Chapter 15
Women's and Gender Studies in Ghana

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Introduction

There is a considerable and growing body of published work on gender. Today
local conferences, seminars and faculty colloquia in Ghana will invariably have a
few presentations from a gender perspective. Over the last half century, the social
sciences in Ghana have examined the subject of women, and later gender, via
historiographies, cross-sectional studies and qualitative approaches. The themes
that have received the most attention include politics and the state; education; work
and livelihoods; religion; health; gender-based violence and in the last few decades,
gender and development policy and practice; sexualities and bodily integrity; and
women's organizing. While we have not limited ourselves to works by Ghanaian
scholars, we have given these pride of place in our selection.

 Prior to the 1980s there existed in Ghana no formal space for the discussion
of gender issues in the academy, and no organized audience for publications on
Women and Gender studies (WGS). Since then much has been accomplished. In the
early to mid-1990s, programmes to study gender were established at the Universi-
ties of Ghana and Cape Coast. In 2004, the University of Development Studies
(UDS) set up the Gender Programmes Unit, which was subsequently shut down in
2008, and in 2005 the University of Ghana established the Centre for Gender Stud-
ies and Advocacy.[1] These developments are indications of the improving levels of
comfort academics have with a gender framework and a growing acceptability of

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[1] We discuss this later in the chapter.

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WGS within various social science disciplines. Despite challenges, they also reflect a level of institutional commitment to the study of gender.

There have been useful reviews and debates on WGS in Africa generally and certain regions in particular [see for example, Adomako Ampofo et al. (2004); Lewis (2002); Mama (1996); Pereira (2002)], however, no work exists that chronicles and analyzes the evolution of the discipline in Ghana. In this chapter, we focus on the history and development of WGS and practice in Ghana. We examine both anthropological and ethnographic studies which, though not necessarily cast in the framework of gender studies, nonetheless provide important impetus for gender analysis, as well as contemporary works that overtly rely on feminist frameworks. We also examine the links between politics, scholarship and practice. For example, in many countries in the global North, women's studies can be seen as the intellectual wing of the women's movement; however, this does not necessarily hold for gender studies in Africa (Mama 1996). Mama argues that this is mainly because the origins of so-called gender training and analyses lie outside the continent—i.e. in the *Women In Development* movement, which was initiated and dominated by aid agencies, the UN, and Western feminist intellectuals. Some have argued that in Africa, gender analysis has become less political and more technical to solve specific problems (Sexwale 1996; Tsikata 2000). At the same time, synergy between practitioners aiming to address specific concerns, such as violence against women, and gender scholars in the academy, has often produced useful interrogations of institutions, practices, and even the ideologies that frame and govern our social relations (cf. edited volume on gender based violence in Ghana by Cusack and Manuh 2009).

In drawing the map of WGS in Ghana we will review trends in the content, ideology and methodology of the discipline, the relationship to "traditional" social science approaches, as well as practices in the academy, and relationship to policy. We conclude by suggesting how gender studies have benefited from the social sciences, and what the social sciences might learn from the approaches, strategies, and practices of gender studies in Ghana over the last 30 years. A brief word on method is necessary here. Our initial intention was to provide as comprehensive a review as possible, thus at the onset we sent out emails to scores of gender scholars and activists in Ghana, asking for copies of their own works as well as references to works of others. Sadly, only a few responded to our call and our review is not as extensive as we had anticipated. Nonetheless we rely on a variety of sources, both academic publications and civil society reports.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. We begin with a discussion of the development of WGS in Ghana. The second section maps the trajectory of gender in the curriculum. In the third section we introduce readers to the associations between the academy and practice—viz. the relationships with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations' work. The fourth section examines some of the key areas that have received attention, including conceptual, theoretical, and methodological contributions to the social sciences. We conclude by making suggestions about the future directions of WGS in Ghana.

The Development of Women and Gender Studies (WGS) in Ghana

WGS in Ghana, like in many Sub-Saharan African countries, has seen exceptional growth since the 1980s. These studies have evolved from specific women's issues and concerns to the establishment of research groups and bodies for the advancement of these issues; the taking on of a wider feminist framework and gender perspectives; and the inclusion of WGS in institutional curricula. This progression can be attributed to the influence of a mix of factors: the international women's movement, the United Nation (UN)'s internationalization of women's issues, the growth of a "women and development" industry, African women's dissatisfaction with governance issues in Africa, and a crisis in African education (Adomako Ampofo et al. 2004; Manuh and Adomako 1992; Prah 1996).

The UN International Women's Year and Decade (1975, 1976–1985) internationalized women's issues and brought them to the forefront of national discussions (Prah 1996; Manuh and Adomako 1992). This was significant in setting the stage for the development of women's studies in Ghana. It aided in the increase of "public awareness of the importance of women's issues and gave impetus to research on women in Ghana" (Prah 1996, p. 414). The National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) was established in 1975 by the military regime of the National Redemption Council (NRC) in response to the UN recommendation to accelerate the integration of women in development. The NCWD's mandate was to conduct research on women in Ghana, monitor and evaluate projects for women, and to provide counsel for the government on issues of women in development. The NCWD's mandate created the opportunity for the production of a body of knowledge about women as the Council sponsored a number of studies on women's work, education, and training; and on family issues that were deemed relevant to the design and execution of policies for the improvement of women's lives. Simultaneously, multi-lateral, bi-lateral, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other donors required a women's component in research, thus encouraging feminist scholars to carry out not only innovative studies but also set the agenda for researchers and practitioners alike. This was particularly salient during the economic restructuring years of the 1980s (Manuh and Adomako 1992; Prah 1996). Nonetheless, inside and outside the academy, research on women was regarded as a concern for only women and as a passing fad. As an interesting footnote, the NCWD subsequently ran into institutional difficulties owing to the rise of state feminism in Ghana, and interference and neglect as a direct result of the creation of a pseudo-state organization, the 31st December Women's Movement (31DWM) headed by the then first lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings (Mensah-Kutin et al. 2000).

The development of WGS as an academic discipline did not take place only in the context of instrumentally-driven research, but also as a direct result of the hard work and advocacy of academics, mostly women (Tsikata 2010; Prah 1996). The dedication of this group of (women) academics to the development of WGS, according to Prah (1996) was rooted in their experiences and the realities of gender

inequalities in Ghanaian society in general, and the academy in particular. Though no institution currently awards a degree in women and/or gender studies in Ghana, by the early 1990s many courses were being offered specializing in gender within specific and inter-disciplinary social science subject areas. Today, gender perspectives are also present in one form or another in state politics, activism, and on advocacy platforms.

