). Fraser et al. (1999) argue that the ability to overcome adversity and be successful in spite of exposure to high risk constitute resilience while Masten (1994) defines resilience as the

ability to sustain competence under pressure and the capacity to recover from trauma (cited in Greene, Galambos & Lee, 2004). People are known to become resilient when they are able to overcome challenges or adversity. For many Ghanaian women, cultural, religious, structural and systemic barriers and challenges existed as they were growing up, but they have been able to overcome these challenges which were pervasive and have attained success in their chosen careers.

Empowerment, according to Saleebey (1996) means assisting individuals, families and communities in discovering and using the resources and tools within and around them. He further asserts that the empowerment imperative requires that individuals are helped to be aware of the tensions and conflicts that oppress and limit them in order to help them free themselves from these restrictions. Cox (2001) posits that an empowerment perspective identifies and builds upon the existing strengths of diverse groups which in turn lead to four psychological outcomes – increasing self-efficacy, developing group consciousness, reducing self-blame, and assuming personal responsibility for change. People are empowered when they are linked to resources by which they can change their conditions for the better.

For the Ghanaian woman, such a resource would be education, employment, having a say in the issues that affect their lives or having a role model who is known to have had similar challenges and has been able to overcome them. It is believed that women who have become successful in Ghana used diverse resources to empower themselves and by their success are also empowering other women to attain success. One of the issues that this

study seeks to bring to light is how such women are effecting change in their places of work and community.

The final principle of the strengths based approach, membership, means that people need to be citizens – responsible and valued members in a viable group or community (Saleebey, 1996). Cox (2001) opines that membership is the recognition that the people whom social workers help are members of a community thereby being entitled to dignity, respect, and responsibility. Related to the principle of membership is the principle of cultural strengths (Lee, 2003). The strengths-based approach emphasizes the recognition and use of a person's cultural strength such as support of the extended family, spirituality, religion, domestic harmony, and survival skills (Barnes, 2001, cited in Lee, 2003) to assist clients in identifying, expanding, and utilizing strengths as rooted in their cultural context.

In her studies of women living in poverty and victims of domestic violence, Parsons (2001) argues that empowerment models are appropriate and necessary in social work interventions with disempowered women. Such empowerment models include programs that address women's need for mutuality, safety, relationship, acceptance, validation, commonality and interdependence, since women feel empowered in a place where they feel accepted, understood, supported, can interact and share emotions and give help to others. She further identifies skill-building, support, advocacy for social change as some important empowerment principles that must be used with women who are often alienated, isolated or lack a voice.

For many years, studies on women, especially, in Africa and other parts of the developing world have focused on their problems, challenges and deficits. Also, Western feminism has resulted in the poor conception of African women as weak and powerless (Mohanty, 1986). However, there are indications that women in Africa, generally, and Ghana in particular, have been successful in many fields of enterprise (Fuest, 2008; Prah, 2004). It is, therefore, timely to throw the spotlight on such successful women and get their stories told, so as to encourage other women to pursue and attain success in spite of whatever challenges or deficits they may have.

2.7 Relationship of Theories to Research

The Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977) and the Strengths Perspectives are adopted for this study because they help to achieve the research objectives of throwing the spotlight on the ways by which successful Ghanaian women are serving as agents of change in Ghana's development. A theory deeply rooted in an agentic perspective (Bandura, 2001, Bandura & Locke, 2003), the social cognitive theory discusses the factors that help a person to develop self-efficacy, which in turn translates into ability to exert agency. It also brings to the fore the core features of human agency and the different ways by which agency can be exerted to achieve desired outcomes. Bandura & Locke (2003, p. 87) argue thus:

Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects; otherwise one has little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

While the social cognitive theory helps to understand the development of resilience and self-efficacy, it focuses on the individual without much attention paid to societal and other factors outside of the person which also contribute to the development of self-efficacy and attainment of success. The strengths perspective of social work practice complements the social cognitive theory in this regard. The strengths perspective, while acknowledging individual factors that contribute to the development of self-efficacy, also discusses societal factors such as membership, empowerment and capacity building approaches which are outside of the individual but contribute to the development of self-efficacy and the attainment of success.

The theories provides different perspectives within which discussions on resilience, self-efficacy and agency can be framed and therefore provides the theoretical base for the study as they combine to addresses issues of change, resilience, membership and empowerment. These theories help to understand ways through which women in the Ghanaian society, despite their challenges developed resilience, which in turn helped them to develop a sense of self-efficacy for the attainment of success in their career. Furthermore, in discussing ways through which women act as agents of change in Ghana, it is imperative to also discuss the ways by which women negotiate for and assert their own agentic skills in their families, workplace and community at large. Finally, the theories help to situate issues relating to how the women in the study have exercised the different modes of agency to bring about change in their own lives and the lives of other women.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the data collection choices and strategies that were employed in this research. It highlights the challenges encountered as well as how the challenges were overcome for the study objectives to be achieved. Due to the nature of the research problem and its attendant questions, there was the need to select a methodology that was deemed to be best suited for the production of knowledge about the problem and to answer the research questions.

As indicated in chapter one, the study sought to highlight the lived experiences of a selected group of successful Ghanaian women and how they are serving as agents of change in Ghana's development. In the preceding chapters, a discussion of the past and present status of women is made, as well as the development of resilience and self-efficacy and how they relate to the development of agency among women. This discussion not only helped to identify and situate the themes that are discussed as findings but also ensured that there is a good fit between the selected research design with its concomitant methodology and the research question.

In the light of the above, phenomenology was considered to be the most appropriate method for the study. According to Schlosser (2009), it is essential to maintain standards of

trustworthiness and rigor at every phase of a qualitative study. This helps to ensure that the data are believable due to the thoroughness and integrity of the description. As such, the researcher was careful to follow high ethical and research standards in all phases of the study. The chapter discusses the research design, study area, methods employed and challenges faced and ends with the analytical framework employed to analyse and interpret the data.

3.1 Research Design

This study is purely qualitative. Qualitative research is inductive, emic, subjective and process-oriented in nature and is used to understand, interpret, describe and/or develop theory on a phenomenon or a setting (Morse & Field 1996; Burns & Grove 1999). The study sought to bring out the experiences of a selected group of women who have successfully pursued, driven and influenced change in the communities, by allowing them to tell their stories about how they got to where they are and what they are currently doing. For this reason, a phenomenological research design was adopted as the best approach to help achieve this goal.

According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2012, p. 11), “phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. There are many different emphasis and interests amongst phenomenologists, but they all tend to share a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is like, in all of its various aspects, but especially in terms of the things which matter to us and which constitute our lived world”. Lester (1999) also argues that phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore

the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. He further asserts that “the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through the eyes of the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s)” (Lester, 1999).

As this study sought to bring the study participants’ experiences to the fore by telling their stories, phenomenological approach was considered to be apt. Creswell (2013) suggests that phenomenological studies report the *common meaning* for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. What this study sought to do was that with the study participants’ stories, the common meanings ascribed to their experiences were outlined and discussed. Additionally, differences are also of interest, as they help make visible the different meanings participants gave to their experiences. As such, the study combines phenomenology with narrative analysis as the means of eliciting and reflecting the different experiences of the study’s participants.

Narratives can take many forms. In this study, it took the form of a method used in analysing the stories told (Chase, 2005). A defining characteristic of narrative research is that they tell the stories “of individual experiences and may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves” (Creswell, 2013, p. 71).

3.2 Philosophical Foundations of the Research Design

A researcher's philosophical grounding and the underlying conceptualization of the research questions determine the choice of any particular research design. Philosophical grounding, which considers methods of reasoning, argument, and research inquiry, encompasses the inextricably linked elements of *ontology* – the theory of existence – and *epistemology* – a theory of knowledge. Crotty (1998) suggests that there should be an interrelationship between the theoretical stance adopted by the researcher, the methodology and methods used, and the researcher's view of the epistemology.

According to Gray (2009, p. 17), “ontology is the study of being, that is, the nature of existence. While ontology embodies an understanding of *what is*, epistemology tries to understand *what it means to know*. Epistemology provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate”. These two elements are the precursors to a *methodology* – a set of rules and procedures, concerned with questions of ‘how do we gain knowledge about the world?’ Underlying these elements is a gendered researcher with his/her own set of socio-economic, cultural, political, religious, racial, and/or ethnic-community perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

This, then goes on to say that the ontological and epistemological groundings of this study are not only influenced by the assumptions and biases of the researcher, but are also shaped by the formulations of the research questions and methodological stances. From the ontological standpoint, this research is shaped by the fact that the realities of Ghanaian women, in terms of their values, position, and worldview, have and continue to change.

Therefore, there is the need to make visible these changes and highlight the ways by which they can be made positive. Epistemologically, the researcher's gender, manifesting as a wife and mother, occupation in the male dominated field of academia, coupled with PhD studies, places her in a strategic position to subjectively appreciate and conceptualize the experiences of the study participants.

Although phenomenology is a research design, it also has a strong philosophical component to it (Creswell, 2013). Its philosophical roots are traced to the works of Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), a German mathematician. The founding principle of Husserl's phenomenological inquiry is requires that individuals examine their experiences as they occur and in its own terms. Husserl's phenomenology entails the careful examination of human experience, particularly in understanding the ways through which people come to know their *own* experience of a given phenomenon. Such people would also be required to apply an amount of deep understanding, coupled with the rigour which will help to identify the essential qualities of that experience. Husserl's phenomenology involves stepping outside of our everyday experience, our natural attitude as he called it, in order to be able to examine that everyday experience. Instead, adopting a phenomenological attitude involves and requires a reflexive move, as we turn our gaze from, for example, objects in the world, and direct it inward, towards our perception of those objects (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012, p. 12).

Other philosophical roots of phenomenology can be traced to the works of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. These authors extend the works of Husserl by contributing to a

view of the person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2012).

Phenomenology was chosen as the appropriate research design because it afforded the researcher the opportunity to produce “thick descriptions” of people’s experiences or perspectives within their natural settings (Gray, 2009). In addition, phenomenology is a rigorous, critical, systematic investigation of phenomena (Streubert & Carpenter 1999, p. 48) that helps to uncover concealed meaning in the phenomenon embedded in the words of the narrative (Sorrell & Redmond 1995 cited in Maggs-Rapport 2000, p. 221). Narrative analysis was also selected for the study because it has been found to be most appropriate for “empowering persons through a more subtle understanding of their life situation. Using a small number of stories, narrative analysis can be used to cast a light on the culture, complexities and contradictions in organizations” (Gray, 2009, p. 172).

3.3 Research Method

In order to elicit the kind of information needed, a semi-structured, in-depth interview was utilised for primary data collection. This method helped to gain information pertaining to the personal life histories and a range of information that was crucial to understand fully the women’s experiences, challenges, successes and the meanings they ascribed to them. According to Aksey and Knight (1999, p. 2), “interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understanding” (cited in Gray, 2009, p. 370). Qualitative

interviewing is a social process in which the researcher and the research participants collaborate discursively for the acquisition and construction of inter-subjective knowledge.

In-depth interviews provided some important advantages. They are useful where it is likely that people may rather talk than to fill in a questionnaire, giving study participants an opportunity to reflect on events without having to commit themselves in writing (Gray, 2009). There is a higher response rate to interviews than questionnaires, leading to a complete description of the phenomenon under study ((Burns & Grove 1999). In addition, interviews allow for themes – often unanticipated – to emerge from people’s varied experiences rather than from preconceived ideas.

For this study, there were either one-session or two-session interviews based on the participants’ preference. The average length of the interviews was one and a half hours, with the shortest interview lasting for 45 minutes and the longest being 2 hours 45 minutes long. All interviews were held at a time and venue suitable to the research participants. Permission was sought from study participants for the interviews to be audio-taped for later transcription (Creswell, 2009).

The interviews were in two parts; the first part explored the life experiences of the respondent prior to the assumption of the position for which she is currently noted. The second part of the interview was devoted to the participants’ experiences after the

assumption of that position, with particular attention to ways through which the respondent has influenced, guided and/or effected progress in her chosen field of enterprise.

To achieve this aim, a semi-structured interview guide was developed with open ended questions that allowed study participants to tell their stories from their own perspectives. The interview guide was divided under headings such as demographics, childhood, education, work history, contributing factors to success and affecting change at the workplace (White, Cox & Cooper, 1997). Demographic data collected included age, occupation, and marital status. One interview guide was used for all three sectors identified. All the interviews were conducted in English, but provisions were made for study participants who would have preferred to be interviewed in a local Ghanaian language. All interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher. Also, field notes were taken and a data collection diary was kept by the researcher to help keep track of all participants and peculiar issues that arose during each interview. These helped the researcher to triangulate the data during the analysis phase (Creswell, 2009).

3.4 Target population

The general target population for this study was successful Ghanaian women. However, participants were drawn particularly from academia, politics and trade. These three categories of fields were selected because they were either regarded as male dominated (in the cases of academia and politics) or had a large pool of women concentrated in this field (trade). Women in academia were of importance to this study firstly because in many

developing countries including Ghana, education is deemed to be one of the main ways through which people are able to break the poverty cycle.

In addition to this, women used to be considered as only good for the home and the kitchen, and although this is no longer the case in Ghana, many of the women who are currently in academia had to face the challenge of breaking out of the confines of the home to attain higher education as well as to gain access into a terrain that was considered to be the reserve of men. Also, some of the women who occupy positions such as heads of departments, deans, pro-vice chancellors and even chancellors are part of the decision making at their institutions and influence higher education policies in Ghana. Finally, women in academia serve as role models for other girls to aspire to attain higher education and not settle for the gender stereotypes that exist for girls concerning education (Sai, 1995, cited in Opare, 2005).

Women in politics were selected for this study because it is believed that “women legislators are more responsive to women’s interests than male legislators as they develop their own distinctive sets of concerns and priorities and take leading part in formulating policies with women’s perspective in mind” (Zakuan, 2010, p. 284). It has also been noted that Ghana is witnessing a steady growth in the number of women participating at the local government level in particular, especially as evidenced in the number of contestants and also in the number of elected women (Allah-Mensah, 2005). The terrain of politics, which used to be the sole reserve of men has now been broken into by women who seem to be doing well. In fact, there have been calls for the appointment of more women into

ministerial and other administrative positions because they are allegedly more effective and less corrupt (Book, 2000).

Women in trade were also chosen for this study because trading is the predominant occupation for many Ghanaian women. Although most of the women in business have little or no education, the trading activities help them to gain economic power, which hitherto, was uncharacteristic of women in Ghana. In many instances, women in trade have been able to mobilize themselves to call on government to take measures or effect policies to address the needs not only of women, but also of men and children in Ghana. In 1999 when there was panic in the country due to the suspicious killings of over 30 women dating back to 1997 (Reuters, 2000), it was mainly women in business, in collaboration with some other women's groups that took to the streets to get the government to take proactive steps towards protecting the women of Ghana. The same can also be said of the passage of the domestic violence bill into law in 2007, and many others (Quarm, 2009).

3.5 Selecting Research Participants

The sampling strategy used in this research was a non-probability one which allows for participants to be chosen by non-random methods (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998, p. 251). The specific type of non-probability sampling applied is purposive sampling. According to Norwood (2000), purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose elements based on her knowledge of the population and of the needs of the study. In the light of the above, and in consideration of the research objectives, the research participants were purposively sampled from academia, politics and trade.

In academia, female academic staff who occupy senior positions in three out of the country's five public universities were selected to participate in the study. Women in academia who occupy such senior positions as heads of departments, schools and faculties, as well as senior administrative positions such as deans, provosts and vice-chancellors were selected to participate in the study. In politics, women in key government positions, heads of public institutions and NGOs that influence public policy as well as women in grassroots and mainstream politics were selected to participate in the study. Women in trade consisted of those in informal trading activities, entrepreneurs, wholesalers and retailers of general goods and providers of general services such as proprietresses of schools, hospitals, etc.

Each of the participants was approached in person by the researcher and introduced to the study, clearly articulating the purpose and objectives of the study. After this, participants were given two letters of introduction, one from the Head of the Department of Social Work, establishing the researcher's credibility and another from the researcher that stated the objectives of the study and an invitation to participate in the study. For the participants who readily expressed interest to participate in the study, appointments were scheduled for suitable times and locations for the in-depth interviews. In the case where participants could not readily indicate an interest, they were asked to keep the letters, which contained the contact details of the researcher so that in the course of time, they could contact her about their readiness. The telephone numbers and/or email addresses of every person that was approached by the researcher were taken for follow-up calls or emails. In all 53 letters were distributed across board.

After distribution of letters to participants, some of them readily expressed interest in granting an interview. The details of such person were taken for follow up calls and subsequent appointments were made for interviews. In a couple of instances, some participants also suggested other women whom they thought would be suitable participants for my study and gave the researcher the telephone numbers of such women. One of such women expressed interest in granting an interview and asked the researcher to send a letter of introduction to her secretary on a particular day and time. Upon reaching the office, the woman's scheduled engagement had been cancelled and she was in the office so she granted the interview without having to schedule a subsequent appointment. The other woman who was recommended could not be reached.

3.6 Sample Size

Based on follow-up calls and emails, as well as the readiness and availability of potential participants, a total of 30 women, 10 each from education, politics and trade were selected by the researcher to participate in the study. For a qualitative study that seeks to delve deeper into the participants' experiences, sampling 10 participants from each sector provided an in-depth and broad scope of information which at the same time was manageable for the researcher to analyse.

Second, this number was chosen because per the characteristics of the participants, the researcher was able to explore into detail the central theme of the study and achieve

research objectives by sampling this number of participants (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003).

3.7 Profile of Participants

A total of 30 women from three categories of professional fields were selected for the study. Ten women each from academia, politics and trade were interviewed. The youngest respondent was 28 years old and the oldest was 60 years. Two participants were divorced, one was widowed and one was unmarried; the rest of the participants were married. With the exception of two, all participants had children.

Participants from academia were selected based on their occupation of senior positions within their universities. Eight out of ten participants were PhD holders, while the remaining two had Master's degrees. Also, eight of the participants were heads of faculty, department, school or a centre. Although the initial plan was to interview women who were above the age of 40, three participants aged, 28, 33 and 37 years from academia were selected to participate in the study because they presented peculiar and interesting cases.

All three participants were natural scientists and had doctoral degrees. The 28 year old respondent is the youngest in her department which was dominated by men and older staff. The 33 year old was the only female member of staff in her department while the 37 year old respondent was one of two post-doctoral candidates and head of a research centre leading a ground-breaking research project in Ghana.

With the participants from politics, all ten of them had university degrees. Nine of the participants were married with one divorced. Three of the participants were members of parliament, five were either former ministers of state, heads of public offices as well as heads of national and non-governmental organizations while two were leading members of political parties.

Study participants from trade came from a wide range of backgrounds but all ten of them were owners of their businesses. Five of the participants from trade had university education, three had post-secondary education and two had secondary education. All ten participants were married with children, except one who was married but had no children. Some participants were service providers while others were entrepreneurs. One was a caterer with a well-established business in Kumasi and Accra, three were exporters of hand-made crafts and members of the African Entrepreneurs Academy, one was the owner of a well-established hospital, two were fashion designers with businesses in Ghana and other African countries, two were owners of schools and one, a leader in the beauty industry in Ghana.

3.8 Study Area

Although the study sought to sample a selected group of Ghanaian women for their stories, the research was largely based in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This was the region of choice because it hosts the capital city of the country, and is a cosmopolitan area with people from all the 10 regions of Ghana residing there. In addition, it is in the Greater Accra Region that majority of the headquarters of government ministries, departments, and

agencies are located. This meant that there was a large pool of potential participants from the Greater Accra Region who were sought to participate in the study. Eight out of ten participants from trade were interviewed in Accra and two in Kumasi. All the participants from politics were interviewed in the Greater Accra region, although some of them represented constituencies outside of the region.

Participants from academia were primarily based in the location of their universities. For this reason, interviews with women in academia were conducted in the Greater Accra Region, Ashanti Region and the Northern Region. Five participants from academia were from the University of Ghana, so they were interviewed at the main Legon campus in Accra. Three participants from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology were interviewed in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region, while two participants from the Tamale Campus of the University of Development Studies (UDS) were interviewed in Tamale.

3.9 Sources of Data

Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained from in-depth interviews with women selected from academia, politics and trade. The secondary sources of information were obtained from refereed journals, books, published research works, internet articles and newspaper publications. While the primary data served as the basis for analysis and discussions, the secondary sources of information sources helped to enrich the discussion by bringing to the fore other studies that have been conducted in relation to this study. With this information, the researcher drew on

commonalities, points of departure, recurring trends and areas of consideration for future studies.

