



# SHAKESPEARE LIVES IN GHANA

Roles, Representations and Perceptions of Women  
in Contemporary Ghanaian Society

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ROLES OF WOMEN</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN</b>	<b>8</b>
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT	8
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS	8
<b>WOMEN'S ROLES AND PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>12</b>
POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE	12
BUSINESS	14
SPORTS	14
THE SCIENCES	15
<b>REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>TRADITIONAL, VISUAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	<b>20</b>
NEWSPAPERS	20
RADIO	20
TELEVISION	21
ADVERTISEMENTS	21
VISUAL MEDIA (POPULAR ARTWORK)	22
SOCIAL MEDIA	23
<b>REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE POPULAR ARTS</b>	<b>24</b>
FILMS AND HOME VIDEO	24
STAGE PLAYS	25
MUSIC AND MUSIC VIDEOS	26
<b>PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>GENDERED NORMS AND RELATIONS</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PERCEPTIONS OF GHANAIAN WOMEN'S ROLES AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY</b>	<b>32</b>
WORK AND BUSINESS	32
POLITICS	34
MEDIA AND ARTS	35
OTHER ASPECTS OF SOCIETY	36
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>TRADITIONAL MEDIA</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>VISUAL ARTS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS</b>	<b>43</b>
SURVEY	44
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS	47
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY</b>	<b>48</b>



## INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy – a social system within which male authority is central to social, political and economic organisation – is a feature of most human societies. Consequently, women’s lives everywhere are marked by distinct patterns of disadvantage on many fronts: at home, in the labour market, and in the larger society. However, women’s experiences are not uniformly of oppression, marginalization and vulnerability but also of joy, pleasure, power and creativity. In Ghana, therefore, as everywhere else in the world, women’s lives are a complex mix of joy and pain, of power and vulnerability.

Much of the research and writing about Ghanaian women’s lives is on the past two centuries. However, some historians have attempted to reconstruct women’s lives as they were before contact with the West and with colonialism. They suggest that in the area that became the Gold Coast and then Ghana, gender relations were complementary, with men and women having different but equal roles in a society where their economic enterprise and independence were valued, and their rights (to property and in relationships) protected (Aidoo, 1985; Arhin, 1983; Hagan, 1983; Sudarkasa, 1986). Thus the unequal relations we see today, according to these researchers, can be attributed to the interruption of African traditions by colonial ideas and practices.

Others argue that rather than creating gender inequalities, colonisation in British West Africa merely reinforced them (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003). Policies were created that compelled women to fit the prescribed roles and behaviours. In the area of work, for instance, the colonial state largely denied the fact that women of the Gold Coast had always worked outside the home and instead sought to shoehorn women into exclusively domestic roles. Women were less likely than men to enter school and, if they did, would receive an inferior education that emphasised domestic over the technical skills that might gain them access to the then burgeoning formal sector (Graham, 1971). Those few who made it into salaried employment were required to resign from their work on marrying or conceiving (Tsikata and Darkwah, 2013). To the disfavour of women again, policies in agriculture assumed male control over land and productive labour, and therefore provided resources such as capital and agricultural inputs to men to cultivate cocoa (Allman, 1996). Moreover, policies that made agriculture and the extractive industries the basis of the colonial economy promoted the commercialisation of land, which further disadvantaged women in terms of access to their primary livelihood (Agbosu et al., 2006).

Despite these constraints, women carved out spaces for themselves in the informal economy mainly as food crop farmers and traders. By the late 1970s and 1980s, female traders had gained great income and power from their work, and had leveraged that power (consolidated through associations) to become a powerful economic and social force. They faced a backlash during the military coups of that era, when they were scapegoated by the military for the corrupt practices, such as hoarding and price-hiking, that were given as a primary reason for the country’s economic ills. A particularly notorious illustration of this violence was the destruction of Makola market by a military regime in 1979 (Bentsi-Enchill, 1979). This razing down of an important ‘(site) of accumulation’ (Akyeampong 2000, p. 222) has been interpreted as an attempt by men to rein in women who were seen as having too much power, and therefore displaying a tendency to disrespect (Manuh, 1993). Thus, as much as

women were expected to be industrious, they were also expected not to pose a challenge to men's power (Manuh and Anyidoho, 2015).

Violence against women may no longer be state-sanctioned, but it is still distressingly present in the private space. Gender-based violence takes various forms: physical and sexual abuse, butchery and, recently, acid attacks. It is difficult to know whether there is an increase in incidence or whether greater public awareness of the issue brings more reports, not least because of the processes and publicity that surrounded the passage of the 2007 Domestic Violence Act and the attendant systems and institutions set up to address violence. Beyond the instances of physical assault that receive some attention from the media, women also suffer taken-for-granted, everyday forms of violence such as sexual harassment and psychological abuse. It must be said that men's actions and attitudes are not the sole problem when it comes to gender-based violence; rather it is the wider culture that informs both men *and* women's perceptions of violence against women as a normal part of gender relations (Cole, 2007; Prah and Adomako Ampofo, 2010). For example, in a recent nation-wide survey, more female (28%) than male (13%) respondents stated that a man was allowed to beat his wife for any of these reasons: if she argued with him, burnt the food, went out without telling him, neglected their children, or refused to have sex with him (GSS, 2015).

Despite all these obstacles, women have made gains in government, in business, education, literature and entertainment, to name a few spheres. And although women have been made largely invisible in the narratives of nation-building in Ghana – a fact to which female scholars drew attention during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ghana's independence in 2007 (Anyidoho and Asante, 2009) – women have made a great contribution to the development of the Ghanaian state and economy.

These advancements can be credited to women's own resilience and initiative, but also to a democratic environment and progressive policymaking. Tsikata (1989, 2009) describes the transformation of women's organizing from the apolitical welfare organisations in the years immediately after independence in 1957 and through the military regimes from the 1960s to the 1980s, to a focus on power inequalities and rights from the 1990s as the political space for self-expression expanded with a deepening commitment to democratic governance. Examples of such women's movements are the coalition that drafted the Women's Manifesto and the National Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation that advocated extensively for the passing of the Domestic Violence Act in 2007. These coalitions are made up of individuals as well as civil society organisations that work for women's rights, including the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (Netright), Abantu for Development, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), and Fataale Rural Foundation. However, their good work is hampered by governments that are often slow to act on women's issues, and also by a public – both men *and* women – that sometimes perceives these activists and their ideas about gender equality as alien and threatening to Ghanaian "culture".

Against this historical backdrop, this report discusses in four sections the situation of contemporary Ghanaian women in terms of their roles and the ways in which they are represented and perceived. The sections on the *Socio-Economic Status and Roles of Women* and *Representations of Women in Literature* are based on desk reviews. The sections on *Representations of Women in the Media* and *Public Perceptions of Women* are underpinned by primary data collected through observation, a survey and

focus group discussions. (The methods and instruments used for primary data collection and analysis are presented in the appendices).

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ROLES OF WOMEN**

### **Socio-Economic Characteristics of Women**

Economic growth and development tend to benefit women and men differently because of the social positions they occupy and the economic activities they engage in. This section presents socio-economic characteristics and status of Ghanaian women, using as indicators demographic characteristics, poverty and access to socio-economic opportunities.

#### **Demographic Context**

Women and girls constitute just over half of Ghana's population. In the 2010 Population and Housing Census, the 12.6 million females in the country made up 51.2% of the total population, continuing a slight female majority over three decades. This gives a sex ratio of 95.2 male per 100 females (GSS, 2013).

The 2014 Demographic and Health Survey (GSS, 2015) indicates that about one-third (33.8%) of all households in the country are headed by women, with higher proportions in urban (37.1%) than in rural areas (29.8%). These statistics suggest that females are the wage earners in many families and participate fully in the economic and social development of the country, even as their contribution is frequently undervalued in national accounts.

### **Socio-Economic Status**

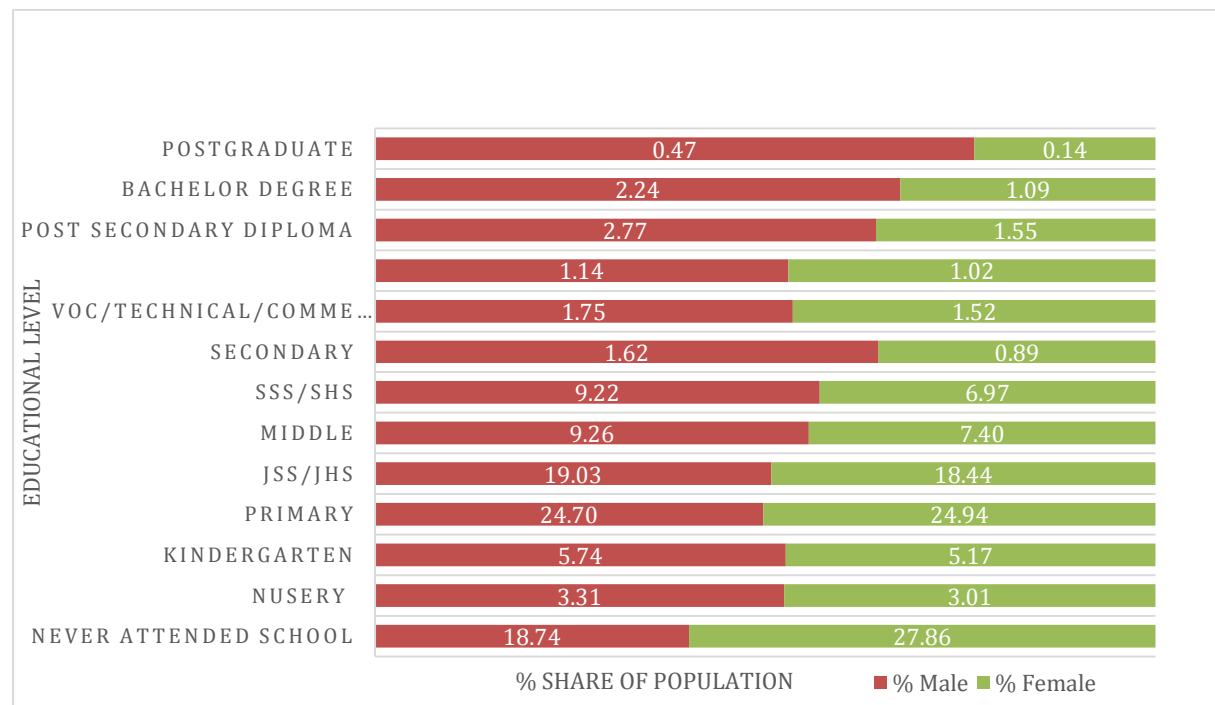
#### ***Education***

According to the 2010 census, the proportion of the population aged 15 years and older reported as literate increased from 54.1% in 2000 to 71.5% in 2010. The increase was greater for females than for males and can be attributed, in part, to government policies such as the establishment of the Girls' Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service (GES) to increase the enrolment of girls in schools. Overall, the female literacy rate is 68.5% compared to a male literacy rate of 80.2% (GSS, 2013.).

In the total household population aged 3 years and over, 19.2% had finished at most high school education, 43.5% had completed at most elementary education, 3.2 % were post-secondary graduates, and 2% were academic degree holders (GSS, 2013).



**Figure 1: Population 3 years and older, by educational level and sex**



Source: GSS (2013)

From Figure 1, we see 2.24% of all males have a bachelor’s degree compared to 1.09 % of females. Women are more likely to have never attended school (27.86% compared to 18.74% for males). It is only at primary school level that the proportion of females who have completed primary level (24.94%) slightly outnumbered the proportion of males (24.70%), due in part to a concerted effort by the government to attain gender parity in primary education as part of its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

There are attempts to close the gender gap at different levels of education. For instance, at the pinnacle of the formal education system (the tertiary level), while male enrolment has consistently surpassed that of females, there is a clear trend towards gender parity. Statistics from the University of Ghana, the oldest and largest public university, illustrate this trend (Table 1).