Although the academic pursuit of *gender* in Ghana did not gain grounds until the 1990s, research on women's issues in the 1970s and 1980s provided very useful grounds for its development. After the launch of the UN decade for women in 1975, there was an increase in works on women in Ghana. Many of these early works appeared as chapters in anthropological and sociological texts. Perhaps foremost among these are the Legon Family Papers edited by Christine Oppong (1973–1976); *The Seven Roles of Women:Impact of Education, Migration, and Employment on Ghanaian Mothers* (by Oppong and Abu 1987), *Female & Male in West Africa* (edited by Oppong 1983), and *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (Dolphyne 1991). A collection is provided by Ardayfio-Schandorf and Kwafo-Akoto in *Women in Ghana: An Annotated Bibliography* (1990). The first issue of the *Research Review's* New Series (1985), a refereed academic journal of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana was devoted to research on Ghanaian women.

In the 1980s, a Women's Research Group (WERG) was established at the University of Ghana by a group of women faculty to bring women researchers together and to explore "women's issues," but unfortunately this group was not sustained (Tsikata 2010). In 1990, leading the birth of institutionalizing WGS as a form of academic enquiry, the Development and Women's Studies Programme (DAWS) was set up within the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana with the support of a network of WGS researchers both within and outside the academy. It was set up as part of the Institute's efforts to build its capacity to address development concerns in Ghana. The objectives of DAWS were to contribute to the development of WGS as an academic discipline through research and teaching; formulate meaningful theoretical frameworks and appropriate methodologies for studying development and gender issues in Ghana; and to influence the work of policy-making organizations concerned with development and gender issues, through action-oriented research and dialogue (Adomako Ampofo 2009). An important milestone was a workshop on gender studies held in 1990 (Manuh and Adomako 1992), and another that brought together academics, practitioners and policy-makers in 1994.

However, it was not until the first decade of the twenty-first century that specific bodies were established in Ghanaian universities. In 2005, DAWS was transformed into a Centre (for Gender Studies and Advocacy, CEGENSA). The University of Cape Coast Women's Caucus (UCCWOC) was formed in 1991 and comprised women faculty and senior administrative staff of the university. UCCWOC was set up to promote gender sensitization within the university community. It was the work of this caucus that led to the introduction of WGS as an academic discipline at the University of Cape Coast in 1995 (Prah 1996). The Gender Mainstreaming Directorate (GMD) of the University of Education, Winneba was set up in 2005,

and the Gender Programmes Unit at the University for Development Studies (UDS) was set up in 2004 to lead gender mainstreaming processes in their respective universities. In August 2013 a Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation (CEGRAD) was set up at the University of Cape Coast. These units have contributed significantly to engendering university cultures and practices. In 2006, following research and advocacy by CEGENSA, the University of Ghana adopted a sexual harassment policy and in October 2009, the GMD of the University of Education, Winneba completed its work on the university's gender policy. This policy was meant "to correct the imbalances in academia with regards to issues of equality among the sexes" (Asabere-Ameyaw 2009, p. v).

By the late 1990s, research had begun to move to more conscious engagements with gender analyses and feminist theories, addressing issues such as gender relations in families, the economy, religion and popular culture; citizenship and women's engagement with politics and the state; women's movements and activism, and the relevance of gender perspectives for analyzing issues in Ghana. There have been discussions on tackling social issues like HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence, while recent research delves into Ghanaian masculinities and sexualities.

The academy itself has become a site for investigation. Researchers have examined the politics of the academy, how gender inequalities have been institutionalized, and how to break this inequality (Adomako Ampofo 2009; Lundgren and Prah 2009; Manuh et al. 2007; Tsikata 2007; Daddieh 2003; Prah 2002, 1996). Earlier studies in this regard mainly focused on the levels of male and female participation in the various sectors of higher education institutions. In their ground-breaking study of publicly funded universities in Ghana, Manuh et al. (2007) observed that Ghanaian universities paid little attention to gender issues and inequalities.[2] Tsikata (2007) describes gender inequalities in student and faculty numbers, and male-centred approaches in the residential arrangements and governance structures. At the University of Cape Coast, Prah (2002) found that while the statistical visibility of female students in higher education had improved by the end of the last millennium as a result of several factors including affirmative action, in terms of leadership and decision-making, women had very low visibility. There were no specific policies that addressed the gender division of labour. Thus simply increasing numbers of women in tertiary education was identified as not enough for addressing the institutional gender gap.

The gendered politics within the academy retain relevance for the development of WGS curricular in Ghana. The academy is identified as a patriarchal space plagued with gender inequalities, and female faculty and students encounter challenges and hardships including invisibility, the glass ceiling and sexual harassment (Manuh et al. 2007; Prah 2002). The personal experiences of women academics indicate that the gendered politics in the academy take the form of invisibility even in language; hostilities towards progressive females; difficulties in accessing

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[2] Apart from the UCC Strategic Plan at the time, the promotion of gender equity was not identified as an objective in the plans of the other institutions, nor was it identified in the Strategic Plan of the National Council for Tertiary Education beyond increasing the proportion of female enrolments.

resource allocations (Lundgren and Prah 2009; Adomako Ampofo 2009); and "hostile departmental restructuring exercises" (Tsikata 2010, p. 1). At UDS, the Gender Programmes Unit (GPU) which was set up in 2004 to lead a gender mainstreaming process in the University was shut down in 2008 by the then Vice-Chancellor against the recommendations of the report of a fact finding committee. This was done "under the guise of a merger with the Centre for Continuous Education and Interdisciplinary Research (CCEIR)."[3] The female head of the GPU was advised to return to her original department while a male, who was her junior, was appointed director for CCEIR.

Gender and the Curriculum

The main centres for research and teaching on women and gender are the universities. However, gender issues are generally not mainstreamed. Thus an essential part of the advancement of WGS in Ghana has been the development of curricular. At a workshop organized by DAWS in the early 1990s, the necessity of including gender in the curriculum was raised, and the general absence of information on, and courses to address this were identified as challenges to the growth of WGS. By the early 1990s, the only teaching programme that specifically focused on gender issues was located at the Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana. The IAS (graduate) programme sought, and continues to teach and research gender issues from the perspective of Africa's social, political and economic history.

By the close of the twentieth century, much progress had been made and many "gender" courses are being taught at both undergraduate and graduate level in almost all the social science departments at the Universities of Ghana, and Cape Coast, and many in other public and private universities. However, this growth is not always reflected in the actual course content (Manuh et al. 2007). In response to the proposal of the UCCWOC for the establishment of a WGS centre and programme at the University of Cape Coast, the Vice-Chancellor set up a committee to draw a curriculum for an interdisciplinary WGS programme. The Committee recommended that courses be developed for the programme. It also proposed that the centre start as an autonomous body within the African and General Studies department where all students were mandated to read gender as one of their course options. Eventually, the gender programme was to develop into a full department. This is yet to be realized. At the University of Ghana, CEGENSA coordinates the teaching of an introductory component as well as two electives on gender under the rubric of *Introduction to African Studies*, one of five required courses at the University.[4] A part of the reference section of the library at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is designated as the Women's Studies Collection. However, to date, not

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[3] Personal conversations with a female Senior Member at UDS, February 7, 2013.