3.10 Data Management

A rigorous system was put in place to manage the data in order to ensure that the data as gathered were not lost. This system was centered mostly on the data records. A field note book and a data collection diary were maintained along the main audio recorder acquired for data collection purposes.

3.10.1 Audio Recording

For accurate presentation of participants' views, all the interviews [with the exception of four participants who did not want to be recorded] were audio-recorded with their expressed consent. Recording the interviews was to help overcome the natural limitation of human memories and the intuitive glosses that may have occurred as a result of listening and writing at the same time. Additionally, it enabled for a thorough re-examination of what was said during the analysis (Maxwell, 1996). Although, generally, some participants were apprehensive to have their voices recorded, efforts were made to ensure that many of them consented to and became comfortable with audio-recording. Assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as providing a signed consent form which spelt out the boundaries within which the data was being collected was critical in securing their consent.

Since the interviews were semi-structured and informal in nature, the collected data was organised and prepared for analysis by listening to the audio tapes of the interviews over and over to get a general sense of each interview and to ensure that all critical questions were answered.

3.10.2 Field Notes and Diary

The two notebooks acquired as a field note and data collection diary served two main purposes. First, they served as a backup for the audio tape recording of the participants. Even though there was a preference of the researcher to have all the interviews audio recorded, some reasons necessitated the purchase of notebook as a tool for data recording. The first reason was in relation to situations where participants declined to have their voices tape recorded. In those instances, the notebooks became the primary data recording instrument. As stated above, there were four of such instances. Secondly, the notebooks further served as supplementary data recording instrument for short notes on other observations that could not be tape-recorded, such as, the mood, body language, facial expressions, including cues, as well as, other happenings in the environment. Though this was done for all the interviewees, it was particularly instrumental when the data were being prepared for analysis, as the initial thoughts of the researcher after listening to the tapes were compared with the field notes and diary in order to triangulate the data collected.

3.10.3 Transcription and Data Analysis

All the interviews, with the exception of those that were not tape-recorded, were transcribed into text afterwards. Those not tape-recorded were written in text during the

interviews. For those ones, the notes were not very detailed during the interviews, but were expanded afterwards and field notes were typed. As stated above, the tapes were listened to over and over again, prior to the commencement of transcription, to gain a general sense of each interview. The transcription was captured as “verbatim” as possible. All the transcripts were then sorted and organized based on whether they were collected from women in education, politics or trade.

Considering the enormous task involved in transcriptions, the interviews were transcribed immediately after each interview, especially when the researcher was waiting to schedule another interview. This approach to processing the data helped to overcome the challenges of piling up interviews and transcribing them all interviews at the end of data collection. Doing this could have presented the researcher with a sense of seeing the task as monumental and, therefore, falling into the trap of rushing through the tapes. Such an act could certainly lead to significant errors which could in turn have also damaged the intent of the study.

Secondly, Lofland and Lofland (1995) advise that transcribing data, as and when a set of data is available, allows the researcher to be more aware of emerging themes. The emerging themes were further explored in subsequent interviews. After transcriptions were done, they were read through over again, and as the notes were being read, ideas that emerged from the notes were jotted down for later comparisons to be made. Key questions that were identified to help begin the analysis were written down as well.

These exercises gave the researcher an idea of what the participants have said, as well as an impression of the tone of ideas, overall depth of the information and how best to use the information. Common themes and underlying patterns were categorized together and organized to give coherence to the data. The themes were then analysed for each individual interview and across different interviews so that the interconnecting themes could be developed into a narrative that will tell the stories of the selected women (Creswell, 2009). The themes that emerged from the interviews were interpreted and discussed to reflect the objectives of the study, incorporating the theories and observations from the secondary sources of information.

3.11 Challenges encountered

The major challenge encountered in this study was in relation to the recruitment of research participants. All participants from academia who were purposively selected indicated interest and readiness in participating in the study. However, in the case of three potential participants, time constraints and busy schedules prevented them from participating in the study. Much difficulty was encountered when it got to recruiting participants from the political domain. Many of the women, especially, the members of parliament who were approached expressed reluctance about participating in the study. While some were concerned about being audio-taped, others avoided giving an interview all together. The main reasons for the refusal to be audio-taped was because, in the run-up to the 2012 general elections, there was a spate of leaked “secret tapes”, about things purported to have been said by one politician or the other. This became a major source of concern for the

women, some of whom indicated that, once their voices were captured on tape, it could be doctored later by anyone who laid hands on it for some political gains.

To allay these fears, the researcher offered the option of interviewing them without tape-recording their voices, but they would not grant the interview at all, insisting that they could be secretly recorded. Even though the researcher did all she could to assure them of confidentiality, anonymity and a strict adherence to research ethics, their fears could not be assuaged. Eventually, some potential participants decided not to participate in the study at all.

There were also some participants who initially expressed the interest to participate in the study but asked that the research instrument be emailed to them to peruse it first. After sending the instrument, the researcher followed up several times with emails and phone calls, but there was no response to enable further arrangements towards the interview. Others also would answer their phones and schedule an appointment for interviews but on the said day and time, they would not answer their calls nor show up for the interview. To overcome the above challenges, the researcher distributed letters to 30 potential participants within the politics category alone and scheduled interviews as and when participants showed interest. This delayed the data collection process, but the researcher made up for the lost time by using the long waiting periods to transcribe interviews that had already been conducted. This strategy ultimately proved useful, as it helped the researcher to be more conversant with emerging themes. Knowledge of the emerging

themes further enriched subsequent interviews as they guided the researcher in conducting the interviews that followed.

3.12 Subjective Perspective

For every qualitative study, it is important for the researcher to be fully aware of her subjective perspective(s) and bracket them. Bracketing is “a reflective process by which opinion and prejudice are [temporarily] suspended to focus attention on what is essential in the phenomena” (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 411). Tufford & Newman (2012) stress the need for a researcher in qualitative social work to bracket his/her subjective perspectives in order to “mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (p. 18).

In this study, the subjective realities and perspectives of the researcher were vividly brought to bear. This is because, the researcher bore many similarities to the participants of the study. First, the researcher was a new mother of a 10-month old daughter at the time of starting her PhD studies. She had to leave the baby and family to go abroad for a one-year course work, and returned at a time when the child was already walking. Upon return, she had to juggle motherhood and studies, relying heavily on family support in the care of her child while she concentrated on data collection and writing the draft. In addition, she worked for a year as a graduate assistant at the University of Ghana. Getting to the end of her studies, she had another baby, meaning that she carried a pregnancy through the tail-end of data collection and report writing phase of her studies.

As a wife, mother of two, PhD candidate and a graduate assistant at the University, she had to find various ways of balancing work and family life. She also identified strongly with her participants from academia, working in the University environment, as a student and a worker. This background of the researcher was one of the realities that the researcher shared with her participants.

Secondly, the researcher considers herself an agent of change within her family and among her peers. Her two nieces, aged 17 and 16 years often tell her she is their role model, mainly because she is the first in the family to pursue a PhD, and they are also witnesses to the relative success she is enjoying in her career and family life. The girls now reside with her and she mentors them by giving advice, challenging and supporting them in their education. Among her peers, many of her PhD colleagues from other departments, who also had a child or two, often told her how she challenged them to become determined to finish writing their dissertations on time. This was at the time when the researcher was writing her own dissertation while heavily pregnant, and resumed writing almost immediately after giving birth. She believes that she is not only a role model to her nieces, but also to many girls, especially, those from her humble neighbourhood of Asafo, in Kumasi, where most girls (and many boys) terminate their education at the Senior High School level.

The researcher was fully aware that her assumptions, values, interests, emotions and theories, (subjective perspective) could inevitably influence how data are gathered, interpreted, and presented (Tufford & Newman, 2012). As a result, she sought to bracket her subjective perspective by constantly asking herself what it was that participants were

seeking to communicate in their narratives. In a bid to answer the question as to what the participants sought to communicate, she would listen to three interviews in a row, write down her initial comments and questions, then allow a number of days to elapse before listening to those same tapes over and over again. She also applied the same strategy to the transcripts and field notes.

Allowing a few days to elapse before going back to the data presented her with a fresh perspective each time. Therefore, after reading the notes several times, the themes that remained consistent were taken as the major themes for analysis. The ones that did not run through the different days' comments and questions were, however, not discarded, but interrogated further to come out with how best to analyse and discuss them without imposing the researcher's own subjective perspectives on them.

The researcher does not seek to claim that the analysis, interpretation and discussion of data is free from her subjective perspective(s), as she is not sure any researcher can fully bracket herself from her data (Salsberry, 1989). What she is seeking to emphasize is that, throughout the research process, she was aware of her own subjectivities and, as much as practicable, bracketed them from the data so as to present the lived experiences of her participants as best as she could.

Nonetheless, she believes that her own subjectivities also helped enrich the analyses she made, since she possessed an empathetic understanding of the experiences of the participants. Descriptive phenomenology is said to hold a commitment to bracketing, but

hermeneutic phenomenology holds that prejudgments can be used positively as part of the data of conscious experience and help establish the horizon of meaning (Ray, 1994, cited in LeVasseur, 2003, p. 417).

CHAPTER FOUR

NAVIGATING THE WORK SPACE

'Workplaces matter to the ways in which we have to negotiate our gender identities at work' (Halford and Leonard, 2006, p. 54, cited in Tyler & Cohen, 2010).

4.0 Introduction

Globally, combining domestic and professional responsibilities has posed great challenges for men and women (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). For the African woman, for whom priority is placed on her domestic roles, the challenge becomes even greater. Throughout history, women have been tasked with caring for children and keeping their homes, to be good wives to their husbands and mothers to their children. Women who venture out of the house to pursue professional careers were met with hostility, ridicule, rejection and other forms of social sanctions (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Parks-Stamm, Heilman & Hearn, 2008; Domenico & Jones, 2006; Heilman, 2001). As a result, women have had to find various ways of navigating the work space, so that they can effectively meet the demands of their homes and still rise to the top of their careers.

This chapter discusses the various ways by which research participants have navigated their work spaces, and attained success in the light of their domestic responsibilities, gender stereotypes and other threats that often serve as a hindrance to their advancement in their professions. From the study, it is identified that women have two major ways of navigating their work spaces. The first is to work with others in ways that are considered favourably

or preferred, so that they can satisfy both their professional and domestic demands. The second, which is less preferred, but sometimes unavoidable, is to fight for their rights to be respected at the workplace in order to have the sound space to work. There are inter-related sub-themes identified under each of these major themes. These are discussed with narratives from participants and analysed with the help of existing literature.

4.1 Negotiating for Space

As women negotiate for space within the work and professional environment, they work in concert with others, to ensure that all the different facets of their lives – as a wife, mother, career woman, church/ community leader, etc. – are satisfied. By negotiating for space, women craft a balance between their work and family lives. Work-life balance has been defined as the ‘satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home’ (Campbell Clark, 2000, p. 751, cited in Sturges, 2012) A person is said to have achieved a work-life balance if he/she is able to combine paid and non-paid work in ways that are comfortable and acceptable to him/her.

Literature suggests that there are three ways by which people craft a work-life balance – physical, relational and cognitive. Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001, cited in Sturges, 2012, p. 1541) argue that,

in attempting to craft their jobs, employees engage in three different kinds of behaviour: physical crafting, which involves crafting the number, scope or type of job tasks; cognitive crafting, which involves defining and framing perceptions of what a job means and entails; and relational crafting, which involves managing the

quantity and quality of interactions with other people at work in order to reinforce and maintain a desirable work identity.

Contrary to Schultheiss' (2009, p. 27) assertion that suggests that women who “engage in the work of mothering are ensnared in a web of economic vulnerability, political powerlessness, and societal devaluation”, Ghanaian women, generally, and the research participants specifically, see mothering as a source of joy and pride, and do not consider forgoing or postponing childbirth in order to focus on their careers. White (1995) also reports of low homemaking commitment among highly successful women. Perhaps, this would be true in a Western context but, in the Ghanaian setting and as shown in this study, participants were as committed to keeping their homes as they were to pursuing their careers.

With the exception of one, all the study participants were married or had been married, and as many as 28 out of the 30 participants either had children or had nephews and nieces living with them. In fact, when asked about their perceptions of success, majority of the participants linked their professional success to the personal success they have achieved in their homes⁴. According to Grant-Vallone & Ensher (2011, p. 333), “professional women with children, who successfully balance their professional and personal lives reap many rewards, including greater financial stability and success, happier marriages, and in general greater life satisfaction”.

⁴ This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, under Conceptions of Success.

4.1.1 Making work invisible

Stalker (2001) suggests that women in adult education have often had to make their studies *invisible*, that is, wait till they have time to themselves before attending to their educational needs, so that they would leave their homes undisturbed. In the same vein, participants can be said to make their work invisible; adopting different methods to ensure that their homes remain undisturbed as they pursue their careers.

To meet the demands of being a mother and a career woman, participants have had to find ways of ensuring that their career responsibilities do not disturb their homes and families. This means that the women would employ different strategies, so that their absence from the home will not become very conspicuous. There were no reports of difference between participants from academia, politics or trade when it came to making work invisible. All the three categories of women felt the need to employ strategies to ensure that their homes and family lives remained intact while they pursued their careers. For Cathy, a mother of two and an academic, she chooses to work when her children are asleep, so that she would have the time and space to concentrate on the work:

...so you plan. When baby is asleep, you don't sleep. You work. For those of us who take work home, you work when baby is asleep. And sometimes when you are a bit free, when baby is asleep, you also sleep, so that you can get some rest. Because, when the baby is awake, you can't sleep. So you have to plan your day. Time management is very important. You have to always plan your day ahead of time.

Elize, a health professional and mother of six children, sends her children to school earlier than the expected age and relies on house-helps to care for the children after school so that she can have the room to go to work and concentrate on the work at hand. There were days she would not be around to put her children to bed, when she was working the night shift, but she made sure to “make it up to the children” when she’s on leave or has free time. She disclosed her strategy thus:

Instead of waiting till my children are 4 or 5 years, I make sure they start school early, when they are one and half, 2 years maximum and I always make sure I have somebody in the house who will go for them from school, help with their homework and get them ready for bed. When I return home, I check that their homework is done before I go to bed. Sometimes I don’t see them at all...but when I am on leave or when I manage to get some free time, I spend it all with them, so that they won’t feel deprived. Family time is a very important thing in my home, even today as my children are older.

Leroux (1992) documents that, one of the strategies successful women adopt is to hire house-helps to do the domestic duties of keeping the home and caring for children while they focused on the professional demands. This was true for not just Elize but for most of the women interviewed.

To emphasise the importance of social support systems for successful women, other participants had to fall on female kin (their mothers, sisters and in-laws) to step in for them, especially, when they had to travel on business. They would prepare a menu for relatives to follow or cook in advance and store the food, so that relatives who are stepping in would

only have to heat the food up for their families. Some participants also chose to travel with their families to conferences, when they could afford it, so that they would “squeeze” a family vacation into a business trip. Naa, a young professor often attends conferences with her children, so that when she is not attending a particular session, she could spend time with them. She recounts:

There are times when I have to attend a conference somewhere so I would plan and squeeze a family vacation into it, if we can afford it. I would attend with my children and sometimes with my husband too if he has the time from work. I mean, it’s not easy, financially and all, but it affords us the opportunity to spend some time together, even though I’m “away”, and ensures that they don’t miss me too much; because I tell you, between conferences, workshops and regular work, I’m almost always away from home.

4.1.2 Leveraging on Support

Studies (Isaac et al., 2012; Fulton et al., 2006) suggest that socialization and the imbibing of certain gender stereotypes often result in women having ‘controlled’ levels of ambition. This means that when the socialization is positive, women have high levels of ambition, and when it is negative, women tend to have low levels of ambition. Baker (2010) in her study with academics in New Zealand reported that many female academics did not think they could attain full professoriate before retirement, not only because of their domestic responsibilities per se, but also because of reasons such as “lack of intelligence and/or ambition; insufficient time, energy or publications; or no desire for additional responsibilities” (p.321) .

However, those who had ambitions to reach the professoriate were those who had received or are receiving some form of support in their lives and/or careers. The support either came from their primary relationships such as parents, siblings, husbands or their own children; colleagues and/or superiors at work; and other networks, like mentors who may not necessarily be at the workplace. While the above study has proven to be true for academics, participants from politics and trade also reported that once they knew they had some support in their careers, they had high levels of motivation to successfully pursue their professional careers.

For Ada, a mother of three and head of a public centre, she used to have difficulties meeting both career and domestic demands. Earlier in her career, she felt that she needed to place premium on her domestic roles over her professional roles, as “society expected her to do”. As a result, when her work began to suffer, her husband encouraged her to dedicate the needed attention to her work while she got help for domestic chores. This marked the turnaround in her career. She felt relieved to focus on her career and that has propelled her to the level where is now, the executive director of a public organization in Ghana. In her own words:

I don't think I could have made it without my husband's support. In fact, when he advised me to concentrate on building my career while other people handled things which they can handle at home, it made all the difference to me. I didn't have to worry about going home to cook or wash clothes or things like that. All I had to do was to take care of him [laughs] and my career.

In Ella's case, there is an unspoken rule in her home that everybody supports each other and does whatever needs to be done, so that if somebody needed to do something, s/he would not worry about committing time to do other things in the home. This support from her husband and children gave her the peace of mind to pursue her career and now, her political interests. She disclosed thus:

My children understand that I have to go to work, my husband understands it. I understand that my children have to go to school and my husband has to go to work. We understand it so we just do what needs to be done. My children cook, my son cooks, my daughter cooks, my husband cooks, and I cook. Everything that needs to be done, whiles you are doing something else, it gets done.

Cecilia is the only female member of staff in her department and the youngest, but the fact that her colleagues and superiors make her feel like she's a part of them makes all the difference to her. She plans to make use of this support she receives from her superiors and colleagues to establish and progress to the top of her career. In her words:

My colleagues make me feel I am a part of them. I am the youngest among them; most of them taught me, either in secondary school or here. But then, they don't make me feel that because I'm a woman and I'm young, I don't have a say. They listen to me when I talk, and then we discuss issues at that level that I'm a colleague, than me being a woman or me being a young person. So I have that support from everybody.

Similarly, this support from superiors and colleagues at work is also what spurs Shelly on. She believes that she has proven herself to be hard working, and due to this, she enjoys

encouragement from her superiors who push her to pursue higher heights in her career. Coincidentally, she is also the only female in the centre where she works as a research fellow and a post-doctoral candidate. She indicated:

Over here, once you are hardworking, opportunities will definitely come and you can always be put on some project or scholarship or something. You just have to prove your worth and earn the trust of your superiors.

Mentors are also known to greatly influence the progression of a career for women (Lortie-Lussier & Rinfret, 2005; Leroux, 1992). However, due to the limited number of women in top positions, women have not benefitted much from mentorship in their careers. This notwithstanding, participants who have mentors and make use of network systems reported the immense benefits they enjoyed from these systems in their careers.

Annie counts on the support she receives from her mentors and other support systems outside her family for inspiration, guidance and direction in her career. For her, this support means everything to her, as she knows that there are people she can always count on, to learn new and innovative things from, which help her to succeed as an entrepreneur and give her business competitive advantage. She said:

Over the years, I've learnt to build networks and support systems that have proven quite helpful. There are people you can call when you have challenges in your work and they will give you all the mentoring and the support you need. I think women do not make much use of networks in their careers, but when you learn to do that, you go places.

In addition, the development of ambition which the women manifested is also a function of the socio-cultural and primary family context within which they grew. The exposure and experience which the participants gained when growing up influenced their level of ambition. For some of the participants, the socio-economic backgrounds of their parents served as motivators for them to pursue and attain careers. Those participants whose parents were highly educated felt some push to meet or beat their parents' achievements while those whose parents came from low socio-economic backgrounds did not want to end up like their parents and so became very ambitious. Kuukuwa, a head of a faculty had a doctor for a father and was made to understand that she had no option than to "make something better" of herself. Linda wanted to do better than her parents, and Cathy's mother wasn't highly educated, so she didn't want to end up like her.

I remember at a point while growing up I wanted to be a secretary, and I remember him pooh-poohing the idea, you know, of me being a secretary, and so in that regard he was always encouraging me to, you know, to attain the top, yeah. And so, to some extent I could say that motivated me a lot, in terms of what my father expected of me (Kuukuwa).

I think I tried to emulate my dad. Always, I tried telling him I wanted to do what he didn't do. So I always wanted to be a step ahead of him; that kind of thing (Linda).

I think it was basically my parents, especially my mother. She dropped out of school in class three and there was something she always said. She said she doesn't want

us to suffer like her, like in terms of education. She didn't want us to lack education. So for me, my parents were an inspiration, they cherished education, though they didn't get much (Cathy).

