

**The University of the Western Cape**



School of Government

Institute for Social Development

**Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Party Women's Wings in Ghana**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The political participation of women in parliaments is not only important for sustainable development of every country, but it is also crucial for their voices to be heard, as they form at least half of the world's population. Furthermore, women's presence in significant decision-making positions represents an indicator of gender transformation and mainstreaming. However, women remain largely underrepresented in parliament and state institutions in Ghana with a current representation of 8.3% in parliament.*

*Against this background, this study evaluates the role of women wings in enhancing women's representation in parliament, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological contexts in which they operate and assesses the constraints and challenges to their effective involvement in parliament. Using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the research analyses the activities of three main political parties' women's wings in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana by addressing the following key questions: (i) What are the demographic features of members of the women's wings in Ghana? (ii) What structures and relationships influence women's participation and advancement in Ghanaian politics? (iii) Do women's wings attached to political parties have the capacity to advance the agendas of women and gender equality in Ghana or are they constrained by loyalties to male-dominated parties? (iv) To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically? (v) Do women's wings of different parties perform different roles, and reflect different strategies for enhancing women's public participation?*

*The findings indicated that women's wings affiliated to political parties are constrained by their loyalty to their political parties resulting in a lack of a clear feminist consciousness. There was also lack of cooperation among the women's wings which also affected their ability to enhance gender equality in the country. In addition cultural norms and discriminatory practices together with a lack of financial resources were found to be major obstacles to the effectiveness of the women's wings in Ghana in achieving gender equality and social justice. The study therefore recommends a need for a stronger feminist consciousness and the building of women's solidarity among and between women's wings to enable them to address the strategic gender needs of the country and achieve gender equality in Ghana.*

## **DECLARATION**

I, **Grace Gletsu**, hereby declare that this mini-thesis entitled “Women’s representation in parliament: The role of party women’s wings in Ghana” is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree, or examination in any other University or College, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

**Grace Gletsu**

Signed..... Date: .....



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my Beloved Mother (Mary Ami Gletsu) of blessed memory, who passed away on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, and to my entire family and loved ones.



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First of all I wish to glorify the Good Lord for the wisdom, the good health and energy He has given me and carried me thus far. To God be the Glory.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC- African National Congress

CC- Central Committee

CPP- Convention People's Party

CSO- Civil Society Organisation

FES- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

FGD- Focused Group Discussion

GSS- Ghana Statistical Service

IEA- Institute for Economic Affairs

IPU- Inter-Parliamentary Union

MASLOC- Micro-finance and Small Loans Centre

MDG- Millennium Development Goal

MMDCE- Municipal Metropolitan and District Chief Executive

MOWAC- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

NDC- National Democratic Congress

NEC- National Executive Committee

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

NPP- New Patriotic Party

PURC- Public Utility Regulatory Commission

REC- Regional Executive Committee

SADC- Southern Africa Development Community

TANU- Tanganyika African National Union

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme



UNRISD- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WiLDAF- Women in Law and Development in Africa



# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

It is a truism that women all over the world are faced with numerous challenges in their quest to participate in political and leadership activities (IPU, 2008). This explains their low representation in government and decision-making bodies across the globe.

This chapter serves as an introduction to a thesis that reports on a study on women and politics in Ghana which aims at identifying the challenges of women's wings affiliated to political parties in achieving the goal of gender equality, both in the Ghanaian parliament and in the broader society. The chapter examines the current situation of gender inequality in Ghana as a background and context for the discussion of the role of political parties' women's wings in advancing women's political representation. It also highlights the significance and research problems of the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

The struggle for women's political rights has persisted for centuries, and even though women are now legally free to vote and stand for elections, there is sufficient evidence that they continue to face various challenges in expressing this right (IPU, 2008). The world's population shows that in most countries women comprise more than 50% of eligible voters (IPU, 2008). This means that, more than half of a country's population that qualifies to stand for political positions are women. However, this is not reflected of the number of women represented in government and decision-making bodies across the globe. For instance, in 2008, there were fewer than 18% of women represented in parliament the world round. This was an increase from a representation of 11% in 1975 when the First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City (IPU, 2008). This shows how little progress has been achieved towards closing the gender gap in government over the past three decades.

Gender inequality is therefore a global social phenomenon; however its manifestation in countries differs across the globe. The Nordic countries for instance have maintained a high representation of women in parliament. In 2008 for instance, the average regional representation of women in parliament was 40%. Research has also shown that women

comprise more than 30% of ministerial and parliamentary positions in about 22 countries in Europe and the Americas (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010). This brings women's representation in the region to an average of 20% which is an increase from 12% a decade earlier. Contrary to the above, women are poorly represented in the Arab states and Pacific regions with several of these countries having a zero representation of women in legislature (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010).

Statistics on ministerial and key political appointments also indicates a low (16%) representation of women worldwide. Out of this figure, countries such as Norway and Grenada have a representation of more than 50%. Women in Europe and the Americas also form close to 30% of this figure. At the opposite end of the scale, 13 countries, most of them situated in the Pacific region, have no woman represented in cabinet. Women are also highly invisible in the highest positions of the state. Out of 150 heads of state and 192 governors in 2008, women constituted 4.7% and 4.2% respectively (IPU, 2008).

The severity of gender inequality in the African continent shows similar trends and varies widely across the continent. Gender inequality has been experienced in different ways in pre-colonial through to post-colonial Africa. In pre-colonial or indigenous Africa, women's political position varied across the continent, with some wielding more authority than others (Firmin-Sellers and O'Barr, 1995). This gender inequality worsened with the experience of colonialism in most African countries. As Firmin-Sellers and O'Barr (1995:189) argue

European administrators imposed a legal and cultural apparatus that undermined women's traditional bases of power; which politically subordinated and marginalized women.

This made the 'private' and the 'public' sphere for women during the colonial period two distinct arenas and this was perpetuated by the patriarchal system thereby affecting women's role in politics and subsequently in the public spheres (Allah-Mensah, 2005). In post-colonial African contexts, despite efforts by women's movements to increase women's public participation, especially in Uganda and South Africa, women continue to be far less visible in national politics than men (Kiamba, 2008; Tamale, 1999; Watson, 2006). In West Africa for instance, apart from Senegal, Mauritania and Cape Verde which have 22.7%, 22.1% and 20.8% representation of women in parliament respectively, all of the other countries have a

representation of less than 20% of women in parliament (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010). The situation is better in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with countries such as South Africa and Mozambique having women representation of 44.5% and 39.2% in parliament respectively (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010). There is also considerable progress in East Africa with Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda heading the list with 56.3%, 36% and 35% of women representation in parliament respectively (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010). The situation in Ghana is however very discouraging as women currently only represent 8.3% of parliamentarians (Continental Advisory Research Team, 2010). This percentage puts the country far behind in terms of the achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) which emphasises gender equality in education and at least a 30% representation of women in political offices by 2015. This picture also does not speak well of a country which over the years has been considered as having a good democracy and is also performing well economically. This therefore contributes to the motivation for this research in the field of women and politics in Ghana.

The next section briefly discusses the situation of gender inequality in government and other state institutions in Ghana, as well as a brief overview of political activism of women's wings in Ghana as a background to the establishment of the research problem.

### **1.2.1 Gender inequality in Ghana**

Although Ghana has achieved a stable democracy over the last two decades, gender inequality continues to persist, particularly within government and decision-making bodies. Closing the gender gap and enhancing women's participation in development is therefore not only an issue of producing a just society, but also a "pre-requisite for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among people on a sustainable basis" (Awumbila, 2001:33).

In pre-colonial Ghana, the "allocation of power, status, right and resources" among men and women was based on factors such as "descent, succession and inheritance, paternity and economic potential" among other things (Aidoo 1995, cited in Prah, 2004:28). For instance the political status of women in matrilineal communities such as the Akan Group was based on descent instead of gender (Prah, 2004). This gave women in matrilineal communities a more recognised political and economic status which was more complementary in nature than

subordinating them to men (Prah, 2004). With the advent of colonialism, the power relation among women and men in Ghana shifted in favour of men as women were completely denied access to political activities among other things (Allah-Mensah, 2005; Prah, 2004). This brought about the relegation of women to purely domestic activities and as a result reduced their status in society as these domestic activities were not rewarded in the capitalist system of colonial rule (Tamale, 1999).

In 1957 when the country gained independence the situation of women's political participation saw an improvement as 10 women were appointed to be represented in the first national Parliament. This was due to the significant role women played during the liberation struggle. In 1964, the number of women in parliament increased to 18 which represented 12.8% (Nketiah, 2005) of the members of parliament at that time. However, due to numerous military regimes that the country experienced, the representation of women in government and decision-making bodies could not be sustained but rather deteriorated.

In today's post-military era and stable democracy, even though there is evidence that women are being employed in state institutions, very few are represented at the top of these institutions (Allah-Mensah, 2005; GSS, 2006; MOWAC, 2009). For instance, in 2007, women constituted 17.1% of chief directors, 23% of Supreme Court judges, 14.8% of High Court judges, 28.4% of district assembly appointees and 11.9% of district assembly elected. Similarly, statistics on ministerial positions and key political appointments indicates a 12.4% representation of women in 2009. This comprised all ministers and deputies, council of state members, Municipal Metropolitan and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) and chief directors (MOWAC, 2009).

The situation is not any different with the representation of women on national Boards across the country. For example currently women constitute 20% of members on the Ghana Education Service Council, 17% of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation, 16.6% of the State Insurance Board, 3.7% of District Chief Executive Nominees and 20% of the University of Ghana Council. The Public Utility Regulatory Commission (PURC), Energy Commission, and the Electricity Company of Ghana have zero representation of women (MOWAC, 2009).

These statistics imply that women have been and are still under-represented in key decision-making structures in Ghana and this gives cause for concern because women form more than

half of the Ghanaian population (GSS, 2012) and as such it is important that they are represented in decisions that affect their wellbeing and development. However, more important than the numerical representation of women in relation to the total population of Ghana is the social fact that women play a fundamental role in the wellbeing of the family and the community at large. Thus above all, it is precisely the centrality of the women's role in the welfare of the community that places them at the heart of the developmental complex. And it is precisely for this reason that the research targets the political participation and representation of women in parliament as a significant concern for research.

Having established the gender disparities that exist within the Ghanaian community, the next section offers a brief overview of political activism of women in Ghana as experienced within political party women's wings.

### **1.2.2 Women's political activism in Ghana**

The political activism of women in Ghana has gone through a series of transformations. Women's activism started during the Nkrumah<sup>1</sup> regime when the Convention People's Party (CPP) co-opted and prohibited the formation of any other women's organisation except the women's section of the CPP (Prah, 2004). This resulted in the suppression of women's ability to organise and be part of the public debate and this continued during the long periods of autocratic rule by the military until Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992 (Prah, 2004). The combined effects of the 1995 Beijing conference and Ghana's return to democratic rule in 1992 have permitted freedoms of speech, association and organisation for all groups including gender-based civil society groups. This has contributed to the promotion and recognition of women's participation in politics. This is evident in the creation of women's wings or sections in all major political parties in Ghana (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

The women's wings in these political parties operate within the national, regional and constituency levels. The national women's wing consists of all women in the political party and it is led by the national women's organiser and her deputy/deputies. The regional and the constituency women's wing also have similar hierarchical structure. The women's wings in the various political parties in Ghana play similar roles and have similar responsibilities. The women's wing of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) for instance seeks to promote the policies

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<sup>1</sup> Nkrumah is the first president of Ghana and also lead the struggle for independence from colonial rulers

and programmes of the party amongst women. It is responsible for recruiting women into the membership of the party, cultivating the support of women for the party before and during elections, raising public awareness on gender and children issues, promoting policies that will realise the full potential of women and children, and opposing policies and practices that mitigate against the full development of women and children, among other things (NPP Constitution, 1998). The women's league of the CPP is also responsible for raising awareness and mobilisation of the Ghanaian women for the achievement of gender balance in the political, socio-economic and cultural spheres of the society (CPP Constitution, 2003).

However, these aims and objectives of the women's wings are not reflective of the position of women within the Ghanaian community as outlined in the previous sections. Against this background, the research problem is to establish why women continue to be under-represented in parliament despite the existence of political parties' women's wings and to assess the extent of their perceived influence in parliament and towards the imperatives of gender equality. What are the challenges that are perceived to inhibit the women's wings in enhancing women's participation in parliament? Do women's wings attached to political parties have the capacity to advance the agendas of women and gender equality in Ghana or are they constrained by loyalties to male-dominated parties? To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within the Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically? Do women's wings of different political parties perform different roles, and reflect different strategies for enhancing women's public participation?

### **1.3 Significance of the Research**

Despite the recognition of gender equality as a prerequisite to economic growth (World Bank, 2012), it has been shown in the previous sections that gender inequality still persists within the Ghanaian community. The political participation of women in parliament is therefore crucial for the development of the economy. Furthermore, women's presence in significant decision-making positions represents an indicator of gender transformation.

Substantial research has attempted to explain the under-representation of women in parliament in various African countries. However, less work has been done on the role of women's wings in political parties in enhancing or inhibiting women's representation in

parliament. In Ghana research focus in the area of strategies to increase women's representation in Ghana has mainly focused on legal affirmative action (Tsikata, 2009). Research on women's wings has either been scarce, or its potential contribution towards achieving an equitable political economy has gone untapped. However, in order for gender inequality to be drastically reduced in Ghana there is a need to develop multidimensional approaches to this effect. It is against this background that the research seeks to evaluate the role of the women's wings in enhancing women's political representation, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological context in which they operate as well as to assess the constraints and challenges to their effective impact in parliament.

This will provide the platform through which the activities of the women's wings within political parties can be organised as a tool for gender equity. The research will create awareness for the women's wings, to identify the role they play in the advancement of the political representation of women in Ghana in particular and development in general.

By identifying the challenges women's wings face, the research will also serve as a means of identifying strategies that can be used to enhance the performance of women in elections. In addition it will serve as a source of relevant data for NGOs and CSOs dedicated to gender equity, development and economic growth in the country. It will also contribute to the extant body of knowledge on women's political representation and thus serve as valuable reference material for academics and professionals interested in this important area of study.

#### **1.4 Overview of the Thesis**

The rest of the discussion is organised as follows:

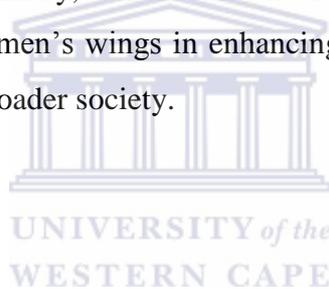
**Chapter Two** reviews the literature in the area of women and politics, beginning with an introduction to the existing scholarship on women and politics and moving on to discuss feminist analyses and critiques of politics from a postcolonial perspective. A discussion of the literature that focuses on, the role of women in political movements and formal politics specifically within the African context follows. Drawing from postcolonial discourses, the chapter discusses key concepts such as autonomy, female solidarity, strategic alliance and women's interests as the conceptual frameworks which guided the formulation of the

research question for the study. The chapter concludes by identifying the gap in the literature and how the current research contributes to bridging this gap.

**Chapter Three** discusses the methodology used in the research. It includes the research questions and research design and also discusses the methodological tools utilised for the study. The concept of feminist research methodology and how this is adopted in the current research is also discussed briefly. Qualitative methods which include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions are employed.

**Chapter Four** provides a detailed representation and analysis of the empirical data gathered from the field research. Key thematic areas are presented that seek to answer the research questions.

**Chapter Five** provides the summary, conclusion and recommendations for practice and further studies on the role of women's wings in enhancing gender equality in the Ghanaian parliament and therefore in the broader society.



## **CHAPTER TWO: EXISTING PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Over the past three decades, international research on women and politics has moved from an examination of the political behaviour of women in electoral politics to women's political participation, such as in social movements, nationalist struggles and community actions (Beckwith, 2000). Studies by African scholars have however focused mostly on women and their relation to the state by focusing on women's access to state power, their role in governance and policy making and their political participation in general (Lewis, 2004). Starting with a focus on the impact of colonialism and postcolonialism on women's political participation, research has gradually moved to the role of women in governance and policy making (Lewis, 2004). This literature review explores the evolution in the field of study on women and politics with particular reference to the African continent by drawing predominantly on postcolonial and postcolonial feminist literature of relevance to the particular focus of the postcolonial context of Ghanaian women's representation in political leadership.

The first section of this literature review looks at the feminist critique of classic definitions of politics and feminist political thought in a postcolonial context. The chapter then provides an analysis of women's movements and political participation with particular focus on the women's wings of political parties. The third section of the chapter focuses on women in politics and parliamentary politics, emphasising the obstacles to and significance of women's involvement in parliamentary politics. The chapter ends with the analysis of key concepts from the literature that will be used as a conceptual guide for attaining the objectives of the study.

### **2.2 Politics and Feminism**

Although there is no agreement on a definition of "politics", political scientists have identified power as the "essence of politics" (Nnoli, 1986:2). Thus it is said that "no one can wield influence in politics more than what his power allows" and this is considered as "the basic truth of politics" (Nnoli, 1986:2). Viewed through this power and influence lens, the involvement of individuals and groups in government structures such as parliament, political

parties, electoral campaigns and voting are considered as the essence of political participation. The identification of colonialism and cultural practices as factors that have historically and in contemporary times excluded African women from political activities reinforces the notion of politics as practices pertaining to government structures and the exercise of power in the public sphere.

However, feminists have argued that the activities of women's movements and associations such as political protest in the form of petitions and demonstrations reveal that women's political activities have mostly not been recognised by political theorists as constituting political action (Robinson, 1998). The definition by Peterson and Runyan (1999) which attributes politics to the difference in access to material and symbolic resources, and the way in which power relations and structures are created, sustained and reconfigured may be more appropriate in this context. What this adds to political scientists' definition of politics is the recognition of both the micro and macro levels of politics that occurs within societies.

In line with this, feminists have argued that: "until we broaden our definition of politics to include the everyday struggle to survive and to change power relations in our society, women's political action will remain obscured" (Bookman and Morgen, 1988:14). Thus, feminism which is considered as "an awareness of women's oppressions and exploitation within the family, at work, and in society, and the conscious effort by women (and men) to change the situation" (Jayawardena, 1986:2) provides a broad scope for the conception of politics in both practice and theory. Feminism thus extends the discipline of politics from the focus on parliaments and parties to include other forms of social action and organisation such as social movements and local campaigns (Stokes, 2005).