**Table 1: Student enrolment at University of Ghana, selected dates, 1961-2006 by sex**

Year	Total Enrolment	Percentage Female
1961-1962	596	9.1
1980-1981	3,601	16.4
1993-1994	5,306	25.5
2001-2002	14,424	36.4
2008-2009	32,546	42.4

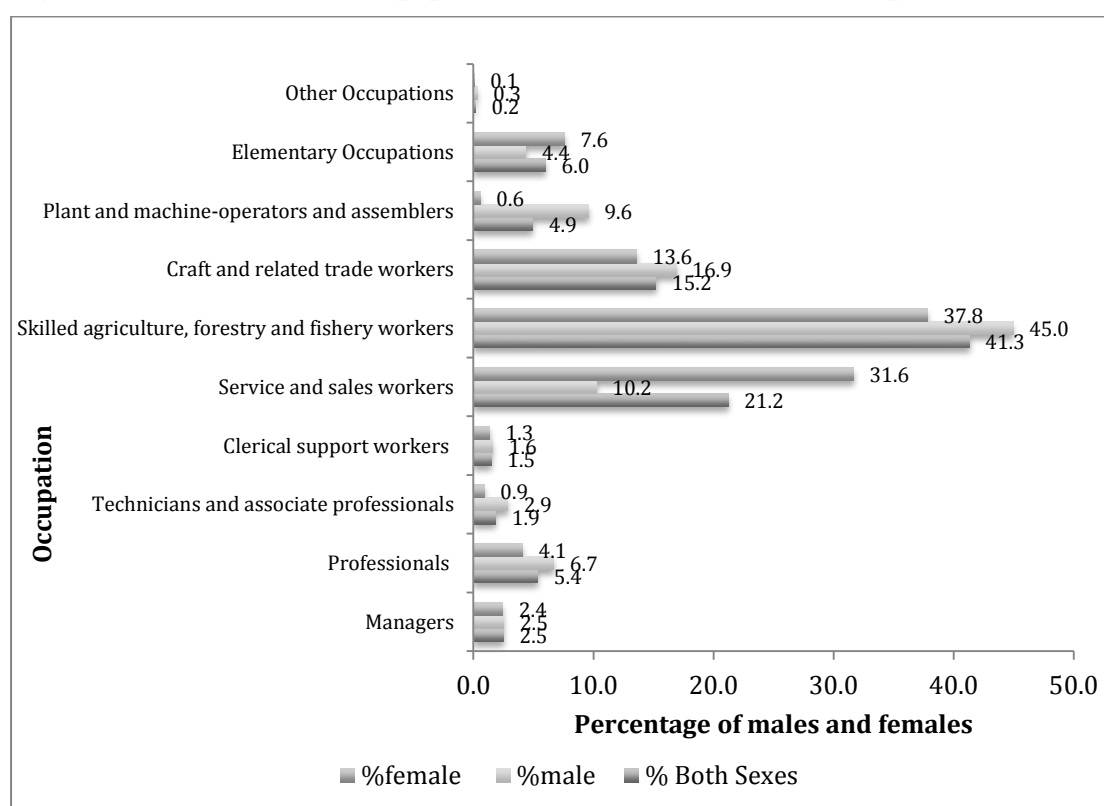
Source: University of Ghana (2012)

### *Economic activity*

Women make up 70% of the economically active population in Ghana compared to 73% of men (GSS, 2013), although it is important to bear in mind that these statistics do not take into account of women’s domestic and care work. The greatest proportion

(37.8%) of women counted as “economically-active” is engaged in agriculture (Figure 2). A further 31.6% is in service and sales work compared to 10.2% of males; this discrepancy may be due to the low start-up capital and the home-based nature of the small trading enterprises that dominate this occupational category, which make it relatively more accessible for women than other occupations. Women are much less represented in work that requires technical or other skills training, such as machine operation or craft. Women are also slightly less likely to be managers or professionals, occupations that frequently require tertiary education. This is in part due to the fact that women’s access to education and their rates of completion at each level of schooling have lagged behind that of men, as discussed in the preceding section (see GSS, 2013).

**Figure 2: Economically active population, 15 years and older, by occupation and sex**



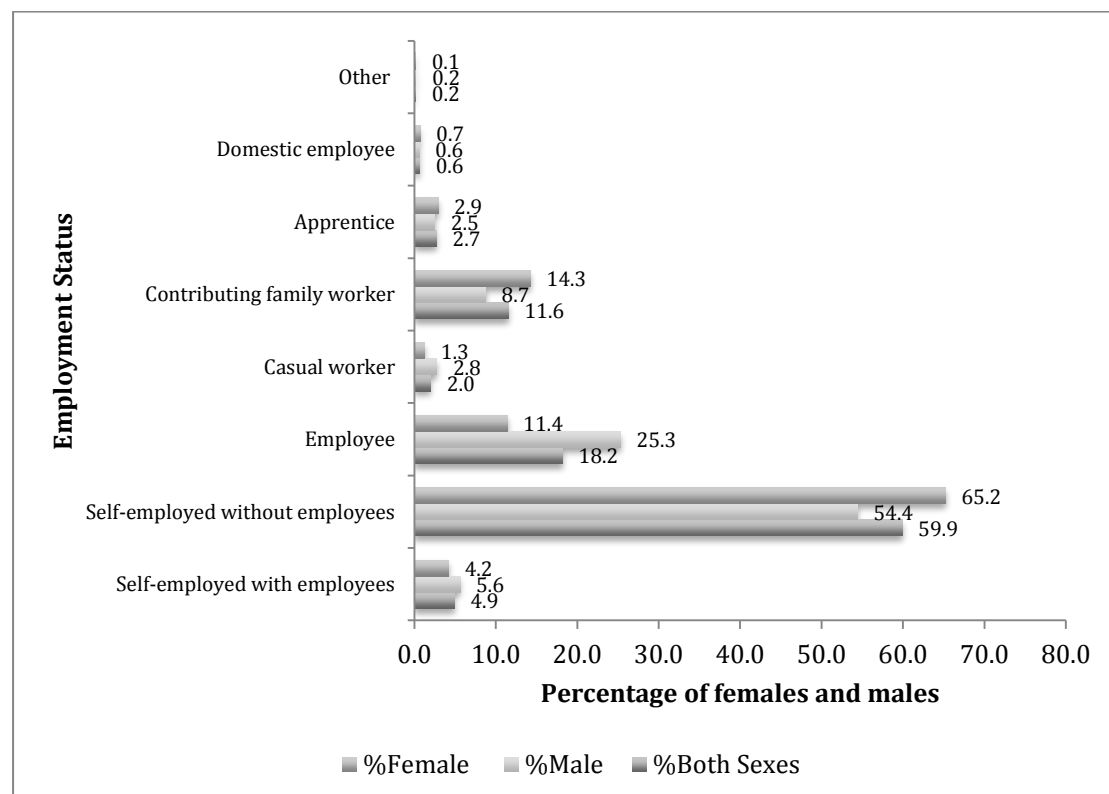
Source: GSS (2013)

In Figure 3, 65.2% of the economically-active female population is classified as self-employed without any employees, compared with 54.4% for men. According to International Classification of Status of Employment (ICSE), this group is labelled “own-account workers and refers to those who work alone and do not engaged any employee on a continuous basis. Such people are less likely to be engaged in employment that meets the standard of decent work<sup>1</sup>. Self-employed men are more

<sup>1</sup> According to the International Labour Organization (ILO ) (n.d.), “decent work involves work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that

likely than self-employed women to provide jobs for workers (5.6% and 4.2% respectively). About a quarter (25.3%) of economically active men are classified as employees, more than twice as many as females (11.4%). Interestingly, the female “preserve” of domestic work is also an area of employment for males with the proportions being about the same (0.7% and 0.6% respectively). Similar proportions are found for males and females as apprentices (0.6% and 0.7% respectively) although there are sex differences in the content of their training: for males, apprenticeship it is more likely to be in auto mechanics, welding, plant maintenance and driving, and for females in hairdressing, dressmaking and cooking (GSS, 2013).

**Figure 3: Economically active population, 15 years and older, by employment status and sex**



Source: GSS (2013)

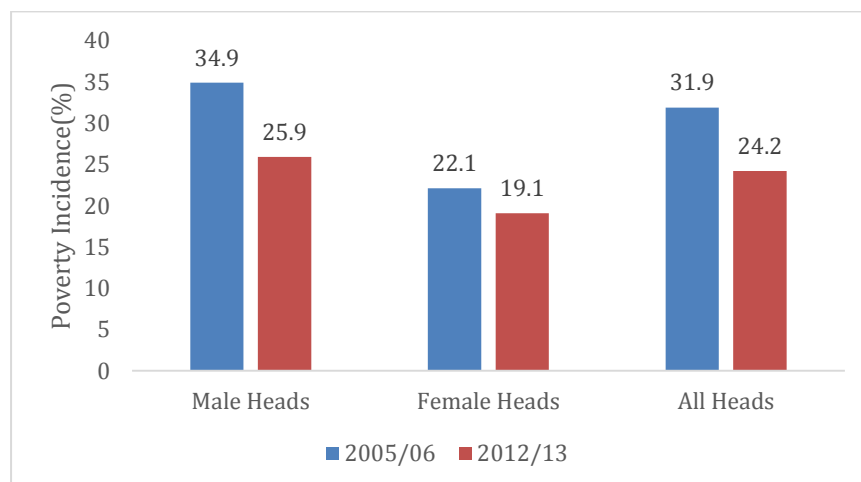
### Poverty and Gender

In 2013, nearly 6.4 million people in Ghana lived below the poverty line (GSS, 2015). Poverty status varies with the sex of the household head – the incidence of poverty among male-headed households is higher (25.9%) than among female-headed households (19.1%) (GSS, 2015). Nonetheless, due to their responsibility for household welfare and their dominance in the informal economy, women disproportionately bear the burden of managing household consumption and

affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men” (<http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>).

production in conditions of scarcity, serving as the primary caretakers and producers of food.

**Figure 4: Poverty incidence\*, by sex of household head, 2005/06-2012/13**



\*Poverty line = GH¢1,314

Source: GSS (2015)

## Women’s Roles and Participation

Participation is one of the important principles of democracy and is defined as “the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over developmental initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them” (World Bank, 1994, p. 1). This section examines the nature of women’s participation in politics and government (parliament, judiciary, cabinet, civil service), business, the sciences and sports.

### Politics and Governance

A little over a decade ago, Allah-Mensah (2005) found that women were woefully underrepresented in governance. Though the major political parties have stated in their manifestos their commitment to addressing women’s lack of representation, little has been done to turn rhetoric into policy. With the exception of the Convention People’s Party (CPP), which until recently had a female chairperson, leadership for women in other parties<sup>2</sup> has been limited to the position of women’s organiser or treasurer. A few of the smaller parties have nominated women as running mates in presidential elections, but one wonders if, given their slim chances of winning, this is not merely symbolic.

Table 2 shows the statistics for women’s contestation in District Assembly elections from 1998 to 2006, which generally indicates an increase over time. The increase in women’s participation in these local government elections can be attributed to a number of factors, but undoubtedly it has been encouraged by the work of advocacy groups such as the Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), the Women’s Manifesto Coalition, Abantu for Development which supports women to run in district and parliamentary elections.

**Table 2: Representation of women in District Assembly elections in Ghana, 1994-2010**

<sup>2</sup> These include the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the People’s National Convention (PNC) and the Progressive People’s Party (PPP).

Year of Election	Total number of seats	Total contestants for AM	Total female contestants for AM	Female candidates elected	% of total contestants elected	% of total female contestants elected
1994	4,204	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1998	4,820	15,243	547	196	1.29	35.8
2002	4,582	13,590	965	341	2.51	35.3
2006	4,830	14,942	1,772	478	3.22	26.9
2010	6,103	17,315	1,376	408	2.3	29.7

Notes: AM – Assembly member; calculated from figures from the Electoral Commission

Source: Electoral Commission, Accra, 2014.

There are very few women in senior positions in government ministries or in other public organisations. Put differently, there are very few women at positions at which important decisions are taken. As of July 2015, females made up 29% of ministers, 23% of deputy ministers, 16% of chief directions, and 8% of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (Dovia, 2015). In Parliament, over the 24-year period of the Fourth Republic, the proportion of female members saw a modest increase (Table 2).