[4] The course, UGRC 220, is located within IAS, however CEGENSA is responsible for the teaching of the introductory gender component as well as the two electives.

a single department or even a complete programme is dedicated to the teaching of WGS in Ghana—this is a function of both inadequate numbers of teaching faculty as well as a lack of institutional commitment. In other sectors of Ghana's educational structure—basic and second cycle institutions—gender is completely absent from the curriculum.

The Academy and Practice: Relations with Civil Society

In order for gender research and teaching to impact society, researchers have sought to work closely with practitioners and vice versa. The collaborations have mainly been in areas relating to struggles for women's citizenship rights, specifically, issues such as gender-based violence, social and economic policies and women's decision-making and involvement in public life. In 1995, an interregional workshop titled, "Enhancing Gender Research and Training" organized by the DAWS programme sought to initiate dialogue among politicians, policy makers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and academicians. The collaboration worked as follows: the academics provide the theoretical framing and methodological expertise while the NGO and CSO actors offer institutional support, and "grassroots" experience with networking and lobbying. However, the lines are not as well defined as pertains in the global north; there are many academics actively engaged in activism and development practice while there are also practitioners with backgrounds in the academy (Aniekwe et al. 2012).

Two significant examples of such collaborations have been around domestic violence specifically and women's citizenship addressed more broadly, with outcomes reflected through the work of the National Domestic Violence Coalition (NDVC) and the Women's Manifesto Coalition (Apusigah et al. 2011; Adomako Ampofo 2008). The NDVC includes scholars, activists and policy makers—both individuals and organisations—that pushed for the passage of domestic violence legislation, and continue to push for its implementation and monitor and respond to incidents of gender-based violence (GBV). In her analysis of the work of the NDVC, Adomako Ampofo (2008), herself a member of the Coalition, suggests that culture, or at least how it is re-constructed, can be a powerful force against women's rights advancements. Oppositions to the criminalization of "marital rape" in the law were constructed in terms of cultural essentialism and relativism even by persons tasked with the safeguarding of women's rights in the country. Adomako Ampofo (2008) underscores the necessity for new ways of analysing social movements, women's collective action, political power and democracy in Africa's contemporary social context.

The Women's Manifesto Coalition (WMC) comprises 180 women's organizations, various CSOs, NGOs, policy-makers, labour groups, as well as over 700 individual women and men including WGS researchers (Mensah-Kutin and Dzah 2010, p. 11). The WMC advocates for and promotes women's rights and gender equality, and monitors government's efforts to address these. Born out of a research

and advocacy project of the ABANTU for Development,[5] the Coalition through consultations with stakeholders deliberated on the situation of women in Ghana and produced the *Women's Manifesto* in 2004, a document that outlines critical issues of concern to women in Ghana and makes demands for addressing them (Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004). This document has contributed greatly to the heightened visibility and acceptability of gender issues on Ghana's political landscape (Mensah-Kutin and Dzah 2010).

Another significant WGS-CSO collaboration is the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT). Established in 1999, it works from a human rights perspective and provides a collective platform to articulate key policy demands more effectively while avoiding duplication of what individual organizations are already engaged in. NETRIGHT consists of 44 organizational members and hundreds of individual members, and has a local focal point in nine of the ten regions of Ghana. It is largely engaged in economic justice advocacy, promoting women's land rights, but also supports struggles by organizations around other areas of women's rights, and produces a quarterly newsletter, Akoben for public education.

These collaborations and their focus are reinforced by studies on GWS, largely by gender or feminist scholars. The studies' findings are relevant for the specific areas being advocated, as well as for women's organizing as a whole. Studies indicate that many people are aware of the gender imbalances in society (Tsikata 2007), so when issues are directly related to their experiences, they do not need to consider themselves feminist to pursue a feminist issue, particularly, when the information disseminated is in everyday language rather than academic jargon. This in turn increases alliance building among scholars, activists and practitioners, which can influence a country's democratization process positively (Adomako Ampofo 2008). Furthermore, the collaborations have shown that when scholars, NGO and CSO actors come together, they lobby, advocate and campaign to bring gender perspectives to national processes more effectively, and even mobilize resources in ways that individuals or individual organizations cannot (Tsikata et al. 2005; Adomako Ampofo 2008). It also provides useful lessons for community engagements.

Key areas of WGS Research

Given the far reaching implications that the subject of gender has across different aspects of society, it is no surprise the varied nature of the areas from which scholars have sought to engage WGS. From ethnographical accounts through anthropological frameworks to outright quantitative endeavours, WGS scholars have sought inquiry into the dimensions of politics and the state; work and livelihoods; religion; health; gender-based violence, gender and development policy and practice; sexualities and bodily integrity; and women's organizing, among several other topics.

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[5] An Africa-wide gender NGO established in 1991, with Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. The head office is in Accra.

Early research in Ghana seeking to explore the relationships between gender and culture concentrated on drawing a composite picture of the varied platforms for male/female performance (Oppong 1983). Regarding this, the historical lens has been trained on a documentation of the histories of women's roles as political and military leaders, primarily in the Akan context. Scholars have argued that contrary to colonialists' assertions of limited female participation in Akan political leadership, women's participation was both visible and influential (Aidoo 1985, Arhin 1983). For instance, Arhin (1983) argues that this colonialist perception created the space for western (Victorian English particularly), chauvinistic and patriarchal cultures, which reduced women's participation, thus legitimizing contemporary constructions of women's limited roles. In his profile of queenmotherhood as a platform for the performance of female political leadership, Arhin (1983) reported that the Akan woman's most influential leadership and political role was probably that of the "*ohemaa*," a role with far reaching expectations for commitment, responsibility, nobility and role-modelling. The "*ohemaa*" was a council member and was deemed the epitome of wisdom with whom the "*ohene*" frequently consulted both in state and in private for advice on thorny issues such as war. While seemingly secondary to the position of the *ohene,* the *ohemma* has been argued by some (Cf. Aidoo 1985) to hold equal or even greater power since her role as the custodian of royal genealogy gave her the final say on who should be enstooled *ohene.*

To appreciate women's position historically among non-Akan groups one has to glean this from non-gender specific writings such as Nukunya on the Anlo Ewe (see 1968), and Odotei on chieftaincy (e.g. 2006) or work by non-Ghanaian scholars such as Greene on the Anlo Ewe (e.g. 1996), Robertson on the Ga (e.g. 1984), or Brydon on the Avatime (for e.g. 1979, 1987). While none of these patrilineal groups had any position equal to that of the *Ohemma*, we can conclude that despite almost universal male privilege, practices such as independent economic activities, and duo-local residence (among the Ga) also provided non-Akan women with considerable autonomy not only in the domestic, but also in community spheres.