### **2.2.1 Postcolonial feminisms**

Postcolonial feminism is identified with the works of feminist scholars from the global south who criticise Western feminist theories based on the experience of Western histories. Western feminism has broadly focused on the "public/private" dichotomy as a critique of politics (Boyd, 1997; Pateman, 1988). The "public/private" dichotomy is the view that women's political subordination is as a result of the segregation of the "private" from the "public" and the constant attribution of women to the "private" sphere. Boyd (1997) for instance argues that women are socialised into the "private" sphere made up of domestic

responsibilities such as the home, family, and sexuality. Men on the other hand, are groomed for public work such as public affairs and decision-making. This creates conflict for women entering into the “public” sphere (Bochel and Bochel, 2000; Strivers, 1993). Postcolonial feminism criticises this over simplified notion of women’s subordination in politics because it fails to account for the experiences of women in the “Third World”.

Postcolonial feminist studies have therefore focused on issues relating to gender, imperialism, class and ethnicity/race in neo-colonial countries (Mbilinyi, 1992). As outlined by Mohanty (1991:10), “Third world” women’s writings on feminism have focused on the following key issues: 1) the idea of simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; 2) the crucial role of the hegemonic state in circumscribing women’s daily lives and survival struggles; 3) the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency; and 4) the differences, conflicts and contradictions internal to women’s organisations and communities in the “Third world”.

Feminism in the “Third World” has been critiqued for being an aspect of Western cultural imperialism (Aina, 1998; Jayawardena, 1986; Mohanty, 1991). On the other hand, this critique has been challenged by the numerous studies (for example, Geiger, 1997; Jayawardena, 1986; Lazreg, 1994; Manuh, 1993; Schmidt, 2005; Tsikata, 1989) conducted on the African continent and in other countries in the global south which foreground the indigenous nature of feminist activities, such as challenging the masculine control of power and resources. For instance, studies conducted in Africa dealing with the involvement of women in nationalist liberation struggles have contradicted the notion of Postcolonial feminism emerging from Western cultural imperialism, and highlight rather the collaboration between western and local feminists in challenging gender inequalities in postcolonial contexts.

Jayawardena’s (1986) study in Asia also emphasises the fact that feminism in developing countries has developed out of the same historical soil and coexisted with social movements with mutual cooperation (Hassim, 2006; Heng, 1997). Feminism in developing countries has therefore been characterised by an involvement with state machineries by organised national movements in collaboration with regional wings, or through independent nongovernmental organisations (Heng, 1997; Lewis, 2004). The involvement of women in social movements in

“Third World” countries is therefore an essential component of the study on women and politics in a postcolonial context.

### **2.3 Women’s Movements and Women’s Participation in Politics**

The participation of women in political movements is fundamental to any analysis of women’s political activities. The activities of movements are necessary to create awareness of women’s roles and ultimately facilitate political environments responsive to women’s needs and the imperatives of gender justice. With regards to this the UNRISD (2005) has indicated that the number of active women’s organisations in a country is positively correlated with the level of women’s political participation. This is because it is through such activities that women have come to demand equal representation in political life and institutions (Becker, 1995; Hassim, 2006; Manuh, 1993; Mba, 1982; Schmidt, 2005; Steady, 2006).

Molyneux (1998:224) has defined a movement as a “social or political phenomenon whose significance is derived from its numerical strength and its capacity to effect change in legal, cultural, social, or political terms”. Women’s movements as stated by Baer (1993:547) are therefore “a bid for political power on the part of women”. Though the forms of women’s participation in women’s movements differ depending on the political context such as colonialism, military dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and religion in which they emerged (Geisler, 2006; Jayawardena, 1986; Kabira and Oduol, 1995; Rai and Sharma, 2000; Waylen, 2007) they are a significant strategic resource for women’s empowerment.

Women’s movements have been broadly classified as either an independent movement or a directed mobilised movement (Molyneux, 1998). As “an independent movement, the women’s movement is a self-governed community with no superior authority, is not subjected to the governance of any other political agency, and has full control over its political agenda” (Molyneux, 1998:227). Whereas, “directed mobilised women movements are those subjected to a higher authority, and under the control of political organisations or governments” (Molyneux, 1998:227). This means that, “the goals of such movements do not necessarily reflect the interests of women and the control and direction of the agenda or activities of the movement does not lie with them as an identifiable social force” (Molyneux, 1998:229). This classification is essential in ascertaining or measuring the impact of a women’s movement in advancing women’s interests.

The societal context within which women's movements develop and operate is known to largely affect the success of the strategies of mobilisation. In societies where governmental structures are relatively open, strong women's movements are believed to have emerged (Bystydzienski, 1992). In postcolonial societies, the gendered construction of men and women tends to limit both the methods of struggle and the goals of women's movements (Ramtohul, 2009).

### **2.3.1 Women in national liberation struggles**

Women in the African continent played independent and transformative roles in national liberation struggles by working against colonial and authoritarian states in the hope of achieving independence or democracy (Jaquette, 1994; Prah, 2004). Women used their own resources including their formal networks and associations to advance the cause of national struggle towards independence. For instance in Nigeria and Guinea, women utilised their traditional commodity associations to form pressure groups (Mba, 1982; Schmidt, 2005) and in Tanzania, women's dance associations provided the space for women's political activism (Manuh, 1993; Schmidt, 2005). In Ghana, the association of women traders in urban areas funded and organised the CPP lead by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah during the liberation struggle (Prah, 2004).

In this context, some national liberation movements such as the ANC in South Africa, the TANU in Tanzania and the CPP in Ghana had women's sections which gathered the support of women for the liberation struggle. The works of several African scholars has further shown that women's political activism has been mostly linked to the larger national struggles for democracy and hence with the new state in the postcolonial or post-conflict phase (Alvarez, 1994; Baldez, 2002; Basu, 1995; Hassim, 2006; Jayawardena, 1986; Manuh, 1993; Mba, 1982; Schmidt, 2005; Steady, 2006; Tripp, 2000).

Manuh (1993) argued that the involvement of women in these liberation struggles was mainly due to the fact that they were more vulnerable in colonial and authoritarian regimes as they were mostly discriminated against in relation to access to resources and power. Faced with such a situation women believed that independence was more beneficial to them as liberation movements promised a change of situation for women (Manuh, 1993; Schmidt, 2005) and

this made their mobilisation easier. Thus, national liberation struggle expedited and legitimised women's political participation irrespective of the fact that such struggles did not necessarily concern gender equality. However, this brought about the public recognition of women as political actors, an activity which was formerly strictly a masculine affair (Schmidt, 2005). This also at times allowed women to challenge oppressive gendered norms and customary practices (Geiger, 1997; Schmidt, 2005).

More recently on the African continent, freedom from authoritarian rules has enabled women's movements to advocate for women's rights in the construction of the constitution of the new state (Tripp, 2004). It also provided the impetus for women's movements to push for greater inclusion in national legislative structures (Ballington, 2004; UNRISD, 2005). Thus the involvement of women in national liberation struggles has been significant in facilitating their ability to address the gendered gaps in women's basic citizenship right during the constitutional change processes (UNRISD, 2005).

### **2.3.2 Women's organisations and women's/gender interests**

Literature on women's activism has shown that not all women's organisations are necessarily feminist (UNRISD, 2005). Feminist groups are those which work towards challenging patriarchy and seek to transform existing gender regimes in order to eliminate women's subordination and male domination. Aina (1998) argues that despite the existence of different women's organisations in Africa, most are not organised along a feminist agenda. According to Lerner (1993) women's movements need to mobilise along a feminist consciousness in order to be able to transform social power relations in a society. Lerner (1993:274) thus describes feminist consciousness as involving: 1) the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group and that, as members of such a group, they have suffered wrongs; 2) the recognition that their condition of subordination is not natural, but socially constructed; 3) the development of a sense of sisterhood; 4) the autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition; and 5) the development of an alternate vision of the future.

Molyneux (1985:233) also distinguishes between "feminist" and "feminine" activities of the women's movement. She argues that feminist activities entail addressing issues specific to women's condition in that particular society whilst feminine activities are organised around gender-related issues and concerns such as health and nutrition which may support women

but are not geared towards larger gendered social transformation. Molyneux further distinguishes between *practical* gender interests and *strategic* gender interests and contends that a decision about which interest one is directed by determines the activities of a women's movement. She identified practical gender interests to be those that are associated with the immediate social and economic needs of women such as facilitating their access to economic, social, medical or educational resources, while strategic gender interests are associated with challenging the arrangements and structures of the larger society that produces women's subordination (Molyneux, 1985). Molyneux (1985) therefore argues that women's organisations which are organised around practical gender interests may benefit women but do not necessarily act against gender inequality.

Some scholars have however been critical of Molyneux's feminist-feminine dichotomy (Korteweg and Ray, 1999; Marchand, 1995). Safa (1990) argues that the clear distinction between practical and strategic gender interests may not always be possible as these two concepts sometimes coincide with one other and are not mutually exclusive but in complex relationship with each other. For instance Waylen (1996a) citing Fisher (1993) shows how women's groups which were initially organised around campaigning for practical gender interests became involved with issues of women's subordination. Nonetheless, Molyneux's classification is relevant for the analysis of the activities of women's organisations and associations especially in the context of the current study which is concerned with women's representation and forms of political organisation.

### **2.3.3 Autonomy and women's organisations**

The extent to which women activists are able to develop a feminist consciousness to work towards strategic needs of women is largely dependent on women's willingness to accept and allow for the adoption of feminist approaches. The development of feminist consciousness among women's groups is in turn dependent on the level of autonomy that such groups wield (Ramtohul, 2009). Whereas autonomy has been a major condition for the existence of women's movements in the North, the situation differs in the South since women's movements in these countries predominantly came into being together with the struggle against colonial and class oppression, and not necessarily as autonomous organisations. While autonomy, which is defined as "the ability to make decisions independently of external forces" (Bratton, 1994:235), is considered a pertinent concept for women's organisations, it is also a debated concept. Hassim (2006:9) for instance cautions that "women organisations

with high levels of autonomy may be at risk of being marginalised from national political processes which might prevent them from shaping political outcomes to favour women”. This was shown to be the case for many women’s parties (for example in Australia and Iceland) which gained very little popularity and were marginalised from mainstream politics (Hughes and Paxton, 2007; Stokes, 2005).

Tripp (2000:4) however is of the view that “relative autonomy” which she defines as “the ability/capacity of non-state collectives to take decisions relatively independent of the state, communal groups, foreign donors or other pressures” is necessary for women’s organisations even if they are strongly linked with larger national parties and organisations. In her study on women and politics in Uganda, Tripp (2000:16–20) outlined several reasons underlying the significance of relative autonomy in women’s organisation. She argued that relative autonomy is what allows or enables organisations to set up their own goals and challenge social norms and practices that violate women’s rights. With relative autonomy societal actors have leverage to be able to effect and demand policy changes. Relative autonomy also allows women’s organisations to select their own leadership without political interference and to challenge discriminatory distributions of resources and power against women. It further allows women’s organisations to address immediate and concrete needs of the community and fulfil independent goals of the organisation. Furthermore relative autonomy prevents what Mama (1995:41) calls “the first lady syndrome” which undermines women’s interests by “upholding the patriarchal status quo”. Thus according to Tripp’s concept of relative autonomy, the degree of autonomy necessary for women’s organisation to achieve a feminist agenda is that which allows them to be able to carry out the above-mentioned activities.

On the subject of degree of autonomy necessary for women’s organisations to achieve feminist consciousness, Molyneux (1998) also gives a feminist understanding of the concept of level of autonomy within different types of women’s organisations. Molyneux (1998:226) identifies three ideal types of direction in the transmission of authority, namely independent, associational and directed. Independent organisations are those women’s organisations whose autonomy allows them to set their own goals and decide their own forms of organisation and struggle. Associational linkage organisations have a type of autonomy “which allows them to form alliances with other political organisations, but each organisation still retains the control

over its own organisational agenda... Power and authority within such associational linkages are negotiated and the cooperation of members is conditional” (Molyneux, 1998:227–228).

Directed mobilised women’s movements are those subjected to a higher authority, and under the control of political organisations or governments (Molyneux, 1998). This means that the goals of such organisation might not reflect the interest of the group but may rather conform to the interest of the higher authority. Therefore, the “control and direction of the agenda may equally not lie with them as an identifiable social force” (Molyneux, 1998:228–229). Despite the limited autonomy under directed mobilisation, it has been shown that a relative autonomy within this group makes the difference in relation to their achievement of feminist consciousness towards the attainment of gender justice and equality. This has been visible in some women’s wings of political parties in some African countries which will be elaborated on in the next section. Therefore the concept of relative autonomy is important for a study on women’s wings in Ghana.

#### **2.3.4 Women’s wings in political parties**

Most political parties in postcolonial Africa have established women’s wings or women’s sections as an internal organ of the political parties charged with dealing with women’s issues. Women’s wings are “supposed to provide an exclusive forum for women and to enhance women’s political roles within the political parties” (Randall, 1987:149). This role of women’s wings in enhancing women’s political interests has however been questioned in recent times. In this context, Chigudu and Tichagwa (1995:2-4) argue

Women’s wings may be created as a way of legitimising the existence of political parties and may only serve as the party’s leadership acknowledgement of the need to secure electoral victories by capturing women’s votes.

This assertion has been validated by some research carried out in the African context. For instance, in the South African region, Selolwane (2006) indicated that historically, women’s wings within political parties have been social clubs which were led by spouses of male politicians and tended to be primarily focused on promoting male interests. Lowe-Morna (2004) confirms this by indicating that women’s units of political parties have been known to be the hospitality wings of political parties, who tend to glorify party activities instead of advancing women’s political and societal status. This was also the case in Namibia, where the

women's wings were constrained by political parties such that they always put the party first in their agendas (Becker, 1995). The situation in Zambia was not any different as the women's league of the dominant party barely advocated for women's needs but was mainly seen as supporting male politicians (Geisler, 2006; Munachonga, 1989).

In other settings, women's wings affiliated to political parties have been found to operate as an important mobilising tool for women's empowerment. For instance the ANC Women's League advocated for 30 percent nomination of women into "winnable positions on the party's electoral ballots", and this coerced other political parties to do the same (Hassim 2002 cited in Fallon and Viterna, 2008:674).

Also due to the activism of women's groups in South Africa, a proportional representation system was instituted (Britton, 2002), and as a result constructed one of the most gender-equitable constitutions in the world (Walsh, 2006). South Africa has also created a monitoring system for gender equity and has contributed immensely to the high rate of women's political representation in parliament (Britton, 2002; Fallon and Viterna, 2008; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2007).

Thus even though women's wings are a "directed organisation" for the most part, they may also serve as a potential tool for enhancing women's political presence and advancing gender equity goals. In line with this, Randall (1987:150) argues that "women's sections may not be the best focus for women's political energies, but when imbued with feminist ideals, women's sections can be valuable in pressing for greater female representation".

In supporting this argument, Hassim (2002 cited in Ramtohul, 2009:60) notes that "women's sections of political parties need to articulate the interests of women supporters of their parties and ensure that they are addressed within the broader political platforms". In establishing the significance of women's wings, Hassim (2002:111) further indicates that

Amongst other important tasks, active women's wings within political parties are necessary to act as a check on women parliamentarians who may be overburdened with multiple tasks such as committee work, party responsibilities and gender activism in order that they do not drift away from the feminist agenda.

#### **2.3.4 Female solidarity**

The extent of cooperation and solidarity among groups of people is a major factor which determines success of any organisation. The degree of unity on issues and willingness of members to work together is therefore necessary for any women's organisation in order for them to be able to put forward their agenda. The theory of intersectionality however shows that identities are complex, comprising of multiple intersections of class, gender, race, nationality and sexuality which can cause individuals to act in different ways (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). This means that women's political activities may not be solely determined by their femininity but also social traits which might affect their mobilisation and success.

Basu (1995) for instance, indicated that difference among women in women's groups influences their perceptions and thus can be a divisive tool in women's organisations. For example, citing Tucker and Wolfe (1990), Basu (1995) explains how in the United States, women of color re-established the priorities of the women's movement and managed to sustain this regardless of the challenges they faced in the 1990's. On the other hand, citing Mohanty, Salo (1999:120) argues that "strategic alliance" could be used as a tool towards achieving a common feminist agenda. Baldez (2002:11) also talks about the concept "framing" which allows different women's groups to come together as one group for feminist purposes. In this situation, gender functions as a source of identity.

This has been more visible on the African continent, where women have broken away from socio-economic distinctions and successfully advocated for changes in policies in favour of women (Geiger, 1997; Hassim, 2006; Nzomo, 1995; Schmidt, 2005; Steady, 2006). Nzomo (1995:135–136) talks for instance about "unity in diversity" and emphasises the strategic alliance that existed among women during liberation struggles in Kenya to ensure a critical mass of at least 30% women's representation in parliament. In addition, in Sierra Leone about 50 women's associations organised through "The Women Forum" paved the way for the return to constitutional rule which also led to greater representation of women in government (Steady, 2006:43). Similarly, after Ghana transitioned fully to democracy in 1992, the women's movement began to place demands on the then NDC government and in 1994, a legislature was passed which made "Trokosi" (a ritual servitude of girl children) as well as Female Genital Mutilation illegal. Also in the same year, a criminal statute prohibiting the beating of wives was passed and finally in 2007 the Domestic Violence Bill was passed to

override what was known as the “British common law” which allowed for domestic abuse (Fallon 2008 cited in Fallon and Viterna 2008:679).

In a recent study conducted by Allah-Mensah (2005:14–15) on the historical study of women in politics in Ghana, it was shown that women’s movements such as the Ghana Women’s League (GWL) in 1951 fought for equality in economic and political activities. This resulted in the appointment of a few women into political office as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners. This made Ghana the first African country to introduce a quota system which allowed for the nomination and election of ten women into the national assembly in 1960. The study further showed that the activities of the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women Movement (DWM) created political opportunities for women’s participation in politics which brought about an increase in the representation of women at both local and national level (Allah-Mensah, 2005:17). This finding is supported by Tamale (1999:23) and Prah (2004:30).

Also, women’s associations and movements, trade unions and professional associations, community based organisations and elected representatives from all districts mobilised to create the Women’s Manifesto in 2004. In South Africa, the Women’s National Coalition in 1992 formed a strategic mechanism which allowed for the involvement of women in the negotiation from apartheid to democracy (Hassim, 2002). This brought gender equality in mainstream politics which further increased women’s representation in parliament.

Contrary to the above, there has been increased division among women in formal politics in some African contexts. Tamale’s (1999) study on women’s parliamentary politics in Uganda showed how the lack of strategic alliance among women’s groups lead to less achievement by the women’s movement. Becker (1995:363) similarly emphasised the importance of female solidarity among women’s groups in her study on women in political parties in Namibia. Female solidarity therefore emerges as an important concept in the study of political parties’ women’s wings in Ghana.