4.1.3 Meeting Time Demands

Study participants from academia had more challenges meeting the demands of time than the participants from politics and trade, especially when it came to combining professional responsibilities with the domestic ones of caring for children and keeping the home. This phenomenon is perhaps due to the rigorous evaluations women in academia go through in order to get promoted in the field. Women in academia, like their male counterparts, are evaluated and promoted based on the number of their research publications within the period of evaluation. In addition to doing the research, teaching and rendering services to their institutions and communities, they are also required to prepare lesson notes for their lectures, supervise students' research works and do other administrative work like serving on boards and committees within the University system.

O'Laughlin & Bischoff (2005) identify time-based and role-strain conflicts as two of the major conflicts which women in academia suffer. Time-based conflict occurs when time pressures from one role make it impossible to fulfil expectations of another role. Laura faced time-based conflicts at several points in her life when she had to combine the demands of motherhood with those of her career.

I can say that it is more difficult for an academic female to make the time to be an academic than it is for an academic male; and particularly for our kind of business

where you really have to devote a lot of time to publish, publish, and publish. How you strategize to ensure that you give your family adequate attention and yet at the same time leave enough space for your work is a major issue. The more time you spend on your work, the more you delegate your family time to other people. It's a choice you make. I insisted on cooking myself and that takes time. I insisted on looking after my daughter myself when she closed from school; preparing her food, but when you are being assessed for promotion, nobody will consider that you had to leave the office earlier to go and cook while your male counterpart stayed in the office till 9, 10 or even midnight.

Kuukuwa, a fellow academic also talks about facing time-based conflict in her work, lamenting that she felt very constrained and overwhelmed sometimes because there were days when she felt like staying in the office to work on a particular paper for submission to a journal, but at the same time, she had to go home to take care of her child. In fact, there were a couple of times when she just could not meet the deadline for submission because the child had been sick and she needed to nurse him back to health first. Kuukuwa's experiences are not only related to time-based conflicts, but also reflect strain-based conflicts as well. According to O'Laughlin & Bischoff (2005), strain-based conflict occurs when the stress of one role impacts one's performance in another role. Schultheiss (2009) argues that many women have often had to make the critical choice to either "mother or matter" in the workplace. Kuukuwa chose to mother but that also came with a cost of not meeting some expectations at the job, like publishing, which in turn delayed her promotion at certain times. She lamented:

I have to confess that I have felt very, very constrained, when it comes to time. Maybe, I should say I felt more constrained than others, perhaps due to the fact that I was a single mother. Sometimes I want to stay in the office and work on a particular interesting paper, but I look at the time and have to shut everything down and go home. Meanwhile, I'm not able to do much work at home, because my child needs me. I can even recall a couple of times when I could not meet the deadline for submitting a paper to a journal, because on those occasions, my son was sick. What can I say, I did what I had to do.

However, unlike the participants in academia, those in public offices and the service sector did not have as much challenges meeting time demands as those in academia. This is because they probably had the physical space and the time to comfortably meet their domestic responsibilities within their work environments. A business woman could easily take her little child to her place of work, supervise and delegate roles to her staff and give the baby all the needed attention, but a woman in academia could not do same while the baby is underfoot. Naana, an entrepreneur points out that:

It's not been a problem for me at all. I always bring them to work with me. When they are young, I bring them to work after my maternity leave until they are ready to start going to school. As you can see, I have now trained lots of people, so I don't have to do the physical work. I give them [the staff] the design, make sure they cut it precisely, or even cut it for them, and they go on with the sewing. I only have to go round to make sure they are sewing well. Even when the children close from school, the driver goes to pick them up and bring them back to me.

Ada, who is the executive director of an organization would close early or take days off, when she needed to, and go to the office for important meetings and issues that require her presence. She noted:

Well, my children are older now so I don't have to face those challenges anymore. But when they were younger, I would take days off and work from home, or close early to go and take care of them. You see, once I have my laptop and internet at home, I can work; write proposals, respond to emails or do conference calls from home. I don't need to be in the office to do all that.

The narratives of the participants about negotiating for space are in tandem with Wrzesniewski & Dutton's (2001) three ways of crafting a work-life balance. However, findings from this study suggest that while research participants also craft work-life balance in these three ways, it is not necessarily to get or keep a desirable work identity only but also to help establish their careers, get the peace of mind to focus on work and to attain success.

4.2 Fighting for Space

This section discusses the ways through which women have to fight for their rights, affirm themselves and ensure that they gain the respect due them in the workplace. Workspaces in organizations which are expected to be gender-neutral are in fact so gendered to the extent it is believed that being a woman is a handicap to pursuing a career in many fields (Czarniawska, 2006; Korvajärvi, 2002). In their study on the relationship between gender performativity and organizational space, Tyler & Cohen (2010) found, among other issues, that women feel constrained and often struggle for belonging in male dominated work

environments. This constraint is a product of the fact that the work environment has been conceptualized to be a man's domain, and so when a woman gets in, she constantly has to fight for a space within this environment to belong.

Hopfl & Matilal (2007, p. 199) argue that it has become “almost as inevitable as it is pervasive to hear women's success described in terms of their ability to demonstrate male behaviour”. As a result, when women are seen to be succeeding and exhibiting the strengths in their femininity, it becomes problematic. When it came to fighting for space within the work setting, there were no reports of gender stereotyping, discrimination or sexual harassment among participants from trade. Much of the reports on gender stereotyping and sexual harassment were from participants in politics, with participants in academia reporting covert forms of discrimination from their peers. It can be explained that since the trade sector in Ghana is considered to be largely a feminine terrain, women were not “punished” for doing well in such a sector.

Another factor that could explain why participants in trade did not have to fight for space within their work environments was that all the women interviewed for the study were owners of their businesses, and therefore less likely to have been subjected to stereotypical or discriminatory treatment by their employees.

Attention has been drawn to the need to create safe workspaces for women due to the fact that the dearth of women in top management positions “heightens visibility and scrutiny” which have the potential of causing women to lose focus of their sense of purpose (Ibarra,

Ely & Kolb, 2013). When women have to persistently fight for recognition, belonging and respect at the workplace, there is a high probability that they will be less likable to their subordinates. Since performance evaluation is closely linked to likability, women leaders who are viewed to be insufferable will end up being evaluated less favourably (Parks-Stamm, Heilman & Hearn, 2008; Garcia 2008, Heilman, 2001). In the long run, many women's ambitions will be thwarted, and the glass ceiling phenomenon will be perpetuated.

4.2.1 Contending with Gender Stereotypes

Many women who have ambitions to rise to top management and leadership positions have been stopped by a number of social, cultural and organizational barriers. The most obvious and pervasive barrier has been the prescription of men's work and women's work based on what is identified as masculinity and femininity, with little tolerance for "deviation" (Wilson, 2005). Consistent with this, Ella recollects how a fellow male engineer reacted to seeing her in an office at the beginning of her career. She recounted thus:

“I was sitting behind my desk one day when this gentleman walked in, greeted me and then went to the Director General and [said] to my hearing, “Oh, is this your new secretary? The DG said no, and then he said, your new receptionist? He said, no, she's a colleague. He said, isn't she your girlfriend? So I said, excuse me, I'm sitting here, I can hear you. I'm a human being, if you want to know what I'm doing here, ask me. He said, oh, sorry, sorry, sorry, but, are you really an engineer? I said excuse me, what is wrong with me being an engineer? [Then he said] oh, you are too pretty for an engineer...then he went on to say “but why do you want to be an

engineer? Pretty girl like you, you could be a teacher, or a nurse or something. Why do you want to do all these brainy work?”

It must be noted that, gender stereotypes are often used as forms of social control to ensure that the status quo will be maintained (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Without a doubt, gender stereotypes serve to perpetuate women’s lower status in organizations. Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) draw attention to second generation gender biases as one of the main hindrances to women’s ascent to top leadership positions. These biases, which are hard to detect in organisations, are the subtle biases embedded in organizational practices. They create contexts that tell women who have managed to succeed that they are exceptions and women who have experienced setbacks that it is their own fault for failing to be sufficiently aggressive or committed to the job. Second generation gender biases are not necessarily intended to exclude, but still end up creating conditions in which “women fail to thrive to reach their full potential” (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013, p. 64).

Serwaa, a 38 year old politician and mother of two, has been faced with both overt and covert forms of gender stereotypes. To avert the threats of these biases on her career, she has often had to go on the campaign trail with her husband and children to assure her constituents that she was a responsible person and capable of exhibiting “motherly love” because she had children of her own. She asserted:

When I started campaigning, my opponents were using marriage against me. They will ask, this woman who wants to go into politics, is she married? But you can’t use marriage as the trump card to, I mean, for entering into politics. There are most of the men here who are not married, they are politicians, they are MPs. Oh, if you

are not married, that means, excuse me to say, you are a loose person, so you can't go into politics as a woman. But, that's wrong in the first place. Then, it was a matter of whether I had children or not. Because to them, if you can't take care of children, then you can't take care of a constituency; I just don't get how they do it to us women, and not the men.

Gender stereotypes are also used as control mechanisms (Prentice & Carranza, 2002) against women in organizations. Being agentic, emotionally stable and ambitious, which have been distinguished as traits of a leader, are also identified to be traits most valued in males rather than females (Chugh & Sahgal, 2007). As a result, when women exhibit such traits, they are "denigrated rather than rewarded" (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013, p. 63). Heilman (2001) asserts that gender stereotypes result in biased evaluations against women in organizations; that even when identical work is produced by men and women, unless the quality of the woman's work product is incontrovertible, the accomplishments are undervalued as compared to those of men. When Ella became the Director General of a state owned corporation, she was faced with such stereotypical evaluations. She shares an example:

When I became Director General, a whole delegation came to see me that because I'm a woman and younger than most of them, I look like a girl when I wear dresses. So basically, they feel like they have a girl ordering them around. So I started wearing a cloth, but, I don't do "akataso" [wrapper], and another delegation came that when I don't put on "akatasoo", I still look young. So the only alternative was to tie my hair. It's not something that I wanted to do by all means, it's something that I needed to do because, at least it helps some people. Later, I did a poll on what

is it that is bothering people about me, and the responses were so funny. One, I'm a woman, of course, two, no akatasoo, number three, I'm too strict, number four, I'm not ugly, you will be surprised, yes, this is a serious feedback, it's recorded.

Again, due to the pervasive nature of gender stereotypes, they tend to shape the popular thoughts concerning what women can do and what they cannot do. Heilman (2001, p. 661) argues that "stereotypes about women suggest that they will not be successful when they engage in activities traditionally reserved for men". As a result, when people are presented with correct information about a woman's achievement in an endeavour that is considered to be reserved for men, the easiest response is to reject it. Ella recollects how as a young engineer in Ghana, she helped build a facility in the country's capital. At the time, she was the only female with requisite qualification for building that facility in the country. When it was time for the project to be commissioned, the Minister asked her to walk out of the room, because to him, she could not be part of a team that had built something so phenomenal. Ella noted:

The Minister came in and asked people who were not connected to the satellite station to walk out. So they did, and then he saw me and shouted, "hey, young lady, go out, didn't you hear me?" The technicians were saying, oh, she's the satellite engineer, but this man wanted me out. Who is she with? Who brought her here? I'm sure he thought I am somebody's girlfriend. So I said, excuse me, I'm one of the engineers, but he didn't believe me. So the chief engineer pulled him aside and told him I was part of the team. So what is wrong with a woman being an engineer? So you see, they don't feel comfortable; they don't think that you should be; and

when you are, it's like you are an outsider. This is just to show you how men feel about women in fields that they consider theirs.

In spite of these biases, the women felt a strong impetus to pursue their careers and aspire for great achievements. Some processes, formal and informal, which women go through, can serve as a launch pad for the development of the necessary skills for their career advancement. Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) point out that, when women internalize a leadership identity and develop a sense of purpose, they are able to succeed and become leaders. The women in the study developed this sense of purpose and leadership traits early in their lives. Most of them were either prefects in school, or had the opportunity of doing volunteer work in their youthful years, which inculcated in them a sense of leadership even before they started their careers. This sense of leadership and purpose have also been seen to have helped them develop their self-efficacy to the extent that, they were not fazed by the gender stereotypes that met them.

4.2.2 Asserting rights

Assertiveness is a skill that is valued among leaders and required for success in any given field. Assertiveness has been defined as the capacity to effectively communicate in interpersonal encounters by sharing ideas clearly and directly (Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966, cited in Pearsall & Ellis, 2006). According to Ames (2008), assertiveness reflects how much a person is seen as speaking up for, defending, and pursuing her personal interests. However, African women are not expected to be assertive; rather, an ideal woman is one who is seen to be “submissive, passive and gentle” (Onyeizugbo, 2003, p. 12). Irrespective of this, participants in the study, having realized that without asserting themselves at the

workplace, they risk having their positions compromised, have devised different strategies, first to guarantee their statuses and then to have the necessary cooperation to focus on their work and be successful at it. Boatemaa says of herself:

I've been resilient enough to push forward and I'm not afraid to make my voice heard. Sometimes, we go for meetings and I'm the only woman there, but I don't keep quiet because of that. I believe that the man was invited to be there because he qualified to be there, and so was I. So, if I have something to say, I would say it and not feel intimidated by anybody.

Asserting one's rights implies that one needs to be tactful in knowing when and how to speak up for one's self and when to let things go. Ames (2008) documents the effectiveness of "situationally appropriate" assertiveness among leaders in organizations. He argues that "the level of assertiveness that is adaptive in one situation may not be effective in the next. Norms for assertiveness vary by culture, organization, relationship, task, and other contexts" (p. 383). When Naa became head of her department, she was relatively younger than the rest of her colleagues. This meant that she was confronted with the double challenge of being a woman in a leadership position and also being young. She narrates how she has dealt with the situation:

You come across males who try to disregard your achievements. I am relatively young so there are two things that work against me [being a woman and being young]. I think in the environment that we have now, it's not helpful for a woman in a male-dominated environment. So you find yourself constantly having to fight, but you learn to choose your battles, it's not everything that you have to face up to and spend time on. Choose your battles, I mean sometimes you have tell them

straight in the face that “you can’t do this. Why are you treating me this way? If I were a male, even at my age, you still wouldn’t do that”, and face up to them.

The participants in the study also showed that, merely asserting one’s rights did not guarantee that one would have the needed cooperation and support at work. There was the need to constantly work hard, plan and show commitment to one’s profession. In doing so, you are able to convince those who might even have wrong perceptions about you and your ability to live up to the expectation. Boatemaa describes this in the following manner, p.

I was the 2nd woman to join this faculty, and our status quo and culture do not favour women, so it is not easy for me to get in and rise to become head of department, but hard work, planning, and commitment have brought me this far.

Contrary to the existing literature that women with high educational attainment are more assertive than those with lower educational attainment (Onyeizugbo, 2003), the findings of this study indicated that being assertive was independent of one’s educational attainment. This may be due to the fact that, the participants in this study are people who have carved a niche for themselves in their fields of enterprise. It can, therefore, be argued that, assertiveness in women may be influenced by context but not by education or achievement.

4.2.3 Tackling sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (E.E.O.C) defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with one’s employment or work performance or creates a hostile or offensive work environment (U.S. E.E.O.C., 2011). A distinction has been made between legal and psychological definitions of sexual

harassment. According to O’Leary-Kelly et al. (2009), the legal definition entails two types of sexual harassment – quid pro quo and hostile work environment.

Quid pro quo, or something-for-something harassment involves threats to make employment-related decisions (e.g., hiring, promotion, termination) on the basis of target compliance with requests for sexual favours, whereas hostile work environment harassment involves sex-related conduct that "unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance" or creates "an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2009).

Participants from politics, who reported being sexually harassed and discriminated against, suffered either quid pro quo or hostile working environments. Oparebea is now an academic, but used to work in government, where she suffered different forms of both quid pro quo harassment and hostile working environments. She tells her story thus:

...later on, this man harassed me so much sexually. So much so that in the end he made me understand that he kind of approved my employment because as soon as he saw me, he was interested in me. That was one...two, in the course of my work at the Ministry, some of the top bosses also were upfront, and demanded to have sex with me or make me quit the job. There was a time when one of them closed his office on me and was going to force me to have sex with him, but this first person that I talked about actually came into my room one night at a workshop and it was a big struggle.

Sexual harassment is an extension of male control in society, based upon which men act to perpetrate women's subordination and vulnerability (Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, 2004). However, at the organizational level, it is worthy of mention that sexual harassment and sex-based discriminations are not meted out only to women in lower positions but also to women at top management levels. McLaughlin, Uggen & Blackstone (2012) point out that women in authority positions are most likely to face harassment and discrimination as men's reactions to threats to their manhood which is manifested through harassing women. When Wendy became the first female minister in a particular ministry in government, she recounts how her subordinates, whom she calls 'mafias' in the ministry came after her and meted out to her all manner of harassing behaviours, because that Ministry is known to be a man's terrain.

The eleven months I spent in that ministry were like eleven years in hell. I was very miserable the whole time. Due to oath of secrecy, I cannot talk about the details, but I was harassed by "mafias" in the ministry. They didn't think that a woman should come into the ministry, because it was a "macho" place and also because they thought as a woman I couldn't do the job ... some of the things they did to me, they wouldn't dare do to a man.

In Ghana, the conceptualization of sexual harassment is a recent phenomenon. Until recently, there was no policy on sexual harassment, mainly "due to the difficulty in conceptualizing the topic and the lack of hard data on the nature of harassment in Ghana" (Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, 2004, p. 8). Many of the actions that are currently conceptualized as sexual harassment were hitherto seen as an "affirmation of masculine authority in both private and public domains of gender relations" (Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, 2004, p. 7). This

fact has made it difficult to tackle sexual harassment in the country in times past, as victims were reluctant to report being harassed and perpetrators were confident they could get away with their actions. Indeed, Andoh (2001) asserts that over 90% of sexual harassment cases went unreported.

Irrespective of the lack of a national policy and the lack of support for victims of sexual harassment, participants who reported suffering sexual harassment were still able to surmount the challenges they were confronted with and did not quit the jobs nor give in to the pressures from the perpetrators. While for Oparebea, her spirituality and upbringing made her believe that she was capable of overcoming any challenge that came her way, Wendy had an inner drive to resist the challenges because she was conscious of the challenges she was likely to meet even before going into the ministry, and also because the President believed in her tenacity and strength to tackle any “mafia” in the ministry.

Oh, I just had a strong will. I’ve always been a “thick chrife” (strong Christian) and so I knew that I’m not supposed to be doing that. It helped me a lot, and also my upbringing helped. I always said to myself that if I could withstand my step-mother at a tender age, I could withstand any challenge now that I was older (Oparebea).

Well, when the President asked me to go and head the Ministry, he told me to go and clean it up because he couldn’t think of a better person to take on the “mafias” than me. We both knew how terrible that Ministry was, and so I was somewhat prepared. I’m happy that at the end of my time there, I had brought some sanity into

the ministry and I was able to leave with my reputation intact and my head held high (Wendy).

The participants from academia who reported experiencing covert forms of sexual harassment were quick to add that it ended quickly once they openly showed disapproval. This was done in most instances in very simple terms but deemed most effective because it made the perpetrators put an end to their actions. Kuukuwa recounts that after a few times of “straightening out” her colleagues, she was successful at putting an end to their advances.

Sometimes, my male colleagues would come to me and say “oh Kuukuwa, you’re wearing a nice dress today” and I’ll have to straighten them out and say, “would you like it if I commented on what you’re wearing?”...you know, such simple, basic things usually put an end to those things.

It is worthy of mention that until 2011, there was no official policy on sexual harassment in academia in Ghana. Bortei-Doku Aryeetey (2004, p. 25) also notes that “unwanted sexual advances” and “making complimentary remarks” were identified as components of sexual harassment by her study participants from the University of Ghana. This indicates that people within academic circles possess a good knowledge of what sexual harassment and the repercussions of such actions. As a result, they are less likely to perpetrate sexual harassment. Also, the literature on sexual harassment (McLaughlin, Uggem & Blackstone, 2012; Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, 2004) indicates that it is used mainly by males as a means of asserting their position of power over their female subordinate or asserting masculinity to female superiors.

The experiences of the participants above reflect the development of resilient self-efficacy in harmony with Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory which suggests that the development of a resilient sense of self-efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort.

In sum, this chapter discussed the lived experiences of some successful Ghanaian women as it related to their work and family lives. It was found that for many of these women, attaining success meant adopting different strategies that would prevent their careers from disturbing their homes. Some of these strategies include incorporating family vacations into work-related travels, relying on different support systems to craft a balance between the different facets of their lives and actively planning their time to meet the demands of their careers and home.