Marriage and the Family

Beyond women's participation in leadership, scholars have demonstrated interest in analyzing gender performance within the marriage and family setting. Particularly, gender roles, and the statuses assigned to, lived and enjoyed by, as well as suffered by women within the context of marriage have been the subject of inquiry by some WGS scholars (see for example, the Family series edited by Oppong in the 1970s).

Much of the early work on marriage and the family has focused on the roles in different lineage systems (see Oppong 1973; Nukunya 1969). Among matrilineal peoples, the family traces its source to a female progenitor while the opposite applies to patrilineal societies. This construction of the family has served as the basis for some analyses of gender relations, including whether in matrilineal or patrilineal societies boys and girls are socialized differently (Adomako Ampofo and Boateng

2007). Sarpong (1977) reports that though the girl is not considered to be inferior to the boy, she remains a child vis-a-vis even her younger brothers until her maturity is attested through marriage. Further, though not accorded the political headship of the family, the wife is expected to be the epitome and source of peace and order in the family; she is expected to be "obedient, faithful, hardworking, helpful and not quarrelsome" (Sarpong 1977, p. 80) and during (Asante) nubility rites, the value of these characteristics are emphasized. Traditionally, womanhood is largely associated with marriage and childbirth (Sarpong 1977) while masculinity is associated with fatherhood, sexual potency and seniority (Adomako Ampofo et al. 2009).

Similarly, Manuh (1997, and in Bowman and Kuenyehia 2003) shows that because in both matrilineal and patrilineal systems, wives are not members of their husbands' families they stand to be dispossessed of all they might have contributed to their husbands' wealth in the event of death or divorce.

Vallenga (1983) provides a useful discussion of the very concept of "wife" and how this may have been diluted by the introduction of the ordinance marriage. Traditionally, the determination of who a wife (and by extension a husband) is assessed on a continuum of formal exchanges between the respective families rather than a one-time event. However, irrespective of the level of the relationship, inequalities existed in terms of property sharing in the event of divorce or death of a partner (Manuh 1997).

Okali (1983) has documented the relationship between kinship and cocoa farming in Akan communities as a platform for exploring the value of women's labour within the marriage context. Drawing on the cultural context in which kinship, as it relates to cocoa farming, was ordered at the time of her study, she presents a creative discussion of the intricacies of marriage, kinship, gender, property ownership and labour, as well as the relationships among them. Okali (1983) reported that, as wives, women provide (free) labour on husbands' farms, often with no guarantee of gaining tangible proprietary rewards (as in ownership of farms or portions thereof). A more nuanced picture of spousal collaboration between fishermen and their fishmonger wives is found in work among fishing communities. Both Vercuijsse (1983) and Hagan (1983) report that the economic relationship between husband and wife was ruled by the limits of their respective roles in the fishing business. In this relationship, the woman receives and thus controls the proceeds from the fish sales and determines how these are allocated, although a general set of expectations is typically set forth for this. This arrangement allows the women some financial autonomy, which has implications for gender relations.

Hagan (1983) also explores the association between economic-power relations and the incidence of divorce in a fishing community, Winneba. His study shows how proceeds from fishing may be at the centre of disagreements between husband and wife, leading to divorce. During the bumper season, mistrust about proceeds declared by wives could lead to men refusing to provide housekeeping money. At the same time, due to a better flow of funds in the husband's pocket, he is likely to court other women, to the displeasure of his wife. In the off season, money can lead to conflict as fishermen tend to travel to other communities in search of fish, a sojourn that was often associated with the men seeking local women as partners,

sometimes leading to additional marriages. On their return, because such men may have used up their funds while away, they refused or were unable to settle debts accruing from housekeeping expenses made in their absence by their wives, a situation that often led to divorce.

Childbirth and the opportunities and dangers it presents for power play and decision-making/sharing has also been examined as part of this general scholarly interest in women's place within the family. Studies in family planning and reproductive health have spawned a large body of literature on women's health, childbearing, contraceptive use, and marital decision-making (see the work of Adomako Ampofo et al. 2009; Anarfi 2006; Apusiga 2005; Awusabo-Asare et al. 1993). While early studies focused primarily on women's preferences and use of modern contraceptives, later attention appears to be trained on the need to encourage male inclusion in family planning. This follows the realization that men constitute, as key stakeholders, an important part of the puzzle of women's low uptake of contraceptives.

Sexualities

In the last decade the subject of sexualities has enjoyed increasing attention from scholars who hitherto had sought to avoid replicating the voyeuristic western gaze (Adomako Ampofo 2009). Popular themes include sexual integrity, sexual rights, sexual pleasure and even sexual orientation. However, the subject of sexualities is not as new an area of enquiry as it might appear to be. Writing on Asante nubility rites, Sarpong (1977) draws clear links between culture and the maintenance of bodily integrity among girls. For instance, within the domains of *bragoro* (nubility rites) and *kyiribra* (special rites for girls who get pregnant before the rites have been performed) society's abhorrence for premature pregnancy, and by extension sexual activity, are underscored. The training during the rites covers not only norms governing womanhood, wifehood and motherhood, but also sexual maturity, discipline, responsibility, and lessons on sexual practice, albeit laced with euphemisms. This way, individual girls could begin to set standards for their own sexuality and bodily integrity. Sarpong (1977) also explores the gendered nature of these rites, noting that boys do not have to undergo same. Indeed, among the Akan the belief seems to be that it is boys who must search for girls as wives and so it is the latter whose maturity should be advertised.

However, sexuality is generally regarded as a sensitive and private issue and it is avoided as much as possible in open conversation (Anarfi 2006). Researchers also note that different expectations and codes of behaviour guide the initiation and participation in the sexual act for females and males (Anarfi 2006; Adomako Ampofo 2001). Adomako Ampofo and Boateng (2007, 2008) suggest that this focus on the training of girls is a contradiction in that while gendered cultural norms tend to provide girls with some information about sexual matters, girls are not expected to display this knowledge while boys, who are permitted relatively more freedom of sexual expression and knowledge are, however, not provided with the information,

counsel or guidance on issues of sexuality that they need. If this is mapped on to a situation where girls are generally expected to remain virgins until marriage as well as to defer to men in sexual matters, while boys who are more ignorant are expected to pursue and seek out girls, then the imbalance can create confusion and conflict in sexual politics. Such notions are not static, however, having shown evidence of ongoing evolution.