## **2.4 Women and Formal Politics**

Formal politics is considered as one of the major avenues for women’s political participation. In today’s world, women are not seen as openly discriminated against in formal politics as almost every country recognises, at least on paper, women’s right to participate in politics.

While this is the case, women's political activism which has equally increased with their recognition of their right to political activities, has not materialised into the representation of women in parliament. This situation reveals the existence and persistence of invisible barriers to women's political representation (Hughes and Paxton, 2007). The public political domain therefore continues to be defined and controlled by men. In this context, the last section of this literature review focuses on the significance of women's political representation and the obstacles that inhibit women's political representation.

#### **2.4.1 Significance of women's political participation and representation**

The Beijing Platform for Action is one of the numerous international recognitions of the significance of women's representation in politics. It has described the equal representation of women in parliament as playing a pivotal role in advancing women. Generally, there are two main arguments supporting the importance of increasing the representation of women in parliament (Lovenduski and Norris, 1989). The first argument is based on the theory of representation which proposes that one can only boast of democracy if all the major divisions of society are represented in equal proportion in parliament. This is because, when women are less represented in decision-making positions, it implies that more than half of the country's citizens are deprived of their contribution to governance. From this perspective, women's representation is seen as an end in itself regardless of whether such representation makes any difference in society or policy making, and this has been termed as descriptive representation (Goetz and Hassim, 2003b). However, while the representation of women in parliament does not guarantee women-centred policies, it is also an undeniable fact that their absence will not allow for such changes. Thus with the descriptive representation argument, increased representation is considered an element of democracy.

The second argument for an increased representation of women in parliament is based on the claim that women's representation in parliament would necessarily make a substantive difference in society and this is considered as the substantive argument (Lovenduski and Norris, 1989). In distinguishing between the two types of arguments, Goetz and Hassim (2003b:5) classify this as a debate between the "feminine presence" position and the "feminist activism" position in politics. With this kind of argument, women's representation is considered as a means to an end (Nzomo, 1995). Thus from this perspective, more women in parliament would produce more gender sensitive policies because women are believed to

have distinct values, attitudes and concerns. This argument is also backed by the critical mass theory which posits that a substantive number of women in parliament is a necessary condition for women in parliament to be able to advance gender sensitive policies (Grey, 2006; Lovenduski, 1997). In line with this, the UNDP Human Development Report (1995) suggested at least a 30% membership of women in parliament as the critical mass necessary to enable women to influence policies in parliament.

It can therefore be argued that “addressing the issues surrounding women’s inclusion in public life is a key to the emergence of an economically sustainable society” (Duke, 2010:83). The substantive representation of women in the Ghanaian parliament is therefore important for socio-economic development.

#### **2.4.2 Factors inhibiting women’s participation in politics**

Several studies have been conducted to highlight the invisible barriers that affect the representation of women in parliament and public institutions. It has been shown from this research that women face political, socio-economic and cultural, factors that inhibit their representation in politics and their representation in parliament (Fallon and Viterna 2008; IPU, 2008; Kunovich and Paxton, 2003; Shvedova, 2005; Tsikata, 2009).

#### **Political factors**

##### ***Masculine model of politics***

Cross national research conducted by Shvedova (2005) on women in politics has shown that the prevalence of the “masculine model” of political life is a major factor that hinders the political participation of women (Shvedova, 2005:35). Political life is organised along male norms and values and thus deters most women from entering into it. Nzomo’s (2003a:2) study in Kenya also confirms that the “electoral playing field has been tilted heavily in favour of men” and this discourages most women from participating in formal politics. Research findings on women and participation in Nigeria have also shown that the masculine nature of politics creates the perception of “politics as a dirty game” and this is a major hurdle for women to participation in politics (Eyinade, 2010:3). The Arowolo (2010) study, also in Nigeria, indicated that the late involvement of women in political party formulation as a

result of the masculine processes it takes denies women from benefitting from foundation membership.

### ***Lack of party support***

Party support plays a crucial role in both enhancing and hindering women's political participation. The global study conducted by the IPU (2008) found the lack of support from political parties a major hindrance to women's participation in politics. Most often women are passed over in favour of their male counterparts by the "big bosses" in the political parties because they do not consider women as fit for politics and do not believe in the capabilities of women as politicians, even though they play vital roles in campaigning for their political parties (Shvedova, 2005:37). Allah-Mensah (2001) argues that the political affiliation of a woman influences her chances of winning an election. In her research in Ghana, she found that women candidates from ruling parties are usually better positioned and well equipped as compared to those with no political affiliation. This was made evident in the 1996 and 2000 general elections where the majority of women who won seats in the elections were from the two main political parties in the country. However, most often women are disfavoured in preference to their male counterpart during party nominations.

Also, Sossou's (2011:6) study on Ghanaian women's perception of political participation attributed the lack of support from political parties for women candidates to "the lack of political experience, male norms and structures that prohibit female participation". A further handicap faced by women candidates is that they are required to pay the same amount of nomination fees, which are mostly very high and this deters many women from contesting seats in their political parties. This has been seen to be a major hindrance to women's representation in parliament (Shvedova, 2005:37). Rai and Sharma's (2000) study in India also indicated that the individual political parties prevent women having a strong collaboration between parties and this also hinders the achievement of gender equality.

### ***Electoral system***

In addition to the lack of support from political parties, research has found that the type of electoral system prevalent in a country plays a major role in the representation of women in that country's parliament (Tsikata, 2009). A global study has shown that proportional representation systems favour the representation of women in parliament as compared to constituency-based election systems (Shvedova, 2005). This is because in a proportional

representation system, elections are conducted strictly on the basis of political parties and not individual tickets. This reduces the financial burden on candidates and also eliminates the tendency of voters' bias against women candidates (IPU, 2008).

### **Socio-economic factors**

Socio-economic factors or conditions related to the position of women in society play a significant role in their representation in parliament and as such have a direct impact on their participation in politics and elected offices (Shvedova, 2005). On a global scale, Shvedova (2005) reveals that poverty and unemployment, also related to a lack of adequate financial resources, are major deterrents for women's participation in politics. Confirming this finding, Sossou (2011:5) contends that "structural financial barriers" impede women's political participation in both rural and urban Ghana.

In Nigeria (Eyinade, 2010) also found poverty to be a major hindrance to women's political participation. The study further attributed this poverty to women having "less access to education, credit information, skills, loans and health care" (Eyinade, 2010:5). Research conducted by Greenberg and Okani (2001) in Mali also shows how lack of information in the form of limited channels of communication and limited content is a factor militating against women's political participation. Therefore an improvement of women's economic status within a country is a necessary factor towards the enhancement of women's political participation (Tremblay, 2007).

### **Cultural factors**

Primary cultural factors that have been identified as hurdles for women's political participation are, perceptions of socially constructed gender roles, education and violence among others (Tremblay, 2007).

### ***Gender roles***

Global analysis reveals that the most important deterrent for women entering into politics is domestic responsibilities (IPU, 2008). This supports the conventional thinking that due to the inability of women to combine family responsibility with political life, given continued gender norms and inequalities in the care burden, they often tend to start their political lives at a later age (IPU, 2008).

This finding is also supported by the works of Greenberg and Okani (2001) who found that the greatest constraint on rural women's participation in decision-making in Mali is the burden of domestic work which leaves them with no time or energy for the consideration of any political action. They have "no time to think about politics, to participate in political processes, for discussion groups or participate in any formal political activities" (Greenberg and Okani, 2001:9). Tsikata (2009) confirms this by arguing that the burden of reproductive activities on women results in women's lack of experience and practice in public life and this contributes to the under-representation of women in politics. She adds that the deficit in formal education and discriminatory practices against women further impacts on the low level of women's representation in parliament.

The stereotypes about women's role and position in society have further been established as one of the significant cultural factors affecting women's representation in politics (Arceneaux, 2001; Campbell et al, 2001; Tsikata, 2009). Thus despite the availability of an adequate supply of qualified female candidates, cultural norms and ideologies function to limit the participation of women in politics (Kunovich and Paxton, 2003).

### ***Education***

Cross national research conducted by IPU (2008) indicated that illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions also contribute to the under-representation of women in politics in general and in parliament in particular. Similarly, Sossou (2011:5) found the "cultural and social educational program that socialise women into roles that remove them from the public decision making" as a hindrance to women's political participation in Ghana. Omtatah (2008 cited in Kamau, 2010:27) supports this finding by indicating that

The lack of belief in the importance of girl child education as well as the socialisation of boys into leadership positions and girls for domestic roles are major factors affecting the political participation of women in Kenya.

### ***Electoral violence against women***

Shvedova (2005:45) contends that "women are very good campaigners, organisers and support mobilizers, but fear sometimes prevents them from contesting elections and from participating in political life". Violence against women who step out of their gender roles to participate in politics has been seen as a significant hurdle for women's political participation. According to Tsikata (2009:18–19), "violence creates a pervasive environment

of insecurity, which builds resistance to women's participation from their family members and well-wishers". This was made evident in the 2006 Ghanaian district assembly elections where a woman was assaulted by her husband because she took a nomination form to contest in one of the districts in the northern part of the country. This created fear and panic among other women; as a result out of the 73 seats in the district, only 8 women contested (GNA, August 8<sup>th</sup> 2006 cited in Tsikata, 2009). Similarly, Nzomo (2003a:2) found that the "culture of electoral violence against women candidates" contributes to the gender inequality in political participation in Kenya. These studies thus confirm the role patriarchy plays in the under-representation of women in parliament.

### ***The role of the media***

It is argued that "the power of the media in building credibility and influence in politics is formidable (Women Direct Service, 2006 cited in Kamau, 2010:28). Yet studies indicate that the media cultivates gender biases and promotes a stereotype about "a woman's place" and does not adequately inform the public about the rights and roles of women in society (Shvedova, 2005:45–46). In confirming this, Omtatah (2008:60) argues that,

The media is biased against women as it fails to embrace gender-neutral language and promotes barriers such as glorification of conflict, intimidation, negative attitudes, and stereotypes against women.

Thus, the media works against women's interests by ignoring issues concerning women such as their achievement and rather focusing on their failures in leadership (Kamau, 2010).

## **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

The review of literature foreshadows a number of key concepts which will give direction to the analysis of the women's wings in the Ghanaian context. The study is located primarily in a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework which will be outlined below together with a number of key concepts specifically related to the position of women in politics. This conceptual framework gives rise to a number of questions which will guide this research and the analysis of the political activities of the women's wings in the three major political parties in Ghana.

### **2.5.1 Postcolonial feminism and its contributions to understanding gender inequality in Ghanaian politics**

Postcolonial feminist literature argues for the analysis of gender inequality in a setting specific context, in particular the way in which gendered power relations have been shaped by the context of colonialism and its aftermath. Postcolonial feminism contends that gender inequality is experienced in different ways in different countries because histories and cultures are not homogenous across nations. As a result of this, in order for us to understand gender inequality we need to consider issues such as colonialism, imperialism, culture, class, ethnicity and how these factors shape and reproduce gender inequality. Such a framework therefore rejects universalism and homogeneity in research and challenges the shortcomings of cultural essentialism (Gouws, 1996).

In explaining gender inequality within the African context for instance, postcolonial feminist thinking argues that colonialism introduced new patterns in the division of labour which brought about negative consequences for women and the loss of certain areas of power they may have had in pre-colonial cultural contexts (Aidoo, 1998; Aina, 1998; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Prah, 2004; Tamale, 1999). The strong patriarchal ideology initiated by colonialism affected mostly women by denying them of some of their customary rights and any autonomy in decision-making. The postcolonial feminist perspective thus recognises the fact that even though certain inequalities and limitations existed in the traditional African societies especially in the allocation of resources, power, rights and duties, colonialism reinforced them and introduced even further inequalities and loss of power for women (Davies, 1986; Guy-Sheftall, 2003).

This framework is therefore useful for the study of women's wings in Ghana, because the histories and cultures of Ghanaian women are not the same as those of other women even within the West African region. A postcolonial feminist perspective therefore provides a framework that enables us to unmask taken-for-granted processes, often invisible to us, that structure life experiences, and ways of being in the world; it also allows us to examine how these processes have been produced. Drawing on this framework, the study analyses the activities of the women's wings in relation to the cultural, economic, historic and political reality of Ghanaian women. This would allow for the examination of how these factors contributed to the gender inequality in the Ghanaian parliament and how it continues to be produced within the Ghanaian context.

### **2.5.2 Women's interests**

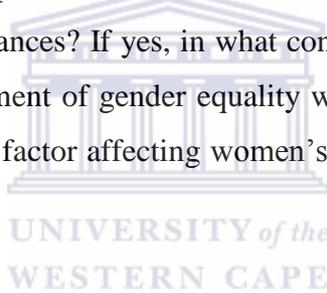
An important concept derived from the literature review is the concept of “women’s interests”. The conceptualisation of “women’s interests” refers to women as a group having shared political interests. Although this notion of unitary women’s interests is contrary to the postcolonial feminist position outlined, this concept has been shown to be important strategically for the development of feminist consciousness and activities, and for promoting women’s representation and effectivity in political contexts. The concept has also been used as a way of assessing the extent to which women are adequately and equitably represented in politics and may impact on gender equality. Having a common interest is important for women’s groups such as political parties’ women’s wings to work together towards the achievement of a feminist agenda such as lobbying for the protection of their rights. The study will therefore identify the type of women’s interests that exists among the women’s wings of the political parties, thus whether they work towards practical or strategic women’s interest. The research will also analyse the mobilisation strategy of the women’s wings in order to identify whether this is based on women’s interest. Thus the thesis will seek to find on what basis the women’s wings mobilises Ghanaian women and how this relates to achieving gender equality in the Ghanaian parliament.

### **2.5.3 Autonomy**

The extent to which women’s movements are able to advance feminist consciousness and address women’s strategic needs has also been shown to be dependent on the level of autonomy that exists within the women’s movements (Jeffery, 1998; Molyneux, 1998; Tripp, 2000). As mentioned in the previous section (see section 2.3.3) Bratton (1994:235) defines autonomy as “the ability to make decisions independently of external forces”. This makes the concept of autonomy pertinent to the study of political parties’ women’s wings in Ghana. However, as it has been shown in the literature review, political party women’s wings are considered as directed women’s wings with relatively less autonomy because of their affiliation with political parties. With respect to this, the study seeks to assess the level of autonomy that exists within the women’s wings, if indeed there is any. How does this affect the capacity of the women’s wings to direct goals and strategies in relation to a feminist agenda? To what extent are the women’s wings aware of this concept and do they consider it as an obstacle to their progress?

#### **2.5.4 Female solidarity**

Due to the fact that postcolonial feminism acknowledges that there are differences among women interests and needs across cultures; it proposes a strategic feminist alliance as essential for women groups (Mohanty, 1997). The concept of “female solidarity” thus focuses on women’s groups working together and forming strategic feminist alliance to lobby for their right or a supportive cause. It is a strategic tool needed to prevent divisions among women’s groups with different identities and interests (Salo, 1999). As emerged from the literature, female solidarity is necessary for women’s groups with different identities because different identities can be divisive. This is an important concept for the analysis of women’s political activities within women’s wings of political parties. The reason for this is that female solidarity is believed to strengthen the women’s wings to have one political voice as a group. For the study of the women’s wings in Ghana, it is therefore important to question whether there exists female solidarity among the political parties’ women’s wings both at the party level and across political parties. Have the women’s wings of the political parties’ formed any strategic feminist alliances? If yes, in what context and over which issues? If no, how does this affect the achievement of gender equality within the Ghanaian parliament? Is female solidarity therefore, a key factor affecting women’s political participation, and if it is, in what ways?



#### **2.6 Conclusion**

The review of literature in the area of women in politics has shown the different routes of women’s political engagement and the role women play in politics. The chapter has particularly highlighted the difficulties women generally face when they decide to take up political careers. The gap identified in the research centres on the lack of research on political parties’ women’s wings within the Ghanaian context even though these women’s wings have been active for the past two decades. The value of this study which aims to explore the women’s wings in the Ghanaian context is evident especially as most of the postcolonial literature on women’s wings is clustered in the Southern and Eastern part of Africa. The Ghanaian context will arguably add a new perspective to the literature as it is located in a totally different region with its own regional differences.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter serves the purpose of presenting the research design and the methodology that was adopted for this study on women's wings of political parties in Ghana and elaborates on the reason for the choice of the design and methods. It also explains the research methods for collecting qualitative data. The chapter further discusses the process of data collection as well as data analysis. The chapter ends by highlighting ethical considerations and the limitations of the research project.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design describes the way a research is conducted. It establishes the "procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what condition the data was collected" (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:22). Thus, as Berg (2001) contends, research design is a road map used in planning when undertaking a research, which aims at visualising and imagining how the research will be carried out and the type of data that would be collected. The purpose of a research design therefore, is to generate empirical data to answer research questions (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). For the purpose of this research, a qualitative feminist research framework was adopted. The following section discusses the feminist research framework and its linkage to qualitative research design. It further elaborates on the reason for the choice of the research plan and how data was generated to answer the research questions.

#### **3.2.1 Feminist research methodologies**

##### ***Gender as a focal point***

There is no singular feminist research methodology; however, feminist research tends to be conducted around certain central themes and criteria that speak to the imperative of researching and taking forward challenges for gender equality and justice. The first central theme of all feminist research is that gender is the focal point of the research and more often than not research questions have been formulated around women's experience or towards benefitting women in the challenges of unequal and patriarchal societies (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006; DeVault, 1999). By focusing on women's experience feminists seek a

methodology that brings to bear women's perspective and the diversity of women's lives which has been marginalised in social science research historically (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006; De Vault, 1999). This creates the medium for research to give a complete and broader perspective of society (Nielsen, 1990).

### ***Power dynamics***

Feminist research also recognises the “role of politics and power in the research process” (DeVault, 1999 cited in Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006:8). It examines the power differentials between the researcher and the researched with the aim of minimising the impact of this phenomenon on the research findings. Scholars such as Banister et al (1994) identified obtaining consent from research participant as one way of minimising the impact of power differentials on research findings. According to Banister et al (1994:66), in order to equalise power, the research participants “should achieve both joint and separate goals through their participation in the research.” Put differently, the participants of the research should also benefit in one way or the other from the research in order to create a collaborative relationship rather than an authoritative relationship. Adopting a feminist research methodology was therefore prudent as this helped to minimise the imbalance of power between researcher and research participants.