A gender and generational analysis of Parliament since 1993 shows that not only are there more men than women in Parliament, there are also more young male MPs members than young female members (Table 3). The fact of older women outnumbering younger women in Parliament suggests that the latter face both gender-based and generational challenges. Allah-Mensah (2005) discussed women's relative absence on standing and select committees of Parliament where important legislative debates and decisions take place, and there is little to suggest that this situation has changed significantly.

**Table 3: Gender and age representation of Members of Parliament in Ghana in the Fourth Republic**

Parliament	No. of seats	Total female contestants	Total females elected (as % of total MPs)	Young <sup>3</sup> MPs	Young female MPs	Youngest female MP
1993-1996	200	23	16 (8%)	17	1	35 years
1997-2000	200	53	18 (9%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001-2004	200	95	20* (10%)	n/a	n/a	n/a
2005-2008	230	n/a	25 (10.9%)	11	0	36 years
2009-2012	230	103	16 (6.9%)	8	0	39 years
2013-2016	275	133	30 (10.9)	15	3	32 years

Source: Calculated from Know Your MP 2005-2009, 2009-2013, 2013-2017 and Ghana Parliamentary Register, 1993-1996 Session

It is, however, encouraging to note the number of young female parliamentarians in 2013 who are educated professionals, as well as the number of young female aspirants running for parliamentary seats in the 2016 elections. For instance, 42 out of 75 females (and out of 728 total candidates) were nominated to contest, on the ticket of

<sup>3</sup> Age 35 years and below

the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the 275 parliamentary seats in the 2016 elections (Aziz, 2015). The appointment of women to important national positions – Chief Justice in 2007, Speaker of Parliament in 2009, acting Inspector-General of Police (IGP) in 2009, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in 2009, Commissioner of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in 2011, and Electoral Commissioner in 2015 – are highlights of women’s participation in governance.

## Business

Gender segmentation is a feature of the Ghanaian labour force, as is true for many parts of the world. This means that in business, as in the informal economy and in the civic and public sectors, women congregate at lower positions and are thin at senior management or board level. Moreover, women are to be found more in small- and medium-scale enterprises than in large-scale enterprises, and few women head financial institutions and non-governmental organisations (Amoah, 2015; Bamfo and Asiedu-Appiah, 2012; Winn, 2005)

However, women continue to work their way up the ladder to head institutions. In 2004, history was made with the appointment of the first woman to head a bank in Ghana. By March 2014, there were four women in managing director positions in reputable banks. In addition, there is at least one woman on almost all the boards of banks in Ghana. Specific examples include 25%, 33% and 38% female representation on the management boards of Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), Fidelity Bank and United Bank for Africa (UBA) respectively. There is hope that the number of women in managerial positions, especially in the banking sector, will increase significantly in the immediate future.<sup>4</sup>

Female entrepreneurs are also changing the face of business. The trend in the non-financial sector and in entrepreneurship indicates a diversification of opportunities for women, with many entering into ICT, brand management and fashion. Amoah (2015) identified positions of managing directors, front-end developers, co-founders and product managers as emerging areas of opportunity for women in ICT. Importantly, younger females, whom Amoah (2015) characterises as independent, well-educated and technology-savvy, are increasingly taking advantage of these opportunities. However, the challenge of start-up capital and gender discrimination still confronts female business owners, as it is true for women in the labour force generally (Tsikata and Darkwah, 2013).

## Sports

According to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), there are currently 270 million people actively involved as players, referees and officials in football, arguably the world’s most popular sport. Out of this number, 26 million (10%) are females.<sup>5</sup> These statistics illustrate the challenge to women’s involvement in sports not only at the global level but also at the national. One study in 1990 reported a bias against women with respect to financial and logistical support for their participation in sports, amount of airtime allotted for female sporting activities as well

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://citifmonline.com/2014/03/07/women-taking-over-top-positions-in-banking-industry/>

<sup>5</sup> See [www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga\\_9384\\_10704.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/emaga_9384_10704.pdf)

as payment for female winners (Duncan et al., 1990). One can argue that this persists today. In 2015, the Ghana women’s national football team, which had just returned with a gold medal from an international tournament, were forced to stage a protest to compel the government to pay them the bonuses they had been promised, which were relatively small amounts of money compared to the bonuses paid out to their male counterparts.<sup>6</sup>

### The Sciences

Science, as an area of teaching, research and learning, has conventionally been the preserve of men. Therefore, an important indication of women’s participation and advancement is the extent to which they are represented in the sciences as teachers, researchers and students. Data from UNESCO indicate that 24% of secondary school teachers in Ghana are female.<sup>7</sup> While figures for female researchers are hard to come by, we know that worldwide they face more difficult conditions in pursuit of their profession than their male counterparts, and show lower levels of productivity in terms of publications (Campion and Shrum, 2004).

Statistics from the University of Ghana for the 2011-2012 academic year show that the admission of females to science programmes (agriculture, engineering and general science) was 40% or less (Table 4). Efforts are being made at secondary level to address the gender-based challenges of girls and to increase their participation in science through the Science, Technology and Mathematics Clinic (STMC) held by the Ministry of Education around the country and private initiatives such as “Evolve with STEM”<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 4: Admissions to programmes in University of Ghana (2011-2012) by sex**

Field	Total	Percentage Female
Agriculture	774	24.2
Engineering	232	15.9
Humanities	12,249	41.2
Science	2,617	40.2
Special/Occasional	563	75.3

Source: University of Ghana (2012)

<sup>6</sup> See <http://citifmonline.com/2015/09/30/delay-in-paying-black-queens-bonuses-unfair-wildaf/>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.TCHR.FE.ZS>

<sup>8</sup> This is an initiative launched by the 2015 CIMG Marketing Woman of the Year, Mrs. Lucy Quist to promote the study of science in some basic schools in Ghana. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

## REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE

The portrayal of women in Ghanaian creative literature is tied primarily to women's "ideal" roles as wives and mothers. In addition, one finds frequent representations of women as seductresses and sexual commodities and, occasionally, as liberators and advocates for women's emancipation.

In "Parasites and Prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels", Abena Busia (1986) states that "there are basically two traditions of oppositions governing the portrayal of women in the novels which concern us here: women as wholesome whores or victimized or virtuous virgins, and women as nurturing earth mothers or destructive Jezebels." She notes that although Armah's women are progressively transformed from parasites to prophets, in the course of this transformation, the women become symbols of liberation and womanhood without a sense of their own individuality and an independent identity. Invariably, "women are always lovers, wives, or blood relatives of central male characters, and have significance in the texts only insofar as they affect those characters" (Busia, 1986). Ama Ata Aidoo (1999) expresses similar views, with particular reference to Armah's Oyo whom she describes as "a whiner, unreasonable, plain unreasonable. Her mother is a greedy ageing bitch and Estella, your perfumed indolent whore" (quoted in Asare-Kumi, 2010).

As a counter to these negative representations, women writers have taken pains to portray women in more sympathetic and dignified ways. Kofi Owusu (1999) cites female writers like Aidoo who contribute to "ongoing attempts to rescue the African woman from the fringes of African literature and restore flesh, blood, voice and credibility to her" (p. 342).

Women writers, in a "negation of negation", have also portrayed men in a negative light as we find in Amma Darko's novels:

To tell the female side of the story, Darko employs a highly subjective female viewpoint which is expressed through verbal violence or language which is deflationary and condemnatory of men, including insults and curses; the caricaturing of male characters; the muting and banishment of male characters; creating assertive female protagonists who defy male dominance in words and deeds; creating female characters who are repositories of knowledge and wisdom and who act as commentators and counsellors expressing the female viewpoint; female counterforces based on group solidarity (Adjei, 2009, p. 49)

In an interview, Darko reveals:

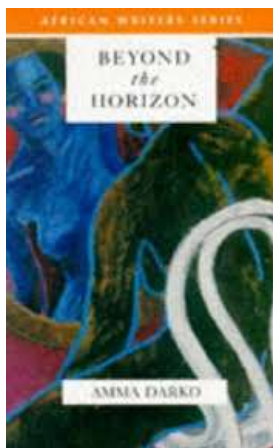
We've started writing from our point of view because, for a while you [men] were writing for us. If we're writing, probably there is some pain that has to come out... You were always portraying us as all-enduring, all-giving mothers and that is the attitude we find in males... but I don't want to be all-giving all the time, *I want to be angry, I want to react* (Ayinne, 2004, p. 14, emphasis added).

By and large, female authors expose the various situations of women, such as the "traditional woman", uneducated, without any means of earning income, and who is only responsible for her husband and her kids; the woman who is educated and well established in a career but has difficulty blending her role as mother and wife with career goals; and the woman who foregoes marriage and childbearing to focus on career and personal development. They also expose the struggles of the woman who tries to combine these roles.



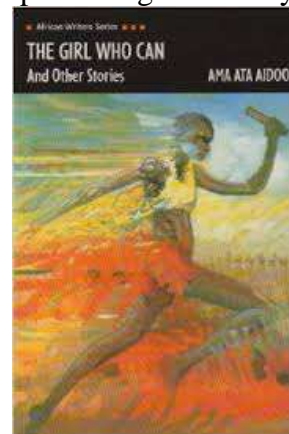
Established novelists like Aidoo and young writers like Ayesha Haruna Attah tell stories that depict the Ghanaian woman in a multiplicity of roles. In Aidoo's *Changes* (1993), we see educated women like Esi and Pokuyaa battle traditional views of marriage, parenting and careers. Even though the educated and emancipated Esi divorces Oko and marries Ali Konde, a Moslem who already has a wife, it turns out to be a most unwise decision because she remains a fringe entity in Konde's marital life. However, she is portrayed as the modern, educated and economically independent woman who is able to opt out of an abusive marriage.

The same cannot be said of Darko's first three novels published in English, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Housemaid* and *Faceless*. In *Beyond the Horizon*, women are portrayed as expendable sexual objects due to their lack of economic power and their dependence on men for their survival. Mara is the representative character who exemplifies the contemporary Ghanaian woman in her obsession with Western material culture. *The Housemaid* features Tika, a business woman who trades her



body for favours from a large clientele of rich men in order to keep her business running. *Faceless* throws the searchlight on a range of female character types. There is Maa Tsuru, an uneducated woman in an urban slum, economically dependent on abusive men for survival and whose fatherless children take to the streets. We have Mama Abidjan and Mami Broni who make a living recruiting and inducting young street girls into prostitution. There are also Kabrias, Fatis and Dinas—the career women behind the female advocacy NGO known as MUTE—who derive confidence from being economically empowered and who take on the self-imposed burden of alleviating the suffering of the likes of Maa Tsuru.

Similarly, Aidoo's *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* presents a mix of female character types: grandmothers who represent tradition; daughters who serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity; and granddaughters representing modernity. In the first three stories all the protagonists are female; they all triumph against all odds in male-controlled domains; men are present only as casual appendages, footnotes and allusions. The emphasis is on the women “who can”, such as Akuba the young woman who breaches a traditionally male preserve to become the first woman fighter pilot in the Ghana Air Force, and the ambitious University Professor Adjoa Moji who rises to become the first female President of a United States of Africa in the year 2020. Utopian and futuristic as this may sound, it is, nonetheless, Aidoo's portrayal of the Ghanaian woman as endowed with the ability to accomplish whatever is possible within human capability, even in a male-dominated setting. Yet, in the same space, Aidoo makes room for a character like Nana (grandmother) whose voice echoes traditional views and who upholds the patriarchal status quo. Of her granddaughter who is born with spindly legs that the society regards as biologically and anatomically inappropriate, she says:



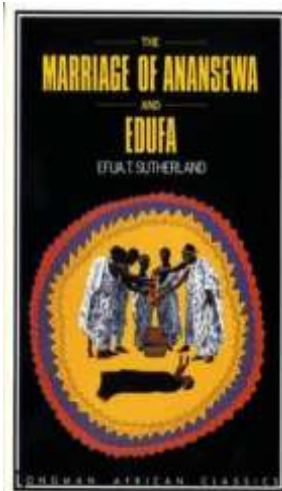
As I keep saying, if any woman decides to come into this world with her two legs, then she should select legs that have meat on them: with good calves. Because you

are sure such legs would support solid hips. And a woman must have solid hips to be able to have children... (p. 9)

Similar to Aidoo's strong female characters is Ayesha Haruna Attah's character, Lizzy, in *Harmattan Rain*, a strong feminist who rebels against marrying the older men her father chooses for her. She also wonders why boys get away with some things and girls do not: "I just don't understand why you can do some things and I can't just because I'm a girl...a woman" (p. 5). This attitude of Lizzy's leads her to seek more education for herself as she continues to admire people with strong opinions everywhere she goes. Lizzie muses when she encounters a woman in Accra who believes she should not work because working is too tiring and should be given up once a woman starts a family: "That woman possessed no dreams of her own...If being a mother was all she wanted from life, she'd have stayed in Adukrom No. 2" (p. 72).