The HIV/AIDS disease spawned a plethora of sexuality studies. Most of the early work focuses on women's vulnerabilities and unequal gender relations, and the negotiations and bargaining that occurs between men and women (Adomako Ampofo 1995, 1999, 2006; Awusabo Asare et al. 1993; Frimpong-Nuoroh 2006). These studies reveal that different categories of women and men negotiate differently based on their contexts and relationships, and feminist scholars in particular address issues of power (Adomako Ampofo 2006). Some also address the impact of the disease on the social sciences, while a few critique the pathologizing of African sexualities and the over-emphasis on reproductive health that resulted. Adomako Ampofo (1999) argues that the relationship of sexuality studies to HIV/AIDS led to a problem-oriented approach to the neglect of everyday issues such as relationships and sexual pleasure.

Later works are more diverse. Oppong (2006) explains that HIV/AIDS has brought sexuality and issues around it into sharp public focus, thereby altering customary norms guiding sexual behaviour. She argues that this erosion of cultural boundaries has had empowering implications for some people while for others the consequences have presented new challenges.

Steegstra (2006) provides an intricate weave between sexuality and personal integrity offering, on the one hand, a society's desire to give identity to its girls through initiation into sexual maturity, and on the other, how cultural and other concomitant conditions have fuelled negative perceptions of Krobo women's sexuality. For example, responding to claims that Krobo Dipo rites promote promiscuity and hence the spread of HIV/AIDS, Steegstra (2006) argues that the rites *per se* do not facilitate the spread of the disease, but that the fringe sub-culture in which fathers encouraged their newly initiated daughters to have children before marriage, so that such offspring belong to the father's household rather than their biological fathers—which can make husbands peripheral to the childbearing project, and may bring women some autonomy. Further, Steegstra argues that the economics of the area in the 1960s arising out of the construction of the Akosombo Hydroelectric Dam and the subsequent loss of farmlands and agrarian income is not unrelated to Krobo women's entry into sex work both at home and abroad.

Apusigah (2005) explores another practice, in this case the Gurusi practice of "*Yi Wie Ne,*" that may bring some women sexual and reproductive autonomy. The emphasis is on the leverage of sexuality for procreation, and through that, females can assert themselves by perpetuating the lineage. "*Yi wie ne*" is a practice through which, in the absence of male heirs to perpetuate the lineage, women can become "male daughters." Like the practice in other parts of Africa, the women became progenitors (Adomako Ampofo 2013; Amadiume 1987). However, unlike other parts of Africa, where "male daughters" also became "female husbands" and have

children through their wives (sexual relations with other men), in "*Yi wie ne*" women are themselves free to engage in sexual relations and have children, and these children receive *their* family names rather than those of their male sexual partners. Apusiga describes *"Yi wie ne"* as an austerity measure driven by the desire to be immortalized. It is clear, however, that beyond the cultural context in which the practice is set and the demands that drive it, "*Yi wie ne*" is indicative of agency in negotiating sexuality to meet one's desired objectives, even if such objectives are not personally gratifying.

Apusiga argues that the practice is an alternative expression of female sexuality that holds liberatory potential for the women as it confers on them rights to titles, children and social status. Women get to perform male (gender) roles and achieve the rights and privileges reserved for men. Using Butler's notion of gender as performance (1988), Apusiga analyzes the biological and sociological interpretation of gender and its relationship to sex and reports that the framework enables an understanding of "*Yi wie ne"* as an expression of alternate sexuality among the Gurusi women of northern Ghana. She argues that in a culture in which female sexuality is strongly tied to social roles, which are often not prestigious, the practice should be viewed more from the perspective of the opportunities it creates for women rather than the challenges it poses (Apusigah 2005).

Even though gender studies have always explored masculinities, albeit indirectly through, especially leadership, reproductive health and sexualities, it remains an emerging area for gender analysis. In 1997, Ghana was thrown into a frenzy as reports circulated that some men's sexual organs shrunk or vanished upon contact with other individuals. Recounting the characteristic features of some reported cases, Sackey (2006) described the enormous need on the part of men to protect their sexual potency. This was exemplified by men's sense of shared fear, and solidarity as they collaborated in mob action to punish alleged perpetrators who had caused organs to vanish.

Gender and Law

The law is an important mechanism by which women and men's lives are organized in society. Issues that have received most attention include inheritance, discrimination, violence, and family law. Researchers have interrogated the country's erstwhile Interstate Succession Law (Awusabo-Asare 1990; Manuh 1997, 2003). Manuh (2003) traces some of the challenges posed by the law, including rights held by children who are unknown to the family until the death of their father; the devolution of property which may have been acquired jointly by spouses but perceived as the husband's; and extended family apprehensions about property sharing. Manuh (2003) found the law to be a good one, but opined that the inherent challenges could stymie its use in the courts as stakeholders could settle for out of court resolutions. She recommends education to build knowledge levels on the law.

Scholarly work can be credited with the current reforms that have been pushed by CSOs such as FIDA and WILDAF.[6]

Manuh (1988) has also explored the co-existence of traditional law and contemporary jurisprudence, with respect to the jurisdiction of the Asantehemaa's court. She details the workings of the Asantehemma's court, and demonstrates how, even in what is supposed to be a female court set up to ensure justice for the womenfolk of Asanteman, the counsellors, are predominantly male.

Recent work on gender and law has focused very much on domestic violence legislation, and access to land, which are discussed separately.

The Media and Representation

Media's role in cultural socialization is not contested and studies have confirmed the media's ability to affect audiences and their worldviews (Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu 2012). Work in the area examines the nature of the media's representation of men and women, as well as women and men's relative participation in media and popular culture. Early works in this regard by Asante Darko and Van der Geest (1983), Collins (1986), as well as more recent works (Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu 2012; Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo 2012; Collins 2003) examine highlife music as a platform for the promotion of the male perspectives on gender norms, especially marital relations.

These authors argue that contemporary popular music has an ideological and political character feeding the perpetuation of male supremacy. Asante Darko and van der Geest (1983) trace lyrics reflecting co-wife relations; wives' jealousy, insubordination, fickleness and preponderance for keeping bad company; and show how highlife may serve to perpetuate notions of women's inferiority to men. Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu (2012) argue that because the artist and creator of cultural products, has tremendous influence in their societies as both entertainer and educator, popular music is a powerful vehicle for cultural and political expression throughout the body politic. From their analyses of over two hundred songs they found that although some songs present positive images of women, especially being praised as mothers and lovers in non-objectifying ways, a disproportionate number of songs objectify and infantilize women. Women are portrayed as exploitative, unfaithful, unreliable, enchantresses, witches, jealous, competitive (typically with other women over men), and materialistic.

Adomako Ampofo and Asiedu argue that, in a society where male domination is so rife, the negative portrayals of women may not even be evident to musicians and consumers. Male musicians and other artists who may consider themselves pro-women may even inadvertently project negative images of women without consciously meaning to do so. Thus, the messages about women and gender are legitimated (Asiedu and Adomako Ampofo 2012).

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[6] FIDA: Federation of African Women Lawyers; WILDAF: Women in Law and Development in Africa.