### ***Critique of objectivity***

Linked to the dynamics of power relations established above is the critique of objectivity in a feminist research methodology. Based on the “critique of the positivist assumption of neutral and value free research”, a feminist research acknowledges that the choice of a research question is strongly subjective and political and as such no research project can be classified as “objective, neutral and value-free” (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006:8). It argues that what is measured in a research as well as how a research project is reported cannot be devoid of biases (Waller, 2005). In other words, a feminist research acknowledges that a research project cannot avoid some level of subjectivity hence strict objectivity as proposed by quantitative methods is an illusion rather than a reality. An adaptation of a feminist research methodology therefore reinforces the constant questioning of the neutrality of the researcher's assumptions during the research process.

### ***Role of reflexivity***

Another important theme in a feminist research methodology which is also linked to its critique of an objective research is self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity involves “the researcher’s reflections of her or his identity, investments in the research, ideological commitments and role in the research process” (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006:9). Recognising the researcher as a component of the research, self-reflexivity seeks to transcend the subjectivity and cultural context of the researcher in order to achieve accuracy in reporting of results (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). Self-reflexivity is therefore important in minimising harm and levelling the power relation between the researcher and the researched and arguably strengthening the research project and its findings (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006).

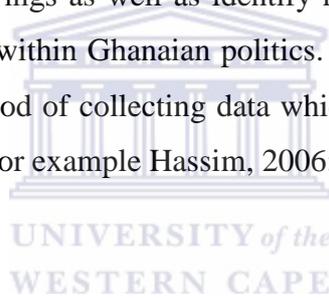
Feminist research methodologies therefore are “methodologies which are grounded in a feminist theoretical perspective” (Waller, 2005:20). The current research project therefore, adopts a feminist research methodology because the central focus of the research is on Ghanaian women’s experience in politics. Locating the research in a feminist methodology is also important as the research adopted a feminist theoretical framework which guided the formulation of the research questions and design. Applying a feminist research methodology also adds a new perspective and understanding to research generated from traditional methodologies.

### **3.2.3 Qualitative research design**

The underlying ideology of a qualitative research design is based on a constructivist assumption that “reality is a multilayer, interactive, shared social experience that is interpreted by individuals” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:314). In other words, individuals ascribe specific meanings to objects and events within specific contexts. Qualitative research design therefore aims at understanding human perceptions and experience rather than explaining or predicting human behaviour (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006). It gives a detailed “verbal description of characteristics, cases, settings, people or systems obtained by interacting with, interviewing and observing the subject” (Thomson, 2007:17). It allows the researcher to evaluate the selected issues of the study in depth and in detail (Patton, 1990).

Just as feminist research methodologies encourage the role of the researcher in the research process, a qualitative research design acknowledges that a researcher cannot be completely “removed from the study context” (Boonzaier and Shefer, 2006:5). Objectivity is therefore not envisaged in this research design. Rather, it encourages self-reflexivity as a means of examining the researcher’s role and impact in the research process. Thus to achieve a feminist research methodology, a qualitative research design was most appropriate for this study as it complements the feminist research methodology. Also, a combination of a qualitative research design and a feminist research methodology creates a platform to establish an understanding of the experience of the political parties’ women’s wings in Ghana in relation to gender equality in the Ghanaian parliament, which is the aim of this study.

As an explorative research, the qualitative research design coupled with a feminist research methodology was most appropriate for the research as it enabled the researcher to document the challenges of the women’s wings as well as identify how the activities of the women’s wings address gender inequality within Ghanaian politics. A qualitative research design was also adopted because it is a method of collecting data which have been proven useful in the field of women and politics (see for example Hassim, 2006; Tamale, 1999; Tripp, 2000).



### **3.3 Research Methods**

Research methods are the sampling and the data collection strategies employed by a researcher in order to answer the research aims and questions. Before outlining the research methods that were employed in this study, it is prudent to establish the research aims and questions that influenced the selection of the research methods.

#### ***Research aims and questions***

The overall aim of the research is to evaluate the role of the women’s wings in enhancing women’s political participation, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological context in which they operate as well as to assess the constraints and challenges to their effective impact in parliament. Specifically, the research is designed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the demographic features of members of the women’s wings in Ghana
- What structures and relationships influence women’s participation and advancement in Ghanaian politics?

- Do women's wings attached to political parties have the capacity to advance the agendas of women and gender equality in Ghana or are they constrained by loyalties to male-dominated parties?
- To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically?
- Do women's wings of different parties perform different roles, and reflect different strategies for enhancing women's public participation?

With the exploratory nature of the research aim and questions outlined above and having decided upon a qualitative feminist research methodology, the face-to face semi-structured interviews coupled with a focus group discussion were the most appropriate research methods for the study. These types of research methods were appropriate because it provide the space for clarification and understanding between the researcher and the participants. As stated by Anderson et al (1990:103), "the oral interview not only allows women to articulate their own experience but also reflects upon the meanings of those experiences to them". The semi-structured interview aids strong rapport and empathy between the researcher and the research participants, allows for flexibility of coverage and at the same time allows for broader discussion to take place enabling the discovery of new ideas within the area under investigation.

Also, a semi-structured interview was appropriate for the study because it enables the respondents to answer questions in their own terms better than fully structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews would therefore allow the political parties' women's wings to discuss their experience and challenges within politics in general and in their political parties in particular without any restrictions. Within this framework, the participants would have the space to give a detailed account of their experiences in their own way which could still be compared to each other according to the themes that come up in these discussions.

### ***Focus groups***

To complement data derived from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion method was employed. A focus group discussion involves the interviewing of sampled groups of people rather than individual persons (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). According to Morgan (1997), a focus group discussion allows for the observation of a large

number of interactions on a topic in a limited time period. This method of data collection was initiated as a means to assess the impact of the activities of the women's wings on its members.

As mentioned by (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:360), "by creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas", a focus group discussion would enable members of the women's wings to express their personal experience and challenges within the women's wings. The focus group discussion was also most appropriate for the study because it would increase the richness of the data collected through the face-to-face semi-structured interview and also increase the validity of the research results. It is also an efficient strategy that allows for the confirmation of the activities of the women's wings within a limited time and space.

### **3.4 The Recruitment Process**

#### ***Target population***

A target population is simply the group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events which is under investigation. The target population for this research comprised the group of all political parties' women's wings in Ghana. This is so because the research is focused on the activities and challenges of political parties' women's wings and their relation to gender equality within the Ghanaian community in general and in parliament in particular.

#### ***Sampling frame***

A sampling frame on the other hand is the group within the target population, from which the researcher selects the respondents for the study. For the purpose of this study, the sampling frame comprised all political parties' women's wings with at least one representation of women in parliament. This means that, even though the focus of the study is political parties' women's wings, not all of them are within the study group. The sample frame for the study therefore comprises all members of the women's wings of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the Convention People's Party (CPP).

#### ***Sampling technique***

Sampling involves the principles and procedure used in identifying, selecting and getting access to relevant units which are needed for the generation of data. A sampling technique is basically the strategies or process employed to select the actual research participants from the

sampling frame. In choosing the research respondents from the sample frame indicated above, a combination of convenience sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling were employed. A convenience sampling was used to select the Greater Accra region out of the ten regions in Ghana as the research site. This was necessary because the Greater Accra region was convenient to the researcher's place of abode. Also and most importantly, the Greater Accra region, as the capital city of Ghana, harbours all the national headquarters of the three political parties and as such it would be easier to get in touch with the national executives of the political parties as compared to the other regions. This also made it possible for data to be collected on the general structure of the political parties which was definitely easier to access in the party headquarters rather than in the regional offices.

Purposive sampling technique is the selection of sample on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities that are theoretically relevant to the study (Silverman, 2004:129). Purposive sampling thus entails the selection of a sample with a particular purpose in mind (O'Leary, 2004). The research utilised purposive sampling technique in choosing women organisers as the main respondents for the study. This approach was utilised because the research was interested in technical information on women's wings operations which may only be available to officials of the women's wings.

Purposive sampling was supplemented by a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is often used when working with populations that are not easily accessible and basically involves building a sample through referrals. Snowball sampling was employed to obtain the contact details of women organisers of the three major political parties in Ghana in this study. This was done because there was no available documentation or database of women organisers of political parties in Ghana which could have been drawn on by the research. This method was also used because the research was dealing with people in politics who may be suspicious when dealing with an unknown person, especially when it has to do with research.

### ***Sample size***

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:203), a sample means "a special subset of a population observed in order to make inferences about the nature of the total population." Cannon et al (1991) highlight the fact that since qualitative research involves face-to-face contact between the researcher and the participants, and because it utilises open-ended rather than close-ended questions, the sample size tends to be small. Out of a total of 177 women

organisers and deputies of the NDC, NPP and CPP women's wings at national, regional and constituency levels, a total of 15 respondents were selected for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This choice of sample size was informed by the fact that "decisions about sample size represent a compromise between the constraints of time and cost and the need for precision" (Bryman, 2008:179). In addition to this, three focus group discussions were held with active members of the women's wings, that is one focus group with each political party. The size of the FGDs also took into consideration the length of time used in organising them and the difficulty in transcribing them.

### **3.5 The Data Collection**

#### ***In-depth interviews***

In all a total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees included three national women organisers, three regional women organisers and nine constituency women organisers from the NDC, NPP and CPP women's wings. That is, from each of the political parties' women's wings, one national, one regional and three constituency women organisers were interviewed. The majority of these interviews took place in the homes or workplace of the participants especially for the constituency women organisers, whilst the interviews for the national and regional women organisers took place within the offices in the party headquarters.

Interviewing this group of individuals required careful preparation and openness during the interview. Since little was known about women's political activities within the women's wings, a balance of power and knowledge was often in favour of the respondent during the interviews because of the respondents' experience in political parties. Although an interview schedule with open-ended questions was used, the research allowed respondents to dictate the contents and terms of the conversation so that other issues which respondents thought were relevant to the study were discussed.

The choice of involving respondents at national, regional and constituency level was relevant because of the different experience of each group at each level and as such distinct information was gathered at each level. This chronological dimension was therefore important to ensure that the sample of leaders of the women's wings included respondents who had experience at all the levels of leadership in the political structure of the women's wings. The national women's organisers were able to provide more comprehensive information on the history of the establishment of the women's wings and what it was meant

to achieve as well as information on the general leadership structure of the political parties. Data on the positions of the women within the political parties on specific committees such as the National Executive Committee and the Regional Executive Committees were also collected from the national women organisers.

The regional women's organisers were also able to provide information that was relevant for their position in the leadership structure of the political parties. Their position was relevant as they deal directly with constituency women organisers who were involved with grassroots mobilisation. They were therefore, able to provide information that supplemented what was obtained from the national women organisers. Their responses also served as a check on the information that was derived from the national women's organisers.

The research also involved more constituency women's organisers because of their role in organising the members of the women's wings in each constituency. They have greater contact with the women within their constituencies and as such are in a better position to know the challenges within each constituency. Since the activities of the women's wings is meant to advance members of the wings, the constituency women organisers are therefore the key instruments in achieving this since they relate better to the members of the women's wings and vice versa. This group of respondents were therefore able to provide relevant information on the regular activities of the women's wings and how the Ghanaian women in each constituency participated in the activities. The information gathered at this level was also relevant to identify whether the women's wings worked towards practical gender interests or strategic interests.

**Table 3.1: Summary of demographics of interviewees**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Political affiliation</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Name of constituencies of interviewees</b>
57	NDC	National women organiser	Ledzokuku
44	CPP	National women organiser	Dome Kwabenya
53	NPP	National women organiser	Klottey Korley
55	NDC	Regional women organiser	Dade Kotopon
57	NPP	Regional women organiser	Okaikwei North
55	CPP	Regional women organiser	Ledzokuku
38	NDC	Constituency women organiser	Okaikwei north
28	NDC	Constituency women organiser	Klottey Korley
48	NDC	Constituency women organiser	Ayawaso West
45	NPP	Constituency women organiser	Ablekuma central
46	NPP	Constituency women organiser	Ayawaso west
48	NPP	Constituency women organiser	Okaikwei south
54	CPP	Constituency women organiser	Ayawaso East
52	CPP	Constituency women organiser	Tema West
55	CPP	Constituency women organiser	Okaikwei north

***Focus group discussions***

Focus group discussions for this study were conducted with members of the three political parties at constituency level. Out of the nine constituencies involved in the in-depth interviews, three were selected for the focus group discussion; that is one focus group discussion with each political party. Each of the focus groups comprised of five to eight active members of the women's wings within the constituency selected. This was relevant to measure the impact of the activities of the women's wings in the communities in which they worked and also to verify the authenticity of the information derived from the constituency

women's organisers. The experiences of the members of the women's wings were also captured in the process.

### ***Validity of qualitative research method***

One major critique of a qualitative feminist research design is how to ensure validity of research findings. Validity refers to “the degree of congruence between the explanations of phenomena and the realities of the world” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:324). In other words, validity of research measures the degree of accuracy between actual data collected and the concepts being measured (Harvey and MacDonald, 1993). The validity of qualitative feminist research design is most often questioned because of the possible occurrence of misinterpretation and misunderstanding between the researcher and the research participants. It raises the question of whether the participants hear what they think they understand or what is actually being asked (or said) by the researcher, and vice versa. In order to minimise this phenomenon and to enhance validity in this research, the study as much as possible adopted a verbatim account as a strategy in reporting research findings. This was made possible through the use of a mechanical recording device which captured the details of all interactions between the researcher and the participants. A participant review was also initiated whereby participants were asked to review the synthesis of the interview for accuracy of representation.

### **3.6 The Data Analysis**

Data processing refers to the method of organising data to enable easy retrieval for the purpose of analysis (Babbie, 2001). Analysis means the categorisation, ordering, codification, manipulating and summarising of data to obtain answers to research questions. Gopaul (2006:91) argues that “the purpose of analysis is to reduce data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the research problem is studied and tested and conclusions drawn”. Working within a qualitative feminist framework, a qualitative data analysis was mostly used in analysing the collected data. However, quantitative analysis in the form of graphs and tables were used in the analysis of the demographic data of the research respondents. Using a thematic analysis method, the qualitative analysis involved the development of themes and patterns from the transcripts of the interviews. This was done through a careful reading of the transcripts in order to become familiar with the text. The text was sorted into broad categories using a gendered analysis and the research questions as a framework to analyse the data. The

themes that prevailed in the data were matched with concepts that were derived from literature. The data was then codified in accordance with the themes developed.

### **3.7 Self-Reflexivity**

Power relations between the researcher and the researched are one of the critical issues in feminist research as outlined in the previous section (see section 3.2.1). The unequal power relation between the (young) researcher and the respondents was a significant issue throughout the research process. Most respondents of the research were mature and experienced women with busy agendas. This made it difficult for the researcher to take total control of the research process. For instance, one regional women's organiser decided not to talk about some of the topics raised in the interview process and the researcher was unable to persuade her to do so since it was difficult getting her to agree to the interview in the first place. The researcher was also unable to ask her many questions as she did not want to be recorded. Despite this constraint she was very instrumental to the research as she gave valuable information during the interview process. An unequal power relationship was also experienced when one respondent totally took charge of the research process by collecting the semi-structured interview guide and starting to answer the questions without being asked by the researcher. This made it difficult for the researcher to ask some follow-up questions as the respondent did not give room for such discussion to take place.

### **3.8 Ethical Statement**

The study was conducted after the proposal was submitted and approved by the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Social Development, the Arts Faculty Postgraduate Board of Studies and the Senate level committees. The research adhered strictly to all ethical research standards and legal obligations of the University of the Western Cape. The researcher obtained a letter from her supervisor that granted the researcher permission to conduct interviews with the identified respondents from the three political parties in Ghana. An introductory letter addressed to the leadership of the political parties requesting permission to conduct this research with women's organisers of their parties was also presented. Permission was granted by the parties to conduct interviews with women's organisers who were willing to participate in the study. Permission was also obtained from the various interviewees before interviews were conducted and consent forms were signed. It was the responsibility of the researcher to adhere to the principles of ethical good practices in social science research such as voluntary participation, not doing harm to the participants, respecting confidentiality,

avoiding accepting favours that might violate research principles and avoiding deceiving participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:520–525).

During the data-collection process and report writing, the researcher ensured that the identities and interests of all respondent were protected by keeping to the norms of confidentiality. Based on these norms, participants were assured that their names would not be used in the research. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants beforehand and the researcher sought their permission to use information gathered from them in writing. The researcher also explained to participants that the information obtained was purely for academic purposes and was a requirement for the completion of a master's degree and nothing else; no form of coercion was used against respondents. The researcher ensured that their participation was voluntary. The researcher also assured participants that in the course of the interviews, those who did not feel comfortable with the information could withdraw. The researcher also behaved in a respectful manner to all participants/respondents throughout the research and finally thanked them for accepting being part of the research. The researcher also acknowledged all the sources of data and quotations used in the report.

### **3.9 Limitation of the Study**

Obtaining a representative sample of women organisers of the political parties' women's wings was a major challenge for the research. These high profile women are either hard to contact, very busy or simply not available. Most appointments were rescheduled severally and others did not take place due to interviewees' time constraints. Part of this challenge was also linked to the timing of the research. As the research was conducted in an election year, most of the women's organisers were busy with other activities such as attending workshops and conferences, and participating in various primaries<sup>2</sup> which were held within the parties to select candidates for the constituencies for the general elections in December 2012. This made it very difficult to meet up with them for interviews. Despite this limitation, the researcher was able to collect data by doing several follow-ups.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the platform where political parties elect candidates to run for elections on the ticket of the party in the various constituencies across the country. That is who stands as an MP in a constituency for the political party in general elections is decided in the primaries

Another problem encountered had to do with some respondents not wanting to be recorded. These respondents were not comfortable with their voices being recorded as they feared these recordings could be used against them even though they had been assured that the recorded data was just for academic research and that the recordings would be deleted after they had been transcribed. This meant writing down the entire interview in a note book, which was not very convenient as the interview was explorative in nature and needed detailed information. In addition, as the respondents had limited time, it meant writing this interview in coded forms to be re-transcribed later. This may have resulted in vital information relevant for the research being overlooked.