Even though Lizzy becomes more empowered by her education, she decides to stay in her marriage even though she finds out her husband Ernest has hidden the fact that he had a child and another wife. Thus, the strong women portrayed by Aidoo and Haruna Attah still hang on to male companionship, echoing a theme in Ghanaian folk literature: a woman is incomplete without a man. The central/northern Ewe express it succinctly in the proverb, *Atsue nye bubu na asi*, which literally means a man is one that makes a woman respectable. The Akan have a similar proverb: *ɔbaa animuonyam ne awareε*, meaning a woman's glory is in marriage.

Dependence on men, for sustenance or protection, can be carried to extremes as Efua Sutherland depicts in the play *Edufa*. It portrays a docile woman, Ampoma, who plays into the hands of her exploitative husband. Ampoma, in an apologetic address to her fellow women, says:



We spend most of our days preventing the heart from beating out its greatness. The things we would rather encourage lie choking among the weeds of our restrictions. And before we know it, time has eluded us. There is not much time allotted us, and half of that we sleep. While we are awake we should allow our hearts to beat without shame of being seen living... (p. 53)

However, in *Foriwa* (first titled *New Life in Kyerefaso*), Sutherland presents a young female character, Foriwa, who even as the daughter of the Queenmother of the community (a repository of culture and tradition) becomes a revolutionary and model of social change by catalysing a change of mindset in a society steeped in unproductive rituals. Foriwa can be likened to Anowa in Aidoo's play *Anowa* where we see the eponymous character defy her parents to marry Kofi Ako, the man of her choice. In Ghanaian folklore, the motif of the so-called *disobedient daughter* presents such revolutionary young women as outcasts and social misfits. While such is the predicament of Anowa whose life ends tragically, Foriwa, on the other hand, is celebrated as a heroine by the entire community. Thus, Aidoo sticks to, or reinforces, tradition in *Anowa*, whereas Sutherland subverts it in *Foriwa* for the purposes of giving voice and presence to women; a break from the past and belief in a future that vests women's empowerment in young, precocious women.

In conclusion, in Ghanaian popular fiction and drama, most of the female protagonists endeavour to be strong, even when they realize the empowerment they

need comes at the price of battling societal norms. As more women writers come up, such as Selassie Taiye and Ayesha Haruna Attah, and Elizabeth-Irene Baitie, we can expect new and more varied representations of women as a reflection of contemporary Ghanaian society.

## **REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL, VISUAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Across visual and audio media, men and women are invited to imbibe images that legitimate dominant gender perceptions, construct new stereotypes and/or challenge existing ones (Blinde, Greendorfer and Shanker, 1991). The average Ghanaian spends at least one hour a day consuming media (GSS, 2012a). Through this access to minds, therefore, the media is critical in framing gender relations.

Previous studies have documented gender disparities in participation as consumers and producers of media (Kimani and Yeboah, 2011). Despite outnumbering men in the general population, women have less access to the media (GSS, 2015). However, as Akrofi-Quarcoo (2007) shows, this may have to do with media gate-keeping practices by mainly male managers, producers and editors. In other areas where participation is less constrained (for example, in phone-in programmes), the inequalities are reduced.

### **Newspapers**

The present study finds women's representation in newspaper content to be lopsided. Across six newspapers sampled, *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Guide*, *Business & Financial Times*, *Graphic Showbiz*, *Junior Graphic* and *90 minutes*, there was one female reporter to every three males. Women were also more likely to be writing for generalist (e.g. *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*) rather than specialist newspapers such as those covering sports or business. As sources, men outnumber women three to one. The news is also mostly about men, who are featured twice as often as women as the main character of a story. Men's appearance in the news also tends to be more positively framed (89% of the time) than women (63% of the time). Positive framing invites the audience to view the news character positively or benignly, such as when one reports on an award winner, whereas negative framing presents a person in a negative light, such as when the report has to do with corrupt or criminal acts). Finally, men had a higher chance (89%) of appearing in the news in a professional/expert capacity than women (72%).

### **Radio**

The gender disparity observed in this study is replicated on radio. Across two popular stations, *Joy FM* (predominantly English language) and *Peace FM* (predominantly Akan, the largest indigenous language group), news bulletins sampled, there were six males for every female news source cited. This was irrespective of the topic (politics, business, health, education, crime or sports). Once they make it into the news, women were less likely (64%) than men (76%) to be cited relative to their professional or expert roles. However, women had an equal chance (78%) as men (78%) of being heard directly (through interviews/quotations). As with newspapers, there were disproportionately more male presenters and reporters; in the news bulletins, the ratio was one in-studio female presenter to five males, and only one field reporter to 25 males.

Non-news radio programming was equally gendered. There were more male presenters featured in a range of genres. Predominantly, males hosted morning shows, as well as music/entertainment segments, sports, business, religious and political

discussion shows. Females presented health and home-related shows such as *Home Affairs* and *Wo haw ne sen?*<sup>9</sup> on Joy FM and Peace FM respectively. Males also predominated as guests across the segments, even on shows discussing so-called “women’s issues.”

## Television

Across three television stations sampled (*GTV, TV3 and the Akan-speaking UTV*), it appears news provides the most inclusive platform for women as employees. While disproportional representation is visible as in other media, the extent of disparity appears visibly less on TV. For instance, unlike radio where we found a lone female with 24 males on TV news, there is near parity on TV (with a ratio of 1:1.5). As news presenters, there are approximately two males to every female presenter, attesting to TV as more receptive to female presenters. However, given the medium’s tendency to entice the “male gaze” syndrome with the beauty of female presenters, there may be political undertones to this finding. On the other hand, consideration for women’s inclusion in news content as sources or news characters presents the same discouraging picture as their involvement is much more limited. The study finds that TV news, like news in other media, is mainly about men. For every female that is the main subject of a story, there are 17 males. News sources cited are predominantly male (3:1). However, there are no clear differences in their chances of being cited relative to their professional roles or being presented in a manner that invites the audience to view them positively (see explanation of positive and negative framing in section on newspaper representation).

Relative to non-news TV programming, similar patterns of increased female visibility are observed. Across morning shows, there is a strong female presenter/guest presence. Furthermore, women appear as knowledgeable discussants on issues raised. Daytime TV also prominently features religious sermons, *telenovela*, imported African drama (mainly Nigerian) and local drama. However, the encouraging picture painted of female representation on morning shows is not replicated here as they tend to portray less progressive images of women. Men deliver sermons while women listen. In addition, stereotypical portrayals of women are highly pervasive in the film/drama content (see section below on film/home video for illustrations).

## Advertisements

Across the three main mass media (TV, radio, print), advertising is the main source of income and as such represents a very prominent component of their content. Given the sheer volume across these media, therefore, advertising merits attention in any analysis of the media’s representation of women. Overall, this study finds women to be numerically well represented in advertisements. On TV, across 68 advertisements sampled, we found 130 females and 99 males featured prominently, indicating women have higher visibility. In a pattern noted as far back as the 1990s by Furnham and Bittar (1993), women are more commonly featured in adverts promoting products used in the domestic setting (e.g. soap/detergents, food and medicine) and less likely

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<sup>9</sup> *Wo haw ne sen?* (Akan) loosely translates as “What troubles you?”

to feature in so-called masculine products (e.g. technology, construction and financial/insurance products).

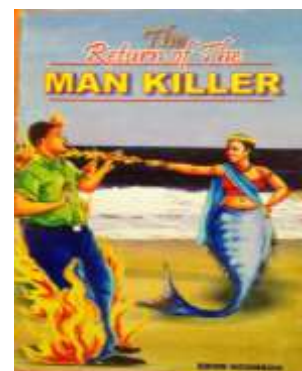
Beyond the numbers, we identified instances of stereotypical portrayals of women. For instance in the recent Vodafone Ghana advert promoting a mobile airtime offer, the stereotype of the interfering and overbearing mother-in-law is replayed. The said mother-in-law is seen constantly on phone with her son's new bride instructing her on how to care for him... ostensibly because she has two full days of free airtime. There is also a tendency, albeit to a limited extent, to project women as reward for men's use of certain products. Evidence comes from an *Alomo Bitters Apuutoo* advert, in which a man misses the chance to attract a beautiful woman because he is drinking the wrong alcoholic beverage. We learn from the woman that the only way to attract her kind is for men to drink *Alomo Bitters*, purported to increase men's sexual drive.

Women are also more likely to be at the receiving end (rather than givers) of information about and the benefits of technology-based and financial products. For instance, in insurance adverts, men are the breadwinners who take policies that benefit women while mobile technology adverts feature men as knowledgeable sharers of information. Similar patterns are found in radio advertisements where men feature more prominently in more prestigious product categories (e.g. banking/insurance, technology) while women sell food, health/beauty and cleaning products. Male voice-overs are also more common, legitimating gendered notions that men are more knowledgeable and authoritative.

### Visual Media (Popular Artwork)

Popular visual media such as film posters, cover art of popular market fiction, and billboards and signs are important because of their visibility and ubiquity. Thus, even without reading or watching the content of these films and books, the fact that these images are part of the visual landscape in urban areas in particular makes them worthy of examination.

A persistent theme in film posters and book covers is that women possess evil powers, whether as powerful and men-destroying witches and mermaids. This reflects both popular beliefs about the existence of such beings (Meyer, 2015), and also about the nature of women.



Less frequently, one encounters the representation of women as wise (e.g. *The Wise Old Woman*) and compassionate (e.g. *The Unreliable Promise* [Amofo, n.d.] and *The Armed Robber's Daughter 1 & 2* [Akorli, n.d.]). There are also themes of betrayal of

female trust within religious settings and the marital home (e.g. *Beware of Miracles* [Amofo, n.d.]; *Sakawa Pastor* [no author indicated]; and *The Prodigal Husband* [Ashiabi, n.d.]).

Posters advertising Pentecostal events proliferate in urban areas of Ghana. These posters represent women positively as religious leaders in their own right or, more frequently, as complements to their husbands.



## Social Media

There is a lack of empirical research on the extent of women's participation in social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, and on personal blogs. However, anecdotal evidence of the number of women at monthly meetings of BloggingGhana<sup>10</sup> (started by a female, Kajsa Adu-Hallberg) suggests that young women are active bloggers and activists on social media. All very active on Facebook and Twitter, such women include actors, activists, academics and filmmakers as Nana Sekyiamah, Kajsa Adu-Hallberg, Yvonne Nelson, Sara Asafu-Adjei, Esi Ansah and Leila Djansi. There are also a number of programmes that attempt to increase girls and women's access to and use of the internet. Among these is the multi-country training programme initiated by Young Urban Women (YUW) that has trained young Ghanaian women on internet use and social media for advocacy.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.bloggingghana.org>

<sup>11</sup> Empowering women in Ghana and Zimbabwe through Social Media <http://social-media-for-development.org/empowering-women-in-ghana-and-zimbabwe-through-social-media/>

## REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE POPULAR ARTS

### Films and Home Video

Ghana's film and home video industry continues to thrive, but with its popularity has come both opportunities and challenges for women's representation. On the one hand, the industry has expanded opportunities for women, with some frequently cast in lead roles. Actors such as Jackie Appiah, Yvonne Nelson, Kyeiwaa (Rose Mensah) and Nana Ama McBrown have become household names. Female movie producers, scriptwriters and directors such as Shirley Frimpong-Manso, Leila Djansi, Akofa Edjeani Asiedu have received acclaim.