In addition to crafting work-life balance, the chapter also highlighted how participants surmounted some sex-based and gender discriminations. Those participants who faced these discriminations drew on internal strengths such as strong moral values, self-regulation and problem-solving skills to develop resilience and self-efficacy skills that helped them to become successful in their careers. In the face of gender stereotypes, participants also asserted themselves by insisting that their rights are not trampled upon. This helped them to prevent the risk of having their positions in the workplace compromised.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCEPTUALIZING AND EXPLAINING SUCCESS

5.0 Introduction

The everyday experiences of people contribute in many ways to determine their abilities to attain success in their personal and professional careers. In addition, the meanings people ascribe to the success they attain is instructive in determining how they will work to effect changes in their own lives and those of others around them. Since this study targeted successful women, it was intriguing to find out from participants how they defined success and how they explained the successes they currently enjoy.

As a researcher who went into the field with a personal construction of success and selected participants based on their professional achievements, it was important to allow the participants to give their personal conceptualizations and explanations of success. Allowing participants to construct their own meanings is one of the key elements of phenomenology, the methodological foundation of this study. Exploring the participants' conceptions and explanations of success helped to shed some light on how they construct their identities and helping to understand how they conduct themselves in a society that, to a large extent, remains patriarchal. Byrne (2003) distinguishes between self and social identities:

Self-identity expresses individual values and preferences, specifying the uniqueness of the person while social identity captures what we hold in common, what we share in terms of experiences with other people of the same sex, 'race',

ethnic group, class or marital status. Social identities can also refer to roles, occupations, social positions or even stereotypes emphasizing real or imagined shared personal attributes, moral orientation or abilities which are believed to signify enduring features of a person's life (Byrne, 2003, p. 445).

Thus understanding of how successful women in Ghana construct their self and social identities is important for understanding their motivations and strategies for serving as agents of change in Ghana's development.

5.1 Conceptions of Success

McAndrews & Ha-Brookshire (2013) argue that meanings of success may be measured objectively or subjectively depending on the person's professional and personal goals. However, due to the fact that women belong to different social groups, the expectations and behavioural patterns required of each group is likely to result in identity conflicts, which can create difficulties in understanding professional and personal successes. Wagner & Wodak (2006) also sought to understand the ambivalence successful women exhibit in their self-presentations and concluded that women who experience some difficulty in attaining work-life balance are more likely to exhibit ambivalence or passivity in their self-presentations.

While the assertions of Wagner & Wodak (2006) are applicable to women globally, the literature on African and Ghanaian women is silent on the factors that determine successful women's identity formation and self-presentation. This section of the chapter, therefore, highlights, among other things, the different meanings successful women in Ghana give to

success in order to get a culturally relevant understanding of Ghanaian women's definitions of success.

Responses to the questions of whether they considered themselves as successful and the factors that have contributed to their successes were varied. The responses were of two kinds, those who readily answered in the affirmative and those who could not, but rather reconstructed the concept of success to mean an improvement in one or more conditions in their lives and being content or happy. Further to this, the latter were also categorized into two groups; those who deferred that judgement to others and those who considered success not as an event but as a continuum. The different conceptualizations of success as given by participants are discussed below.

5.1.1 Then and Now

For those participants who readily affirmed their success, they mainly considered the “then and now” of their lives, comparing the socio-economic backgrounds and social settings of their families while growing up and their social standing now. It was stimulating to note that, in describing their present circumstances, while some of them placed great value on their financial standing, the majority focused on non-financial indicators such as the influence they exert in society. Cecilia is a typical example of those who conceptualised their current success in terms of their financial standing.

When I look at myself and my classmates from primary school, my mates from the university, and then I look at how far I have gone, and what is left for me to achieve depending [based] on the career pattern I have taken, I have achieved a lot.

Serwaa, who is a politician on the other hand represents those who described their success in non-financial terms. She considers the fact that she is the first woman to contest and win at the primaries of her party's elections and went on to win at the constituency level as an indication of success in her career.

Looking at where I came from, and then my constituency, no woman has contested a seat before. And this time, not just any woman, but a woman coming from within the party delegates itself, I think yes. I think I've been very, very successful

Still others measured their success in both financial and non-financial terms. Annie for example compared the economic status of her family while she was growing up with her current financial standing, as well as what she has been able to achieve in her career. For her, these two factors are evidence that she has been successful.

It depends on where I started from, the level, and how far God has brought me; it depends on what I did not have and what I have now; it depends on if I look back towards my childhood and everything and where I am now, I never imagined it. Very, very few women in Ghana are like me, at the level that God has brought me to.

A few of the participants could not readily affirm their success and instead regarded it as a continuum implicitly considered the "then and now" of their lives as well. They employed phrases such as "achievements", "improvements", "better", etc., in their conceptualizations, but insisted that they could still do better.

5.1.2 A journey, not a destination

Another group of participants were of the belief that success is a journey and as such, as long as a person is alive, there are things to do and improve upon one's self. For this group of participants, a person cannot consider herself successful so long as there is some work to do, something to do to improve one's self or some objective to achieve. Such sentiments were expressed by Boatemaa, Ada and Cecilia, though their conceptualizations differ in subtle ways. According to Boatemaa:

Success is relative and there's always room for improvement, but I think I've done well for myself. There is always room for improvement and so no matter how well I've done and will do, I can always improve upon it so long as I have life.

Ada reinforced Boatemaa's views thus:

I think until the day I die, I will be working on one thing or the other. For me, I think success is about what I've become in all I'm doing. Am I a more compassionate person, am I a person who is interested in other people's lives, and am I a person who respects other people? If I can answer yes to all these questions, then, of course I'm successful, but I'm not sure it's up to me to answer these questions...except that I'm becoming more matured as I keep working.

Cecilia summed it all as:

Success is a ladder. I see it as a ladder, to some extent, I won't say I have achieved everything, but I have achieved a lot. I still have a lot of things to do. It's not completed yet, but there is a lot of improvement.

As far as these three participants above are concerned, a person cannot conclusively say she is successful because there is always one thing or another that one could do to improve upon one's achievements and successes. It is, therefore, important that one considers the improvements one has made upon her life from one point to the other and pay attention to those, rather than to say that one has been successful.

5.1.3 Other people's judgement

Closely related to the above group's conceptualization of success, is that of those who believe that the judgement of whether one is successful or not should be made by other people, and not them. Laura captures this sentiment succinctly when she argues:

You see, I think that is for other people to judge. In my own view, there is always something you could have done better. Looking back, I could have probably strategized better even if it is not clear to me how but I think I have been more successful in some areas than others. It is hard for me to judge whether I have been successful or not. All I know is that I have done some things better than I have done others.

The reasons Laura gives for not being able to judge her success resonates with the findings of Wagner & Wodak (2006). Because Laura experienced some difficulty in finding a balance between her work and family life, she exhibited some form of ambivalence in presenting herself as successful and still believed that, there were things she could have done better. This is irrespective of the fact that she admitted to have "turned around" the centre which she was heading at the time of the interview, and could also recount some successes she had chalked in the course of her career as a woman.

Elize, on the other hand, believes that if she decides that she is successful, there is the tendency for her to become complacent, but once she leaves that judgement to other people, she could only strive to work harder and do better than she has done. She elaborates:

There is a saying that the salt does not praise itself (sic), so I also cannot look at myself and judge whether I'm successful or not. It is other people who will look at me and say "look at that woman, she has done A, B, C and D and so she is very successful". If I sit down and say I'm successful, then I will not be inclined to do anything else.

5.1.4 God's grace and hard work

The African has been described as notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1989), to the extent that religion is thought to be responsible for shaping the character and culture of the people. Baffoe (2013, p. 305) alludes to the fact that "Africans are spiritual by nature and hold strong beliefs in and their reverence for a Supreme Being, spirits and their ancestors." While these authors may have a point to a great extent, findings from this study show that, although people place a lot of emphasis on the God-factor in their achievements, they do not discount other factors such as hard work in determining whether they would be successful or not.

Many of the participants believe that success is the result of grace from above (the Supreme Being). Elize believes that success is the result of hard work and dedication to God's work. She believes that all the success she enjoys in her career, marriage and personal life started

after she decided to dedicate more time to her church activities. She states that the more one dedicates herself to doing God's work, the more one's hard work is rewarded with success. Elize's conception of success as the result of her dedication to God's work reflects the doctrines of faith gospel theology. It has been asserted that "the basic tenet of faith gospel theology is that the children of God, defined as born-again Christians who abide by Biblical principles are supposed to be wealthy" (Darkwah, 2001, p.11).

When you work hard and you are also dedicated to God, He rewards you. It was my husband and I who introduced our church to Ghana, and we have worked hard to spread it across the country. I believe God saw all that we did and so He also blessed us.

For Jenny, since success is the result of God's blessings, one needs to be humble when one is successful. Her conception of success and how a successful person should behave is rather reflective of orthodox Christian teachings that emphasize that when a person humbles him/herself, s/he will be exalted. For instance, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax collector recorded in Luke 18:9 – 14, the Pharisee was criticized for boasting about his achievements and the parable ends with an admonition that "... everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (verse 14b, KJV).

Jenny emphasized:

It is God who blesses me with everything, so I don't have to show off. I need to give glory to God and humble myself.

For some participants, God's grace was necessary but not sufficient for success; they were of the belief that without working hard, one could not attain success, even when one was enjoying the grace of God. This is how Oparebea, Shelly, Elize and Jenny who affirmed

that they considered themselves as successful explained their success, highlighting the importance of hard work in bringing success to a person. Oparebea explains:

I think it's all God's grace, it's all God's grace, yes, but God's grace doesn't mean you don't have to do anything. So it's God's grace, it's a lot of hard work; it is the upbringing that says you have to do it and the hard work that I was groomed to embrace.

For Oparebea, success is the result of many interconnecting factors, chief of which is God's grace, but she also emphasises hard work on one's part and having an attitude that does not allow one to give up. In like manner, Shelly believes that success is mainly hinged on God's grace and hard work. She asserts:

God and hard work. I mention these two because without God, you cannot be successful, but then, that also doesn't mean that you become lazy and expect God to drop everything into your laps. If you are hardworking, God also rewards your work with success. So I will bring everything down to these two factors.

As can be observed, central to the conceptualisation of the factors contributing to their respective successes is the place of God. This attribution notwithstanding, all the four were quick to delimit the place of God by including factors such as hard work, dedication and a commitment to their respective careers. The interplay of both the God factor and self-attributions presents a thought-provoking perspective into the presence and fusion of both orthodox Christian beliefs and a more recent faith gospel teaching about success and prosperity. The view that children of God, made in His image are meant to be successful and prosperous is central to Christian teachings. However, faith gospel theology emphasises the role of the person in attaining success, while orthodox Christian teachings

de-emphasize personal contributions to success and rather underscores the grace of God as the key determining factor in one's success (See Proverbs 10:22, NIV).

5.1.5 Ability to marshal resources

Some of the participants also indicated that, for them, once they are able to marshal the resources they need to help themselves and other people, they are successful. For Naana who is an entrepreneur, so long as she can pool resources together to get what she needs, and also seek audience with anybody, irrespective of the person's social standing, then she is successful. She indicated:

Indeed I'm very successful. As I speak with you now, I can seek audience with the President, and I can go very low to speak to whoever you consider to be the lowest person. If there is something I need, nothing will stop me from getting it. Success is not about money, you see, it's about being able to decide what you want for yourself and going for it.

Similarly, Afi notes:

I am able to marshal resources and get things done. I don't think there is anything I cannot do, and even some of the things that I've done, some men cannot boast of them, so I'm very successful. I believe that I'm the Yaa Asantewaa⁵ of my generation. I take pride in my femininity and I'm proud to be a woman.

These women believe that an important determinant of success is bringing resources together to achieve a specific goal. While Naana explicitly talks about accessing and

⁵ Yaa Asantewaa was an Ashanti queen mother who led the Ashanti rebellion known as the War of the Golden Stool, also known as the Yaa Asantewaa war, against British colonialism in 1900,

marshalling human resources, Afi mentions resources in general terms and does not make reference to any particular kind of resource, but the underlying factor for both of them, as well as other participants in the study is that once a person, especially a woman, is able to identify needs and marshal resources to meet those needs, then she can be considered successful.

Balungile (2010) captures the sentiments of the participants above in her argument that access to resources alone is not a sufficient prerequisite for empowerment. Improved access to resources will only transform into empowerment outcomes if women are able to act or exercise their agency to achieve desired outcomes. This is a reflection of Kabeer's (1999) empowerment model, which talks about resources, agency and outcomes as the determinants of empowerment.

5.1.6 Being happy/content

Being happy and content featured strongly among participants when answering whether they considered themselves successful or not. Claudette and Wendy link their contentment and happiness with their achievements, but while Claudette takes a more holistic approach – bringing her physical, mental and emotional wellbeing into consideration – Wendy bases her contentment on the feedback she gets from people about her achievements. Claudette notes:

I mean if I wasn't happy within myself, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, I will not be successful at anything but I think that when I look at myself; spiritually,

physically, everything ... I think I'm happy within myself and I think that that is because I have achieved most of the things I set out to achieve in my life.

Wendy on the other hand says:

I'm an achiever. In fact if you mention Ghana's top women achievers, I think I should be among the top twenty. I'm talking about my contemporaries, not the older generation. People tell me I've done a lot and I'm a role model for younger people.

Although the above participants conceptualize success based on happiness or contentment and link it to their achievements, Ella conceptualizes success to mean being intrinsically happy. Curiously, she did not link this happiness to an achievement but tacitly to her personality.

I think life is about being content and I'm very content. Life is about being happy, I'm a very happy person. I am such that you can't get me down, no matter what you do. I am content, I am very happy, I enjoy my life in every bit of the sense. So if that is what you call success, then I am one of the most successful people in the whole world.

Ella's linkage of her contentment to her personality is consistent with findings by Lounsbury et al., (2004) and Lounsbury, et al., (2003), in which strong correlations were found between personality traits, career satisfaction and life satisfaction.

5.1.7 Having “successful” children

Some participants reflected on their roles as mothers and interpreted success in terms of how well they were doing in meeting their domestic responsibilities. . In a society where womanhood is defined as being in a heterosexual marriage and having children (Byrne,

2003), these participants felt it necessary to define their success in their roles as mothers.

Naa indicated:

Well, I think that I'm successful professionally and domestically. I mean if you meet my children, you meet children that are cultured, children that look well-taken care of. They are also doing well in their own lives. My daughter was, I think two years ago, one of the winners of a reading competition. Yes and my son was the senior prefect in his school.

Mrs Mingle emphasized the point more aptly:

All four of my children have completed university and some have even started their masters. Actually, we're grooming my last child to come and take over the business after his masters, but I have never been to the university before, so it's a source of pride for me.

As can be seen from the narratives of Naa and Mrs Mingle, it was important for them to highlight how well their children were doing and use that as a yardstick to measure their own success. Conspicuously missing in their interpretations, however, were the roles participants played as wives, although almost all of them were married or had ever been married. This could be accounted for by the fact that, generally within the Ghanaian traditional setting, husbands are responsible for their wives, while mothers are primarily responsible for their children. For this reason, when analysing whether they are successful or not, the women paid less attention to their roles as wives and placed more emphasis on the accomplishments of their children.

The findings on the participants' conceptualization of success extend the work of Wagner & Wodak (2006) who argue that it is not only a difficulty in balancing work and family life that make successful women exhibit ambivalence and passiveness in their self-presentations, but rather, they employ different strategies that balance "existing discourses of success with their own ideas of what constitutes achievement and their own constructed self-presentations" (Wagner & Wodak, 2006, p. 402). In like manner, for the participants in this study, the ambivalence and passivity exhibited in their self-presentations as successful women are a reflection of their religion, their personal constructs of what success is about and their personal as well as societal expectations of them.

5.2 Explanations for Success

After participants had given the different ways they conceptualized success, the next point of interest was to find the different explanations they gave to their successes. All participants were asked the factors to which they would attribute their successes even if they had difficulty conceptualising themselves as successful.

5.2.1 Happy childhoods

Although childhood has been discussed in the literature pertaining to success among women, the focus has been on birth rank (Mussen et al., 1979), the influence of older brothers, compared to older sisters (White, Cox & Cooper, 1997) and whether one came from a larger or smaller family (Beoku-Betts, 2000). In this section, the spotlight is thrown on the importance of positive childhood experiences in determining success in later life.

Ranasinghe (2008) documents the importance of childhood experiences in ensuring success among women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. He argued that childhood experiences, particularly those pertaining to the level of training the women received is critical. To him, this occurs

“...where responsibilities were given and women were exposed to an environment which encouraged independence and creative exploration. This environment of independence laid the foundation that enabled them to portray strong personalities able to handle problems and challenges through their journey to success” (p.96).

Some participants in this study recall having happy childhoods, where they were given room to explore, to portray their skills, and to develop their talents as some of the factors which they believe have contributed to the development of those personality traits that ensured success in their adult lives. Cecilia recounts her childhood in the following manner:

I was a very outgoing person as a child. I liked to play and to socialize, I liked talking in my childhood. I remember my parents used to tell me I used to answer all the questions in the house. If someone knocked at the gate, I would be there... and I would tell them all the things they didn't even need to know at the gate before they even entered the house

Cecilia is a scientist in academia and believes that being a happy-go-lucky child and being allowed the freedom to express herself, ask questions and answer questions helped her to develop the skills needed to become a scientist. For Naana, a fashion designer, living in a family where she was left to herself most of the time engendered creativity in her. Beoku-

Betts (2000) talks about how coming from a large family fostered some competition and cooperation in African women, helping them to choose careers in the sciences. Naana's experience adds to Beoku-Betts' (2000) arguments about the advantages larger families have for the girl child in allowing her the space to become creative. Naana recounts:

Even as a child, I used to sew for my dollies and I was very creative about it; doing different things and making different styles, but it was not just the sewing. I remember myself picking up empty milk tins and pretending to be in a shop, talking to myself, etc. Sometimes I just pretended to be selling rice in these milk tins. I would advise that one good thing is to give children the opportunity to be adventurous; just leave them to explore, but of course in a safe environment. Most of the time, I was left to myself, so I used to imagine and do all sorts of things. I enjoyed being all by myself to think and imagine things. Being left by myself made me think, imagine and explore my world.

In Paulina's case, having parents who encouraged her to strive for excellence is the deciding factor that has helped her attain a doctorate degree at the age of 28 years. She recounts that once she knew she would be rewarded, she always strove to do well in school.

I remember my parents instituted a reward system for me where every time I did well in school, I would be given some sort of reward. Because of this, I always strove to come first in class so that I would get that reward, whether it was a bicycle or whatever I wanted so badly.

The narratives of the participants above give credence to the fact that when children are raised in an enabling environment where they are happy, encouraged and given the

opportunity to explore, it fosters a can-do attitude that helps them to strive for and attain success in their adult lives.

5.2.2 Enduring hardships in childhood

Somewhat divergent from the findings of Rodin & Stewart (2012), where social support in childhood contributed to the development of resilience, for some of the participants in this study, whose experiences contrast sharply with those in the previous section, it was the lack of social support in childhood, and the sense that they needed to survive on their own that caused them to develop resilience.

This group of participants attribute the success they are enjoying in their adult lives to having to endure hardships in their childhood which made them stronger and resilient. It has been asserted that individuals who develop resilience early in life are able to overcome personal and career adversity; thereby becoming successful in later years. “One component of resiliency that is closely associated with work success is having flexibility and openness to change in one’s approach to daily schedules, assignments, and work-related activities” (Burke & Attridge, 201, pp. 178 – 9).

Cyrułnik (2009) defines resilience as the ability to succeed, to live, and to develop in a positive way ... despite the stress or adversity that would normally involve the real possibility of a negative outcome. This definition of resilience has broad applicability over different situations, and is therefore apt for analysing the hardships which participants faced in childhood and how they leveraged on these to succeed in their adult lives.

Indeed, Masten & Gewirtz (2006, cited in Burke & Attridge, 2011) argue that having a modest level of early negative experiences may have been a direct benefit to the individual through creating a “stress inoculation effect” in which one learns valuable coping skills for life’s problems. Consistent with this argument, Elize, a respondent who has founded a hospital reported that, the hardships she endured in her childhood made her so resilient that, later on in her life, she realized she had become very resourceful. She was able to overcome any adversity she met by looking for options and “other ways” by which she could resolve whatever the problem was. Other participants also had to truncate their education at certain points and work for a while, in order to save money for school which gave them resilient spirits. Elize recounts her experience:

...I lost my father when I was 4 years old. When I grew up a little, in order to pay my school fees, I used to do cocoa, you know, what we call “abusa⁶”, I did cocoa abusa whereby after harvesting the cocoa, you divide the dried beans into three, then you will take one third, and the owner will take two-thirds. So it was through that, and then I go round in the bush, collect firewood during the holidays and sell the firewood, in order to get enough money for my school fees and other school expenses.