Conducting focused group discussion was also complicated by the women's busy schedules. This resulted in much rescheduling of focus groups; one of the focus group discussions had to be scheduled at an odd hour in order to get the interview done.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the research design and methodology used in this study. A qualitative feminist research methodology and design was utilised for this research to gather information from respondents. The chapter overviewed all details of the research procedure and the data analysis process, including issues of self-reflexivity and an elaboration on the limitations of the research. Data gathered points to the fact that the representation of women in formal politics is low. The next chapter is the analysis chapter which deals with the way in which the data speaks to the research questions, and aims of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN'S WINGS AND GENDER EQUALITY: SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM GHANA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research. The central objective of the thesis was to evaluate the role of the women's wings in enhancing women's political participation, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological context in which they operate as well as to assess the constraints and challenges to their effective impact in parliament. The specific research questions that the analysis is structured towards are: (1) What are the demographic features of members of the Women's wings in Ghana? (2) What structures and relationships influence women's participation and advancement in Ghanaian politics? (3) Do women's wings attached to political parties have the scope to advance the agendas of women and gender equality in Ghana or are they constrained by loyalties to male-dominated parties? (4) To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically? (5) Do women's wings of different parties perform different roles, and reflect different strategies for enhancing women's public participation?

The data are presented in qualitative form in a narrative and textual manner, although where appropriate certain quantitative data are also presented. The results of the analysis are based on both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as well reports and documents about the women's wings collected during fieldwork.

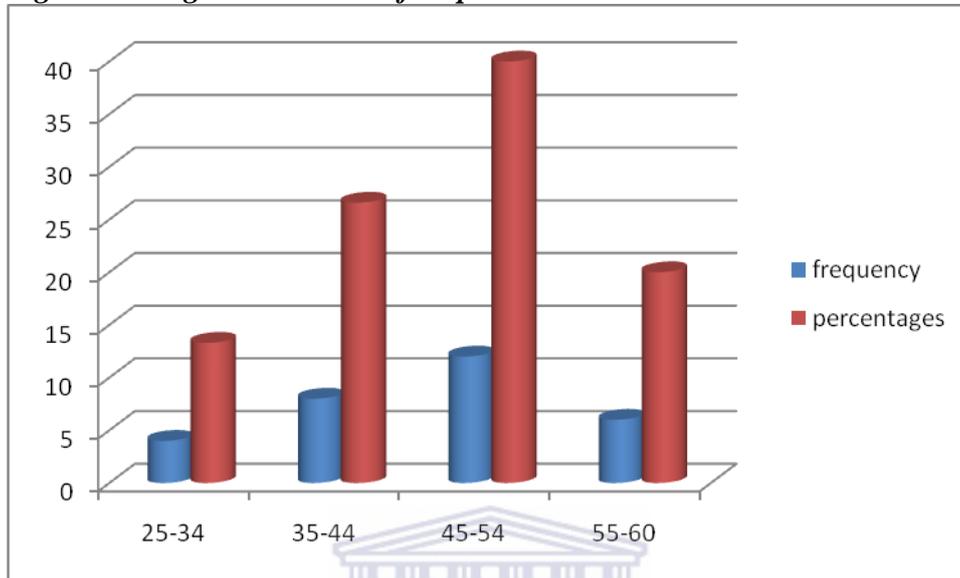
### **4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

#### **4.2.1 Age of respondents**

As shown in Figure 4.1 below, the majority of the respondents in this study fall within the age range 35–44 and 45–54. These age groups constitute 26.6% and 40% of the respondents respectively, while 20% fall within the age group 55–60. A minority (13.3%) of the respondents fall within the age group 25–35. The high percentage of the respondents within the age group of 45–54 could arguably be attributed to the fact that most women retire from their domestic duties as mothers at this age and therefore are able to take up political duties.

This supports research findings that concludes that due to domestic responsibilities women are mostly seen late in politics (IPU, 2008). This also explains why the minority of the respondents fall within the age of 25–35.

**Figure 4.1: Age distribution of respondent**

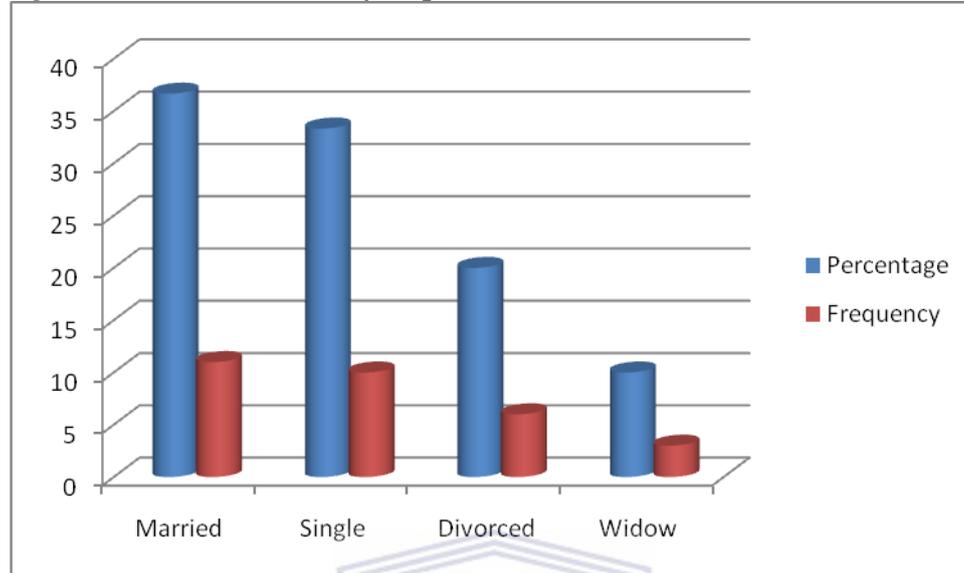


Source: Author's Field Work, 2012

#### **4.2.2 Marital status of respondent**

As depicted in Figure 4.2 below, the majority of the respondents (36.67%) are married. This is to be expected as majority of the respondents fall within the ages of 35 to 54. However a significant number of the respondents (33.33%) are single. This seems to reinforce the perception that women who engage actively in politics either end up single or get married later in their life because society thinks they are not good enough to be wives (Tamale, 1999). Also a significant number of the respondents (20%) were divorced; however none of the respondents attributed the divorce to their involvement in politics. Nonetheless, all the divorcees only joined politics after their divorce and this arguably once again supports the notion of responsibilities to husbands and family as a hindrance to women's participation in politics. A minority (10%) of the respondents were widowed.

**Figure 4.2: Marital status of respondents**

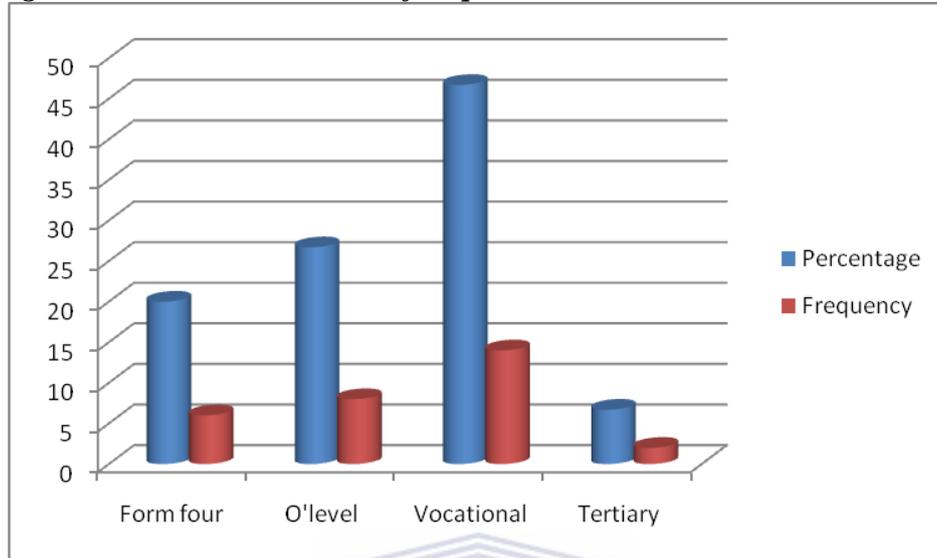


Source: Author's Field Work, 2012

#### **4.2.2 Education and employment status level of respondents**

Figure 4.3 below shows that the majority (46.7%) of the research respondents reported a vocational training as their highest level of education. Of those with only school-level education, 26.7% of the respondents had attained O-Levels, while 20% had completed Form Four. A minority of 6.7% had a tertiary education. It can therefore be deduced that most of the respondents have no tertiary education. This is to be expected as most of the respondents fall within the age group 35 to 55 and as such did not have equal opportunity in education as girl child education was still new to Ghanaian culture and as such not all households had endorsed it. Also, the types of education of the respondents depict how traditional gender roles are perpetuated within the Ghanaian community as most of the respondents pursued courses outside the sciences. This also goes to support the structural inequalities that prevail in the Ghanaian community.

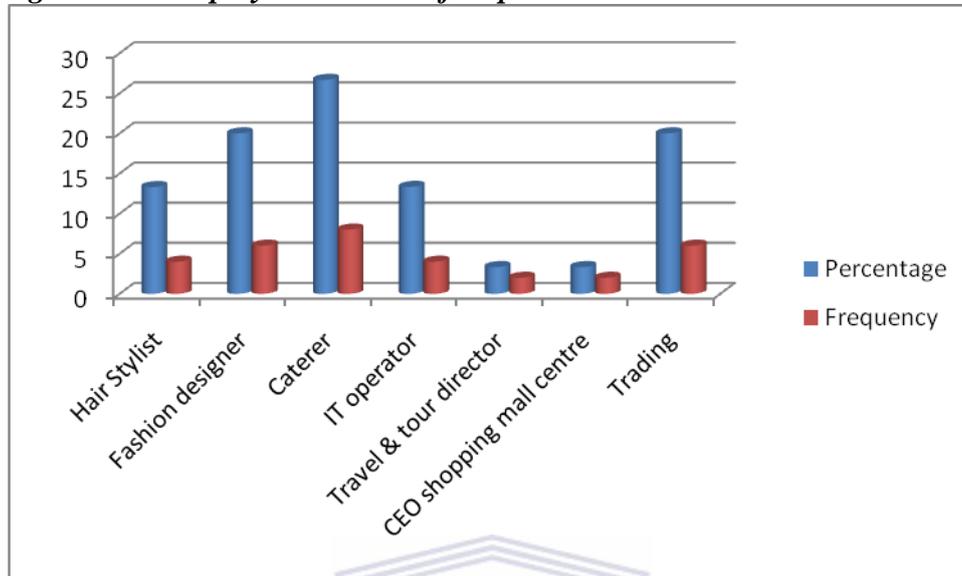
**Figure 4.3: Educational level of respondents**



Source: Author's Field work, 2012

In terms of the employment status of respondents, all of the respondents were involved in the informal sector and were self-employed. The majority (60%) of the respondents were involved in vocational occupation which is to be expected as this corresponds with their level of education. These vocations include hairdressing (13.3%), fashion designing (20%) and catering (26.67%). The rest of the respondents were engaged in occupations such as operating an IT shop (13.33), a travel and tour agency (3.33%) and CEO of a shopping centre (3.33%). The remaining 20% of the respondents were engaged in buying and selling on a retail and wholesale basis. It is also worth mentioning that the respondents involved in an IT business had some form of tertiary training. Therefore, it could be argued that the type of education that females take is crucial for addressing strategic gender inequality in a country. The various occupations of the respondents are depicted in the Figure 4.4 below.

**Figure 4.4: Employment status of respondents**

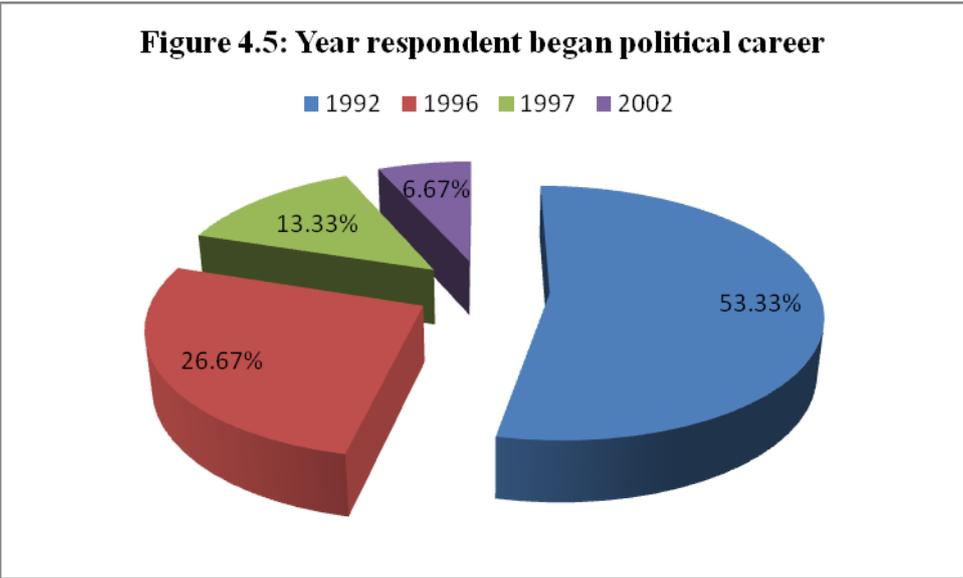


Source: Author's Field Work, 2012

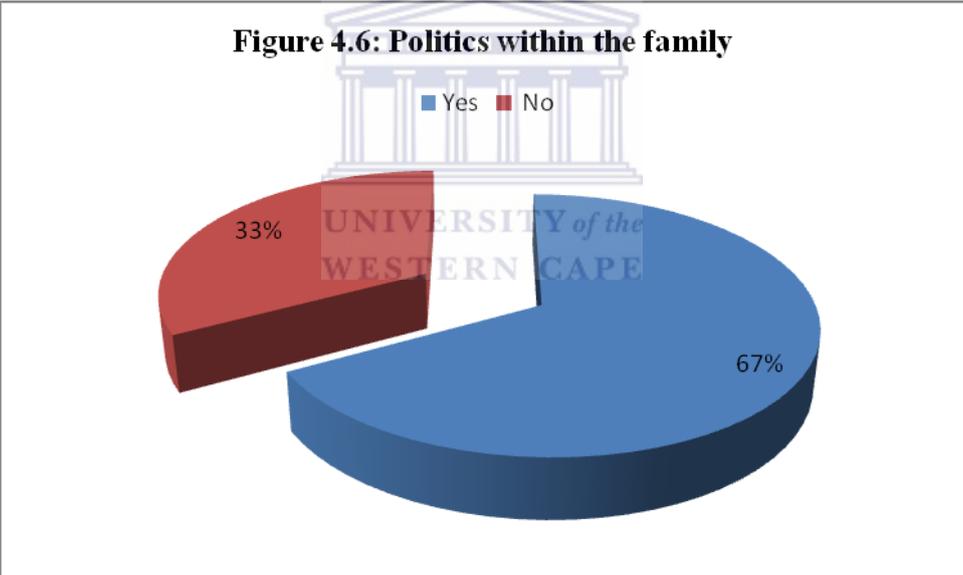
### **4.2.3 Political background of respondents**

#### **Year respondents began their political career**

Figure 4.5 below indicates that the majority of respondents began their political careers in the 1990s: 53.3%, in the year 1992; 26.67% in 1996; and 13.3% in 1997. A minority representing 6.7% of the respondents engaged in politics later, in the year 2002. It is evident from the above that not only did more than half of the respondents begin their political career in 1992, but also this was the earliest year in which respondents began their political activism. Arguably, this could be attributed to the several military regimes experienced in the country which created an environment not conducive for women to participate in politics and thus excluded most women from political activities until 1992 when the country regained democracy (Prah, 2004). It is therefore to be expected that most women in the political parties' women's wings would have begun their political careers in or after 1992.



Source: Author’s Field work, 2012



Source: Author’s Field work, 2012

**Politics within the family**

As is evident from Figure 4.6 above, the majority (67%) of the respondents attributed their aspirations in politics to family background, while a minority representing 33% of the respondents did not have any family history of political activity. What was evident in the responses of members who had some political experience in their families was that most of these family members were male. A majority representing 80% of the respondents who said that politics was a “family affair” mentioned their grandfather or father as the person who ushered them into politics. Only 20% mentioned their grandmothers or mothers as their

inspiration to become involved in politics. This shows the structural inequalities in the political lives of men and women in pre-colonial and early postcolonial Ghana. This also shows that the family background of a woman is a contributing factor to her ability to engage in active participation in politics. Below are some of the responses from respondents:

Yes politics runs in the family, my father was a politician, even though he was an illiterate by then he still supported Nkrumah during his campaign for independence and currently as am speaking with you my immediate brother is the regional organiser in upper east for CPP as well, another one is always a pooling agent so most of my family members are very active in politics and in the same CPP<sup>3</sup>

No it my personal aspirations, I like politics that is why I joined it, it makes me move around so that I don't get bored, when am alone doing nothing I don't like it but with politics I will always get something to do, like talking to people, encouraging them, advising the youth<sup>4</sup>

### **4.3 Structures and Relationships Influencing Women's Participation and Advancement in Ghanaian Politics**

This section analyses the reported factors that according to participants, impact on women's political participation and representation in Ghana based on the experience of women in politics. It draws from the experiences and issues raised by the women interviewed in the research. The responses have been categorised into political, socio-cultural and the ideologies of gender factors.

#### **4.3.1 Political factors**

According to the majority of the respondents, political obstacles play a major role in deterring most women from engaging in politics. Prominent among these political obstacles is the way politics is seen as a male vocation.

#### ***The 'masculine model' of politics***

Most of the respondents were of the view that men dominate the political parties making it difficult for women to operate smoothly in the political party. Also, political life is organised to suit the male lifestyle making it difficult for women to compete fairly with men in politics. For instance the idea of politics as a competition which results in confrontations is not the common norm of women who believe in collaboration and consensus. This therefore deters

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ms Haj; [to ensure anonymity, all interviewee names that follow in the report are pseudonyms.] one of the National women's organisers

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ms Haw; a Regional women's organiser

most women from engaging in politics. In expressing this concern, one of the constituency women's organisers mentioned that most of the members in her constituency consider politics as "too masculine" and involving too much violence; as such they are not motivated to be involved in politics.

In relation to this model of masculine politics, respondents raised the point that parliament is structured to suit men as there are no support mechanisms for working mothers or women MPs. This means either you choose politics and forget about being a mother or remain a mother and forget your political aspirations. These concerns are highlighted below in the following direct quotes of some of the respondents.