Beyond these opportunities, stereotypical, disempowering images persist. Particularly in the category of the industry dubbed Kumawood (specialising in films produced in Akan), female characters commonly play troublesome mothers-in-law, or are subservient to men, materialistic, scheming and preoccupied with marriage as opposed to professional career aspirations. In a recent film award nominee, *Ensi aga*,<sup>12</sup> a woman who loses her husband is driven from the family home, invited to share her friend's husband (a chief for whom she is to produce kids), and later becomes the subject of her friend's evil schemes to evict her. The two women have no clear occupations besides being a chief's wives and their whole existence is defined in the context of their domestic wifely roles. Stereotypes of the schemer, quarrelsome rival, man-dependent and domesticated are highly emphasized. In another film, *Adie no adan*,<sup>13</sup> a young girl is peddled off by her mother to the highest bidder even though she loves a poor taxi driver. Her grandmother, dissatisfied with how the taxi driver was treated, decides to give him another of her granddaughters as replacement. Foregrounding these events are the girls' portrayal as tools for marriage and frequent depictions of the first girl's mother as t-e evil mother-in law, selfish, scheming and materialistic. So common are these stereotypes in Kumawood films that some actresses (e.g. Kyeiwaa and Mercy Asiedu) have assumed archetypal status where their presence forecasts their roles (evil mother-in law, witch, schemer, and so on) and the themes explored in films. Considering the pervasiveness of this medium in the

Ghanaian social fabric, this concentration of negative portrayals becomes a cause for concern.



One wonders whether the rise of female film producers, scriptwriters and directors holds any prospect of remedying the negative representation, as has occurred in other media (e.g. print;

Yeboah, 2011). A closer look at their productions reveals new images (albeit not necessarily positive). A common image in Shirley Frimpong-Manso's productions is

<sup>12</sup> *Ensi aga* (Akan) loosely translates as "It did not amount to anything" or "Your evil intentions failed".

<sup>13</sup> *Adie no adane* (Akan) loosely translates as "It has been overturned" or "what was intended for evil turned out positive".



the accomplished career women who makes independent decisions and is sexually expressive. In *The Perfect Picture*, this writer-director-producer clearly articulates this philosophy of women when one of the lead characters, Dede, describes her circle of friends as “stable minded, clear-visioned, sensible women”. However, these women are saddled with their own problems: they are either too high up the social and occupational ladder to attract any men (a notion with which they are preoccupied) or at a risk of attracting so-called wrong men. Thus, underlying these new images is the enduring image of women’s preoccupation with love/marriage and their insecurities without it.

In another Frimpong-Manso film, *Checkmate*, which recounts the travails of a cheating customs officer husband, a major female character, Jessica, is a chain-smoking, scheming and blackmailing drug pusher. Other frequent images in her films include the young, well-groomed, manicured career woman who has it all (work, home, beauty and family). Leila Djansi’s *Sinking Sands* also presents a lead female character, a professional (teacher) with career growth aspirations and potential. Her quest for love and marital bliss however draws her down a path of destruction and abuse by a husband struggling with his changed circumstances. Arguably, while introducing new images of ‘woman’ that reflect a middle-class female demographic, productions by the female producer cohort still recall enduring stereotypes.

The negative portrayals of women extend beyond the characters on screen to the actors’ personal lives. While a celebrity culture has been created where an actor such as Yvonne Nelson is not only a household name but has become a social commentator and activist (fronting the #DumsorMustStop social media and street campaign in 2015 that protested the government’s handling of the energy crisis), there is the persistent perception that women in entertainment have loose morals. Witness the incident when a self-proclaimed spokesman of President Mahama’s administration, in response to a critique of his boss by the actor Lydia Forson, shot back that unmarried actresses above 30 years were prostitutes whose opinions did not deserve attention.<sup>14</sup> That he felt compelled by the backlash on social media to apologise for his statement may tell us something about contemporary Ghanaian society (or at least the segment that is on social media, which is arguably educated, young, and middle class) and its sensitivity to attempted shaming of women in this way.<sup>15</sup>

## Stage Plays

Stage drama has historically enjoyed tremendous popularity among Ghanaians. Stage plays as accompaniment to the music concerts of early highlife musicians including Nana Kwame Ampadu, Akwasi Ampofo Agyei and J.A. Adofo (Black Chinese) were common in the 1970s. Having suffered setbacks in the straitened economic environment of the 1980s, they were revived by the National Theatre in the 1990s, and have gained new popularity in recent times. Some credit for this resurgence goes to Roverman Productions, owned by Ebo Whyte, who is also the writer and producer of these plays. Mainly targeting the Ghanaian middle class, predominant themes in

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<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.modernghana.com/news/615376/presidential-staffer-insults-stars-call-them-prostitute.html>

<sup>15</sup> See <http://ghana-news.adomonline.com/politics/2015/May-4th/prostitute-comments-my-worse-ever-comment-halidu-haruna.php>

Roverman Productions include love, marriage, family, and the tensions between convention and Christian values. Women are featured prominently, as evidenced by several of the titles so far produced: *Don't Mess with a Woman*; *Make Me a Woman Tonight*; *Men Run, Women Cry*; *Unhappy Wives, Confused Husbands*; *Dad is Mom and Mom is Dad*; *Women on Fire*; *Different Shades of Women*; and *The Day Dad Came*.



Driven by a personal philosophy that women are stronger than men and socially better supported (Boadi, interview on 20 February 2016<sup>16</sup>), the playwright, Ebo Whyte, often portrays women as a powerful force, long suffering yet determined to get what they want. An example is in *The Day Dad Came* in which Ama suffers an abusive and unfaithful husband with an unflinching belief that he will change. In a twist of fate, Ama brings her husband back to moral strength (and a new life) after a life-threatening illness. *Unhappy Wives, Confused Husbands* portrays successful career woman Esi, who sets high expectations for herself and challenges gendered norms. Nonetheless, there are underlying stereotypical references to women as gossips (relying on a “Women’s News Network”), displaying a high tendency to jump to irrational conclusions (particularly about their husbands’ fidelity), and vulnerable to societal pressures to look to men and marriage for fulfilment (Boadi, interview on 20 February 2016).

### Music and Music Videos

In Ghana, as elsewhere, music is a ubiquitous platform for cultural socialization (Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu, 2012). Previous studies suggest that local music has historically carried male-dominant cultural ideologies through an emphasis on women’s wifely roles, with lyrical references to co-wife rivalry, wives’ jealousy, insubordination and fickleness. More recent evidence from Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) shows that although local songs praise women as mother and lover, images of women as evil, exploitative, unfaithful, jealous, and unreliable persist.

Women are overwhelmingly portrayed as sex objects in contemporary music lyrics and videos. The video of the 2015 Best Hiplife Song winner at the Vodafone Ghana Music Awards, *Seihor*<sup>17</sup> shows scantily-clad female dancers (including a pole dancer) engaged in a dance-off for the attention of fully-clothed male singers whose lyrics make unsubtle references to sex acts. In the best Afro pop song, *Koene*<sup>18</sup>, men are invited to lure girls into sleeping with them “inside a corner” and then to “shun” them. This is followed by a female rapper who describes herself as a temptress and “go-getter”. Such images are highly pervasive in highlife and hip life music and videos.

<sup>16</sup> Kofi Boadi is an actor who has frequently starred in plays by Roverman Productions. He granted a telephone interview on the plays he has featured in.

<sup>17</sup> *Seihor* (Akan) loosely translates as “Tear that place up”.

<sup>18</sup> *Koene* (Ewe) means “Give it to her/him.”

Women are also frequently presented as scheming, greedy, money-loving cheats as seen in the song *Aso*<sup>19</sup> by Kwabena.

There are no observable differences in lyric content as both male and female hiplife artistes address themes of love, sex and relationships, though the lyrics of women's songs tend to be less overt about sex. However, MzBel's *Am in love*, or *16 years*, Abrewa Nana's *We gonna make love tonight*, and Becca's *You lied to me* subvert the stereotypes of women as sexual appendages in music videos and challenge social assumptions about women's sexual shyness.

This contravention of gendered sexual norms can come at a price. In 2005, Mzbel, a popular female musician, was sexually assaulted during a concert when she was groped and her outfit (described as being "very seductive and suggestive" in one report) torn off her body by some male audience members at a concert on the campus of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).<sup>20</sup> The furore that erupted was dominated by people who said the action by the university students, while not right, was provoked by Mzbel's overt sexualisation in her songs and her stage performances. Indeed, even while sanctioning the students found culpable of the assault on Mzbel, KNUST put out a press statement "admonish(ing) artistes who perform at student functions at the university to exercise decency... (to) help forestall incidences that cast a slur on the image of the university."<sup>21</sup> It may be indicative of a gradual shift in society's perception of female musicians that a new



crop of female artistes made somewhat in the image of Mzbel – such as Kaaki, Tiffany and Eazzy – have not been censured in the same way as Mzbel for their music or public image. In fact, there is now a cadre of female musicians in various genres (including the male-dominated hip-hop and dancehall) who are successful in their own right and headline such shows as the all-women "Red Lipstick" concert.

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<sup>19</sup> An Akan female name.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.modernghana.com/music/2609/3/knust-probes-assault-on-mzbel.html>

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.modernghana.com/music/2677/knust-cautions-artistes-to-exercise-decency.html>

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN

This section is based on primary data collected through a survey and focus group discussions (see Appendix A for a description of methods used, and Appendix B for the research instruments used). While respondents in the survey are not representative of the Ghanaian population (see Appendix A for sampling design and sample composition), the survey does provide an indication of public perception, especially as it varies across social and demographic groups. The focus group discussions present a general social consensus and points of contestation in the public perception of women. The discussion that follows presents general trends and statistically significant findings from the survey, while the analysis of the focus group discussions offers depth and nuance on the perception of women’s roles and representations.

The questionnaire used in the survey was divided into different sections containing statements about women that respondents were invited to agree or disagree with. For each section, a score was derived for each respondent that showed whether, on aggregate, they endorsed mostly positive or mostly negative views of women (see Appendix A for methods of analysis and Appendix B for questionnaire). Table 5 shows the proportion of respondents that held, on aggregate, a negative, positive or neutral view for the various sections of the questionnaire.

There was positive perception of women when it came to gendered norms and relations, though when gendered norms were put in the form of popular sayings, respondents were likely to agree with negative perceptions of women. Women were regarded most positively in terms of their roles and participation in politics and work, and most negatively regarded in their participation in the arts and media.

**Table 5: Summary of perceptions of Ghanaian women from survey**

	Mostly <b>positive</b> perceptions	Mostly <b>negative</b> perceptions	Neutral	Total
<b>Gendered norms and relations</b> (Questions # 12-30)	54%	44%	2%	100%
<b>Popular Ghanaian idioms</b> (Questions #69-75)	38%	59%	3%	100%
Women’s roles and participation in <b>employment and business</b> (Questions # 31-34)	59%	24%	17%	100%
Women’s roles and participation in <b>politics</b> (Questions #35-38)	63%	19%	18%	100%
Women’s roles and participation in <b>media and the arts</b> (Questions #47-48)	39%	31%	30%	100%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

The positive perspective of women in various sectors may be related to exposure to examples of successful women in those areas. In Table 6, we see that the highest proportion of respondents (65%) reported knowing of a successful or prominent woman in politics, which may be linked with the results in Table 5 that show that public perception was most positive with regard to women’s political participation and roles.

**Table 6: Responses to “Do you know/have you heard of any successful or prominent women in these sectors?”**

Question number (see Appendix B)	Statement	Yes	No
Q39	Business (corporate)	38%	62%
Q40	Business (trade)	37%	63%
Q41	Politics and government (parliamentarian, minister)	65%	35%
Q42	Education	46%	54%
Q43	Sciences	21%	79%
Q44	Sports	34%	66%
Q45	Religion	43%	57%
Q46	Civil society	20%	80%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

### Gendered norms and relations

Table 5 shows that slightly less than half (44%) of respondents adhered to stereotypical gendered norms and relations. In examining specific responses to some of the questions in that section (Table 6), we see apparent contradictions in the way that women are viewed in relation to men. For instance, while respondents did not agree that males at birth are inherently better than females (Q15), they did generally believe that men were superior to women (Q12) and that women were created to be helpmates to men (Q13).

Women were perceived positively when it came to their economic work and roles (e.g. Q16, Q27, Q28 and Q29) and most negatively in terms of their marital relations and roles (e.g. Q18, Q19, Q22 and Q26).