Margie also narrates her childhood experience as:

My father had many children, and could not afford to take us all to school, so I had to stop schooling at many points, work for a while and save before I could go back

⁶ Abusa is a system of share-cropping where the landowner allows a tenant to use the land in return for two-thirds of the crops produced on the land.

to school...life throws many challenges at you, but it's up to you to decide what you're going to do with those challenges. And in any case, I've still made something for myself, haven't I? You are interviewing successful women for your study and here you are interviewing me as well.

Coincidentally, all the participants who reported financial difficulties in childhood were from the trade category. No respondent from academia or politics reported having to find ways of funding her education while growing up. This, however, does not mean that participants from academia and politics did not have to endure some other hardships in their childhoods.

Oparebea, an academic, like the majority of the participants in Rodin & Stewart's (2012) study, suffered some emotional abuse and neglect when she lived with a "wicked" stepmother. However, unlike Rodin & Stewart's participants, she did not rely on social support to develop the resilience that she is seen to be exhibiting now. Rather, she attributes her resilience to the psychological adaptive mechanisms she employed, which is also consistent with some of the findings of Rodin & Stewart (2012). She reported that with a deep level of spirituality, even at a young age, she developed a sense of inner strength, a positive attitude, self-esteem, sympathy and optimism about every situation. This attitude helped her to resist sexual harassment at the beginning of her career and later to have the right attitude to overcome obstacles in her personal and professional aspirations. Oparebea recalls:

Somehow my stepmother, she wasn't really a mother to us. I mean the very typical, dirty, unclean, I mean...the hateful stepmother who did not really behave like a

mother to us. She wasn't good towards all of us, almost all of us, but especially me.... It got to a point my father moved me to go and live with my aunt, my mother's sister, but that made me tough. When I left her (stepmother's) house, I had the attitude that I could take on the world and conquer it...I made it through because I knew that God will not let any challenge that is greater than my abilities come to me.

It is also evident in this study that not only did enduring hardships make participants develop resilience, but it also served as a motivating factor to propel them toward success. The participants applied the hardships they endured in their childhoods as propellers to aspire for better lives for themselves and their children. They saw the hardships as something to avoid in the future and also to ensure that, their children will not have to suffer the same fate that they did. Elize again recalls how being teased in school for wearing second hand clothes made her resolve to make a better life for herself and her children. When being teased in school began to affect her studies, she decided she was not going to "subject" her children to the same ordeal. She lamented:

In middle school we had to go to church in a white uniform, and my mum couldn't afford to buy me a white uniform, so she bought me "obroni waawu" [second hand dress]. Those dresses have some peculiar smell in it, and so my colleagues, they just teased me! "Oh, look at her, she's wearing obroni waawu, and by then *The Ramblers*⁷ had released that "obroni waawu" song, and so these people will be following me and singing this song after me. I was so miserable that I told myself

⁷ Formed in 1962 as a result of the big band highlife boom, the Ramblers were one of Ghana's most popular touring and recording group throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

I'll work hard so that my children will never have to wear “obroni waawu” in their lives.

5.2.3 Relationships with fathers

Sriram & Sandhu (2013) highlight the important roles fathers play in ensuring their children's success in life, which are embedded in the Indian culture. These authors argue that “the well-known collection of letters written by the late Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter Indira Gandhi validate the key role that Indian fathers have played in their daughters' success” (p. 164).

Many of the participants attributed their success to the close relationships they enjoyed with their fathers during their childhood periods. Although they also had good relationships with their mothers, the participants believe that, the relationships they had with their fathers were a more determining factor in ensuring that they developed the requisite skills for attaining success later in their lives. This was eloquently captured by Laura's narrative of her childhood experiences:

I think a very important childhood experience for me was my closeness to my father. My father was very close to his children and especially to his daughters. I think you build a lot of confidence when you are close to your parents, and if a girl is close to her father, she becomes even more confident. She learns to, in my view, hold her own in the company of men, because you can communicate with men, and I think that is very important.

In Laura's case, the close relationship she had with her father helped her to develop self-confidence such that men did not intimidate her. This later became an accessory for her, when she went to a co-educational secondary school and university, where she had to compete with males. She believed that, the close relationship she had built with her father and the confidence she had developed as a result helped her to successfully manage the competition with her male classmates even when she always came up tops in her class. Naa shares similar sentiments about her father:

I think that the outlook of my parents, particularly my dad has contributed a great deal, because he always let us know that anything was possible for us, you know.

He was a very, very loving man, a caring father and extremely supportive.

For Naa, having a father who encouraged her and made her know that she was capable of doing and achieving anything she set her mind to achieving was the key to the success that she is now enjoying in her career. Because of that motivation and support she received from her father, she went through life believing that she could be anything she set her mind to becoming, and this made her able to prevail over challenges that came her way.

Serwaa attributes her decision to enter into politics to the mentorship she received from her father. Though not a politician himself, he was very passionate about politics and would always discuss political issues with her. He always encouraged her to visit the constituency and do what she could to improve the lives of the people. While she was an accountant, she would team up with her father to get funding for one project or another in the community. It was only a matter of time before she got into full time politics with her father as her campaign manager. She disclosed thus:

I lived with my father from the age of three. I am very close to my father. I mean we are very, very close. Apart from God, he is the next person I look up to. He has influenced me; all the decisions that I have taken, I mean he has influenced me positively. He supports me, he guides me and even now, he's still there for me.

Although in Hennig & Jardim's (1978) study, many successful women identified strongly with their fathers, they attributed their success to the fact that their fathers engaged them in activities normally reserved for sons (cited in White, Cox & Cooper, (1997). The above findings take the argument further by emphasizing the supportive, motivational and guiding roles that fathers play in their daughters' lives which also become antecedents for ensuring their success in later years.

Johnson (2013, p. 10) asserts that "fathers teach their daughters how to be independent and how to be secure but at the same time living within a society that is dominated by men". This argument is what Laura, Naa, Serwaa and Ada have expressed about the relationship they enjoyed with their fathers and how such relationships have translated into success in their careers.

Extending the argument further, it was found in this study that, while fathers played significant roles in the development of their daughters' self-confidence, other male figures in the lives of participants were influential. These male figures included significant others such as uncles, headmasters, class teachers and even older brothers. Paulina recounted the instrumental roles her class two teacher and her uncle played in her life. She narrated that

being a very shy and introverted child, it was her class two teacher who “discovered” her academic prowess and teamed up with her parents to nurture her. After this, spending vacations with her uncle who was a professor, right from primary school to the university influenced her career choice as an academic.

Initially, it was my class two teacher who discovered that I was really intelligent and started paying attention to me. He always made sure that I answered questions in class and even followed my progress when I left his class to other classes...but I think deciding to go into academia was influenced by my uncle. He was a professor and I used to spend vacations in his house. Maybe I should say he mentored me to become a lecturer.

In the case of Shelly, it was her older brother who influenced and inspired her to aspire for success. Having an older brother who was elected a school prefect made her competitive, so that she could also enjoy some of the attention and praise showered on the brother. She has engaged in a “friendly competition” with her brother ever since.

I remember when my brother became school prefect in class six. That day when he came home, my parents showered lots of praises on him and were congratulating him. For the rest of the week, it was as if he was the only person that existed in the family. So this made me resolve that, I’ll do whatever it took to also become school prefect when I got to class six, in order to get some of those praises too, and I did! So since then, it’s like, everything my brother does, I also try to do same or even better than him.

Similar sentiments were shared by Elize:

Ever since we were children, and even now, I always tried to either compete with my older brother and beat him or emulate him for one thing or the other. But since he was older, he understood and encouraged me all the way.

Ada not only enjoyed a close relationship with her father but also with her elder brother, whom she followed around most of the time. Like Laura, Ada believes that being in the company of her brother and his friends made her develop a lot of confidence as a girl

My dad was very close to his daughters. He was very keen on us and always supported and encouraged us to strive hard to achieve whatever we wanted to achieve in life. I was also very close to my elder brother and would follow him everywhere he went to. He was much older and in a band, so following him around, I became kind of “tom-boyish”, and I think that made me quite confident as a young lady.

The experiences of Shelly and Elize reflect Beoku-Betts’ (2000) findings of women scientists whose brothers motivated them in creative and competitive ways to attain high academic achievements.

5.2.4 Mentors and Role models

Mentors and role models are identified as crucial to individual growth and development (Latu et al., 2013, Gibson, 2004; Krumboltz, 1996; Sai, 1995). Indeed, it is suggested that people who tend to become successful in their careers are those who identify with role models. As a result, individuals are encouraged to seek role models to help them achieve their goals (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Mentors have been differentiated from role models, on the basis of the kind of relationships that exist between the person and the one

whom s/he wants to model his/her behaviour after. Gibson (2004, p. 137) defines mentors as “persons who provide advice and support to a protégé through an interactive relationship”. A role model, on the other hand, has been defined as someone whose life and activities influence another person in some way (Basoc & Howe, 1979, cited in Quimby & DeSantis, 2006).

The concept of role modelling, rooted in social learning theory, which later became the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), is such that people observe the behaviour of others in a particular situation and their outcomes, and use that knowledge to model their own behaviours, with expectations of similar outcomes (Singh, Vinnicombe & James, 2006). According to Chung (2000), role models are useful in the ways that they inspire the person to believe in the possibility of attaining goals, especially when they are believed to have similar characteristics. Mentors, on the other hand, have the defining quality of “taking an active interest in and action to define the protégé’s career by providing developmental assistance (Higgins & Kram, 2001, p. 268, cited in Gibson, 2004, p. 138).

In spite of the advantages role models and mentors are known to have for women, one of the identified barriers to women’s professional advancement is the lack of role models and mentors (Catalyst, 2003, cited in Singh, Vinnicombe & James, 2006). Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013, p. 64) assert that “fewer role models can suggest to young would-be leaders that being a woman is a liability and thus discourage them” from pursuing career success. Tharenou (2005) also argues that women need mentors more than men due to the gender discrimination, male hierarchies and lack of informal networks that confront women.

Although it is asserted that mentors provide their protégés with “visibility, credibility, legitimacy and access to her sponsor’s networks” (Tharenou, 2005, p. 79), findings from this study indicate that, participants identified role models and mentors in their childhoods and this helped them to shape their behaviours, attitudes and aspirations, as well as their career choices. For many of the participants, these role models and mentors were people with whom they had an informal relationship.

While some of these older people took a keen interest in and actively participated in shaping the participants’ career paths, others were only influential in the sense that the participants looked up to them and fashioned their own lives in such a way that they would reflect that of the role model. For Laura, her mother’s friends mentored her when she was young, introducing her to community activities such as the Red Cross, Girls’ Scout and the like. Through this mentoring, she wanted to become a social welfare officer, and though she ended up in academia, she still works actively in community-driven activities. She observed thus:

I think it was the kind of mentoring that some of my mother’s friends gave me...she had friends who were public officials and they were very fond of me and often gave me ideas. I remember one of them used to call me Social Welfare officer. So when I went to University and my father’s friends asked me, what I wanted to be, I said I wanted to be a social welfare officer.

Laura identifies one of her lecturers at the University as the one who influenced her decision to enter into academia. She admired the fact that the lecturer was also a family

woman and was able to make time for both her family and work. Singh, Vinnicombe & James (2006) point out that the way in which some high profile women manage their work/life balance is an issue of great interest since women who manage this well are role models for many younger female managers. She opined thus:

I think one of my professors at Tech (KNUST) taught me sociology and we became friends and I admired her a lot. She was a family person, she was a very good lecturer and when we became good friends, at the weekends she would come and pick me up [take me] to her house, especially on Sundays to go and have lunch.

Some participants also identified their mothers as role models. Although they did not recognize the strength their mothers embodied and exhibited when they were younger, as they grew up, they got to appreciate their mothers more, and therefore quickly identified their mothers as role models. The roles mothers play in providing inspiration for their daughters can be categorized into visible and invisible roles. In the visible roles, the efforts of the mothers are readily seen by their daughters, in terms of the attitudes, composure and examples they set and these caused the daughters to model their behaviours after the mothers.

Cathy identifies her mother as her role model due to the visible role she saw and heard her mother playing in her family. She narrates that although her mother was a school drop-out, she valued the merits of education and therefore strove to have all her children educated to the highest levels, irrespective of her socio-economic status. This effort Cathy saw her mother put into her and her siblings' education made her identify her mother as a role model. Cathy narrates her story thus:

I think it was basically my parents, especially my mother. She dropped out in class three. There was something she always said. She said she doesn't want us to suffer like her, like in terms of education. She didn't want us to lack education. So she really invested a lot in our education. So it was basically our parents. So for me, my parents were an inspiration, they cherished education, though they didn't get much. Ella also recounted how she admired the strength her mother exhibited while she was growing up. She narrated that her mother was a hands-on person who would not wait for help before she would fix something that was broken in the home, and even when she needed to get help, she would first try her hands at fixing things first. This attitude her mother exhibited inculcated the sense of being able to do anything in Ella, making her grow up with the attitude that she can do everything she sets her mind on. She believes her interest in engineering and her hands-on attitude came from her mother, whom she has emulated from childhood up to now. Ella summarizes the point:

If there is one woman that I admire and will always admire even if she wasn't my mother, is my mother. You know, here's a woman who cooks everything that you can buy on the streets and she does it in such a way that it's so effortless and it always comes out great. She makes all our clothes, she fixes things, her blender breaks, she will fix it, her sewing machine spoils, she will fix it. And she will do it, not like, "oohh, bueee!!" (with wailing), you know, no! She will just go and do whatever she can do. If she gets to the point where she can't do it, yes she will get help, but not with frustration and irritation, nothing. And I think attitude is bigger than anything else.

The invisible roles, on the other hand, are more a product of reflections by the daughters which made them begin to understand and appreciate their mothers' roles more in their adult lives. The participants who now identify their mothers as role models report that, in their adult lives, some circumstances have made them appreciate the roles their mothers played in their lives more, and for such reasons, they cannot think of a more appropriate role model than their mothers. Annie only got to realize how strong her mother was, after her death when she got the opportunity to read her mother's letters and diaries. She disclosed thus:

In fact, I didn't have a role model as a young person, but now when you ask me, I'd say it's my mother. When she died and I got the opportunity to read her letters and diaries, it struck me how strong she was...she always made sure we were okay and she always had a smile on her face, but from her letters, you can tell that she herself was very far from okay. She never gave the impression that she was going through lots of emotional and physical turmoil, she never let it on. So now, I would readily tell you my mother is my role model. She was a very strong woman.

Boatema, on the other hand, now identifies her mother as a role model due to the fact that with age, bearing children and having to combine her career with motherhood, she has come to appreciate more the strength her mother exhibited when she was younger.

Actually my mother was my role model because though she was not educated, she was hardworking and put all her children through school. In fact, when I think of her lack of education, the challenges of her time and what she was able to achieve for herself and us, I think with all my education and so-called empowerment, I don't match up to her. She was also a disciplinarian and I loved her for her ingenuity.

5.2.5 Role of education

The critical roles of education in breaking poverty cycles and ensuring success have been and continue to be stressed in development literature and discourse. It is considered to be key to reducing group inequalities, as schooling is particularly thought to play a pivotal role in the success of minority and vulnerable groups, as well as to help reduce the gender wage gaps over the past few decades (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). Finland, which is noted for its top-ranking position in the United Nations gender-related indices attributes the high standing to women's higher enrolment ratios in education and their gains in closing the gender gap in earned income (Schlosser, 2001).

Riddell (2004) alludes to the private returns on education which accrue to the individual as a result of being educated. These private returns include improved health and longevity and greater job satisfaction, among others. For the participants in this study, all the success they enjoy today, can be attributed primarily to the education they received. Irrespective of whether they are from academia, trade or politics, they believe that without education, they would not find themselves where they are today. They also believe that, the exposure education has afforded them has made them more aware of happenings around the world, and therefore empowered them as well. Chrissy is of the view that since she comes from an area in Ghana that is well noted for trading, if she had not been educated, she would have ended up as a trader. Chrissy made the point aptly:

Let me put it this way; if I didn't have parents who were capable of educating me, then obviously I'm sure by now I would have ended up in Kantamanto (a local market) somewhere, selling one thing or the other.

Oparebea, on the other hand, believes that through education, she has been empowered, she has both human and social capital and leads a quality life. She observes:

I think next to my salvation, and probably my upbringing at home, education has played the next big role in my life... it has empowered me, foremost, to equip me to live my life the best that I can think of it... And also, certainly, it has opened the doors for me to have a lot of social contacts.

For Linda, although education has played a critical role in realizing her potential as a woman, it is not merely a matter of getting an education but the exposure that education afforded her that has also helped to "refine" her in ways that she could not have achieved otherwise. She puts the role education has played in her life this way:

A lot! A lot, because there are things you don't learn at home. And I believe education has made me "more enlightened", because there are certain things you would not do, not because it is not done, but because you are kind of...let me put it this way, probably the way you talk, the way you carry yourself, the way you relate to people, there's a lot of difference, and it also helps to realize your potential as a woman... I think education is the key. And education with exposure, not without exposure. I always say if people are educated and they have not been exposed to certain things, their thinking and their reaction are different.

Paulina attributes her personality to the education that she has received. She affirms that as she met and interacted with different people as a result of education and going through

different situations by virtue of going to diverse locations for school, her character in turn has been modified over the years. She observes:

I don't think I would have been the same person without education. I have been exposed to people and situations that have helped mould my character. So definitely, education has played a critical role in my life.

The above narratives emphasize the importance of education in the participants' lives. The government of Ghana and its development partners have also stressed the importance of education in helping to improve the quality of life of women and families, as well as to alleviate poverty and ensure economic growth. This point was also underscored by President Obama when he addressed the University of Cairo on June 4, 2009. He asserted that "it is no coincidence that countries where women are well educated are far more likely to be prosperous...Our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity – men and women – to reach their full potential...We must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century" (cited in Jackson, 2009, p. 2).

Over the years, the government of Ghana has implemented some programs to promote formal education. Among these are the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), Capitation Grant, School Feeding Program and some other scholarships for brilliant but needy students. While it cannot be said that these programs have been wholly successful, they have contributed to increased school enrolment in many deprived communities across the country.

In summary, this chapter focused on the different ways successful women in Ghana define and explain success, with the aim of gaining an understanding of how these women form their social identities and present themselves. Key among the findings are that in conceptualizing success, the women considered both their domestic and professional achievements. The domestic achievements which were mostly emphasized by the participants found expression in the women's ability to raise children who are also doing well in their own endeavours. In professional advancement the emerged themes included attributes such as being agentic, resourceful or wielding influence in society. However, the participants' definitions of success did not focus much on material acquisition or wealth. The participants did not dwell much on their material acquisitions or their possession of wealth in their conceptions of success, although in comparing the "then and now" of their lives, some participants made reference to what they had then versus their worth at the time of granting the interview.

CHAPTER SIX

INFLUENCING CHANGE

The ability to understand and respond to the human dimension of change is ultimately the determining factor in implementing and sustaining successful change (D. W. Farmer, 1990, p. 7).

6.0 Introduction

In keeping with the main objective of this study, this chapter discusses the ways by which Ghanaian women push for, and cause change in their workplaces, communities and society at large. It is important to explore this issue because it is suggested that the strategies and assumptions change agents employ to guide and influence the process of social change are often given little or no attention. Moreover, literature on social change mainly focuses on macro level issues such as civil rights, women's suffrage, feminists and pro-choice movements with little attention to the micro level factors. In order for any country to meet its development agenda, attention must be paid to providing women with increased opportunities to empower other women at the micro level.

Sen (1999, p. 19) argues that "put simply, an agent is someone who acts and brings about change". Alkire (2008) defines agency as a person's ability to act on behalf of what he/she values and has reason to value. One way of measuring agency is its impact on poverty reduction (Alkire, 2008). This poverty reduction property of being a change agent has both intrinsic and extrinsic values. The person working as an agent can benefit by reducing her

own poverty or poverty within her family and also to reduce poverty for another person, group, entity or a community. Being an agent of change implies that one is able to bring about change in either her own circumstances or in somebody else's condition. Participants in this study are considered as agents of change because by virtue of the success or status they have attained in their professions, they have been able to alter their personal circumstances to the admiration of themselves and others. Also, all the participants indicated something they have or are engaged in to improve the status of some other people – women, youth, and their communities. The major themes participants focused on were economic empowerment, bridging the gender gap and helping their communities to get some needed amenities or facilities when they considered the ways by which they have served as agents of change. It is significant to discuss how successful women are serving as agents of change in order to bring attention to women's efforts at the micro level to promote women's empowerment and to initiate and promote community development. This will help the government to target such women as partners for sustainable development in the country.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the participants' motivations for working as agents of change for other women, their workplaces and communities, as well as the different strategies they employed while serving as agents of change. The chapter ends with how the participants drew on their strengths to overcome the challenges they encountered.