The problems is that most of the members for instance in my constituency consider politics to be a male affair because it does not provide the space for you to be a mother to your children, you are always on the move and you even forget about your home so for some of them who want to be mothers they don't want to be involved in politics<sup>5</sup>

The nature of party politics in Ghana is too rough for a woman brought up to be respectful and gentle, to actively participate so most women will rather not get involved in politics<sup>6</sup>

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### ***Lack of party support***

The lack of party support was also identified as a political obstacle to women's representation in parliament. Women play a major role especially in mobilising and campaigning for the party but they rarely get support from these parties. During election periods for instance women aspirants do not get any financial support from their parties to support their campaigns even though the political parties have resources for conducting elections. Yet most often the women are expected to pay the same nomination fees as their male counterparts. These nomination fees, which most often are very huge sums of money, were unaffordable for most of the women aspirants because of their socio-economic status in the country. Structurally women form the majority of low income earners in the country (GSS, 2012). This was raised as a major factor that affects the supply of women for electoral positions within the Ghanaian context. Ms Kat, a constituency women's organiser, expressed this concern in the following statement:

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Ms Zaf ; a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ms Mer; a Regional women's organiser

For those who are still single most of them are showing interest to contest in politics but the problem for most of them is money, money is a major problem for most of the women in my constituency who wants to stand for elections, politics today is all about money and it seems as if some people have an upper hand in politics because they have the money which they use to influence the choice of the voters. Some can even use the money to threaten others to back off, so it is just a few voters who will vote based on the ideologies of a candidate<sup>7</sup>

### ***Discriminatory attitudes of men***

Furthermore, the discriminatory attitudes of men in general and specifically within political parties were considered as a limiting factor to women's full participation and representation in politics. Respondents mentioned the fact that men within their political parties continue to "relegate them to the background". As such they face some problems trying to climb to the top within their political parties. They also pointed to the fact that this discrimination was not structural, as structurally they have equal rights within the political parties. This finding validates Caul's (2001) assertion that the discrimination against women in political parties does not come from formal structures of the party as most of them have adopted women's branches, but that there are invisible barriers that undermine their progress within the political parties. The following was a response from one of the research participants:

Men like discouraging us and telling us all sort of things like you think you can be like us, do it and let us see and stuff like that, they try to discourage you and control you, they discriminate against us saying you are a woman you don't have to do that and that<sup>8</sup>

### **4.3.2 Socio-economic and cultural factors**

The participants identified negative cultural and traditional practices that prohibit women from involving in politics, lack of education, and structural financial barriers as major obstacles that hinders their political advancement in Ghanaian politics.

#### ***Cultural norms and practices***

When discussing cultural norms and practices, participants identified the allocation of primary responsibilities to women as a major hindrance to their political advancement. Participants expressed the view that obligations to husbands, children and families are factors that hinder their complete engagement in political activities. According to some of the

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Ms Cyn; a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Ms Mer; a Constituency women's organiser

respondents, husbands are sometimes not supportive of women's political activities and will restrict their activities in the public domain. According to these respondents, this creates a situation of "no peace" in the family as they continue to have issues with their husbands. This according to the respondents also discourages most of the women from contesting for elections. The following statements are some of the views expressed:

Sometimes when we go for meetings by the time we get to our various homes it is around 9 to 10 in the evening, some husbands won't understand, they want you to stay in the house cook their food and stay with the children and do all the house chores because most at times when both parents are busy and do not pay attention to the kids the kids became bad kids so the men will always want the mother to be more vigilant on their children and not be involved in too many extracurricular activities to avoid the kid from spoiling<sup>9</sup>

There are some negative socio-cultural practices and beliefs which constitutes barriers that militate against women aspiring to enter into politics. The patriarchal nature of Ghanaian societies relegates women into the background of community life<sup>10</sup>

### ***Financial barriers***

When talking about the financial barriers the participants mentioned that being active in politics in Ghana is very expensive and this is a major challenge for most women in politics. The expenses can be felt in the huge campaign that is needed to win an election in Ghana. One of the respondents attributed the financial constraints to the low income level of most Ghanaian women and mentioned that women are always discriminated against when looking for job opportunities and are sometimes paid less for the same job when compared to their male counterparts. She expressed this concern in the following quote: "when it comes to even job offering they consider the men more than the women so when it comes to everything the women are behind"<sup>11</sup>.

Another respondent, who was a national women's organiser of one of the political parties, mentioned that most women contesting in the primaries within her party for the December 2012 elections are faced with this problem. She mentioned that a common fear of the women contesting in the primaries was that the men they were opposing would eventually win

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Ms Sof; a Constituency woman organiser

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Ms Zaj, a Regional women's organiser

<sup>11</sup> Ms Ant in the focus group discussion

because they had the upper hand in terms of the money. She expressed this in the following sentences:

You know I met two women yesterday, one is contesting in the primaries in the Hohoe north consistency and the other is contesting in Afram north consistency, all they were asking was what we [the women's wings] are doing in support of their campaign, they were saying "what are you doing for the women, you have to push for us, you know last minute the men are just throwing the money everywhere" so money is a major constraint for us women in politics<sup>12</sup>

### 4.3.3 The Ideologies of gender

Gendered ideologies were identified by respondents as pertinent to the political advancement of women in Ghanaian politics. The majority of respondents felt that most people in Ghana still believe that politics should be reserved for men; as such women who enter politics are faced with a lot of challenges. Prominent among these are insults and the use of abusive words when referring to women in politics. These factors, according to most of the respondents, deter women from politics. The following concerns were expressed by some of the respondents:

As a woman wherever you are because you mingle with men people start calling you prostitute, when a woman is brave, she is labelled as a witch and this is not healthy for political growth<sup>13</sup>

What discourages most of the members to think of contesting for elections in my constituency is the intimidation by fellow women and men disrespecting you saying all sort of things about you, saying all sort of fallacious stories about you this discourages most of the members<sup>14</sup>

In addition, criticism against women who are appointed to ministerial positions was considered by some respondents as a contributing factor affecting women's political advancement in Ghana. According to respondents, when a woman is appointed into a ministerial or top political position, she is labelled in derogatory ways. She is never accepted by the people as good enough for the job and all sort of things are said about her.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Ms Mag; a National women's organiser

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ms Ha;, Regional women's organiser

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ms Kat; Regional women's organiser

Respondents felt that this affects the political advancement of women in the country. One of the respondents expressed this concern in the following sentences:

Immediately you are employed as a chief executive somewhere then people begin to ask questions such as, how can they appoint this woman, she doesn't deserve to be there, they would not even give her the opportunity to exhibit what she has, to exhibit the kind of qualities that she has, yet they have already prejudge her, as for me I will tell such person not to listen to such negative criticism because if you do it will discourage you from working, let them go ahead and criticise you, just take those criticism as normal in our society and focus on what you are doing and why you think you deserve to be there and prove to the world that this is what you have, make good use of the special gift God has given you and show them that all the negative things that they are saying about you will not prevent you from doing your job<sup>15</sup>

Emerging from the responses of the participants is the fact that women need to justify their inclusion whenever they are appointed into positions of power. They are expected to go beyond the limit to prove they are fit for the job. This arguably could affect the performance of women in position as they would be under undue pressure to get things right and this could make them lose focus and affect their success or progress.

#### **4.4 The Capacity of Political Parties' Women's Wings to Advance Women's Agenda and Gender Equality in Ghanaian Politics**

Having identified the problems that affect women's political participation and advancement in Ghana above, this section aims to unpack some perspectives on the effectiveness of women's wings in the political parties, including whether they are perceived to be able to solve these problems or whether they are constrained by loyalties to the male-dominated parties in which they belong. The analysis is guided by key concepts in the literature which have been identified as major elements necessary for the advancement of gender equality by any feminist group or organisation. These elements include the positions of women in the political parties, women's interests, female solidarity and autonomy. The following subsections discuss these concepts in the context of the Ghanaian political parties' women's wings in order to identify their capacity to advance gender equality in Ghanaian politics.

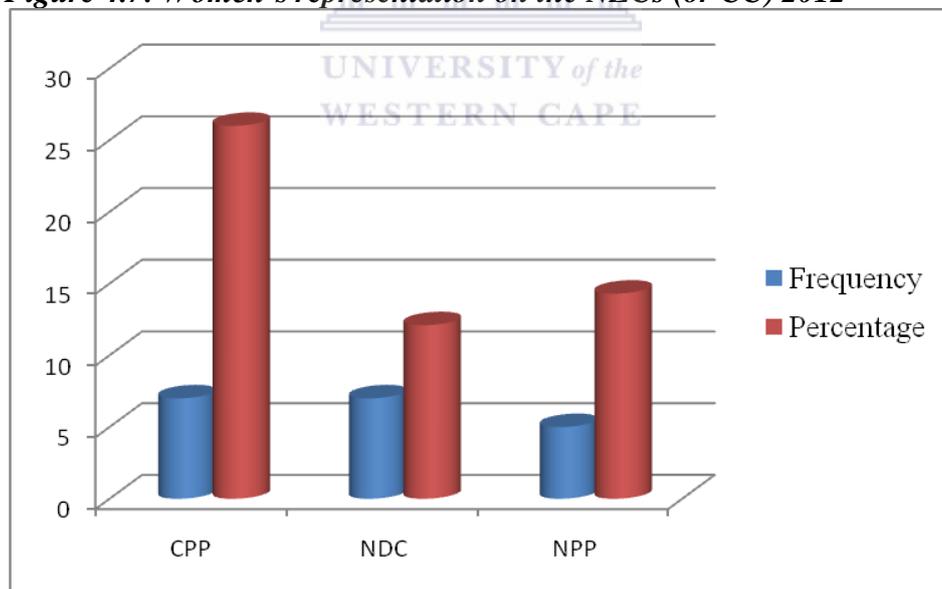
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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ms Agn; National women's organiser

#### 4.4.1 Women's positions within the political parties

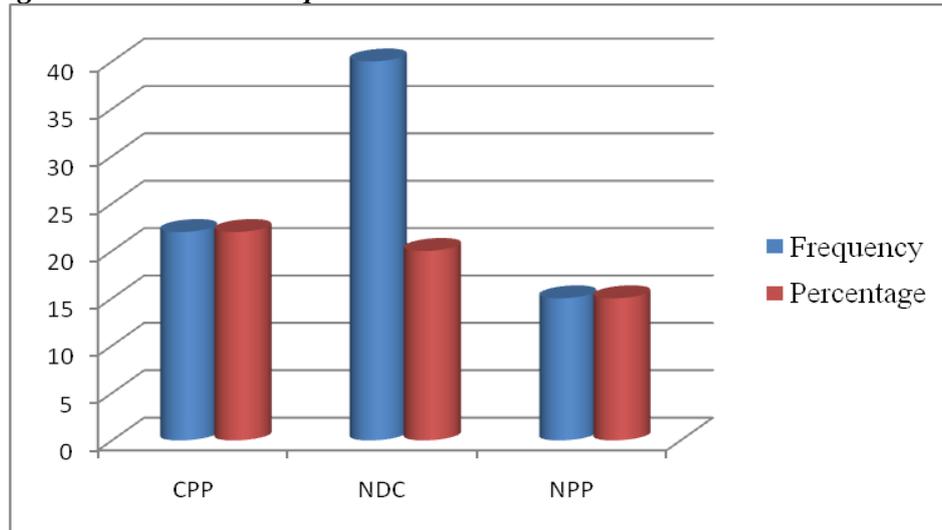
Gender equality within the political party is a major step towards advancing women's political participation in the Ghanaian community. That is, the position of women in the leadership structure of the political parties is crucial in determining their influence within the political party and in the Ghanaian community at large. This section therefore, establishes the representation of women within the NPP, NDC and the CPP as a background to determining whether they have the capacity to advance gender equality within the Ghanaian community. This is done based on the representation of women on the National Executive Committees (NECs), or Central Committee (CC) in the case of the CPP, and the Regional Executive Committees (RECs). This criterion is used because the NECs (or CC) and the RECs are the important decision-making bodies based on their functions at national and regional levels within the political parties. The figures below show the representation of women on these two committees within the NDC, NPP and CPP.

*Figure 4.7: Women's representation on the NECs (or CC) 2012*



Source: Author's Field Work, 2012

**Figure 4.8: Women's representation on the RECs 2012**



Source: Author's Field Work, 2012

As depicted in Figures 4.7 and 4.8 above, the representation of women on both the NECs (or CC) and the RECs is less than 30% in all of the political parties. The low representation of women on the NECs (or CC) (average of 17.5%) arguably undermines women's overall control over important decisions such as who are appointed into ministerial positions which is key to the political advancement of women in the Ghanaian community. This is because the NECs (or CC) is responsible for "approving the names of candidates submitted for election to parliament". The committee also "scrutinises and recommends candidates for appointment as ministers, deputy ministers, chairperson, members and managing directors of Board of Public Corporations, Ambassadors, etc. if the party holds national executive power" (CPP Constitution, 2003:16). Because of their relatively low representation, women would be less likely to influence the choices of the committee in favour of women candidates, which could have a negative effect on the number of women nominated both for elections and for political appointments.

Also the low representation of women on the NECs (or CC) affects their influence on raising funds to support the activities of the women's wings because the NECs (or CC) also has the responsibility to authorise fund-raising activities for any purpose and can revoke any fund-raising decision taken by any lower organ of the party on reasonable grounds (CPP Constitution, 2003: NPP Constitution, 1992). The implication of this for the women's wings is that they would have to rely on their male counterparts to support their missions if they are to be successful. However, it is also questionable whether male leaders would support

decisions which may threaten their own position within the political party. Therefore this lack of women's representation may limit the capacity of the women's wings in advocating for gender equality within the Ghanaian community.

The low representation of women on the RECs also limits the capacity of the Women's wings to advance gender equality within the Ghanaian community. This is because it limits the influence of women on the decisions that are taken within the region which also affects decisions in the various constituencies. As outlined in the various Constitutions of the political parties, the RECs is responsible for "coordinating the operations and activities of the party in the Region, for ensuring that party policies and programmes are implemented in the region, for fostering cooperation between the various constituency organisations of the party within the region and for drawing up suitable regional programmes of activities for this purpose" (CPP Constitution, 2003:12-13; NPP Constitution, 1992:14).

This implies that decisions concerning women will be taken by men which would not necessarily reflect the needs of the women in that region. Also, since all activities of the constituencies need approval from the RECs, women organisers in the constituencies may only be taking orders, and may not be able to implement what is beneficial to the women in the constituencies. This was also confirmed by respondents when they established that the activities of the women's wings are controlled by the regional offices.

#### **4.4.2 Autonomy of women's wings**

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the extent to which women's organisations can advance gender equality is dependent on the level of autonomy that exists within their organisation. As defined by Tripp (2000:4), autonomy is the "ability/capacity of non-state collectives to take decisions relatively independent of the state, communal groups and foreign donors, and other pressure groups."

With regard to decision-making among the political parties' women's wings, respondents reported that they are allowed by the political parties to take decisions regarding the activities of the women's wings. In explaining this issue one of the respondents stated that:

The women's wing as it stands now is an autonomous body we engage women in various programmes, we go to the market women we ask them of their needs, not only market women we also go to all the 27 constituencies, we have monthly meetings we go round visiting the women around, finding out of their problems,.....so our programmes are not influenced by anybody, normally we draw a programme and with the budget attached to it we send it to the regional chairman and they will give us the quota we need for the programme<sup>16</sup>

Emerging from the above response, it can be seen that the women's wings plan their own programmes; however, they still need approval from the political party. This is clearly seen from the way activities are coordinated in the women's wings in Ghana. All activities of the women's wings are coordinated from the top management of the political parties; this applies even to the lowest positions within the women's wings themselves. This oversight continues down from the national executives of the political parties, to the national women organisers and even to the constituencies and branch leaders. This means that all the activities of the women's wings must be approved by the highest authority within the political parties, namely the NECs (or CC) in each political party. Also respondents mentioned that more often than not, activities are generated within the headquarters of the parties and the constituency organisers have to follow them and are not allowed to control their own agendas of activity. The following comment from one respondent explains this situation:

In the political party, the youth wings are there so we work with the youth wing, we work with the women's affair committee, the communication committee because the communication committee they feed us with exactly what the party wants us to talk about, we don't just go and start talking, you see everything that we say should be the party's position not our personal position, we work in conjunction with the Central Committee because you know we cannot do anything that will expose the party to public ridicule so whatever we are doing is from the top<sup>17</sup>

Drawing on this response, one can argue that if the activities of the women's wings threaten the positions of men in the political party then their implementation may not be accepted or will be delayed by the Committee as the majority of these Committees are made up of men (as illustrated in section 4.4.1 above). The following comment further illustrates the limited autonomy among the women's wings in Ghana:

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Ms Viv; a Regional women's organiser

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ms Haj; a National women's organiser

We [regional women organisers] call the constituency women organisers and their deputies for meetings and teach them how to deal with their women organisers under them so if they face difficulties they come to us and we also forward it to our big men<sup>18</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Female solidarity**

The extent of cooperation and solidarity among groups of women, given their marginalised status, affects their ability to advance women's agenda and gender equality (Shvedova, 2005). This makes the concept of female solidarity an important factor in determining the capacity of the political parties' women's wings in Ghana, especially because they form the minority in high positions within the various political parties. The analysis of female solidarity is discussed on three levels of strategic alliance: 1) within the women's wings within the political party; 2) among all three political parties' women's wings in Ghana; and 3) between other women's organisations in and outside Ghana.