Advertising is another popular platform that has received international acclaim for its treatment of the subject of gender in both visual portrayals and in the written text. Addy (2006) and Tsegah (2009) have used gender analysis frameworks to examine how men and women are portrayed in advertisements and report on the stereotypical representations of women they observed.

Beyond portrayal, work on media representation of women has also explored the subject from the perspective of numbers and inclusion. Yeboah (2009) presents a rather disturbing picture of the nation's foremost newspaper, the *Daily Graphic,* and its exclusion of women in the news creation process. According to the study, whether as reporters or sources, women lagged far behind males in the participation and creation of what would eventually be presented as the news. Kimani and Yeboah (2011) look beyond these figures to assess whether the few women who do make it into the news are as likely as men to be given prominence. Their content analysis of six local newspapers reveals that, once given access, women are unlikely to be treated differently from men in terms of the prominence they received.

Others explore how women may secure better representation in the media (Akrofi-Quarcoo 2007; Yeboah 2011). Akrofi-Quarcoo (2007) examines men and women's participation in morning radio programmes through listener phone-ins and reports that where women participated they tended to do so as much as men did. In other words, the limited media access and participation reported by researchers such as Yeboah (2009) operates more as a function of media gate-keeping processes which privileges male over female access. Where participation is open to all, such as a radio discussion call-in session, women are just as likely as men to call-in to share their opinions.

Yeboah (2011) examines whether the gender of female journalists portends any benefits for increasing female participation in the news. The author describes a tendency for female reporters to use more female sources; however, this does not seem to draw from any consciousness on the part of these female journalists to "write" women into the news. It appeared to be more a result of female journalists' perception that their audiences preferred to hear the news from female sources.

Women's general lack of visibility in media has also been addressed from the perspective of their participation as practitioners, particularly as journalists. Gadzekpo (2001) has contributed a historical study of women's participation in the Gold Coast print culture. Gadzekpo finds that the trend towards so-called "gender-blind historicizing" has led to a neglect of women's roles in the telling of historical accounts of women's participation in the media industry. She provides a comprehensive review of women's roles as media professionals in, and consumers of, the Gold Coast print culture. She finds that women practitioners, such as Mabel Dove (Danquah), writing under various pseudonyms, both conformed to and challenged notions of women's interests. Extending the discourse on women's professional participation in media industries, Kyere (2012) has also examined the place of different cohorts of women in the music industry. Yeboah and Thompson (In Press) have embarked on a similar endeavour with somewhat different objectives. Their work sought to turn the subject of gender inequality within media industries on its head to examine the "gendered" dimensions of women's career success in Ghana's

media/communication industry. It sought to answer the question whether the processes of gendering (both at home and at work) portend any benefits for women in their career journeys. Findings showed that gender does indeed present some advantages to female communication practitioners that may have been overlooked by both themselves and scholars.

Gender-based Violence

Until the 1980s, gender-based violence was a relatively under-researched area. However, in 1998 a study by a CSO, the Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre on the prevalence of violence against women and children in Ghana (Coker-Appiah and Cusack 1999) seems to have spawned researchers' interest in the subject. In an effort to draw out the architecture for gendered violence in Ghana, researchers explored various aspects of the phenomenon informed by their diverse social science backgrounds. Some of the areas examined include sexual violence, domestic violence, abuse of minors, and state violence.

Violence against women is said to derive from the perceived inferiority of women to men as well as their unequal status either in law or according to social norms (Akumatey and Darkwah 2009, Manuh, 2009). This closely relates to notions of masculinity and femininity which are also directly associated with sexuality and parenting (Prah and Adomako Ampofo 2009; Adomako Ampofo Prah 2009). Also complicit is the economic ordering of contemporary society which constructs women as economically dependent on men, despite historical evidence to the contrary (see Aidoo 1985). This, in turn leads to men's frustrations over their inability to live up to the expected male role of economic provider which can produce tensions that sometimes culminate in violence (Biritwum and Cusack 2009). Contrary to developmentalist approaches, researchers argue that economic empowerment of women alone may not be the panacea as a woman's economic independence by itself may not protect her from violence. Indeed, in certain cases, a wife's economic independence is deemed to present a challenge to her husband's authority, thereby predisposing her to violence (Adomako Ampofo Prah 2009).

A key element in this architecture is state complicity. Some of the early works in this area come from Adomako Ampofo (1993) and Tsikata (1997) in which they discuss the role of the military in projecting women, namely market traders, as the scapegoats for the nation's economic woes, and thus justifying their public abuse. In their efforts to control women's so-called economic crimes, the military also seized women's wares and thus succeeded in bringing many to economic ruin. Manuh (2009) argues that the Ghanaian state demonstrates ambivalence towards violence against women as evidenced by its passivity towards abuses as well as the promulgation of policies with harmful effects for women. The absence of true democracy and women's lack of equal participation in state decision-making have all been thought to exacerbate the disparities between men and women and fed into the creation of opportunities for abuse. Prah and Adomako Ampofo's (2009) work that

seeks to conceptualize discipline and punishment in Ghana lends support to this point. According to the authors, "the state constitutes a backdrop against which discipline, punishment and abuse of women and children occurs" (Prah and Adomako Ampofo 2009, p. 198). They explain that by relegating certain violent actions to the private domain, the state actually condones violence against women.

Culture can also be viewed as culprit or potential arbiter in the perpetration of violence against women (Adomako Ampofo et al. 2005; Adomako Ampofo and Prah 2009). According to Adomako Ampofo and Prah (2009) domestic violence is conceived within Ghanaian society as a private issue, a conception that is problematic, often leading to women's willingness to endure it quietly without seeking redress. Further, the authors argue that there is fluidity in definitions of what constitutes violence. Citing cultural permissions for male punishment of female "deviant" behaviour, sometimes with violent actions, they suggest that it is difficult then for people to determine at what point such permitted punishment becomes violence that calls for redress. They, therefore call for further efforts at defining violence and conscientizing the populace about it.

Adomako Ampofo and Boateng (2008) have also discussed violence as it relates to the concepts of masculinity and femininity and notions about them. Their work suggests that violence can sometimes be linked to men's (boys') constructions of their masculinity and their efforts to assert this. In a culture that uses marriage as a platform to transfer the guardianship role of parents over daughters to their husbands, they argue that men's violent behaviour towards women is often tied to the masculine notion that they can and should punish female wrongful behaviour (as parents would their children). Nonetheless, Adomako Ampofo and Prah (2009) propose that cultural prescriptions that valorize wifehood and motherhood, as well as constructions of masculinity such as supportive and protective can be creatively employed to address gender-based violence against women.

Adomako Ampofo, Awotwi and Dwamena-Aboagye (2005) argue that some cultural wisdom may perpetuate violence, for example prescriptions that for marriages to be successful, one of the partners (typically the woman) should be a "fool," hold the potential of calling on women to endure and even condone gendered violence. The authors also argue that the political economy supports the incidence and non-reporting of gendered violence. Since women and children may depend on men for maintenance, they may not report violent behaviour for fear that a conviction will leave them destitute.