6.1 Motivations for Influencing Change

To be motivated means to be moved to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is suggested that if “one wishes to stimulate community involvement, or even to understand why it occurs, then it is crucial to know what motives might lead people to care about the welfare of others and of the community at large” (Batson, Ahmad & Tsang, 2002, p. 433). Ryan & Deci (2000) differentiate between levels (how much) and orientations (the why of an action) of motivation. This section of the study is concerned with the orientations of motivation, that is, the factors that caused participants to engage in actions that caused change in other people’s lives, their workplaces and/or communities.

According to Goodman (2000), the factors that motivate people from privileged groups to support and often lead struggles for social equity tend to fall into three distinct, though related, categories: Empathy; moral or spiritual values; and self-interest. “Empathy involves being able to identify with the situation and feelings of another person, incorporating affective and cognitive components that require both the capacity to share in the emotional life of another, as well as the ability to imagine the way the world looks from another's vantage point” (Goodman, 2000, p. 1062 – 3). A person from a privileged group is more likely to act on another’s behalf and help to change the circumstances of the less-privileged person if they feel a sense of oneness with him/her, or is able to see things from the other person’s perspective.

Similarly, one would have a strong desire to pursue social equity if the current circumstances conflict with one’s personal moral or spiritual values. For people who

believe in the inherent worth and dignity of others, or cannot bear to witness the plight of disadvantaged groups, there is greater motivation to act and bring about some change or social equity (Goodman, 2000).

The third factor, self-interest, often comes with negative connotations, but Goodman (2000, p. 1072) argues that “instead of defining self-interest merely as selfish concern, we can define it more broadly to include benefits to oneself that do not necessarily exclude benefits to others as well. Self-interest can incorporate the interests of others and oneself”. Here, the argument is that people are motivated to influence change if they envisage that while the change is going to benefit another person or group of persons, it will also take off some burden from the change agent. For instance, a successful woman is more likely to help another woman or group of women to become economically independent so that she would not have to support them financially all the time.

Participants were asked if they have or are engaged in personal, community or church related activities for which reason they could be considered as agents of change. They needed not to have engaged in such change-causing activities solely by themselves, but rather, could have worked with other women, men or groups in their workplaces, communities or the country in general. All participants answered this question in the affirmative. After this, they were asked to mention some of the reasons why they felt the need to cause such a change. The reasons provided fall into the three larger categories of altruism, egoism and reciprocity.

These categories are both similar to, and different from, Goodman's (2000) categorization of empathy, moral or spiritual values and self-interest. While the category of egoism is similar to Goodman's (2000) "self-interest" in definition and scope, altruism and reciprocity are of a different meaning and scope. However, altruism can also originate from feelings of empathy. That is, if a person in a privileged position feels empathetic towards another, she could be motivated to act on behalf of the less privileged person to improve her wellbeing.

6.1.1 Altruism

To the extent that acting as an agent of change involves protecting the interests of other people, it is considered pro-social behaviour. Simpson & Willer (2008, p. 39) define pro-social behaviour as "any behaviour that benefits another person, often at a cost to the benefactor". People behave and act in pro-social ways for very different reasons. At the core of pro-sociality is the concept of altruism (Smolenska & Reykowski, 1992). Post (2002, p. 53) defines an altruist as "someone who does something for the other and for the other's sake, rather than as a means to self-promotion or internal well-being...". Batson (1994, p. 606), on the other hand, asserts that altruism has "the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of one or more individuals other than oneself". Distinguishing between altruism, helping and self-sacrifice, Batson (1994) further clarified that the actions of an individual can be considered to be altruistic only if the actor intended to improve the wellbeing of the recipient.

Although altruism is said to be driven by biological, contextual, economic, affective and relational factors (Wilson & Kniffin 2003; Oliner 2002), Smolenska & Reykowski (1992) distinguish between three major factors as motives for altruism – allocentric factors, normocentric factors and axiological factors (cited in Mattis et al., 2009). Allocentric factors are centred on the needs of the other person such that they arouse a desire to do something to protect him or her. In other words, the altruistic person sees a person in need and is filled with a desire to do something to alleviate the plight of that person. Normocentric factors arise from the internalization of a sense of commitment to a norm of helping. Such norms could be familial, religious or political, while axiological factors originate from the actualization of some moral principles such as justice, sanctity of human life; and a sensitization of discrepancies between one’s principles and reality.

Building on the works of Smolenska & Reykowski (1992) and Oliner (2002), Mattis et al (2009) add a fourth motive of altruism, socio-political factors where the altruistic behaviour is attributed to one’s social location (e.g., class status) or the social location of the recipient of the altruistic act.

For the group of participants whose drive to cause change was inspired by altruism, findings of this study suggest that the actions emanated from three out of the four motives put forward by Smolenska & Reykowski (1992) and Mattis et al (2009). Key among the three motives were allocentric factors. Most of the participants reported that, they saw something in the other people for whom they acted as agents of change that made them want to help. Annie is an entrepreneur who has helped one of her employees to acquire a

university education because she felt a strong desire to help the employee when she found out that her parents could not afford to pay her fees. She observes:

There is this lady who I initially employed as a cleaner, but something about her drew me to her so I started asking about her background. She told me she was working to save enough money to continue her education because her parents could not afford to pay her fees beyond the basic level. Of course, I felt inclined to help her because I realized she was clever and didn't want her to "waste her brain" like that. So I worked out a plan with her so she could go to secondary school and work for me during her vacations. When she passed the SSSCE, it was only natural that I help her to go to the university as well. Now she has a degree and is even planning to go for a masters.

In a similar vein, Boatemaa, head of a department in one university recounted how she helped to pay one of her students' fees and other financial obligations after she learnt of the difficulties the student was facing. She recounts:

I had this lady in my class who was always withdrawn and appeared distracted in class so I asked her what the problem was. Initially she didn't want to open up about it but after some persistence from me, she told me of some serious financial challenges she was facing. I can't talk to you about them but they were quite serious. I felt so moved by her story that I decided to pay her fees and also give her money for her upkeep until she completed her degree. She comes to me all the time and calls me mummy. She's working with one international NGO now and is doing quite well.

Some participants also indicated normocentric factors as their motives for engaging in altruistic actions. Oparebea indicated that as a Christian, she felt obligated to ensure that every house help she lived with returned with some skill that would help her live an independent and empowered life. She relates:

As a Christian, I feel that I have to ensure that I positively influence everybody that I come across and so whenever I live with a house help, I make sure that by the time she's going back to wherever she came from, she would have some skill that would help her live an independent and economically empowered life. I see it as my Christian duty, and I can count not less than ten girls who have lived with me so far.

Likewise, Mrs Mingle engages in altruistic acts because she was raised to always help people in need. According to her, while growing up, she was trained to offer a helping hand whenever she could. This training, she says, has inculcated in her a drive to always help others in any way she could. She however added that she preferred to help other women because she knows by helping a woman, she touches the lives of not only that woman but her whole family. She discloses:

Because of the training I had when I was growing up, I always feel the need to help other people that I come across who need help. Over here, there are lots of people I've employed, but most of them are women. I think there are just about two men compared with over fifteen women who are here. I usually offer employment to the women because I know that once they get money, they want to pay their children's

school fees and keep the rest for managing the homes, but the men will just go and booze (sic).

While allocentric and normocentric motives for acting as agents of change were popular among women in academia and trade, the third motive, socio-political was popular among participants in politics. This could be accounted for by the fact that by virtue of occupying a political position, the participants found themselves in a better social location than the people for whom they performed the altruistic acts. For Serwaa, it was a matter of using her resources and influence as a Member of Parliament to mobilize women in the different districts within the constituency and equipping them with the skills to contest for district level elections. She discloses:

For me, I'm very passionate about women contesting for, and winning the District Assembly elections. Once we get that, I believe we can change the whole constituency. But many women don't have the confidence and the support to also come out and contest, but by God's grace, I have the resources and links, so I use that influence to also help them.

Ella, who is a leader of a political party talks about how she goes from place to place giving talks and encouraging women to go after their dreams. Ella says:

Any chance I get, I try to encourage women. If you call me to attend a program, and I haven't already committed to something else, I'll definitely come. I think it's important for me to be doing this because you don't see women who are leaders of political parties in our side of the world. So I think there's a lot of work that we need to do, and I'm trying to tell women that, you know, it's fine for somebody to

give you something, but it's important and more effective if you get up and go after it yourself.

The narratives of the participants about their motives for acting altruistically indicate that they either felt empathetic towards the beneficiaries of their pro-social acts, or saw the beneficiaries as having something in common with them. This is in tandem with the arguments of Aron et al (1991) who point to the fact that, people are likely to be altruistic towards others when they experience a sense of 'oneness' with that person or when they sense that the other person is part of their own identity (Aron et al., 1991; cited in Maner & Gailliot, 2007). Taking this perspective, it can be argued that, successful women are more likely to become change agents when they experience a sense of oneness with other women in their communities and feel the need to cause a change in such women's lives.

6.1.2 Egoism

Batson, Ahmad & Tsang (2002) identify egoism as one of four motivations for community involvement. To these authors, "egoism is the most obvious motive for acting for the common good... (especially, where such) action either is instrumental to reaching the ultimate goal of self-benefit, or is an unintended consequence of reaching this goal" (p. 434). Egoism has been identified to be fundamental to human nature, since people are more likely to help others in order to maximize their own self-benefits and avoid pain or cost (Gantt & Burton, 2013; Hoffman, 2000). To this end, Gantt & Burton (2013, p. 442) assert that "it is impossible to conceive of others and our relationships with them as anything other than the instrumental means by which we accomplish our own deepest desires for individual fulfilment, self-realization, or advancement".

To the extent that the reasons some of the participants gave for working to empower other women also benefitted the participants in the long run, their actions and motivations are considered to be egoistic in nature. Jemma, a former minister and a member of parliament recounts that even though she had not initially planned to enter politics, it was when she went to work in a deprived community as a nurse and her dedication to the people that got her nominated to become a government appointee. She recounts:

I was living in London but decided to come home and help my people. As a nurse, I was posted to (name of community withheld), where there were no lights and no potable water. I didn't refuse, I went and worked hard in those communities. In fact, there was no doctor at the time and no proper clinic, but I worked anyway. I worked there for over ten years, doing more than a nurse's work. So when this grassroots governance thing was introduced, the people themselves nominated me to represent them. Although now I am MP of a different constituency, I see that it was my work with this other community that ushered me into politics, and I've not regretted it.

Mansah, on the other hand, believes in teaching a person to fish, so that she would not have to give the person fish all the time. She narrated that, she preferred to offer free training and employment to other women who often came to ask her help in meeting some financial obligation for their children. That way, such women would have skills, earn some income and meet their children's needs without having to come to her all the time. In her view:

There have been a couple of times that some women have approached me to ask for a loan to either pay their children's fees or send them to hospital. We both know

that such loans will never be paid back, and the women would come at another time to beg again, so what I did was to tell them that “look, you have no job and you can’t go about begging for money every time your child falls sick. So why don’t you come and train with me, I’ll be paying you some little money while you help around here, and when you finish training, you can either work with me or go on to start your own business”. Trust me, these women and I have not regretted this. The women are now economically empowered and are doing very well.

Some authors argue that all pro-social behaviour is driven by egoistic motives, because actions that are intended to help a person in need may in actual fact be motivated by a desire to enhance one’s own emotional state rather than a desire to enhance the welfare of the person in need (see Dovidio et al., 1991; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981, Cialdini et al., 1987; Manucia, Baumann, & Cialdini, 1984). A person would therefore work to alleviate the plight of another, not because s/he wants to seek the welfare of the one in need per se, but because in so doing, s/he is likely to increase some positive emotion or reduce some negative tension within him/herself. Consistent with this assertion, Lydia and Cathy reported having a good feeling when they see another person for whom they have provided some kind of help. Lydia indicated that she is always happy when she sees that other women whom she has trained are doing very well.

I feel good when I drive around town and see these beauty parlours that are like top parlours (sic), and I can proudly say that I trained them. I mean, I always have this top of the world feeling that I’m also contributing my quota to make Ghanaian women look beautiful.

Cathy, on the other hand, is more involved with the youth of her church and recounted that providing social support for the young people, knowing that some of them have no one to positively influence their lives gives her a sense of satisfaction and purpose. She opines:

You see, most of these young people have nobody who would even say “you can do it” to them. So when I provide this pastoral care to them and help them to develop a positive outlook on life, it gives me a great sense of satisfaction. I strongly believe that this pastoral service is my calling, because apart from my church, I even do it here in the office, except that it is quite informal.

Borrowing from Batson, Ahmad & Tsang (2002, p. 435), it must be noted that, “people may get involved to see themselves – or be seen by others – as caring, concerned, responsible, good people. Pursuit of such side payments may provide great benefit to the community”. And so long as their actions serve to empower other women and bring positive social change, then their egoistic motives need not be given negative connotations.

6.1.3 Reciprocity

Closely related to the concept of egoism is that of reciprocity as a motive for influencing change. Researchers point to models of indirect reciprocity which account for the possibility that individuals receive long-term benefits for their short-term pro-social acts (Simpson & Willer, 2008). While indirect reciprocity may be a strong motive for people’s pro-social behaviour, findings from this study indicate to the contrary that, people tend to behave pro-socially as a way of giving back something which they received. According to Gouldner (1960), norms of reciprocity provide the social system with stability, especially

when there is a potential for exploitation in the presence of power disparities among parties (cited in Wade-Benzoni &Tost, 2009, p. 174).

Some participants indicated a strong sense of obligation to pay for some action which they benefitted from, with the hope that those towards whom they act pro-socially will continue paying it forward. This action of paying forward has been termed intergenerational reciprocity by Wade-Benzoni &Tost (2009) who argue thus:

in the intergenerational reciprocity, actors benefit first (from the behaviour of past generations) and later have the chance to contribute (to future generations) with little or no probability of benefiting again, trusting in the future reciprocation of others directly back to oneself cannot be a motive for contribution. Intergenerational contributions may, however, be based on the trust that the next generation would continue to pay it forward (p. 175).

Indeed, some of the participants felt that had it not been for what they had benefitted in the past, they would not be in the positions they are enjoying now, and therefore, they feel the need to help others, especially, their fellow women whom they consider to be disempowered. Hamdiyah, is a head of one of the country's public offices. Growing up, she was forced to drop out of school because her parents did not believe in educating the girl child and were not committed to ensuring that she went to school, even though she did not have to pay any fees. However, when she was nine years old, she was taken to Koforidua to serve as a house help to somebody who enrolled her in school and insisted that she went to school every day. This person also ensured that she kept up with her

academic work, taking the pains to buy her books and giving her exercises at home. She relates:

In my area, parents were more concerned about their sons' education than their daughters', so my parents didn't care whether I went to school or not, although it was free. Me too, by the time I finished my house chores and went to school, I would be late, but because I was afraid of being spanked, I was truant most of the time and eventually dropped out...later when I went to live with (name withheld), she took my education so seriously eh [sic]. She would buy me books and make sure I did all my homework, plus the work she would give me at home. Honestly, I owe all that I am today to her... so now, whenever I go back home, I bring some girls with me to help educate them.

Hamdiyah's drive to help empower other girls (and women) from her community stems from her feeling of gratitude towards the person who turned her life around. It is argued that experiencing gratitude serves as a motivating factor for beneficiaries to repay their benefactors and to extend generosity to third parties (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008). Conversely, Darkowa's conception of reciprocity is more rooted in the belief of doing unto others as she would want others to do unto her (see Goodman, 2000). Her core motivation for helping empower other women is because she feels that if she weren't empowered, she would have wished to be empowered. She observes:

I always have this drive in me to help change other women's destinies. I am lucky that I've never at any point felt disempowered, but I think that if I were (not empowered) and nobody did anything to empower me, I would be very disappointed. We always want to wait for the government to initiate programs and

things like that, but as individuals, if we all contributed our quota, women will not be marginalized in any society.

Darkowa's motive of reciprocity resonates with Goodman's (2000, p.1068) model of moral reasoning, one of which is a principle-oriented ethic of justice. Goodman (2000) asserts that when using the principle-oriented ethic of justice, people make moral decisions based on the application of logical, abstract, and impartial rules or principles. As a result, they consider something to be unfair or unjust when it violates accepted standards, which often involve equal rights, equal opportunity, or role-related obligations or duties.

6.2 Strategies for Causing Change

6.2.1 Mentoring

Mentoring is identified as an important component in women's career advancement and comprises both career and psychosocial support (Tharenou, 2005). Career support entails sponsoring, coaching, providing challenging assignments, exposure and visibility in organisations while psychosocial support would involve friendship and acceptance, counselling, enhancing the protégé's self-efficacy and acting as role models (Allen et al. 2004; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett 2003). Career support mentoring is aimed at facilitating the protégé's advancement within an organization while psychosocial mentoring is geared towards the protégé's personal growth and professional development (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

A further distinction is made between formal and informal mentoring. Formal mentoring occurs within an organizational setting with the organization's intervention and informal

mentoring is rather interpersonal and develops quite spontaneously. However, formal mentoring is less effective than informal mentoring (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). It is further asserted that women face greater challenges initiating or developing informal mentoring than men (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). This is due to the relatively little or no representation of women in higher echelons of organizations who can identify protégés in lower levels for mentoring.

Participants in this study, knowing and having enjoyed the benefits of mentoring relationships in their own careers⁸ have also sought to mentor other younger women. The mentoring relationships were either formal or informal, but in all reported instances, there is a blend between the functions, as there were no clear distinctions between the career and psychosocial support they provided for the protégés. The informal mentoring relationships were more common among women who engaged in trade.

Elize is a 60-year old entrepreneur who engages in informal mentoring at both her church and workplace. She takes it upon herself to counsel younger women to work and support their husbands in taking care of their children. As well, she counsels the younger nurses who work in the hospital she founded to learn what she terms “the correct principles” in life. She believes this is part of her responsibilities as a “mother” to the younger generation. She discloses:

⁸ The benefits of mentoring relationships on respondents’ career advancement have been discussed in the chapter titled “Navigating the workspace”.

I always teach, in my church I teach...the women and the young ones. The adults I teach them; I teach the mothers how to work hard to support their husbands to look after the children. And also the student nurses, those nurses who come here, I teach them the correct principles to move in life.

Mansah is another entrepreneur who engages in informal mentoring but gives both career and psychosocial support to her protégés. She often identifies some of her younger trainees and assists them to start their own businesses. She explained:

You see, when the vocational students are on holiday, they normally come here for internship. I have trained a lot of them. I got one student here who I mentored for a while, and she decided to go to training college on her own. So I assisted her training. Now, she has completed University of Education and is in Germany. And this one here (pointing to a girl working nearby) is a JSS graduate whom I realized was hardworking, so I started mentoring her, and now she is working on her own .

Similarly, Lydia has mentored many of the students in her beauty and cosmetics training school and says she finds great joy in seeing some of her protégés who are doing well for themselves. She particularly makes reference to one of her students who has gone on to establish three beauty centres in Accra, although she (Lydia) has only one school. Lydia says:

I'm proud of all my trainees, because each of them is doing well...but one student that I'm so proud of is Mary. She is owner of [name withheld] beauty parlour. And I say I'm proud of her because I took her as my daughter and mentored her, and now she has three branches of her parlour in Accra alone. I'm always happy to see her doing so well. I can say she's even doing better than me.

On the other hand, the kind of mentoring that was reported by participants from academia were more formal in nature, in the sense that they occurred in a more formalized setting, but the kind of mentoring within academia was not seen to be institutionalized in nature, as the participants did not report of it being part of their job description. The mentoring relationships developed out of the respondent “seeing a person” with potential and taking an interest in her, and also because these participants also benefitted from mentoring relationships in their own career development. In spite of the formal nature of mentoring reported by women in academia, the functions were still blended, as the mentors provided both career-oriented and psychosocial support to their protégés. Naa reported:

Well, I think that in very direct and visible terms, we can talk about my work at the centre with the mentoring and professional development I do. Mentoring is something that I like to do and so I’ve been doing this for four years now.