On the issue of solidarity within the women's wings of a political party, participants reported that there is good collaboration among members. They suggest that most of the members of the women's wings in Ghana work together for the collective aim of the wing and the party and do not undermine each other. This is how one of the respondents put it when asked about the level of cooperation among members:

Once we have structures I can say 80 to 85% of the women are respecting it and so I can say that it is not making things too difficult, the branch organiser knows who to report to, the regional knows who she is supposed to report to and the national organiser knows who she is supposed to report to, so when the issue reaches the top which is us here at the national level then we channel it to the general secretary or the chairman, so once the structures are there and it is not us giving the orders, and the constitution is also there to support it, I can say there is order among the women's wings but you know as a human institution we [women's wings] face some lapses somewhere but it is not too much the good working relationship is there so anytime there is little misunderstanding we go out there and make sure we put things in place so we don't have that much of a difficulty<sup>19</sup>

The discussion of the issue of solidarity among respondents also highlighted some form of solidarity among the political parties' women's wings in Ghana. Participants spoke about their collaboration with each other's wings in activities, such as attending workshops

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Ms Viv, a Regional women's organiser

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Ms Mag, a National women's organiser

organised by other women's organisations and NGOs devoted to the agenda of women, to deliberate on the issues affecting women and the way forward in solving the problem of gender inequality within their various political parties and in the country as a whole. These workshops, which bring together all the major political parties' women's wings, facilitate a platform for female solidarity among them. In explaining this, one regional women's organiser articulates the solidarity achieved as follows:

During the workshops all the political parties release the same number of women from the various women's wings; we share ideas, experiences..... it a very educative programme, it is a good platform for women, it involves older people in politics and those in politics currently, we share ideas, and during this workshop, there is no NPP, or NDC, we are all women and we talk about women, how to solve women's problem, women's needs, what should be made a law and legalise....., so during this meetings all we talk about is women, there is no misunderstanding, no quarrel<sup>20</sup>

This was however, the only platform that the respondents identified as a time that they (as members of different political party women's wings) collaborated together. Apart from these workshops, the respondents admitted they do not have any other means of collaborating with other political parties' women's wings. When asked about the cooperation among political parties this was what one of the respondents said:

There is little or no cooperation with other political parties' women's wing, the only time we meet is when we have international women conferences that is when we discuss issues pertaining to women and how to move forward but apart from that we don't have any activities or work together in any way<sup>21</sup>

Most of the interviewees reported that there was collaboration with other women's organisations in civil society. Prominent among these organisations were NGOs, church organisations and other women's organisations such as the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), Abantu for development, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Women's World Bank and Micro-finance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC). The collaboration among these organisations was mostly in the form of getting support from them to assist members of the women's wings. This included financial support such as the provision of loans to members, training of members and supporting women contesting for elections within the political parties. This is how some of the respondents expressed the collaboration and support from other women's organisations:

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Ms Kat; a Regional women's organiser

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ms Jes; a Constituency women's organiser

We do work with some private women organisations, we help them and they also sometimes help us by supporting the activities of the women's wing in whatever way possible.....sometimes they [the women's organisations] will tell you to bring your budget, if you want to start your women's group for instance they would like to come and see the women to make sure you are really organising the women and not just doing something else before they give you any support they have, and it not only that, they do call us for workshop as well<sup>22</sup>

#### **4.5 The Extent to which Women's Wings Address Gendered Political Structures and Ideology within Ghanaian Society generally, and Ghanaian Politics specifically**

Having established the capacity of the women's wings and their reported autonomy and impact, this section aims at establishing whether the activities of the women's wings in any way addresses the problems related to women's political representation and gender equality in political parties and more broadly in Ghanaian society. This is done by critically examining the activities of the women's wings and classifying them into categories including political, economic and social activities. This categorisation is used to determine the extent to which women's wings in Ghana address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian politics specifically and gender inequality in general within the country.

##### **4.5.1 Political activities of the women's wings**

The women's wings in Ghana are involved in a number of political activities which mostly engage members of the women's wings within the various constituencies in the country. One of these activities according to the respondents of the research is identifying and organising women for their various political parties. In explaining this, the respondents mentioned the fact that one of the objectives of the women's wings is to identify, mobilise and organise both women and men alike for their political parties, while especially prioritising women. In doing this, the women's wings encourage other women to join their various parties, give their best to the party and participate fully in the activities of the party such as voting for candidates of the party, attending rallies in the name of the party and setting their priorities for the party. To achieve this, the women's wings of the political parties explain the party's ideology to women in their constituencies, emphasising women's and gender issues.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ms Kat; a Constituency women's organiser

This is one of the common means of mobilising women used by women's wings in Ghana within their parties. By explaining the ideologies of the political parties and emphasising the importance the party places on the advancement of women within it, the organisers of the women's wings who are responsible for organising women within the political parties convince other women outside the party to join the women's wings and thus their political party. Explaining this one of the respondents said, "We tell them [women outside the party] about the ideologies when they think they believe in the ideologies then they join."<sup>23</sup> This is done to win more women into the political party, as one of the respondents said, "We the women's wings exist to fight for the party, we realised that the men alone cannot do it, and we the women are strong so we can push the party forward."<sup>24</sup>

Thus the women's wings within the political parties in Ghana among other things see their parties as their priority and appear to strategically draw on discourses of women's rights to recruit women as members and supporters.

Another political activity of the women's wings in Ghana related to the one above is encouraging women to be actively involved in politics, especially young women. This is because most women in Ghana, according to the respondents and as established in the previous section (see section 4.3), do not want to be involved in politics because they do not want to be branded with all sorts of names, e.g. "prostitute". And because marriage is an institution which is very much valued within the Ghanaian context, most of the young women do not want to be associated with anything that could jeopardise their chances of getting married in the near future. This leaves active politics in Ghana for the older women who are already married, divorced or widowed. This is corroborated by the age distribution of the respondents established in section 4.2 above. The women's wings of the political parties therefore encourage especially the young women within their constituencies to take up political responsibilities and positions within the constituencies as they believe this will boost their morale to further advance their political careers. They encourage them to turn a deaf ear to the names attributed to women in politics and to rather focus on their aspirations. This is how some of the respondents articulated this imperative:

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ms Haj, a National women's organiser

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ms Adol, a Regional women's organiser

We encourage the women at the grass root level not to only contest for the women organiser but also the youth organiser or go for the secretary or the chairman... when you get there prove to them why you think you have those qualities that is all, it about membership drive so if you can do that why can't you be the chairman or the youth organiser or the women's organiser, so we let them understand some of these things and we believe things will change for us<sup>25</sup>

We encourage the women to be involved in political activities especially those who have political ambitions to contest for elections, to familiarise themselves with the members in the constituency through that when in the near future they want to stand for an election they will get the people to vote for them<sup>26</sup>

This they achieve through workshops and talks where they advise the youth on the importance of being involved in political activities and not just sitting on the fence and only coming out during elections to vote. As one of the respondents mentioned,

We talk to the youth to be more involved in politics, you see most of Ghanaian women will only get involved in politics when there is elections or primaries that is when you see them participating, if not they will come for meetings and that is all<sup>27</sup>

As indicated by the comments above, one of the goals of the political parties' women's wings in Ghana is specifically to recruit potential women leadership, that is to identify, groom and build the capacities of members, especially young women with political aspirations. In line with this, one of the respondents mentioned that when she was still a constituency women's organiser, she identified two young women in her constituency with great political potential. Therefore when she [the constituency women's organiser] was leaving to move to the national level, she made these two women leaders in the constituency. This is how they identify and build capacities within their various constituencies. The following comments are what some of the respondents had to say to support this;

We identify young women, who are vocal, give them some political training by enrolling them in some short course programmes to help develop their political career so they can become better politicians<sup>28</sup>

We identify women to contest on our ticket, in the past elections we were able to get about 24 of them but only 1 of them was elected to go to parliament and virtually she became the chairperson for the party, and we mostly want to build their capabilities

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ms Mag, a National women's organiser

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ms Ros, a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Ms Safu, a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Ms Haj, a National women's organiser

you know some of them are media shy, when you put tell them to go and talk on television or radio they don't want to go, so we try to allay those fears, for instance when am going for a programme I take one of them with me to go and sit and watch the way I do it<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the women's wings of the political parties are also engaged in activities such as educating women especially those within their constituencies and political parties on how to manage the problems women face in politics especially in relation to the abusive words and the branding of names such as prostitute and the like. The women's wings also achieve this through organising workshops and talks among members. This is what one of the respondents had to say about their strategy of using these events for women as a forum for supporting emerging leaders as well as themselves:

By organising workshops, we talk to them [members of the women's wings] about these problems, explaining to them to ignore such people and just focus on their goal, we share experience with each other and encourage ourselves... So we try at every point to tell people not to listen to what others say but just focus on what they want to do<sup>30</sup>

Because this is a major obstacle that affects the political advancement of women in politics, the women's wings do not only rely on workshops or formal talks to educate members and themselves about managing negative response to women in politics. Rather they also implore informal discussion forums as a means of sharing personal experiences in relation to managing the issues related to the negative attitudes towards women in politics among themselves. In articulating this imperative one of the respondent said,

I always tell my colleagues that politics is like that, if you hear people saying things about you, don't give ears to them, just ignore them, because they will always say these things, just keep focus, move forward and achieve your aim, because if you keep listening to what people say then you cannot be successful in politics<sup>31</sup>

The women's wings also educate women about the religious and traditional beliefs which may prohibit women from being involved in politics. They challenge conservative beliefs

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Ms Agn, a National women's organiser

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ms Kat, a Regional women's organiser

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Ms zaj, a Regional women's organiser

which they consider to be outmoded and undermining women's capacity and desire to participate fully in politics.

The women's wings also attempt to impact on increasing the nomination of female candidates in their constituencies. The respondents mentioned that, when there are women aspirants within their constituency they try to lobby for such candidates to win the seat. However, nominations according to the respondents are strictly by voting by delegates so they try to lobby the delegates to vote for the woman aspirant. For instance, one of the respondents confirmed that in 2004, when she was still the women organiser for her constituency she was able to lobby for a woman aspirant in her constituency who won in the primaries and also won the seat in the general elections for her party.

Another respondent also cited the example of how in 2008 the women's wing in her party lobbied for a female to be the chairperson of the party and rallied behind her to win the position. This made her the first woman chairperson of a political party in Ghana. Related to this, other respondents also reported that the women's wings try to advocate for aspiring women to stand for elections in constituencies where the party has the majority of electorate's support, that is where they are sure of the voters' vote irrespective of who is standing for the positions, in order to enhance the chance for the woman to be elected. The following are some of the comments the respondents made relating to the above.

What we normally do is to look for a constituency where the MP has maintained power for let say 12 years or more, then we try to advocate for a change by replacing the old MP who in most cases will be an elderly man with a woman aspirant, that is we try to lobby for our women aspirants to be nominated into constituencies where we are sure of the electorate's votes<sup>32</sup>

What we [the women's wings] do is to lobby for our women, to cite an example in 2009 we the women in the CPP made a decision to lobby for the chairmanship position to be given to a woman, this was because since 1992 when Ghana retained a stable democracy, no woman have ever chaired the party, so this time we decided to support our woman aspirant to win the chairmanship, so we rallied behind her and campaigned for her and she won the seat, so that is how we manage to get our women into such high positions<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Ms Jes, a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Ms Haj, a National women's organiser

Finally and importantly, the political activities of the Women's wings also involve supporting women contesting for elections at political party level that is, during the primaries when the political parties elect candidates to represent the party in the general elections in the various constituencies in the country. The women's wings do this by advocating for discounts on nomination fees for women aspirants. They also engage in "door-to-door"<sup>34</sup> campaigns for the women aspirants where they try to win the votes of delegates who would be voting in such elections. Also, the women's wings give women aspirants some form of training on how to communicate their policies and ideas, and why they should be voted for, effectively to voters. Another role is to raise funds to support the campaigns of women aspirants since finance is a major challenge for most women contesting elections in Ghana. The following describe some of the respondents' activities in this respect:

When I was the women's organiser we were able to raise some funding through friends and loved ones to support the women in our party, we manage to provide some T-shirts which were given to the campaigning team of the women aspirants at the constituencies and also on the election day too we were able to give some small monies to the women to be given to their pooling agents to feed and to do the little running around, you know Ghanaian politics you need to have a big purse, so that is how we do it and this time most women have shown interest in contesting on the CPP ticket so that is what we are going to do for them<sup>35</sup>

We advocated for 25% discount on nomination fees for women and we are still lobbying for a 50% discount to encourage more women to contest for the elections.....We teach women aspirants how to do house to house campaigns, help in campaigning, designing of posters, giving of T-shirts, etc<sup>36</sup>

#### **4.5.2 Economic activities of the women's wings**

The political parties' women's wings in Ghana are also reportedly involved in economic activities. These economic activities are geared towards helping members of the women's wings. What stood out in the economic activities of the political parties women's wings was their role in giving vocational training to their members. According to the respondents, most of the members of the women's wings are either unemployed or engaged in petty trading. As a result, it is common for members of the women's wings to provide training in vocational skills such as weaving of beads, and making bags, "tie and dye"<sup>37</sup> and soaps. This they

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<sup>34</sup> The system of campaigning which involves going to the houses of individuals in order to persuade them to vote for a particular candidate

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ms Haj, a National women's organiser

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Ms Ros, a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>37</sup> A type of traditional material used in making traditional attire

believe will provide some income for the majority of members who do not have any form of employment and help them take care of themselves and their families.

There is also the option for young women who do not have high education to learn hairdressing and dressmaking. Some are trained in basic computing and other promising students are assisted to further their education. According to the respondents this is necessary since many of the youth are unemployed and have little or no work to do which may lead to criminal and other antisocial activities, so their economic programme is directed at assisting their members to be economically active and also independent. These activities are often sponsored by the political parties and some organisations such as the IEA, WiLDAF and Abantu for development, and contribute to development for all in Ghana.

The women's wings of the political parties further provide a system of financial loans to members who are mostly involved in buying and selling to support their businesses. Most of the women's wings have partners such as the Women's World Bank and MASLOC which offers loans to the members of the women's wings with interest rates ranging from 5% to 10%. The members are also advised on how to manage the loans before they are given the loans. They are made to understand that the loans are to be paid back and that they are not for free. The aim for giving the loans to members is to assist women to grow their business. This is a welfare objective of the women's wings. This is how one of the respondents talked about the issue:

Since 1992 when we started this women's wing, it has been for women, we have been assisting them by collecting MASLOC loan for them because as you know women are the majority like 90% of people who are unemployed in this country and all most of them need is money to do some trading to enable them take care of their families because you know it is us women who look after the homes in Ghana so if you are able to help them to be on their own they will be able to support their family as well<sup>38</sup>

Most of the women's wings have also formed smaller groups within their organisations which serve as a support system for members within the group. Common among these groups were the *Widows' group* and the *Development for Women in Reducing Poverty group*. Membership in these groups is based on need or relevance. For instance, to be part of the widows' group one has to be a widow or have the needs of widows at heart. Their aim is to

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Ma Viv, a Regional women's organiser

support each other. Because members of the women's wings have specific needs and interests there is a need for these smaller sections to exist in order to cater better for members' personal needs. The following comments are from some of the participants,

I have formed the widow group because I am a widow, I listen to them, identify their needs..... there are some people who would also want to support such people [widows] but because they have not been identified they cannot support them so I have taken it upon myself as a women's organiser to organise them [widows] and to sell ourselves to people not as beggars but we have some people who can support them in kind or in cash or even to motivate them or talk to them<sup>39</sup>

#### **4.5.3 Social activities of the women's wings**

The women's wings of the political parties in Ghana – like most other organisations – also engage in social activities. Prominent among the social activities are the welfare activities such as attending members' ceremonies including funerals, “baby out-dooring”<sup>40</sup>, weddings, birthday parties and other anniversaries. During such occasions, the women's wings contribute by providing the members with some or all of the expenses for the occasion depending on the position of the member within the wing. This is done to boost the morale of members and also to encourage new members. Other social activities also include picnics, keep fit clubs and outdoor games. One of the interviewees confirmed this by saying that:

In 2009, I lost my stepfather, during the funeral it was the political party which paid for all expenses of the burial ceremony, they also attended the funeral in their numbers which graced the occasion, it was a great event, I am certain that I got this favour because I am a member so I think being in the women's wings is very important and has help me a lot<sup>41</sup>

Other social activities include visits to hospitals and children homes to donate some items, both cash and kind, to the people in these places. These they considered us their social responsibility as a women's organisation. The main motive behind these social activities is to campaign and attract more women into the political party. As one of the respondents mentioned in a statement:

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Ms Haj, a Regional women's organiser

<sup>40</sup> This is a traditional naming ceremony which normally happens a week after a baby is born. The essence of the ceremony is to give a name to the child and to formally introduce the baby to family members and friends and also to usher the baby into the realities of the life ahead of him/her.

<sup>41</sup> A member of the women's wings during the focus group discussion

The programmes are all about campaigning, we do it to attract people, some of the programmes is keep fit walk, games – women football, playing of ludo<sup>42</sup>, the main aims is to attract people to join the activity and then we are able to convince them later to join the party<sup>43</sup>

This also confirms that the political parties' women's wings' first priority appears to be to gain numbers for the political party.

#### **4.6 Reported Challenges of the Women's Wings in Ghana**

The purpose of this section is to discuss the reported challenges faced by the women's wings in Ghana aimed at assessing their effective impact on gender equality in parliament.

A major challenge identified by the women's wings of all the political parties as a hindrance to their achievement of gender equality in the Ghanaian community was financial constraints. The majority of the respondents mentioned that the lack of a sustainable source of funding for their activities affects the achievement of their aims and objectives negatively. Most of the women's wings in Ghana rely on internal sources such as from their political parties or from government, especially for those whose party is in power, and also on external sources such as from organisations like the WILDAF, ABANTU for development, Women World Bank as well as some Christian NGOs inside and outside the country.