Yeboah and Batse (2009) take this further through a quantitative analysis of the contributive effects of each of a list of variables thought to affect domestic violence. Isolating 20 forms of psychological violence including threats, isolation and insults, the researchers found that whether as adults or adolescents, the sample reported having experienced at least five of the isolated forms, the most prevalent of which was insults and threats. Sexual violence often took the form of women being touched without their consent. They also report that lines of intimacy often overshadow violence in the domestic setting.

Oduyoye (2009) and Armah-Koney (2009) have explored the relationship between religion, and Christianity and Islam, respectively. Both Oduyoye and Armah-

Koney contend that misinterpretations lead women to hold a diminished view of themselves, thus making them unquestioning recipients of violence. According to Oduyoye, the practice of citing isolated scriptures out of context in order to back subjective arguments creates room for the perpetration, or at least the lack of any critical questioning, of gender-based violence. As an example, she cites reference to the verse in the book Ephesians in the Bible asking wives to submit to husbands who should in turn love them, as being lifted in isolation from an earlier admonition for both husband and wife to be "mutually submissive to one another."[7]

Armah-Koney (2009) argues that the Quran decries violence against women and lays the blame for the widespread practice of gender-based violence among adherents at the door of early Islamic scholars or classical lawyers (fuqaha)—all males, whose interpretations of Quranic verses have introduced misogynistic interpretations. Armah argues that when these basic religious texts, which are held in high esteem by adherents, are interpreted by them in light of their own cultures, which may be tolerant of gender-based violence, this leads to tolerance forhusbands (and men) disciplining their wives (and women). Chapter 4:34 of the Quran is an example she offers to explicate this point:

> Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance—[first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.

Where wives' submission to their husbands is so often highlighted without a similar expectation provided for men, it becomes easier to understand how the disciplining of wives by their husbands for insubordination is accepted while the reverse is not considered let alone countenanced (Adomako Ampofo and Prah 2009). Both Oduyoye (2009) and Armah-Koney (2009) call for re-readings of the major religious texts as imperatives for the prevention of gender-based violence and the recognition of women's inherent equality to men.

According to Oduyoye (2009) and Adomako Ampofo and Okyerefo (2014) beyond the (mis)interpretation of scripture, a male-dominated application of religious doctrines may also offer grounds for gender-based violence, for example through one of the basic tenets, forgiveness, which requires adherents to forgive, unconditionally, wrongs done against them. According to Oduyoye, in the events of gender-based violence, female Christian religious adherents may be under a lot of pressure to "forgive and forget", leaving perpetrators free and making such women susceptible to more violence. Indeed, Adomako Ampofo and Okyerefo's gendered analysis (2014) of the writings of some leading Christian clerics finds explicit exhortations to women to submit to husbands, even in cases of violence. Oduyoye concludes that there is a critical need for a re-examination of the Christian religion, since "interpreted and used in narrow and limiting ways, the kinds of messages

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[7] Ephesians Chap. 5: 21–22.

portrayed run contrary to the Christian intention of equality, mutuality, caring and justice" (2009, p. 152).

As purveyors of culture, the media represents a strong platform from which to engage the subject of violence. Gadzekpo (2009) examines the print media coverage and representation of violence against women by focusing on the frames via which readers are invited to engage with such stories. Using a textual analysis of purposively sampled newspaper stories covering a series on intimate partner femicides in 2002, Gadzekpo showed that the media placed selective emphasis on aspects of the stories which tended to obscure the real issues at play such as unequal gender relations. Gadzekpo's analysis reveals at least five such frames, all of which hold the potential to detract attention from the culpability of perpetrators. These were: "victim blaming", in which the news emphasized reasons such as victims' infidelity for blame rather than the perpetrators; "medical pathology" which attributed spousal murders to perpetrators' pathology (insanity); "extraordinary" frame in which the spousal murders were positioned as an unusual calamity, failing to highlight its growing incidence; "minimizing frame" by which the media fail to contextualize each episode as a potential manifestation of an endemic cultural practice; and "romantic expression" in which the media propagate reasons such as jealousy, passion and so forth, as the causes for gender-based violence.

Politics and the State: Women's Organizing

Women's organizing in Ghana has a long history. Indeed, women's organizing was a key ingredient in the success of the independence struggle (Apusigah et al. 2011). Like women's organizing and political activism in the rest of Africa, the focus of early organizing was with wider nationalist concerns rather than with a "narrow preoccupation with gender equity alone" (Steady 2006 cited in Adomako Ampofo 2008). Apusigah et al. (2011) and Adomako Ampofo (2008) provide a historical account of the forms in which women's organizing have manifested in the country. From organizing cocoa hold-ups, feeding political activists and serving as foot soldiers, women demonstrated an interest in fighting for the better positioning of Ghanaian humanity. The authors draw references from Adamafio (1982) to recount how following the attainment of independence more gender equity actions were initiated with an agenda for securing equal conditions for women and men in the country. For instance, in the immediate post-independence era, the Nkrumah government sought to institutionalize women's organizing through the setting up of the Ghana Federation of Women in 1953, largely as a welfare and social support group, the Women's League with a more feminist agenda and the National Council of Ghana Women, NCGW, under which all Ghanaian women were to organize and be organized (see Tsikata 1997).

However, it appears that the romance between the political institution of government and women's organizing was short-lived as Ghana was ushered, with the overthrow of Nkrumah into a series of military and democratic eras, the disjointed nature

of which affected the women's cause for organizing around the political issues of rights and citizenship. Of particular interest here, is how the Rawlings era presented a double-bind to women's organizing: on the one hand existing machineries for organizing such as the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) were stripped of their influence and effectiveness while on the other, the nation saw a new form of organizing under the auspices of the 31st December Women's Movement, established and run by the wife of the then military leader, Jerry Rawlings. Indeed, scholars have on occasion described women's organizing in these times as an "illusion of activity" (Prah 2004, p. 37) and "an illusion of collective power" (Adomako Ampofo 2008) to characterize the overtaking of collective effort by the first lady syndrome.

Mensah Kutin et al. (2000), provide a review of the political, social and economic context in which the National Council for Women and Development was established and functioned. Based on interviews with various stakeholders, including staff, they find that factors such as political interference affected its effective functioning. Tsikata (1997) has also analyzed state level gender policy and their implications for gender relations and gender equality. Tracing state policies under various governments from colonial to the fourth republic, she concludes that successive governments, with a few exceptions have tended to be gender-biased or gender-blind, with consequences for gender equality. She also highlights gaps between scholarship and activism as having aggravated successive governments' tendencies not to tackle gender inequality with consistency. Tsikata (2000) examines the trajectory of the women's machinery for organizing in eight African countries including Ghana. Her work showed that existing machineries for implementing the then Beijing Platform for Action were inadequate and, therefore, unlikely to deliver on the promises desired. She concludes on the need for more collaboration between national machineries and civil society towards the achievement of the common goal of advancing women's well-being.