While Naa’s kind of mentoring is more formal and career-oriented in nature, Shelly takes a more blended approach, where she provides career-oriented support to some female technicians at her centre. In addition to that, she also goes further to encourage them to take advantage of some opportunities she identifies for them. Shelly explains:

We have female technicians, female students. So I always encourage them. Of course, if I see that there is an opportunity, I push it over to them. At least, I can boldly say there are two women behind me that I’m trying to pull along. I sit down with them, I teach them these things.

6.2.2 Community-related activities

It is argued that women leaders' experiences and practice, particularly outside their business and commercial environments, are neither well documented nor analysed, nor are they reflected in current leadership theory (Elliott & Stead, 2008). Nonetheless, Bond et al (2008) argue that although women have largely been absent from many formal, public, and civic arenas, they have been more visible in informal local leadership roles, as evidenced in grassroots neighbourhood and community movements.

When women lead or initiate community-related activities and programs, they pursue those that are broad, comprehensive and will respond to the needs of other women, children and families (Gittell et al., 2000). Consistent with this, findings of this study suggest that successful women in Ghana are actively engaged in community-related activities that help to promote the cause of other women. These activities are either related or not related to their professional activities per se. Annie, a respondent who is a member of the Rotary Club sees her role in the activities of the club as a contribution towards easing the burden on other women and also promoting good health in children. She elaborates:

I am a member of the Rotary Club, and through that I have done a lot of community-related activities. Some of these activities and projects may not be targeted at women per se, but in the long run, they benefit women and ease their burden. For instance if we do a community water project, our aim is to provide that community with clean, drinking water, but it eases the burden on women travelling long distances to fetch water, and also ensures that their children don't get sick

frequently from water-related diseases. We can also talk about polio immunization, library projects and a whole lot more.

Margie, who entered into an entrepreneurial competition and won an award of \$25,000 decided to use the money to train other women all over the country in income-generating skills. She then helped such women to form co-operatives and export their products through her company. She also considers this to be her widow's mite in helping to develop the country. She indicates:

I recently won an award of \$25,000 for a contest I participated in, and I used the money to go round the country, training women on adding value to an indigenous product. I travelled from Accra to Wa, and in each of these places, I look for that thing within the community that we can add value to and export, and I trained the women in doing these things.

Gittell et al (2000) also suggest that women are deeply committed, community-based leaders who foster community participation and use a collaborative approach to create social change. Mrs Mingle confirmed this when she also talked about her commitment to her community. She leads the community in securing social amenities and directs attention of government to the community. This action of hers has endeared her to the community members such that, they have impressed upon her to contest as an Assembly woman, since they believe that, in government, she will be better placed to bring development to the area. She emphasizes:

People have been asking me to contest for Assembly woman because of the way I'm committed to this community. I take active part in everything we do here as a

community, and if there is something the community needs, you can be sure that I'll be in the lead.

Bond et al. (2008) posit that women's community engagement in turn contributes to their own development, as women involved in their communities report achieving more open-mindedness about people and ideas, a more positive self-image, and increased connections with people and community, among other self-developmental benefits. In light of this, it can be argued that success and community engagement in women have a reciprocal relationship. Beyond the self-developmental benefits though, for certain groups of women such as politicians, engaging in community activities serves as a platform for them to either maintain or elevate their professional status. Thus, it is important for successful women to engage more in community-related activities.

6.2.3 Female-friendly work policies

Participants in management positions also talked about instituting female-friendly policies in their workplaces. Women who are in leadership positions have been found to be more responsive to other women's needs as they prioritize and take leading roles in formulating policies with women's perspective in mind (Zakuan, 2010). As Ella recounted, she sought to institute female-friendly policies in her workplace when she became the Director General of a public institution. She was the first female director general, and was disappointed that even in middle level management, there were very few women there. Recognizing the problem to be more human capital-based, she arranged with one public institution based in Accra to start a training course for all women who had the desire and the qualification to pursue higher education. She recounts:

When I got there, I realized that there was only one woman in middle management position. Everybody else was below management, and when you looked at the people coming up for promotion, it was always one woman here, one woman there (sic). So I started a training course at [name withheld] that all the female staff with the right qualification should go. After the course, they were eligible for promotion into management positions.

Laura heads a centre in a public university and reported that since she became head of the centre, she has instituted a policy of giving preference to a qualified woman over a man. Also in the centre's admission policies, it is ensured that at least forty percent of all students admitted into the master's program are females. She emphasizes:

This centre is seriously female-gender biased; we have a policy that if two people who are equally qualified apply for a job and one is a female, we would give preference to her and when we admit students, we always strive to have at least a forty-sixty balance since the beginning of our master's programme.

Cathy also reports promoting flexible office hours and space for the female members of staff in her department, although most are done on an unofficial basis. She notes that in addition to following the legal statutes that allow new mothers to close earlier than their colleagues, when there is the need, mothers can ask for permission to send their children to the hospital without it counting as a day off from work, pick their children from school, attend parent-teacher meetings and even bring their children to the office after school.

Cathy discloses:

We are quite flexible here. We understand that women need some extra time, so if a woman returns from maternity leave, she closes earlier than her colleagues, then

if someone needs to take a sick child to the hospital, attend PTA meeting or something of the sort, they can always ask permission and another person will stand in for her. Some of the mothers also pick their children up from school and bring them to the office until they close. These are all some of the things we allow so that women can have the peace of mind to focus on their work.

A strong correlation has been found between worker-friendly policies and employee retention, employee satisfaction and employee productivity (Hoyman & Duer, 2004). It is, therefore, important to encourage, promote and pursue female-friendly work policies in order to prevent the glass ceiling phenomenon and reduce time constraints on working women.

To conclude this section on the strategies participants employed in working as change agents, it can be argued that, once women recognise themselves as having increased opportunities, they often act as proxy agents for others who do not have access to required resources, expertise or influence (Martin, 2004). As agents of change, these participants, therefore, identified people who exhibited potential skills and provided them with opportunities, alleviated conditions or improved the circumstances of others. Bandura (2001) identifies the core features of human agency as intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness. These features can be identified throughout the strategies employed by the participants to bring about the desired outcomes in their families, workplaces and communities.

6.3 Overcoming Challenges

Initiating, pursuing and promoting change, no matter the level at which it is done often comes with many challenges. While the present rhetoric of many organizations is to promote leadership that embodies such feminine characteristics as good communication, emotional management, a sense of community and so forth (Hopfl & Matilal, 2007), women are at the same time presented with many challenges as leaders, and more especially as they seek to initiate or promote change. Hopfl & Matilal (2007, p. 200) argue that the perception of women as “lacking order, logic, direction and rationality” is the foremost reason why women in management positions encounter the many challenges and obstacles as leaders.

When participants in this study were asked if they encountered any challenges in their bid to influence change in their workplaces and communities, most of them answered in the affirmative. Some of the challenges encountered included outright opposition to the intended change through downplaying of participants’ efforts by their colleagues to financial constraints especially when the participants had to personally bear the cost of their intended actions. However, irrespective of the challenges encountered, the participants exhibited a strong sense of commitment and resilience by forging on until they achieved what they had set out to achieve. In keeping with the strengths perspective of social work practice, this section of the chapter does not focus on the challenges these change agents were presented with, but on the different approaches they employed in overcoming them.

6.3.1 Getting support

Support, in whatever form it came, was a very important factor that resonated with most of the participants as a means of overcoming difficulties they faced. In the face of challenges, the women exerted their personal agency and also tried to get others to act at their behest to secure the outcomes they desired (Bandura, 2001). The ability to exercise personal agency and/or make use of proxy agents in overcoming challenges helped the participants to develop their self-efficacy, which in turn ensured their success in influencing the anticipated change. As noted by Bandura (2008, p. 1397), “the development of a resilient sense of self-efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort such that people can manage failure so it is informative rather than demoralizing”.

Farmer (1990, p. 12) also argues that “the effective change agent understands the variety of possible reasons for opposition to change and employs this knowledge to obtain willing cooperation from individuals whom the change affects”. Clara, the head of a centre in a university has been at the forefront of many of the centre’s and some university initiatives. She intimated that getting the stakeholders of her initiatives to support her always ensures that she is successful. She asserts that once she wants to initiate change, she first identifies who the stakeholders of the initiative are, then she sells her ideas to them and makes sure majority have bought into the idea. When she is able to get the stakeholders to support her, she is sure of being able to overcome any challenges that will be presented in the course of influencing change. She elaborates:

For me, whenever I want to initiate something, I try to get the people who matter to buy onto it. You know if you start it right, you don’t just get up and start a

process, you have to make sure the stakeholders have bought into it. Of course you will have the few 3% who will always oppose change, but obviously, once a lot of people are ready to buy onto it, you can be assured of being successful.

Naa, who is also an academic reported of having her senior colleagues often downplaying her efforts and initiatives by virtue of her being female and young⁹. She talks of relying on proxy agents in the form of support systems within her networks upon which she could fall. She recounted several instances where she had faced some challenges and felt like giving up, but once she spoke to someone within her support systems or networks, they were able to offer pieces of advice that helped her to re-strategize and move on.

It's all about making use of your support system. Sometimes, you may have a challenge and think that oh, this is so overwhelming and that oh God, why did you let this happen to me, and am I the only person? For all you know, if you talk to somebody else, you will realize that you are not the only person. You know, people have gone along that path and they will be willing to offer you certain pieces of advice to help you.

The experiences of both Clara and Naa reflect the second mode of agency distinguished within the social cognitive theory, as well as the membership principle of the strengths perspective of social work practice. When faced with challenges, these participants sought help from proxies to help them achieve the outcomes they desired. Also, the membership principle of the strengths perspective indicates that people can make use of their cultural

⁹ Naa's challenges have been discussed in depth in Chapter Four under the section titled "asserting rights".

strengths such as the support systems of the extended family, spirituality, religion, etc. (Lee, 2003) to expand on their strengths in overcoming challenges. In Naa's narrative above, this membership principle is seen to be at play, as she depends on the cultural strengths she had to help her gain a renewed sense of purpose to pursue her initiatives.

6.3.2 Climbing over obstacles

According to O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan (2011), the many obstacles women face in their career advancement include sex discrimination (Kirchmeyer, 2002; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), gender stereotyping (Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002; Schein, 2007), male-dominated organizational cultures (Maier, 1999; O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008), and corporate practices that continue to favour men (Catalyst, 1998; Oakley, 2000). Apart from these challenges impeding women's career advancement, it was found from this study that they also become manifest when women are seen to be initiating or pushing for change at the organizational and formal levels.

Afi is a leader of a political party and by virtue of her being an executive member of the party, is involved in taking part in the decision making processes of the party. She laments the lack of other women at the executive level who could serve as a support base for her and how this affects her initiatives and suggestions. She also talked about how she has decided to ignore voices that seek to distract her and persist at what she intends to achieve until she has achieved the result she desires. She indicates:

You just have to ignore distractive voices. No matter what you do in life, there are people who will always not like you and will try to pull you down. Ignore them and

hang around with the people that have the same positive spirit that will help you to focus on the things that matter. When those detractors see that you are persistent, they will leave you alone so that you can also achieve your goals. I tell people all the time that the moment we learn to ignore distractive voices, we'll be able to get over every obstacle in our way.

Darkowa, like Afi, sees challenges she faces as stepping stones in her way and persistently pursues the changes she requires until she is able to overcome them. She relates:

Well, I consider challenges as hurdles that I have to climb over. They are stepping stones for me, and so the more challenges I face, the more determined I become. It even makes things more exciting for me that I'm pursuing something and I'm meeting many challenges, because it tells me that the thing I'm pursuing is worthwhile.

The narratives of Afi and Darkowa can be located in the strengths perspective of social work practice. In choosing to ignore distractive voices and perceiving challenges as stepping stones, they were able to look beyond the deficits they were presented with and rather focused on the gifts, capacities, skills, resources, and aspirations (Tong, 2011) that they could capitalize on. This ensured that they were able to successfully bring about some needed changes in their communities and their workplaces.

6.3.3 Being Resilient

According to Howe, Smajdor & Stockl (2012, p. 349) "resilience is a dynamic capability which can allow people to thrive on challenges given appropriate social and personal

contexts”. They identify dimensions of resilience to include self-efficacy, self-control, ability to engage support and help, learning from difficulties, and persistence despite blocks to progress. Jackson et al (2007) assert that being resilient helps one to cope better with workplace adversity. Masten & Wright (2010) also point out that resilience processes are underpinned by some fundamental protective systems, such as healthy attachments; self-regulation, self-direction and mastery experiences; problem-solving skills; productive meaning making; and cultural and religious traditions.

Participants in this study also demonstrated resilience in the face of challenges. Oparebea lived with her stepmother as a child and suffered some abuses at her hands. She believes having that experience has made her become so resilient that she is able to persevere through any challenge until she is successful. Her ability to learn from this difficult phase in her life and persisting in spite of the difficulties have yielded fruits in her adult working life. She reports:

I told you about how living with my step mum was such a bad experience as a child? Now when I think about it, I don't consider it to be a bad experience after all, because through that, I have become very resilient. I tell myself that if I could “handle” my step mum as a child, then as an adult, there is no challenge that will be too huge for me to handle. I just keep forging on till I achieve what I want to achieve.

Ella also showed much resilience at the workplace, determined that she would do whatever it took to succeed at her career. With this determination, she was able to cope with difficulties she faced in her career until she rose to the very top position. She narrated that:

... if you are relaxed and motherly, people will just take advantage of your leniency. At the same time, if you are tough, they call you “obaa kokonini” (female cockerel), but they will respect you and give you the needed cooperation in order to do what you’ve set out to do. For me, I will rather be an “obaa kokonini” and succeed than someone that everyone loves and fail at the end of the day. That also doesn’t mean that I’m not approachable, not at all. It’s just that I show them what I will take and what I will not. I guess all that I’m saying is that as a woman, you have to be tough to be able to overcome all those challenges.

From Oparebea and Ella’s narratives, the resilience they developed and exhibited at work were underpinned by the basic protective transactions posited by Masten & Wright (2010). For instance, Oparebea employed self-regulation and productive meaning making about her experiences with her stepmother. This process helped her to transform those negative experiences into a positive one, which in turn aided in the development of self-efficacy to tackle trials that confronted her in her career as well at different times when she has sought to influence change. Ella’s resilience can be seen to be reinforced by self-regulation – ability to adjust one’s emotions to be consistent with one’s deepest values – as she determined to do whatever it took for her to succeed at what she had set out to achieve for herself and others.

In sum, this chapter highlighted the different strategies that successful women in Ghana employ to serve as change agents in their families, workplaces and communities. These strategies included mentoring, engaging in community-related activities and initiating or pursuing female-friendly work policies. Some reasons that underlie their drive to influence

change were categorised broadly as altruistic, egoistic or reciprocal. Successful women were more likely to act on behalf of others when they experienced a sense of oneness with the other person or felt empathetic towards the other. They also felt motivated to help others when they foresaw some benefit that could come to them as a result of their helping behaviour, or when they felt the need to pay back something which they had received. In the face of challenges, they rallied support, resiliently forged on or found ways to surmount obstacles in order to achieve their aims of influencing change on behalf of others.

Consistent with the Social Cognitive Theory, findings of the study indicate that, participants made use of personal, proxy and collective agencies to achieve desired outcomes in serving as agents of change. Where they were faced with challenges, they depended on the strengths they had to empower themselves and develop their self-efficacy. The developed sense of self-efficacy in turn positively influenced their thoughts and behaviour, enabling them to motivate themselves for their personal successes and also in serving as change agents for others.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

The theme for the 2011 Commonwealth Day celebrations was “*Women as Agents of Change*”. This theme was adopted to reiterate the point that no meaningful development can be achieved without involving women in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and policies. Without a doubt, women have been playing significant roles in Ghana’s development since the country attained independence. However, women in Ghana are yet to achieve parity with their male counterparts with respect to their career attainment, political representation, land ownership and agency. It is noteworthy, though, that in spite of the many barriers and challenges that Ghanaian women have and continue to face, many have risen above them and are chalking successes in almost every sector of Ghana’s economy.

7.1 Purpose of the research

As women make up over 51 percent of the total population of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008) it is important to highlight the ways in which they have, and continue to influence change in Ghana’s development. Unfortunately, though, there is a dearth of literature on women’s success stories in the African and Ghanaian context. This study, therefore, sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the ways through which women drive development processes in Ghana by focusing on a selected group of women who have enjoyed success in their fields of enterprises. These women told their

stories, paying particular attention to the factors that contributed to their success, their challenges and the different ways by which they have led, driven and brought about changes in their families, workplaces and communities. Taking a strengths' based approach in social work practice, the narratives lean heavily towards the different ways through which the women overcame their challenges and obstacles in order to be successful in their work while at the same time working to empower others in their workplaces and communities.

The study, therefore, had the following as its objectives:

1. To investigate the lived experiences of a selected group of successful women in Ghana.
2. To discuss how Ghanaian women conceptualize success
3. To draw attention to the factors that have contributed to the success of the women in Ghana.
4. To identify ways through which the selected women have guided and influenced the process of change in the country's social and economic development and
5. Discuss the implication of the study's findings for social work practice, research and policy.

7.2. Research Design

The research adopted a phenomenological research design as the best approach to help achieve the research objectives stated above. Grounded within the social constructionist paradigm, the study adopted a qualitative research method and conducted in-depth

interviews with a total of 30 women from the fields of education, politics and trade in Ghana. These women were mainly selected from academia, politics and trade, and were purposively sampled. The study was largely based in Accra, but some participants were selected from Kumasi and Tamale.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to elicit information from the selected participants. Based on participants' preference, there were either a one-session interview which lasted between an hour and two hours, or a two-session interview, each of which lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. The average interview length was an hour and half. For each respondent, the interviews were in two parts; the first part explored the life experiences of the respondent prior to the assumption of the position for which she is currently noted, while the second part of the interview was devoted to the participants' experiences after the assumption of that position, with particular attention to ways through which the respondent has influenced, guided and/or effected progress in her family, workplace and/or community.

Although a few participants refused to have their interviews taped, many of the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed as verbatim as possible. All interviews were conducted in the English language, which was preferred by participants. The transcribed data were then analysed manually, following strict rules of qualitative data analysis. Common themes and underlying patterns that emerged from the data were used for discussions based on existing literature and rooted in the strengths' perspective of social work practice.

7.3 Key Research Findings

Successful Ghanaian women from the areas of academia, politics and trade have had many lived experiences, all of which have contributed to making them who they are today. In seeking to highlight their experiences, the participants dwelt on their childhood through to the positions they occupy now, paying attention to their challenges as well as triumphs. Since it is the totality of their life experiences that gives meaning to the successes the women are enjoying, it was imperative to discuss all these to give a fuller picture and meaning to the women's success stories. In terms of childhood experiences the participants can be grouped into two broad categories; those who had quite difficult childhood and those who had comparatively supportive childhood experiences. The former group comprised participants who endured hardships in their childhoods: losing a parent early in life and having to work in order to pay one's school fees, or living under harsh conditions as a child. In their work lives, some participants also faced gender based discrimination and sexual harassment at the workplaces, while others had to deal with severe time constraints having to balance motherhood, keeping the home and building a career. The second category of participants are those who had happy childhoods; having parents who encouraged them to strive for excellence; and were allowed the space to become creative and explore and developed their talents. These participants hardly lacked anything that their parents deemed as essential for their education and personal development as children.

Also, for the African woman, priority is placed on motherhood and other domestic responsibilities. The issue of combining a career with these domestic responsibilities was therefore one of a major concern for all participants. This was found to be in consonance

with studies from other parts of the world where successful career women have, and continue to face time constraints and gender discrimination. In spite of the gender discrimination and sexual harassment, the participants developed high levels of self-efficacy and resilience that helped them to forge on and succeed in their careers.

Regarding time constraints relating to work-family balance, White (1995) argues that domestic responsibilities force women to go in for low paying, low tasking, low-reward jobs that would give them the space to effectively meet family and career requirements. This study, however, finds that successful Ghanaian women rather look for ingenious ways to be able to cater for their domestic responsibilities while at the same time pursuing their high-tasking, high rewarding careers. These they do by either falling on social support systems such as family and close friends or creating spaces within their working environment to accommodate their domestic responsibilities.

In addition to the above findings, this study also sought to identify the factors that have contributed to the success of a selected group of Ghanaian women. The participants identified hard work and the grace of God, having mentors and role models, supportive males (fathers, husbands, brothers and uncles), as well as enjoying close relationships with their fathers as the main factors that contributed to their successes. Out of these factors, the ones which were rather intriguing were the combination of hard work and God's grace, and enjoying close relationships with their fathers.