Females were less likely than men to subscribe to the negative statements in this section, and higher levels of education corresponded with lower adherence to negative gendered norms. Religion also mattered, however neither age nor area of residence (rural or urban, low-income or high-income neighbourhoods) had any association with the extent to which a respondent held to conventional views about women and gender relations.

**Table 7: Responses to some questions on gendered norms and relations**

Question number (see Appendix B)	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ can't tell
Q12	Women and men are not equal; men are superior to women.	69%	30%	2%
Q13	Women were created to help men.	93%	6%	1%
Q14	Women cannot do a lot of the things men can do.	61%	38%	1%
Q15	It is better to give birth to a boy than a girl.	30%	66%	4%
Q16	Sons are better able to provide financial support to their aging parents than daughters.	41%	58%	2%
Q17	Under some circumstances, it is okay for a man to beat his wife.	11%	89%	0%
Q18	There is no such thing as marital rape; a woman should always be ready to have sex with her husband when the man	40%	59%	1%

	wants it.			
Q19	For a healthy marriage, a man should be older than his wife.	72%	26%	3%
Q20	It is not good for a woman to have/to earn more money than her husband.	39%	58%	3%
Q22	A good wife must submit to the decisions and wishes of the husband at home.	87%	12%	1%
Q26	A woman who is not married has no honour, no matter her other achievements	66%	32%	2%
Q27	Women should <b>not</b> work outside the home.	13%	86%	0%
Q28	It is better for a marriage and for the family if women work outside the home.	84%	14%	3%
Q29	Women should contribute to economic decisions in the household (e.g. selling crops, livestock or land, purchasing tools, asking for a loan).	97%	3%	0%
Q30	Men should share the responsibilities in managing the home (cleaning, cooking, laundry, washing clothes and dishes, sweeping, etc.).	69%	30%	1%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

Respondents in the study were also asked their opinions of popular proverbs or sayings in Ghana that referenced women. For this section overall, as many as 59% of the survey respondents held negative views of women (Table 5). However, in terms of individual responses (Table 8), there were mixed sentiments: 80% or more of survey respondents agreed to positive statements about women (Q69 and Q70) but similar numbers responded to a negative statement (Q89). Encouragingly, almost half (44%) of people disagreed with a negative statement about women's inherent worth (Q74).

**Table 8: Responses to idioms and proverbs about women**

Question number (see Appendix B)	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ can't tell
Q69	"If you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation."	80%	17%	3%
Q70	"Behind every successful man is a woman."	89%	10%	1%
Q71	"If a woman buys a gun, it is stored in a man's room."	76%	20%	5%
Q72	"Women are their own worst enemies."	89%	9%	2%
Q73	"A woman's place is in the kitchen."	50%	50%	0%
Q74	"One son is like ten daughters."	52%	44%	4%
Q75	"If a woman incurs fortune in a marriage, it belongs to her extended family, if she incurs a debt (misfortune), it belongs to	72%	25%	4%

	her husband.”			
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Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

The focus group discussions (FGDs) added some nuance to these responses. For instance, participants in the focus group, both male and female and young and old, subscribed to the gendered norm that it is the woman’s role to keep the home, but they also stated the need for male “help” in this role since women were stepping into or supporting men in the traditionally male “provider” role. This endorses the survey finding that 69% of people agreed that men should share some household chores (Table 7):

The way we are brought up in our society, we say that men are the heads and the females are to help them. But in our society today, in some homes the females are providing for the homes. (Female formal sector employee, Accra)

In terms of decision making, participants in all the FGDs felt that females should be given some say in household decisions. However, in the event of stalemate, there was agreement that the man should have the final say as the head of the household. In general, the idea of men as the authority figure in the home, in keeping with patriarchal norms, was strongly held:

If a woman makes decisions at home, the man would be seen as being stupid and not a man. People will laugh at him and insult him behind his back; they will call him a woman. (Urban male youth, Awoshie).

One area in which there was a generally positive outlook in both the survey and FGDs was women’s education. For instance, more than half (55%) of survey respondents disagreed with a statement that implied that it was more worthwhile to educate a boy than a girl (Q23 in Table 9) and 80% agreed with the well-known quote (attributed to Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey) that educating women yielded society-wide impact (Q 69 in Table 9).

**Table 9: Responses to survey questions on educating women**

Question number (see Appendix B)	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know/ can’t tell
Question 23	If a parent does not have enough money and has to choose, s/he should focus on educating a son rather than a daughter.	43%	55%	2%
Question 69	“If you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”	80%	17%	3%
Question 21	It is not good for a woman to have higher education than her husband.	37%	61%	2%
Question 25	Highly educated women (those with a university degree) usually make poor wives.	44%	50%	6%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

Across all the focus groups, and for both males and females, there was a strong rejection of “olden days ideas” that female education was not necessary because

women would end up in the kitchen or be married and taken care of by a man. Focus group participants strongly advocated female education without restriction in the level and type, informed by their perception that a changing world and changing roles for women required a good education:

Now we are in the computer world. We are not in the olden days anymore so education for a woman is good. At first it was only the men that provided the housekeeping money but now a man provides and a woman also provides; so what a man can do a woman can also do. (Rural male adult male, Danfar)

Good education for a female makes her independent of their parents or husbands; it helps them to steer clear of boys and teenage pregnancy. (Urban young female, Awoshie)

The younger FGD participants specifically made reference to successful and highly educated women such as the Chief Justice, a previous Speaker of Parliament, and a previous acting Inspector-General of Police.

Nonetheless, both survey and focus groups respondents expressed some reservations about what an education meant for women’s social roles, especially for the socially-prized role of “wife”: 37% believed it would be bad for a marriage if the wife had more education than her husband and 44% believed that an educated women would make a poor wife (Q21 and Q25 in Table 9). In the focus group also, some participants suggested that women who have higher education or are intelligent are social misfits since women are not supposed to be too smart.

### Perceptions of Ghanaian women’s roles and participation in society

This section covers perceptions of women’s participation in work and politics, in comparison to men’s participation. Broadly, while respondents supported greater opportunities for women, especially in education and employment, they observed that the organisation of society still constrained women’s freedoms. In the focus groups, these concerns were expressed especially by women, who also tended to have a more positive outlook on women’s capabilities:

Our freedom doesn’t come easily. A man can decide to go anywhere he wants but if a woman does so, it brings problems. (Rural adult female, Danfar)

### Work and business

The survey respondents’ perceptions of women’s roles in work, including in the business world, was moderately positive; overall, 59% of respondents had a positive aggregate score for the section of the questionnaire on women’s participation in the labour force (Table 5). For all the questions in this section, about two out of every three respondents disagreed with statements that suggested that women were less capable in leadership roles at work (Table 10). Women held more positive views here than men, and increasing educational achievement was correlated with more positive views. There seemed to be a difference in perspective depending on one’s locality or neighbourhood, a difference which was also associated with socio-economic status. However, neither age nor religion was associated with views on women and work.

**Table 10: Responses to survey questions on work and business**

Question number	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know/
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(Appendix B)				can't tell
Q31	I will not be happy if my boss is a woman	34%	64%	2%
Q32	Businesses/programmes/projects perform worse under female bosses.	30%	66%	4%
Q33	Women are less capable than men of occupying high-level positions.	37%	62%	1%
Q34	I will not feel good having a pastor who is a female.	36%	62%	2%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

The general view of focus group participants on women's roles in the labour market was that the decision to enter a particular type of work should be based on the interest and ability of the individual rather than on one's gender:

It all now depends on the females. Now there is no gendered occupation once the lady is willing to engage. What a man can do, a woman can do also. (Urban male student, University of Ghana)

Now a woman can do anything. Now we don't say that 'this is for a woman' or 'this is for a man'. A woman can now fire a gun and also go to war. (Urban formal sector male, Accra)

Participants still considered some work more suitable for men, and this was based on the stereotypical view that women do not have the physical strength, technical efficiency or know-how for certain types of jobs:

Women are not able to stand certain things; they are easily frightened. I wouldn't have the courage to work at a morgue because I can't look after a corpse. I would be frightened. When a man sees that thing, he won't run away; he will just do his work. (Urban female youth, Awoshie)

What men can do a woman can do but some of them are beyond the strength of a woman. Something like masonry...it will be difficult for a woman to climb up a building to lay brick. Carpentry work can be done by a woman but not as well as a man. (Rural male adult, Danfar)

While there was generally a positive view by both males and females that it was good for a woman to be highly successful in her career, it was also suggested that such women would face challenges in Ghanaian society. Participants listed some of the labels put on women who entered occupations considered to be the preserve of men, which implied that she was less womanly or feminine: these included "woman tiger", "woman-man" and "iron woman". Participants said such women were perceived as arrogant and that men were uncomfortable working under them as subordinates or being married to them.

The general sentiment among male participants was that they would not want to marry a female higher in age and social status (that is, education and occupation) because they would not get respect from such women. Conversely, female participants said they would not marry a man who was younger or of lower social status because it would be difficult to submit to such men:

It is the societal perception. If a female medical doctor marries a *trotro* driver, society won't understand. They will talk about it. It is just the way it is, and (we can't avoid it) because we're part of the society. (Urban female youth, Awoshie)

The man is seen as the head, so if society sees that a women is at the same level with the men or higher, the men think that they (the women) won't respect them. (Male informal sector employee, Madina)

## Politics

Out of all the domains of social life featured in the questionnaire, survey respondents were most positive about women's participation in political leadership, with 63% of respondents having a positive aggregate score in this section (Table 5). A significant majority (74%) of respondents believed that women were as capable as men of being political leaders, a larger majority (83%) stated that they would vote for a woman to represent them at local government level, and a smaller majority (63%) appeared willing to vote for a female president (table 11). Again, being female and having more education was associated with a more positive outlook on women in politics. Location of residence also seemed to matter, although age and religion did not.

**Table 11: Responses to survey questions on women in politics**

Question number (see Appendix B)	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ can't tell
Q35	I would <u>not</u> vote for a woman who is generally considered capable as President of Ghana.	36%	63%	1%
Q36	Women are as capable as men of filling political leadership roles.	74%	25%	1%
Q37	I would vote for a woman to represent me in the District Assembly, if she is capable.	83%	17%	0%
Q38	Male parliamentarians are more effective than female parliamentarians.	42%	49%	9%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

The focus group discussions presented a slightly less positive picture. While participants affirmed women's right to enter politics, they also explained that politics in Ghana was a rough terrain that was especially challenging for women because they would come against male chauvinism in a society in which men were used to being authority figures:

If you a woman enters into politics, it means you are brave. If you are not brave, you can't do it (Adult female rural residence, Danfar)

The men do not want the women to rule over them. So when the women try to come into politics they discourage them. Men don't want women to rule over them. In the Bible they say that the man is the head so if a woman wants to be the head, the men don't agree. (Female informal sector employee, Madina)

People have created the impression that a woman cannot lead a man so when they involve themselves in politics, it means they are trying to lead the men so mostly the men don't allow them in politics. (Urban male student, Adotey Otintor Senior High School, Tuba)

Some participants described the women who managed to enter the political arena as tough, arrogant, unmarried, and lacking morals. Female participants thus indicated their disinclination to enter politics because they did not want to expose themselves to ridicule and vulgarity. However, a minority opinion was expressed that it was fine for

women to go into politics, and that in a number of cases, women were better and more honest at managing affairs than men, because of the conventional view that women are more nurturing and careful:

To me women are wise. A woman can give you advice that if you follow it will help, so if a woman is at Parliament she can make useful contributions. (Adult rural male, Danfar)

Women are more careful than men. The economy for instance has been run by men and look where we are. If a woman should take it up, she would be careful with it because of her children. You see that love and care in women. (Urban female student, Achimota Senior High School, Achimota)

### Media and arts

Compared to other areas of public life for which survey respondents’ perceptions of women were assessed under this study, the most negative perceptions were held of women in media and the arts (Table 5). For example, 44% of respondents agreed to the statement: “I will not be happy if my wife / future wife (for males) or sister (for females) were a musician or an actor”, and 47% agreed to the statement: “I feel that women who perform music or act films are often immoral.” Sex and educational level were correlated with perception, such that being female and being educated made one less negative about women’s participation in the media and the arts. Location of residence mattered, but age and religion did not.