More recent work has looked at how women's groups have paid attention to specific female concerns such as violence against women or women's political participation. Adomako Ampofo (2008) traces Ghana's journey towards the promulgation of a Domestic Violence Law, reflecting on strategy, issues of contestation, challenges and successes with collaborations. In what appears to be an era of coalitions, she shows how different women's groups worked together around issues of interest to women, key among which was the development of a Women's Manifesto and the Domestic Violence Law. This contemporary form of organizing that exploits new media typifies the conviction that "by working in collectives they can more effectively lobby, advocate and campaign to bring gender perspectives to national processes in ways that individuals, groups of individuals, or even organizations cannot" (Adomako Ampofo 2008, p. 400).

Gender and Development

Social science researchers in Ghana have also, consistently, engaged the subject of development from the perspective of women and men's contributions to, and gains from national development. For instance, Date-Bah (1983) studied men and women working in factories in Accra for any signs of gender-based discriminatory treatment on the job. She reported no significant differences in the treatment on the job in ways that disadvantaged one sex. However, a notable difference between male and female workers appeared to be a spillover from women's domestic duties. Female workers were more prone to lateness and absenteeism as a result of their domestic duties. Of significance here is the connection such a study makes between women's dual contributions to development via reproductive (domestic) work as well as work outside the home.

Clark (1994) offers an interesting ethnographic account of the economic activities and strategies of the women of the Kumasi Central Market in their quest for profit accumulation and survival. Her work reveals the intricate connections between women's trading, domestic and public sphere lives and how market trade overall serves as a backbone to the economy while also maintaining its status as vantage point for food and goods distribution to facilitate development.

Building on some of the early work by Benneh et al. (1995), Duncan and Brants (2004) have looked at women's lack of access to land, credit and agricultural technology, which in turn hinders their contributions to development. A study of the gendered effects of Ghana's Structural Adjustment Policies reveals severe cutbacks in women's economic well-being (Manuh 1994). Darkwah (2007) uses the life narratives of two market women to discuss women's coping strategies during the SAP period. She shows that at the height of the implementation of the adjustment policies, some educated women metamorphosed into transnational traders in the informal economy. Darkwah calls attention to women's creativity and their successes at adapting to different economic conditions. Adomako Ampofo (2001) and Manuh (1994), however, point to the ways in which the gender-blind policies marginalized women and even pushed some into sex work.

Ghana registers a large informal sector in which the majority of both men and women carry out their economic activities, albeit with differing relations to the operations of the economy (Tsikata 2009). Darkwah (2007) shows how women have carved out their own niche within the sector to maximize their agency. Arguing that definitions of the sector, often *ad hoc* and primitive, fail to capture the complexities of that sector and its realities for the lives of both women and men, she suggests that women's location in the informal sector has offered opportunities through enterprise development, capital mobilization, political resistance and social networking. Further, women's participation in the informal sector has positive implications for their own as well as their families' upkeep. Thus, she proposes that the state and its collaborators should embrace the sector as a legitimate site of economic activity and provide credit support, appropriate technologies, skills training and improved infrastructure to enhance informal sector activities.

Apusigah (2004) and Sureshbabu and Apusigah (2005) discuss gender and development from the perspective of meeting women's strategic and practical needs. Strategic needs are gender status related, while practical needs relate to their daily living conditions. They argue that women's empowerment initiatives have resulted in improvements in women's conditions but not their status, as women remain in subjugation, a situation she blames on the fact that empowerment initiatives only stress the practical needs without similar emphasis on strategic interests. Arguing that the pursuit of strategic needs has relevance not only for women but also for families and communities and even national development, a case is made for women's empowerment initiatives to take more seriously questions of strategic relevance. Apusigah (2004) argues that women's empowerment can only be realized through a change in the status of women, and makes a case for the re/channelling of practical programmes in ways that promote strategic gender interests.

Sureshbabu and Apusiga (2005) have also looked at how micro-enterprise development could be tied to meet women's strategic interests. Tracing different developmental paradigms that have guided women's economic empowerment (from development the era of "development for" to the era of "development with") the authors note the need to tie women's strategic needs to their practical needs. They argue that while resources such as education, health, human rights as well as infrastructural facilities including housing, water, sanitation, markets and roads remain essential, income and employment are critical for accessing these resources. Economic empowerment should, therefore, remain part of new development planning and delivery. Welfarism is not the way to go and development planners are encouraged to look to empowering women through microfinance as a means to empowering them to also enjoy facilities available for meeting their strategic needs.

Politics of Gender and Future Directions

Gender studies have made significant contributions to the social sciences by revealing, and reflecting on women and men's relative situations, and the questions of power and culture that are implicit. They have also introduced, or emphasized, concepts and methodologies that were hitherto ignored or absent. A significant contribution has also been work that reveals the politics of the academy itself (Prah 2002; Tsikata 2007). For instance, using feminist methodologies of personal narratives, Lundgren and Prah (2009) and Adomako Ampofo (2009) show how the structure of academia may inhibit female academics from attaining their full potential. Lundgren and Prah suggest that, through a complex maze of delays in promotion, low expectations of female academics by their male counterparts and seniors as well as overburdening workloads, the academy limits female potential, thus denying scientific knowledge of female perspectives and input. They also argue that due to socialization processes, female academics may start-off lacking intellectual self-confidence and this, coupled with the restrictions the academy imposes, can result in lopsided scientific knowledge by restricting women's contributions.

Adomako Ampofo (2009) discusses female academics' challenge of staying true to feminist goals, while also trying to survive as academics of repute: maintaining consistency in the midst of the challenges of publishing demands, economic insufficiencies and of working with theoretical frameworks developed from the global north. Prah (2002) argues that ordinarily, a university is expected to provide the space for women's career success because it is supposed to be a place where freedom of expression is encouraged. However, her research at the University of Cape Coast showed that the female staff there lacked visibility (owing to their limited numbers in comparison to male staff) which then meant that they lacked the power to influence decision-making. She also found that the female staff who had spent many years in the institution reported having experienced gender discrimination. However, these female workers did not feel such discrimination was connected to unfavourable policies that put women at a disadvantage in the institution.

GWS in Ghana have not yet achieved the disciplinary legitimacy that they have achieved in some parts of Africa with the setting up of departments and undergraduate majors. Part of this task will fall to the scholars who are engaged in this work, who will have to lead the advocacy. Additionally, it will require a major commitment from university authorities to hire faculty with training and skills in gender analyses.

Particular areas that have not received much attention in Ghana are gender and climate/the environment; alternative and minority sexualities; and gender and health care systems.

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