For the former, Gifford (1994) and Darkwah (2001) assert that the proliferation of faith gospel theology in Ghana has succeeded in inculcating in the middle-class Ghanaian the idea that one needs to persistently work hard in order to attain success and prosperity. Believers in faith gospel theology are also encouraged to show off their affluence, while orthodox Christianity stresses humility and modesty. Findings of this study indicate that participants have not completely done away with the orthodox Christian doctrines of humility, modesty and relying on God for success. They have effectively fused both orthodox Christian and faith gospel doctrines in a way that makes them able to work and pursue success and still remain modest in the way they express themselves.

The other thought-provoking factor that was identified by participants as contributing to their success was the close relationships they had with their fathers when they were children. Almost all participants in the study indicated that as children, they had very close relationships with their fathers which helped them to build confidence early on in their lives. This confidence later helped them in overcoming gender-related discrimination in their careers. Even participants who lost their fathers early in their lives still made references to other male figures either at home or at the work places whose support and encouragements urged them on to success. This finding is consistent with the work of Sriram & Sandhu's (2013) who assert that when fathers are deeply involved in their children's lives, planning and providing for them, engaging with them in extra-curricular activities, guiding and mentoring, as well as providing practical and emotional support, it goes a long way to ensure their success in later lives.

Although I considered all my participants to be successful because of their personal achievements which were very conspicuous in their varying field of enterprise, the women themselves had different and varying conceptions of success. Some participants felt that success was a journey, not a destination, and so no person can conclusively say she is successful, while others felt that it was not up to them to decide that they were successful. Yet, some other participants defined their success as their ability to pull resources together for themselves and others, and some also expressed within the context of having children who are well-groomed, cultured and doing well for themselves. It is worthy of mention that the researcher's definition of success as combination of work, achievement of goals and social recognition was rather restricted to success in one's profession or career, while the participants' definition was much broader in scope as it encompassed all aspects of their lives, including their outlook, philosophies, beliefs, roles and self-identities.

The final objective of the study was to identify the different ways through which the selected women have served as change agents in the country's social and economic development. It was found that successful women either mentor other women in a bid to help empower them, engage in activities that bring development to their communities; and promote female friendly work policies at their workplaces. The participants had different motives for serving as agents of change. These motives were categorized as altruistic, egoistic and reciprocal. As they sought to initiate, pursue or promote change, the participants were also faced with many challenges. However, they drew on some strengths within themselves and their environments to overcome those challenges.

7.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of this study make contributions to social work practice, gender studies and policy directions for development. This is because, instead of taking the popular approach of focusing on the problems, deficits and challenges of women in Ghana, the study utilized the strengths-based approach in social work practice to highlight success stories of women in leadership or high echelons in their fields of work despite the challenges and stereotypes they may have faced while getting there. It is argued that although empowerment models are advocated for in working with women, the literature is generally not specific about what principles and helping behaviours are useful in such models (Parsons, 2001). This study bridges that gap by elucidating the empowerment models of a selected group of successful women in Ghana.

Also, the study identified that having the support of a family, especially, that of a father and/or husband or of other networks such as mentors, is critical in ensuring the success of women in their career aspirations. While many scholars have sought to find ways of effectively empowering women, the roles fathers and husbands play in a daughter's or a wife's life have not been given much attention. Through this study, such roles are highlighted and identified as the missing link in getting women empowered right from their childhoods and setting them up for success in their adult lives.

Finally, this study, utilized the social cognitive theory to bring out issues of resilience, empowerment and agency among Ghanaian women, which enhances understanding of the factors that have contributed to the success of women in the Ghanaian society. It helps to

fill some of the gaps in the literature on successful women from developing countries and patriarchal societies by elucidating the empowerment models of a selected group of successful Ghanaian women and expounding on the factors that have contributed to their success. The study also generally contributes to knowledge on women's issues in Ghana.

7.5 Conclusion

Professional women as well as women working in politics and trade are actively engaged in activities that help empower other women in their workplaces and communities. The lived experiences of successful women in Ghana reflect their trials and triumphs from their childhood through to building their careers to the present positions they currently enjoy, but they also find expression in their future aspirations as well. The findings of this study challenge the monologue by which existing literature has highlighted the influences of serene childhood experience as a necessarily precursor to successful adult life. Though this study does not deny the potency of happy childhood, it reveals that people who had a not so happy childhood life but got motivated in the course of their growing up could transform their non-desirable early life experiences into a positive stepping stone upon which they could leverage for a better future. The participants did this by either preventing their children from going through the same experience they had or by using their hardship to develop relevant resilience and self-efficacy skills or both.

In the light of the findings of this study, it is concluded that that despite the vulnerable outlook with which discourse about women from developing societies are framed, the women have, and continue to work in remarkable ways to bring development to their

communities and the country at large. This, they do by first resiliently leveraging on their challenges to develop self-efficacy to become successful and then they use their successes to mentor other women, drive community development initiatives and push for female-friendly work policies.

7.6 Recommendations

The recommendations proffered for this study are in three forms. The first form of recommendation deals with areas where further research can be carried out, while the second addresses the policy implications of the study and the third discusses implications of the findings for social work practice.

7.6.1 Policy implications

In the past, the extended family was a self-sufficient unit that catered for the requirements of its members in food, shelter, social education and insurance against sickness, old age, and the consequences of death. However, the demands of socio-economic change, urbanization, modern education and employment have largely eroded some of these fundamental roles of the extended family system. This has resulted in many women facing serious time constraints in balancing work and family life. Often, some women opt out of senior management positions to look after their children or elderly family members (Sabharwal, 2013). To address this in a manner that will afford women the time and space to pursue their careers, it is recommended that the state and other capable institutions and

agencies¹⁰ makes provisions for the care of the young and aged in society. By establishing well-equipped, accessible, affordable and functional centres where young children and the elderly can be sent to for quality care, the burden of having to terminate or put a career on hold to look after these family members will no longer be on women. These centres could be located within the precinct of organisations, so that mothers can take breaks to visit and breastfeed young children and afford others the convenience of spending some quality time with their aged family members during the day.

Second, given that many women are working in different ways to empower other women, youth and children and also to bring about development in their own communities, it is recommended that such women are given the necessary support and push by government to enable them do more than they are currently doing. This can be done, for example, by organizing yearly award ceremonies and sponsorship packages for women who are nominated by others to be agents of change. Although this is being done in the country presently, it is mostly undertaken by private institutions and corporations, and are also quite sporadic with limited coverage. In 2013, however, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (now called the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection) initiated a National Women's Award that recognized and awarded some women who were working to bring about grassroots social change and development. This awards program, which was under the theme "empowering the Ghanaian woman for national development" was

¹⁰ In the 1990s, the 31st December Women's Movement (led by the First Lady at the time) began establishing day care centres for children in close proximity to markets where quality pre-school education was given to children.

organized to coincide with the International Women's day. It was meant to motivate Ghanaian women to strive for excellence in their various fields of endeavour and to take their rightful places in the national development process.

However, the coverage of the nominations was rather limited to women who were well-known and within the Greater Accra Region. Again, the nomination process did not involve the general public. It is, therefore, recommended that this program becomes an annual event that will search for women nationwide who, in their own ways, are working to empower other women and bring about communal and national development. Prior to the date slated for the award, people can be invited to nominate women whom they believe deserve commendation, who will then be shortlisted. This will not only serve to make the award highly competitive, but also as a motivating factor for more women, especially when they are able to access some resources to help them expand their scope.

Also, all the participants stressed the importance of getting formal and vocational education in empowering them both socially and economically. Education opens the doors for many women to break the poverty cycles of their families, become economically and socially independent and also to experience other cultures. All the participants alluded to the fact that they could not have been successful without education. There is the need for concerted efforts to remove all barriers that hinder women's educational attainment and create more access and opportunities for them in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Currently, there is equal access to education from the basic to tertiary levels for both males and females across the country. However, sustaining girls through school, and ensuring that their biological needs

are met in the school system remains a problem, resulting in many girls terminating their education before completion. In the light of this, it is recommended that provisions are made in schools and campuses for women to successfully meet their physiological needs within the school environment. Bathrooms and clean water made available in the school environment will go a long way to improve the quality of education women receive and keep many more women in school.

In addition, the non-formal education program is one of the major adult education policies adopted by the Government of Ghana in the early 1990s to bridge the literacy gap for its adult citizens. However, the program was largely unsuccessful due to factors such as lack of books and resources like primers and radios, and also because as part of the program, women were expected to converge at certain points for lessons. This compounded the issue of time-constraints for many women – as they had inadequate time to combine household activities with the education program – causing the learners to either drop out or be inconsistent in attendance. It is, therefore, recommended that, the program should be reintroduced and repackaged to better suit the needs of women by designing the lessons in such a way that women can follow them at homes and in their businesses, limiting the time for face-to-face lessons to the convenience of the learner. There could be a resource person stationed in every district, whom learners can go to when they do not understand something they have been previously taught. Also, compared to the 1990s, there is now availability of radios in almost every household across the country. By so doing, many rural women, and even their counterparts in urban and peri-urban centers would be able to take full advantage of the program and still have time for their family and household duties.

Government and donor organizations can equally commit more resources to make books, primers and other educational needs available to learners in rural communities in a timely manner.

7.6.2 Implications for Social Work Education and Practice.

This study has implications for social work education and practice, especially in relation to anti-oppressive and social justice practice as it brings to the fore issues concerning women's empowerment and women's effort at bringing sustainable change at the micro level and the challenges they face. The study has revealed that although Ghanaian women have and continue to work in various ways to empower themselves and other women, there are still some pervasive structural and cultural practices that serve as hindrances to their attainment of success and empowerment. As such, there is the need for professional social workers, particularly in anti-oppressive and social justice practice to help ensure that such women are able to work in spaces that promote growth for themselves and other women within their families, workplaces and communities. This can be done by advocating for female-friendly work policies such as anti-sexual harassment policies, extended maternity leave and flexible working hours for women.

As Mwansa (2011) asserts, as a profession, social work in Africa holds promise and has unlimited opportunities to deal with the diverse social problems on the continent such as poverty, disease, illiteracy, corruption, and civil violence. Although participants in this study reported of some negative and or difficult experiences they encountered in the course of their careers, key among which are sexual harassment, sex-based and gender

discriminations, they were able to surmount these challenges and rather used them as launch pads to attain the successes they now enjoy in their careers. The positive self-regulation, resilience and strengths these participants embodied is worthy of recognition and must be highlighted, so that practitioners can continuously emphasise strengths in the clients they work with.

Nonetheless, these negative experiences point to the prevalence of biases that confront many women and girls on the basis of their gender and must be addressed holistically. The Labour Act (2003, Act 651, 14 (e)) of Ghana is emphatic that “an employer shall not in respect of any person seeking employment, or of persons already in his employment discriminate against the person on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed, social or economic status, disability or politics.” While the act prohibits employers from discriminating against their employees on the basis of their gender, it is silent on the discrimination that male colleagues and even subordinates mete out to females in many workplaces. Many women and girls are also not aware of the provisions in the laws of Ghana that protects their rights. To address the issue of discrimination by colleagues and subordinates, there is the need to strengthen the professional body of social work practitioners who will organise its members to begin an educational campaign which will create awareness about the second generation gender biases that serve as obstacles to many women’s career advancement, as well as the endemic, subtle discriminations in workplaces that create hostile working environments in certain professional fields for women. As part of the educational campaign, social workers should emphasise on the rights of women and girls as pertains to their gender and sexuality enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, the Labour

Act and the Criminal Code (1960, Act 29). In addition, the social workers, with collaboration of other civil society groups can also begin an advocacy campaign for organizations to have gender policies that take into cognisance issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

Also, social workers should engage government and civil society organisations through activism and workplace resistance to bring political attention to the discriminatory practices that occur in many workplaces across Ghana. Once the awareness has been created among the general public, civil society organisations and government, practitioners could galvanize support and advocate for strong policies that address sexual harassment and all forms of sex-based discrimination at the workplace. This will foster a female-friendly work environment where women will be able to effectively navigate their workspaces to attain success.

The study also highlights the important roles fathers play in setting their children up for success in the future. Culturally, many Ghanaian men are more concerned about providing for the children, leaving the actual upbringing of their daughters to the mothers. Indeed, there is a saying in Akan that “obaa na otete obaa, na barima atete barima”; to wit, girls are raised by mothers while fathers raise boys. This proverb has resulted in many fathers paying particular attention to raising their sons, with the expectations that the mothers will also take care of ensuring that their daughters are raised to become socially-accepted females. Also, the gender-based division of labour within the household and family system makes it such that, men are required to play minimal roles in rearing their children. This is

reinforced by sayings such as “akoko bere na ne mma di n’akyi, enye onini”, translated as “it is the hen that the chicks follow, not the cockerel”. But, as findings of this and other studies show, when men are actively involved in raising their daughters, the daughters have higher chances of becoming successful in future. Consequently, it is recommended that men in general and fathers in particular be sensitized to recognize the impact of their involvement on their daughters’ future prospects. Family social workers can take up this role of sensitization and public education by organizing seminars and workshops on radio and TV programmes so that Ghanaian men will become aware of the important roles they play in ensuring that their children in general and daughters in particular can become successful. Students of social work in tertiary institutions across the country can equally undertake such sensitization programmes during students’ week celebrations. Also, the education and sensitisation could, for instance, be scheduled to coincide with the celebration of fathers’ day in Ghana as a means of activating the nation’s interest in the positive role men can play in the lives of their daughters.

Taking cognisance of the fact that professional social work practice is a relatively young profession that is not making significant impact in the country, there is the need, first of all, for a redefinition of social work education and practice in Ghana. African scholars such as Midgley (1981, 2008), Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie (2011), and Osei-Hwedie (2000, 2010) stress the need for social work practice and education in Africa to be indigenized or made more culturally relevant. It must shed off its foreign character and redefine its central focus. Thus, social work practitioners and educators must understand their own environment in order to formulate the basis of the profession (Osei-Hwedie, 2000). Indigenizing social

work education and practice means developing policies and programmes that address issues at the macro-level such as tackling socio-cultural problems in Ghana, key among which is discrimination against women. To this end, some of the issues that this study raises, with respect to some of the challenges that women in this study encountered in their journey towards success, need to be incorporated in social work education and considered in the various fields of social work practice. For example, findings in this study suggest that some of the women were disregarded among their male counterparts even though the women had higher or equal qualifications as those males. Such situations reveal the endemic societal ascription that women should occupy subservient positions in relation to men. Exploring the dynamics and underpinnings of such widespread attribution about the place of women in society, in comparison to their male counterparts, would be a crucial component of social work education and practice in Ghana. Apart from the fact that it will direct students of social work to critically think about context-specific gender issues regarding social mobility, recognition and acceptance of achieved social status, among others, it would also prepare them and existing social work practitioners to consider the subtleties involved in dealing with families, organizations and communities in Ghana as far as gender differences are concerned.

7.6.3 Areas for further studies

While this study is significant in its contribution to the intellectual discourse on women and their contribution to national development, as well as the literature on micro level social change factors, there are some areas where further studies are deemed important. In

this study, all participants were drawn from the formal sectors¹¹ of the Ghanaian economy. However, a large number of Ghanaian women are engaged in the informal sectors of the economy (Amu, 2005), where they might have also made significant impact or recognisable contribution to the development of their respective communities. Studying the ways by which women in the informal sector serve as change agents in Ghana's development will complement the current findings in presenting a holistic picture. Avenues of interest could include the areas of influence, that is, the extent of power or influence which women in the informal sector wield in driving social change policies at the governmental level. This will help to understand whether or not the women in the informal sector employ strategies that are different from their counterparts in the formal sector in influencing change at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. It is also necessary to find out if there are differences in the conceptions of success between women in the formal and those in the informal sectors.

Methodologically, a future study could adopt quantitative approaches to answer the same research questions this study had to find out if there will be differences in the outcomes. This future study could use the findings of this current study as a basis for carrying out a nationwide quantitative study with a larger population across the country. This will ensure that the findings of the study could be generalised to the national population which will in turn strengthen the basis of policy formulations.

¹¹ Formal sector employment is defined as labour that has a legally enforceable contract, is authorized to charge Value Added Tax and is a contributor to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (see Gockel & Vormawor, 2004).

Also, the study has revealed that many successful Ghanaian women take a rather ambivalent outlook in presenting themselves as successful. In addition, the women's conceptualization of success took into consideration the many facets of their lives, including their beliefs, values, philosophies and social roles. In this direction a comparable study that examines how Ghanaian men conceptualise success in their self-presentations will further enrich our understanding of success among Ghanaians and if there are any gender dynamics that come into play in Ghanaian self-presentations. A study of such nature will benefit significantly from ethnographic approaches which underscore the primary and secondary forms of socialisation within Ghanaian social institutions.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Department of Social Work

University of Ghana, Legon

Instrument for Data Collection

My name is Doris Akyere Boateng, a PhD student from the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, Legon. I am conducting a study on how a selected group of Ghanaian women have served as agents of change in their respective fields of enterprise and communities, the factors that have contributed to the success of such women and how the women have used their success to help empower other women. I will be most grateful if you can grant me an interview to achieve this objective. The information you provide will be strictly be used for academic purposes. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

PART I: LIFE EXPERIENCES

Demographics

1. Kindly tell me about yourself
 - a. Age
 - b. Marital status
 - c. Occupation
 - d. Educational level

Childhood

2. Where were you born?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Can you tell me what you remember about your childhood? What kind of child were you? Did you live with both your parents or you lived with a guardian?
5. Do you remember any childhood experiences that have contributed to who you are today?
6. Did you have any role models or influential adult(s) in your life whom you admired or felt inspired or guided by?

Education

7. Which schools did you attend?
8. Did you occupy any leadership positions in school?
9. How was the educational experience for you as a female?
10. Did you encounter any challenges in your education?
11. Would you say education has played any critical role in your life?

Work history

12. Now, please tell me about some of your previous work and what roles you've played prior to where you are now.
13. What have been some of your experiences as a woman? How do you think your experiences would have been different from those of a man?
14. Did you seek to affect or influence change in your previous work?
15. Please tell me more about that.
16. Did you encounter any challenges in influencing the change?

17. How did you overcome the challenges?

PART II: EXPERIENCES AFTER ASSUMPTION OF CURRENT POSITION

18. Let's now talk about the work you do now. What is your position (job title) and what roles do you play?

19. What made you decide to do what you're doing now?

20. Did you encounter any challenges as a woman before you getting to where you are now? How did you overcome those challenges?

21. With your current position, have you sought to, or are you influencing change now, for instance, in helping to empower other women, or using your position to influence change in your society? How?

22. Apart from work, are you engaged in community or church-related activities that seek to empower other women?

Contributing factors to success

23. Looking at your past and current experiences, do you consider yourself to be successful? How?

24. What are some of the factors that have contributed to your success?

25. How do you find a balance between your work and family life?

26. Do you consider yourself to be empowered?

27. In what ways have you been empowered? In which aspects or areas of your life are you empowered?

28. How do you think you have served to empower other women? At work, in leadership activities or in other settings?

29. Can you identify some ways through which Ghanaian women can be empowered?

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study. Your contribution to this research is invaluable to the success of the study. Please bear in mind that, the interview will be used solely for academic purposes. Although the main rationale of the study is to tell your stories, all information will be kept confidential at all times. To this end, pseudonyms will be used, and that as much as practicable, no information that directly identifies you will be used in the course of the study. Be assured that the highest standards of research and social work ethics will be adhered to throughout this interview and during the use of information received.

Kindly note also, that participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw from it at any time you so wish to do. Should you have any questions, you can ask them at any time during the interview, or at the end of the session. I look forward to a great and interesting conversation with you.

Signed:

I, hereby give my consent to participate in the study titled “The Ghanaian woman as an Agent of Change in Ghana’s development”. I have read and understand that the study is bound by the following:

Informed consent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX 3

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

November 21st, 2012.

To Whom It May Concern.

Dear Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

My name is Doris Akyere Boateng, a PhD candidate with the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana. I am conducting a study titled “*The Ghanaian woman as an agent of Change in Ghana’s Development*”. This study seeks to assess ways through which a selected group of Ghanaian women have guided and influenced the process of change in the country’s social and economic development, and the factors that have contributed to the success of such women.

To achieve this goal, I am targeting women who have attained success in their careers as potential participants for the study. I will be grateful if you would grant me an interview about your life; in respect to your work, challenges, achievements and finding a balance between your work and family life.

The interview is expected to last up to one hour and will be conducted at a venue of your choice. Kindly let me know if you are available for this interview on

boatengabena@yahoo.com, or on 0246507089. I count on your favourable response.

Thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely,

(signed)

Doris Akyere Boateng