The negative perception may be linked to respondents’ experience of the type of roles that women are given in the arts and media. Respondents observed that women had greater numerical representation than men across most platforms, with the exception of radio, news broadcasts and sport shows. This generally bears out the empirical analysis of women’s representation in media discussed earlier in this report. Respondents had perhaps a more optimistic view of the *nature* of women’s representation: women on radio, TV and stage were the most positively perceived and women in music videos the most negatively viewed (Table 12).

**Table 12: Perceptions of women’s representation in various media**

	Women “more likely” to be represented (seen and heard) compared to men	Women seen in “positive roles” compared to negative roles
Radio	47%	86%
TV	75%	80%
Films and home videos (“Ghallywood”—English language)	79%	52%
Films and home videos (“Kumawood”—local language)	76%	52%

Plays (e.g. by Ebo Whyte, National Theatre, etc.)	65%	80%
Music videos	75%	27%
Newspapers	42%	72%
Advertisements (billboards)	76%	64%
TV news broadcasts	77%	95%
TV sports broadcasts	24%	81%

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

In all the focus group discussions, concern was expressed about the roles that women were made to play, particularly in movies and in music. Whilst the increase in number of women in movies and music was considered a good development, there was the perception that there was a growing trend of negative roles being played by women in which they exposed their bodies and acted in ways that were offensive to society and destroyed the image of women:

When (women) go into the music it is good, but when they expose their bodies we see them as prostitutes (Male formal sector employee, Accra).

A man can take off his shirt but a woman cannot do that, but now on the television such acts by women is all over on channels. They should please reduce it. Those (visuals) are meant for your husband's eyes only. (Female informal sector employee, Madina)

### Other aspects of society

Respondents commended and encouraged female participation in all aspects of sports except boxing, which they considered unsafe for women. They debunked the view held by older generations that a woman's participation in sports such as athletics could have negative reproductive implications and give them an unfeminine physique:

It was said that a woman's body will not be flexible but would be stiff and masculine because of the sports, so they wouldn't get husbands. (Male formal sector employee, Accra)

In the area of religion, which is a salient aspect of Ghanaian life, focus group participants welcomed the increasing number of women playing leading roles in religion.

Well, they say Jesus was a man and that is why men were pastors but it is not so; it is the Word that is important. (Rural adult female, Danfar)

## CONCLUSION

Over the years, Ghanaian women have made progress in many aspects of social life, and in particular in work and education. While there are singular and inspiring examples of women in business, politics and sports, for instance, available data inform us that overall, women continue to lag behind men in educational attainment, income and employment status.

With regard to women's representation, we find both conventional and non-conventional depictions of women in the creative arts and in the media. In literature and film, women's involvement as writers, producers and directors tends to introduce more diverse and complex representations of women, though traditional and negative depictions of women—for example, as quarrelsome, jealous and preoccupied with marriage—have endured. Specifically, images of women as independent and capable of success are emerging, particularly in the medium of English-language films by a younger cohort of female writers/producers/directors. However, to the extent that these films largely attract a small, mainly middle-class demographic, it means a large segment of the population is left to consume content that reproduces and legitimates longstanding stereotypes. In the media broadly—which includes print, television, radio, film and visual arts—there are clear gendered trends, both numerically and thematically. There are fewer female participants in media (as news sources, guests, etc.) and producers of media content (reporters, presenters, voices in advertisements, film producers/directors). Thematically, there are instances of progressive representation but also many examples of stereotyping, objectification, and commoditization of women.

The public's perception of women (elicited through a survey and in focus group discussions) appears to be complex and sometimes contradictory. In general, respondents disagreed with statements that questioned a woman's inherent worth as a human being (such as, "It is better to give birth to a son than a daughter") or that endorsed violence against women, but the majority of respondents also subscribed to a patriarchal system in which men hold more power and are considered superior.

On a positive note, women's participation in economic activity and politics was well regarded, and their educational attainment encouraged. However, women's participation in these sectors was refracted through their gendered normative roles, particularly as wives and mothers. In other words, women's participation was viewed positively only to the extent that it was not seen to "interfere" with their marital roles, or to challenge men's authority. It was not surprising, therefore, that some of the least progressive views were expressed in relation to men's and women's intimate relations and respective marital roles. On an encouraging note, educational achievement mediates these views, such that having more formal schooling makes one less likely to hold on to conventional views about women's roles and potential. It also appears that exposure to more affirming representations of women—in real life and through the media and the creative arts—has a positive influence on public attitudes to women.

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## APPENDIX A

### METHODS FOR COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA

#### Traditional Media

This section is based on content analysis of a corpus of media content gathered from different media platforms (radio, television, newspapers, advertisements, music and music videos, film/home video and stage plays). A convenience sampling strategy was used where the researchers focused mainly on what content resource was readily available for analysis. Coding was completed by the researcher and an assistant using a coding instrument/guide generated for the study. The lead researcher completed coding for radio, local film/home video, music/videos, advertisements and stage drama while the assistant completed coding for TV and newspapers. Table 1 presents a brief profile of the content sampled for the study.

Medium/platform	Content profile
<b>Newspapers</b>	The sample included at least one issue of six newspapers, including the widest-circulating paper, <i>Daily Graphic</i> , and five generalist and specialists paper ( <i>Daily Guide</i> , <i>Business &amp; Financial Times</i> , <i>90 Minutes</i> , <i>Junior Graphic</i> and <i>Graphic Showbiz</i> ). Stories coded included those published on the front, back and middle pages. Coding covered source/main character gender, role of main character (professional/non-professional) and framing (positive/negative) as well as the reporter's gender.
<b>Radio</b>	The radio sample included two weekdays' coverage of programming of the two most popular radio stations in Ghana <i>Peace FM</i> (Akan) and <i>Joy FM</i> (English), with emphasis on primetime news bulletins. Coding covered source/main character gender, role of main character (professional/non-professional) whether they are paraphrased or allowed direct access to the audience through interviews/quotations, reporter gender as well as presenter gender. Non-news content coding mainly included genre and presenter's gender.
<b>Television</b>	The sample comprised the nationally-broadcast <i>GTV</i> (English and Ghanaian languages), the station with the second widest coverage, <i>TV3</i> (mainly English), and <i>UTV</i> as an Akan station. Content on the three shows was observed across three days of programming (two weekdays and Saturday) with separate coding protocols for news versus non-news content. News coding covered source/main character gender, role of main character (professional/non-professional), framing, reporter gender and presenter gender. Non-news content coding mainly included presented gender and genre. Non-news coding covered role, programme type, framing of main characters as well as presence/absence of stereotypes.

<b>Advertisements</b>	The sample included over 60 TV and 20 radio adverts. Codes applied included voice/character gender, product category, dress/presentation (for TV) and a general commentary on stereotypical portrayals.
<b>Film/Home video</b>	The sample included award winning/nominee films from the 2015 <i>Kumawood</i> awards, a sample of productions by the upcoming cohort of female film producers. Analysis was qualitative guided by the general themes of roles played by male and female characters and the corresponding images/identities portrayed.
<b>Music/videos</b>	Sample drawn mainly from the 2015 Vodafone Ghana Music Awards and 2015 4syte Music Video Awards. Analysis was qualitative with an emphasis on lyrical references to men and women and the accompanying implications. Videos were analysed for the roles played by men and women, suggestiveness of dance moves and well as dress codes.
<b>Stage drama</b>	A convenience sample of stage plays by Roverman Productions. Qualitative analysis with an emphasis on roles played by male and female characters and the images they portray.

## Visual Arts

For the section on popular visual media, 200 contemporary posters from the video-movie industry, 79 cover artwork of Ghanaian popular market-fiction and 120 Pentecostal Christian billboards/banners were captured and analysed by theme.

## Public Perceptions

In order to understand public perceptions of women in Ghana, primary data were collected from a cross-section of the public, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research instruments were designed based on the literature review on various aspects of contemporary women's lives in Ghana (see questionnaire and focus group guidelines in Appendix B).

In consideration of cost and the timely conduct of fieldwork, a sample of the population was taken from the Greater Accra Region, with a concerted effort being made to obtain a diverse sample in terms of sex, location (urban/rural), age, education, income levels and occupation. While a nationally represented sample would have been ideal, within the constraints of time and resources, the Greater Accra Region offers the next best option for a diverse set of opinions, with a mix of most ethnic groups and with both urban and rural areas. The fieldwork took place between late February and early March 2016.

## Survey

### Sample composition

The survey used purposive sampling to cover both rural and urban, and the broad geographical spread of the region, covering north, south, east and west areas. It also attempted to cover people from various walks of life in terms of age grouping, sex, marital, religion, ethnicity, education, employment status, and descent system. Others included persons from the indigenous communities, early settlers, recent settler communities, religious concentrations, and mixed international migrant communities (Table 13). The major sampling approach was to cover equal numbers of males and females, and to make conscious efforts to also cover the three age groupings.

**Table 13: Study communities for survey**

Locality	Total Number	Percentage of sample
<b>Urban (Accra: GAMA, Ga East, Ga South)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamestown</li> <li>• Abokobi/Boi/Akporman</li> <li>• Sabon Zongo</li> <li>• Adenta/Ashalley Botwe</li> <li>• Gbawe</li> <li>• Cantonments</li> <li>• Ministries area (downtown Accra)</li> <li>• Achimota Senior High school</li> <li>• University of Ghana main campus</li> <li>• Adotey Otintor Senior High School (at Tuba, Ga South, near Kasoa)</li> </ul>		
<i>Subtotal</i>	394	77
<b>Rural (Outside Accra)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domeabra</li> <li>• Katamanso</li> <li>• Kobekrom</li> <li>• Miotso</li> </ul>		
<i>Subtotal</i>	117	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

As shown in Table 12, there were 511 respondents, comprising 77% (394) from urban Greater Accra Metropolitan area (GAMA), and 23% (117) from four communities outside the GAMA. The respondents comprised 49% males (n = 249) and 51% (n = 262) females. Similar percentages of males and females responded in the rural-urban divide. They also included persons from all walks of life, including in-school youth at both basic and secondary levels, government workers and those in the informal sector, persons living in communities with varied socio-economic and socio-spatial characteristics, tertiary level students and persons of different religious faith.

In a few respects (such as the male-female breakdown), the background characteristics of our respondents mimic those at national level, based on the latest population and housing census (2010). However, for most characteristics (such as religion, rural-urban breakdown, ethnicity and system of descent), those of our respondents are different from those of the national population. The data show that as

is expected, males have higher education, compared to females, there are more males currently in school than females, and more males are in the professional/technical occupations. However, unlike the national level breakdown, more females in our sample are unemployed (Table 14).

**Table 14: Background characteristics of respondents**

		<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Residence</b>				
	Rural	57	60	117 (23%)
	Urban	192	202	394 (77%)
<b>Migration status</b>				
	Indigene	47	52	99 (19%)
	Non-indigene	202	210	412 (81%)
<b>Sex</b>				
	Male			249 (49%)
	Female			262 (51%)
<b>Age (grouped, years)</b>				
	15-35	166	174	340 (67%)
	36-55	56	65	121 (24%)
	56-83	27	22	49 (10%)
<b>Occupation</b>				
	Unemployed	11	36	47 (9%)
	Unskilled manual	19	17	36 (7%)
	Skilled manual	50	23	73 (14%)
	Farmers	5	1	6 (1%)
	Sales/Services	44	81	125 (25%)
	Clerical	6	3	9 (2%)
	Professional/technical/managerial	30	23	53 (10%)
	Pensioner	13	7	20 (4%)
	Homemaker	4	11	15 (3%)
	Student	67	60	127 (25%)
<b>Marital status</b>				
	Single (never married)	146	133	279 (55%)
	Married	63	73	136 (27%)
	Other	40	56	96 (18%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
	Akan	96	80	176 (34%)
	Non-Akan	135	169	304 (60%)
	Other	18	13	31 (6%)

<b>Formal education (level attained)</b>				
	None	10	28	38 (8%)
	Some basic	105	120	225(45%)
	Secondary/vocational	99	87	186 (30%)
	Tertiary	34	27	61 (19%)
<b>Formal education (in-school, out of school)</b>				
	In-school	40	41	81 (16%)
	Out of school	209	221	430 (84%)
<b>Religion</b>				
	Christian	206	233	439 (86%)
	Muslim	36	28	64 (13%)
	Traditional	1	0	1 (0%)
	None	4	1	5 (1%)
<b>Income level (by neighbourhood)</b>				
	High	44	48	92 (18%)
	Middle	158	162	320 (63%)
	Low	47	52	99 (19%)
<b>System of descent</b>				
	Matrilineal	68	59	127 (25%)
	Patrilineal	154	176	330 (65%)
	Combined	24	26	50 (10%)

Source: Field data (February-March 2016)

### *Quality control*

The quality control measures for the study included a two-day training workshop for the eight field assistants (six males and two females) on community entry techniques, value neutrality, ethics of research, and the objectives of the research. The research instrument (see Appendix B) was also pre-tested in some of the study communities before being finalised for the actual fieldwork.

The training also covered translation of the questions from English to the local languages (Twi, Ga, and Ewe) and back translation from the local languages to English. All the field assistants spoke at least one local language in addition to English and were assigned to the data collection sites based on their ability to speak the main language(s) in the vicinity (see Table 1). Respondents chose the language they wanted to be interviewed in, and a little more than half of them asked to be interviewed in English.

### *Survey data analysis*

Responses to statement that was favourable or unfavourable to women were coded. A response that was favourable to women was coded as 1, one that was unfavourable was coded as -1 and a neutral answer was given a 0 score. For example, for the statement "Women and men are not equal; men are superior to women", an "agree" response was coded -1, "disagree" was coded 1, and "don't know/can't tell" was given a score of 0. On the other hand, for the statement "Women are as capable as men in political leadership roles", an "agree" response would receive a 1, "disagree" would be -1, and "don't know/can't tell" would be coded 0.

The questions were grouped into sections such as “gendered norms and relations”, “women’s roles and participation in work and business”, “women’s roles and participation in the media and arts”, and so on (see questionnaire in Appendix B). For each of these sections, we calculated “aggregate scores” for each individual that showed whether, overall, they had a negative or positive score for that section.

Pearson’s chi-squared test was also conducted on the data to determine if there were significant differences in responses by demographic group (using variables such as sex, age, educational level) at the 0.05 level of significance.

### Focus group discussions

The qualitative study was undertaken among different groups in Greater Accra Region through the use of focus group discussions (FGDs). The discussion was to obtain information that would deepen the understanding gained from the desk research and quantitative survey.

Table 15 shows the groups that were engaged in the focus-group discussion. Each group was made up of between 10 and 12 participants with almost equal male and female representation in each. The FGDs were facilitated by two male researchers, and were recorded and transcribed under themes generated from the key issues that formed the discussions. These included education, employment, politics, culture/religion, and family roles.

**Table 15: Groups for the focus group discussions (FGDs)**

Group	Type of Participants	Location drawn from
In-school young persons	Senior High School students (public, high-ranking)	Achimota Senior High School, Achimota
In-school young persons	Senior High School students (private, low-ranking )	Adotey Otintor Senior High School, Tuba
Out of school/in-school young persons	Rural dwellers aged 15-21 years	Danfa
Out of school/in-school young persons	Urban dwellers aged 15-21 years	Awoshie
Middle-level young persons	University students	University of Ghana, Legon
Informal sector employees	Traders, artisans, etc.	Madina
Formal sector employees	Office workers in government ministries	Downtown Accra
Adult rural residents	Community members	Danfa

## APPENDIX B

### RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

#### Questionnaire for Survey

#### Questionnaire ID:

INSTITUTE OF STATISTICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH  
STUDY ON PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN IN GHANA

#### Draft Questionnaire for Quantitative Study (Survey)

#### Introduction and Respondents' consent

[**READ OUT**] Good morning/evening. My name is..... I am working for the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana. We are undertaking research on Perception of/views on the roles and contributions of women in Ghana. I would be grateful if you can speak to me on this topic. We are using it only for our academic purposes and what you tell me will not be disclosed to any other person outside that purpose. Your name will not be mentioned in our report and no one will know you gave specific information.

Please contact Dr. Owusu (0243167783) if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

#### Consent:

Please say whether you agree or not to these statements:

1. That you understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
2. That you agree to participate in the research project and that your participation is voluntary.
3. That you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
4. That you understand that any data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be destroyed or be retained by the researcher for use in the research study, depending on what you desire.

- a) Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending time: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Interviewer's name: .....
- c) Interviewer's phone number:.....
- d) Supervisor's signature:.....



<b>SURVEY ON PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN IN GHANA – QUESTIONNAIRE</b>		<b>Code</b>
<b>SECTION A: General information</b>		
Q1	Locality (choose one): 1) Rural    2) Urban	
Q2	Name of town/city/village:	
Q3	Name of community/suburb:	
Q4	Respondent's sex: 1) male    2) female	
Q5	Respondent's age (as of your last birthday) in years:	
Q6	Respondent's occupation: What is your MOST IMPORTANT source of earnings? 1) Unemployed                      2) Unskilled manual    3) Skilled manual 4) Farmers                              5) Sales/services          6) Clerical 7) Professional/technical/managerial 8) Pensioner    9) Homemaker 10) Student                              11) Other ( <i>specify</i> ):	
Q7	Marital status: 1) Single (never married)    2) Married 3) Divorce                              4) Consensual/cohabitation 5) Separated                              6) Widowed	
Q8	Ethnicity: 1) Akan                      2) Gurma                      3) Ga-Dangbe 4) Ewe                                      5) Mole-Dagbani              6) Guan 7) Other ( <i>specify</i> )	
Q9	Religion: 1) Christian                      2) Muslim                      3) Traditional 4) None                                      5) Other ( <i>specify</i> ): .....	
Q10	What is your highest level of formal education COMPLETED? 1) none                                      2) primary                      3) JSS/JHS/Middle School 4) SSS/SHS/Vocational/Technical/IT              5) HND/Diploma 6) Graduate                                      7) Postgraduate	
Q11	What is your system of descent? 1) Matrilineal                              2) Patrilineal                      3) Combined	
<b>SECTION B: GENDERED NORMS AND RELATIONS IN GHANAIAN SOCIETY</b> 1) <i>Agree</i> 2) <i>Disagree</i> 3) <i>Don't know/can't tell</i>		
Q12	Women and men are not equal; men are superior to women.	

Q13	Women were created to help men.	
Q14	Women cannot do a lot of the things men can do.	
Q15	It is better to give birth to a boy than a girl.	
Q16	Sons are better able to provide financial support to their aging parents than daughters.	
Q17	Under some circumstances, it is okay for a man to beat his wife.	
Q18	There is no such thing as marital rape; a woman should always be ready to have sex with her husband when the man wants it.	
Q19	For a healthy marriage, a man should be older than his wife.	
Q20	It is not good for a woman to have/earn more money than her husband.	
Q21	It is not good for a woman to have higher education than her husband.	
Q22	A good wife must submit to the decisions and wishes of the husband at home.	
<b>SECTION C: Women's roles in the family</b>		
1) <i>Agree</i> 2) <i>Disagree</i> 3) <i>Don't know/can't tell</i>		
Q23	If a parent does not have enough money and has to choose, s/he should focus on educating a son rather than a daughter.	
Q24	A woman of a marriageable age has lesser respect if she is unmarried, compared to one who is married.	
Q25	Highly educated women (those with a university degree) usually make poor wives.	
Q26	A woman who is not married has no honour, no matter her other achievements	
Q27	Women should <b>not</b> work outside the home.	
Q28	It is better for a marriage and for the family if women work outside the home.	
Q29	Women should contribute to economic decisions in the household (e.g. selling crops, livestock or land, purchasing tools, asking for a loan)?	
Q30	Men should share the responsibilities in managing the home (cleaning, cooking, laundry, washing clothes and dishes, sweeping, etc.)?	
<b>SECTION D: WOMEN'S ROLES AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY:</b>		
1) <i>Agree</i> 2) <i>Disagree</i> 3) <i>Don't know/can't tell</i>		
<b>Business/work/employment:</b>		
Q31	I would not be happy if my boss is a woman	
Q32	Businesses/programmes/projects perform worse under female bosses.	
Q33	Women are less capable than men of occupying high-level positions.	

Q34	I will not feel good having a pastor who is female.	
<b>Politics:</b>		
Q35	I would <u>not</u> vote for a woman who was generally considered capable as President of Ghana.	
Q36	Women are as capable as men in political leadership roles.	
Q37	I would vote for a woman to represent me in the District Assembly, if she is capable.	
Q38	Male parliamentarians are more effective than female parliamentarians.	
<b>Do you know of/have you heard of any successful or prominent women in these sectors?</b> 1) <i>Yes</i> 2) <i>No</i>		
Q39	Business (corporate). If yes, specify:	
Q40	Business (trade). If yes, specify:	
Q41	Politics and government (parliamentarian, minister). If yes, specify:	
Q42	Education. If yes, specify:	
Q43	Sciences. If yes, specify:	
Q44	Sports. If yes, specify:	
Q45	Religion. If yes, specify:	
Q46	Civil society. If yes, specify:	
<b>SECTION E: MEDIA AND ARTS</b> 1) <i>Agree</i> 2) <i>Disagree</i> 3) <i>Don't know/can't tell</i>		
Q47	I will not be happy if my wife/future wife (for males), sister (for females) wants to be a musician or an actor.	
Q48	I feel that women who perform music or act in films are often immoral.	
<b>Compared to men, to what extent are women likely to be represented (seen and heard) in the following types of media content:</b> 1) <i>More likely</i> 2) <i>Less likely</i> 3) <i>Don't know/not applicable (e.g. doesn't watch TV)</i>		
Q49	Radio	
Q50	TV	
Q51	Films and home videos (Ghallywood)	

Q52	Films and home videos (Kumawood)	
Q53	Plays (e.g. Uncle Ebo, National Theatre, etc.)	
Q54	Music videos	
Q55	Newspapers	
Q56	Advertisements (billboards)	
Q57	TV news broadcasts	
Q58	TV sports broadcasts	
<p><b>For each of the following media, tell us whether the women generally play positive or negative roles.</b></p> <p>1) <i>Positive</i></p> <p>2) <i>Negative</i></p> <p>3) <i>Don't know/not applicable (e.g. doesn't watch TV)</i></p>		
Q59	Radio	
Q60	TV	
Q61	Films and home videos (“Ghallywood”—English language)	
Q62	Films and home videos (“Kumawood”—local language)	
Q63	Plays (e.g. Uncle Ebo, National Theatre, etc.)	
Q64	Music videos	
Q65	Newspapers	
Q66	Advertisements (billboards)	
Q67	TV news broadcasts	
Q68	TV sports broadcasts	
<p><b>SECTION F: RESPONSES TO POPULAR IDIOMS</b></p> <p>1) <i>Agree</i></p> <p>2) <i>Disagree</i></p> <p>3) <i>Don't know/can't tell</i></p>		
Q69	“If you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”	
Q70	“Behind every successful man is a woman.”	
Q71	“If a woman buys a gun, it is stored in a man's room.”	
Q72	“Women are their own worst enemies.”	
Q73	“A woman's place is in the kitchen”	

Q74	“One son is like ten daughters”	
Q75	“If a woman incurs fortune in a marriage, it belongs to her extended family, if she incurs a debt (misfortune), it belongs to her husband”	

**WRAP UP: Thank you for answering our questions.**

### Guideline for Focus Group Discussion

#### 1. Formal Education

What are your views on the kind of education a woman should receive: (Probe for level, type, reasons?)

#### 2. Employment/Work

What are your perceptions on women’s work and employment: What can women do or cannot do (compared to men?) What do people often say about women who are successful at work? What are your own views?

#### 3. Politics and Governance

What do people often say of women who go into politics? What are your own views on women’s participation in politics?

#### 4. Popular Culture and Religion

How are women portrayed in Music, movies, news, films, plays, etc.? (probe for specific adjectives or words to describe how women are portrayed). What are your own views on these roles women are made to play (are they good/bad, are they accurate etc.)?

What are your views about the role of women in religion (churches, mosques, etc.)

#### 5. Family roles

What do you think should be women’s roles at home and in the family (compared to men)? When it comes to decisions in the home/family, how much say should women have and why?

6. **In general**, do women have as much opportunity, choice and freedom in society as men?