These sources of funding are not always guaranteed and are also most often not sufficient for their operations. This, according to the respondents, affects the participation of Ghanaian women in some of their programmes because they are unable to give incentives which will attract people to the programmes. They mentioned that most women do not attend the programmes because they think they will not benefit anything from attending and so would rather stay in their homes and work to earn some income. This affects the level of effectiveness of the women's wings as it is through these programmes that they are able to address some of the gendered socio-cultural practices that hinder most women from participating in formal politics. The following quotes express this concern of the women's wings:

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<sup>42</sup> A traditional indoor game which normally involves four players

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Ms Mer, a Constituency women's organiser

We need finance to support our activities, to give to our women when they come for programmes; you know when there is a programme and the women in the constituency comes and after the programme you don't give them anything, next time when there is another programme they won't attend, so you see that we need money to do all these things and all this also affect our operations<sup>44</sup>

Finance is one of the things killing us, right now am not able to mobilise the women because there is no money for the funding of the programmes for the women's wings so finance is a problem<sup>45</sup>

Related to the financial problem, the interviewees identified the lack of resources for mobilisation of the women as a significant challenge to achieving their goals and objectives. The respondents mentioned the lack of transport for the women's wings as a major hindrance to their effectiveness. One of the respondents had this to say:

We need vehicles or something to move around, in a constituency we need a car or even a motor bike so that maybe when you are going to a short distance within the constituency you can use, but this is not there so you either have to walk or use a taxi which you would have to pay with your own money so if you don't have the money then you have to walk and you know some of the constituencies are very big like mine for instance is very big and some of the electoral areas cannot be reached without a motor bike or car, this makes working in the constituency very hard and it is really affecting our work<sup>46</sup>

Some of the respondents also recognised the lack of solidarity between political parties' women's wings in the country as discussed in section 4.4 above as a challenge for gender equality in Ghana. They explained this by saying that because they belong to different political parties they tend to be divided along this front and this affects their influence in the Ghanaian community with regard to the progress of gender equality in Ghana. This is what some of the respondents had to say on the subject:

I still believe that if we have to be successful we must come together and not be too partisan in dealing with issues if not we won't succeed, the cooperation among other women in other political parties is a key factor for women advancement, we should see ourselves as women first then our political parties can come once we are able to do that then we can move forward but then again the difficulty is there because if I say let's support this lady for that position after all if she gets to the top she is going to fight for women's needs so I don't see why we should not push her but someone will

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Ms Viv, a Regional women's organiser

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Ms Kat, a Constituency women's organiser

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ms Mer; a Constituency women's organiser

also sit down and say she is not in our political party and maybe she might also worsen her situation by her own utterance so how do we help push each other..... so I keep saying that every day having meetings here and there international conferences will not help, until we change our attitudes<sup>47</sup>

Also certain cultural practices, in particular traditional gender roles and expectations for men and women in Ghana were identified by respondents as a challenge in advancing gender equality in Ghana. In the first place, the respondents argued that discriminatory cultural practices that prohibit women from participating in politics, because it is considered as not suitable for a “proper women”, is a factor which affects the advancement of women, especially young women, in Ghana. This is because some women, especially those in the rural areas still believe that their rightful place is the home and still think politics should be left for the men who are supposed to be the heads of the family. Educating these women on the necessity of participating in politics is therefore a challenge for the women’s wings. Another challenge to achieving gender equality that was mentioned was that women are sometimes perpetrators of negative cultural practices such as genital mutilation and widowhood rights in their capacity as custodians of such practices. This is because as long as women hold onto these negative practices their elimination within the Ghanaian community becomes highly unlikely. One of the respondents expressed this concern in the following quote:

Sometimes we sit down as women and say we want to fight for women out there but I do strongly believe that most of the problems are even created by us, there was an instance where a house help was beaten by a husband with an iron and had the support of the wife, so I was asking myself how can a woman support a man to do such evil to another woman, even if you think your house help is not doing the right thing do you think you should allow him to do this....., consider for instance the female mutilation that is going on in the north, it is our mothers who do it, it is our mothers who go to do the thing because of some useless reason, it a useless believe, look at the witches at the camp, the “gambaga witch camp” it our colleague women who do this things, all these things destroys our society because these women are old ladies who are not capable of helping themselves so the supposed witches would have to bring their head grandchildren with her to that village to fetch water, to fetch firewood, etc and this is depriving that girl or boy of her/his future, it is a pity we are not trying to help ourselves<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the respondents mentioned that the apathy of some Ghanaian women forms a part of their challenge towards the achievement of gender equality in Ghana. Highlighting this,

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ms Mag, National women’s organiser

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ms Mag; National women’s organiser

the respondents argued that getting the women involved in political activities is sometimes difficult because most of them are shy and not vocal. Some of them also do not want to get involved because they do not want to be insulted by other people. They would rather “sit on the fence” and only participate during election periods. In light of this, one of the respondents said:

Most of the women in my constituency are very reserved; they don't want to be involved in anything ... you know women's politics in Ghana is not good but now it is getting better I will say, some of them are coming up, normally it gets better when we are getting to primaries or election before you will see the women really participating in a lot of things<sup>49</sup>

Other respondents also explained that the apathy of Ghanaian women to participate in politics is due to the fact that most women in Ghana are faced with economic hardships and as such they do not see the need to participate in politics. This is how one of the respondents viewed the problem:

When you go out there to mobilise the women, some of the women will say we have heard about this we are tired we have been voting yet we don't see anything, so when you are not strong you will say enough my purpose is not being achieved so why do I continue but some of us are strong so we keep the fire burning<sup>50</sup>

WESTERN CAPE

Furthermore, some of the respondents identified the lack of support from other members as a challenge for the women's wings. The respondents mentioned that sometimes there are internal conflicts among the various organisations and this hinders the progress of the women's wings. This is because women are sometimes difficult to deal with and do not sometimes understand each other and some will be pulling in the opposite direction when others are trying to move forward. Emphasising this issue, one of the respondents said:

You see with this inauguration I am doing now, I was supposed to do it long before now but your own executive sometimes will be pulling you back while you want to make a move ahead: they will be asking so many unnecessary questions like how will this programme profit us if we do it, just to prevent you from having the programme, but I am not the one who initiated the programme, it was brought from the top, and I am not even doing it for myself but for the party, so sometimes members not helping is also a problem<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Ms Saf; Constituency women's organiser

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ms Haj; National women's organiser

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Ms Mer; Constituency women's organiser

Lastly and also contrary to the above challenges, one respondent identified the primary focus of the women's wings on women and women's issues as a problem for them. In explaining this issue, the respondent mentioned that the women's wings always talk about women and never about men. However, the women's wings do expect the men to support them in their activities. The respondent argued that some issues, such as the equal sharing of responsibilities in the home, should not be part of the agenda of women's wings in Ghana. This is because according to the respondent the focus on such "petty issues" as she called them, which could be managed by the individual women, diverts the attention of the women's wings from more pressing gender needs. This according to her affects their effectiveness in the achievement of gender equality. This is how she raised the concern:

A problem that I have identify of the women's wings is that it is too women centred, it is all about women, no men talk, yet we want the men to support us, sometimes it feels like we are babies demanding for everything, also sometimes the things that we demand is too childish, for instance most of my colleagues wants us to advocate for a law that will oblige husbands to help at home with the domestic chores to free women from being solely responsible for this activity, but for me I think this is something that can be decided in the house with one's husband, I don't see how women should rely on the government or law to be able to achieve this in their homes, it is just about telling your partner to help, is true some of the men don't do anything in the house they just read newspapers, but we should be able to talk to our partners for understanding of some of these things, so these are some of the negatives of the women's wings<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

A key research finding that emerges in this study relates to how women's wings affiliated to political parties perform similar roles in enhancing women's public participation and adopt similar strategies to this effect. They are engaged in similar political, economic and social activities which mostly are targeted at women in Ghana. However, it is argued that the women's wings are more focused on recruiting members into their political parties than on women's equality or empowerment per se. It is therefore argued that the activities of the women's wings are not necessarily directed around gender issues in particular, but rather in supporting individual women towards the larger goal of recruiting them into the political parties. This is also linked to their limited capacity within the political parties.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Ms Kat; Regional women's organiser

This is not to say that the women's wings in Ghana are not engaged in any political advancement of women in Ghana. However, the process by which this is done appears to be fraught with challenges. That is, the process by which the women's wings recruit members for leadership positions does not take into account women who can push the agenda of women generally but rather women who seem to have the potential to be successful leaders. As much as this may be a necessary condition for the achievement of gender equality, it is not a sufficient condition for recruitment of women leaders towards the achievement of gender equality. The consequence of this may be the achievement of an increased representation of women in leadership but with less of an impact on the socio-economic wellbeing of women and gender equality in the country.

In an attempt to synthesise the key findings towards contributing to the progress of women's wings in their efforts to achieve gender equality within the Ghanaian community, conclusions and recommendations are made in the next chapter of this thesis.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE GHANAIAN PARLIAMENT: THE WAY FORWARD**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study of women and politics in Ghanaian society is significant in the African context, specifically because Ghana is one of the countries which is lagging behind in the achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), namely gender equality in education, employment and politics. This research has provided analyses of women's activism within three women's wings affiliated to political parties in Ghana. This chapter presents the summary of the major findings of the study. It then discusses the implications of these findings and gives recommendations towards the effectiveness of women's wings in achieving gender equality within the Ghanaian community in general and in parliament in particular. The chapter further highlights the limitations of the study and suggests areas for further research before concluding.

### **5.2 Summary of Research Findings**

The research has shown that women in Ghana are under-represented in state institutions and decision-making bodies specifically in the Ghanaian parliament. This low representation could be linked to their low representation within the various political parties to which they belong. It was established in the research that women in politics form less than 18% of members of important decision-making committees within the political parties in Ghana. The consequence of this low representation is their low representation in parliament and other ministerial positions across the country. This is because these important committees are responsible for taking decisions on crucial matters such as the appointments of individuals into key political and ministerial positions in the country. It is therefore obvious that the names of women will not be significantly visible on the appointment list since they are virtually invisible on these committees.

The study has also shown that women's wings in Ghana face numerous challenges in their attempt to address the gendered socio-economic and political inequalities within the broader Ghanaian community. One key challenge is the issue of accessing money for designing and implementing activities that promote the political advancement of Ghanaian women and reduce, if not eliminate the structural poverty that most women in Ghana happen to find themselves in. Because of this reason, most of the women's wings are not very active,

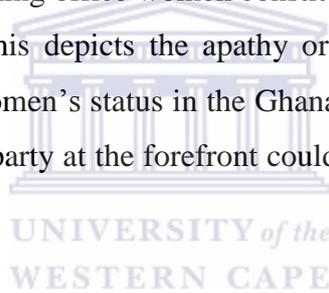
especially when there are no funds to support their activities and they have to postpone or delay most of their activities. This was the case particularly in the political parties which were not in government since most of the women's wings rely on party funds for operations. It was thus noticed that the activities of some women's wings came to a halt when their political parties were elected out of government.

The inability of the women's wings to raise funds to sustain their activities also affects the kind of support they give to female political aspirants. The research established that women's wings affiliated to political parties in Ghana have the culture of providing some form of incentives in the form of printing of posters and T-shirts, as well as giving some little monies to polling agents of women aspirants to support their campaign process. This assistance is however heavily dependent on the availability of funds. That is, the more funds there are the higher the assistance they render to these women aspirants. And since more often than not the women's wings lack funds, any assistance they can afford comes in small amounts. This is seen as a major obstacle to increasing the representation of women in parliament because most women aspirants also face the difficulty of supporting themselves financially during election periods due to their socio-economic status in the country. This in effect de-motivates most women from contesting elections and, as a consequence impacts on the progress of the women's wings in their efforts to achieve gender equality in Ghana.

In addition, the issue of apathy on the part of Ghanaian women to participate in the activities of the women's wings was identified as a challenge for them in achieving gender equality in Ghanaian politics. The research highlighted the fact that some Ghanaian women are not willing to participate in politics because they see it as a waste of their time and resources because they believe it will take them nowhere. This attitude dampens the zeal of most of the leaders of the women's wings and thus affects their commitment to the cause of gender equality within the Ghanaian community. The lack of interest or the apathy that some Ghanaian women show towards politics was shown to be associated to the fact that the living conditions of the common Ghanaian woman do not improve regardless of which political party is in power. In line with this, Hassim (2002) mentioned that, women's sections of political parties need to articulate the interests of women's supporters of their parties and ensure that they are addressed within the broader political platforms. The failure of the women's wings to act as a check on their political parties has therefore produced the apathy

experienced among Ghanaian women. Yet the women's wings adopt a mobilisation strategy which puts the political parties at the forefront of their campaign.

The research showed that the women's wings in Ghana utilise similar mobilisation strategies in getting Ghanaian women involved in their activities. They try to get members into their organisations by explaining to women the gender policies of their political parties and how this supports the livelihood of women. However, this strategy is not effective because of the lack of commitment on the part of political parties in Ghana to promote women's agenda. That is to say, apart from Nkrumah's government in the 1960s which made a conscious attempt to promote women's advancement in Ghana which was highlighted in Chapter One of this thesis, very little has been done by any political party to improve the gendered inequalities within the country and especially in parliament. A recent scenario was the promise of a 40% representation of women into key political positions in the manifesto of the current government. Yet in assuming office women constituted less than 10% of key political and ministerial appointments. This depicts the apathy or lack of commitment of political parties in Ghana to improving women's status in the Ghanaian community. For this reason, a strategy which puts the political party at the forefront could not be properly sold to Ghanaian women.



Furthermore, the research has established that negative cultural practices in the form of discriminatory practices which prohibit especially rural women from participating actively in politics result in women's wings falling short in their efforts to advance women's political participation. Some women in Ghana are still very much immersed in the cultural norms of the country and even though some of these norms may be outmoded or irrelevant for the current development era in which we live, they continue to hold onto these norms. In particular, as the research has highlighted in Chapter Four, some Ghanaian women still recognise the "private" and "public" divide and accept the "private" as their rightful place in society and even consider other women who cross the line as deviant and inappropriate for society. This over-recognition of cultural norms has also made Ghanaian women perpetrators of discriminatory practices against their fellow women in their community as seen in the practices of female genital mutilation and the witch camp in the northern region in Ghana, in which elderly women are made the custodians of such discriminatory practices in the name of culture.

Thus, culture is seen as a major challenge for the women's wings in Ghana in working towards the political advancement of Ghanaian women and in achieving gender equality within the Ghanaian community.

In connection with the above, the study also observed a weak collaboration of women's wings and women parliamentarians in Ghana. Hassim (2002) has shown that one significant role of women's wings is to serve as a check on women parliamentarians to make sure that they do not move away from a feminist agenda because they most often are overburdened with work which could shift their attention away from women's needs. Both collaboration and this checking role were rather lacking between women's wings in Ghana and female parliamentarians. It was observed that the women's wings were more interested in getting women into parliament, but that the check to ensure that these women produce what is expected of them was lacking in their activities. Thus it could be argued that the women's wings may not necessarily be interested in gender issues in particular but rather in supporting individual women towards the larger goal of recruiting them into the political parties.

The research has also shown that autonomy is crucial and to a large extent determines the direction and success of women's political organisations. Feminist authors emphasise that autonomy is critically important for women's associations in order for them to have a feminist vision. The women's wings in Ghana lack an "independent autonomy" (adopting Molyneux's classification of autonomy) because they are affiliated to male-dominated political parties. What exists is a "directed autonomy"; in other words they are not completely in charge of their own aims and goals. In line with Molyneux's conception of autonomy, the goals of the women's wings are limited, even though they do concern women, and "the control and direction of the agenda does not lie with the women's wings as an identifiable social force" (Molyneux, 1998: 229). This was made evident in Chapter Four of this thesis, where it was shown that the coordination and direction of activities of the women's wings happened in a top-to-bottom approach. Their level of autonomy is also affected by their low presence on important decision-making committees within the various political parties which further limits their power in the political parties to influence and make decisions.

The lack of control and direction of goals of the women's wings is seen in the mobilisation strategy of women's wings which is geared towards gaining more political votes for the party rather than for the benefit of women in general. Hence data has shown that women's wings in Ghana experience the difficulty of maintaining a critical feminist consciousness. This difficulty results from their lack of autonomy and is also linked to their inability to finance their activities. It has been shown by the research that women's wings rely heavily on their political parties, especially those in government, for funding most of their activities. As mentioned above, this is because women's wings in Ghana face a major challenge in financing their activities and therefore turn to their political parties for funding. This reliance restricts their feminist vision as they are unable to see the male-dominated party as part of the problem they need to address. As a result, most of the activities of the women's wings address gendered inequality outside the political parties. Thus the gender inequalities that exist within the political parties are not being addressed effectively by the women's wings. Yet this is a critical concern to the advancement of gender equality within the Ghanaian community in general and politics specifically.

Furthermore, the research established that the women's wings are involved in political, economic and social activities. The political activities were in the form of capacity building of selected members who were recognised as having potential to succeed in politics, and supporting women aspirants in their political campaigns. Most of the economic activities were geared towards the gendered normative roles of women, such as offering members vocational training and loans to help them engage in petty trading to support their families. The social activities were mostly in the form of supporting members during special occasions such as attending weddings, funerals and also organising panics and keep fit clubs. All this was however, geared towards recruiting members to the political parties.

Last but not the least, the problems of women in politics in general also coincides with the challenges of women's wings. The majority of the respondents identified socio-economic factors as a major hindrance to women's participation in Ghanaian politics. Due to the high cost involved in campaigning for elections and because most women in Ghana are found in the low-income level groups, they are de-motivated to aspire to political positions. Consequently, many women are excluded from political participation in Ghana. In addition, most of the respondents identified gender factors such as the traditional role of women in Ghanaian society, including notions that women do not belong in politics, as an obstacle to

their political advancement. This creates a platform for the use of abusive and provocative words against women in politics which also discourages most women from pursuing their political career.

### **5.3 Implications and Recommendations**

The research findings indicate that gender equality in Ghana is far from achieved and that women's wings in Ghana are on a long, winding path in helping to achieve gender equality and equal political decision-making and participation in the country. Most of the women's wings have not identified their significant role in the achievement of gender equality in the country in general and parliament specifically. Their loyalty to political parties to a large extent seems to have facilitated an uncritical stance towards the political parties in relation to gender issues. This arguably inhibits the achievement of gender equality within the Ghanaian community in general and parliament in particular.

It was also established that a significant factor that undermines the role of the women's wings in achieving gender equality is the gender norms and practices that inhibit women from participating in politics. It is therefore important for institutions such as the family, religion, education as well as traditional systems to be transformed structurally in order to challenge the continued perpetuation of gendered inequality and discrimination against women within Ghanaian society. As mentioned by Reynolds (1999), the socio-cultural factors that create gender inequality within a country can be overcome with time but must involve women and men alike accepting the legitimacy of women in positions of power.

This implies that there is still a need for empowerment and consciousness-raising programmes to be initiated, to challenge these sets of ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices among Ghanaian women (and men) in all parts of the country. This would not only increase women's political participation in Ghana, but would also empower women and men to accept their fellow women candidates as fit for political positions. It would create the situation where the ability of a candidate would be the basis for election rather than that person's gender. This would increase the effectiveness of the women's wings in attaining gender equality in Ghana as this would increase the level of commitment of Ghanaian women to the cause of gender equality and social justice in the country.

More importantly, the study has highlighted that female solidarity is crucial in advancing women's rights. When women's organisations formed strategic feminist alliances in the early 1950s to fight for equality in economic and political activities, and in the early 1990s to fight against discriminatory practices – as established in Chapter Two of this thesis, it brought about the abolishing of “Trokosi” (a ritual servitude of girl children) and the passing of the Domestic Violence Bill. The data however show that female solidarity is currently very weak among women's wings in Ghana, and in fact rarely occurs. Yet, solidarity among women's organisations is not only critical for women to gain a strong lobbying power to protect their gender interests, but also because women are invisible in influential positions within the various political parties in the country. As such their cooperation is vital for their success in achieving gender equality within the Ghanaian society.

Effective solidarity among the women's wings is hindered by their loyalty to political parties which creates conflicting interests and therefore their inability to work together towards a common goal. This has also been identified by other researchers (for example, Rai and Sharma, 2000) as a political factor that hinders gender equality within a country. In the absence of a strong lobbying power and voice, Ghanaian women lack the ability to push for effective policies for the political advancement of women within their political parties and in the country as a whole. This lack of solidarity among Ghanaian politicians also explains the lack of a strong women's movement in Ghana. This study therefore highlights the fact that the absence of a strong strategic alliance among women's wings influences the lobbying power of women and affects their participation and representation in politics. Thus solidarity between women would be an asset to gender equality within the Ghanaian community.

Furthermore, the fact that most of the activities of the women's wings are geared towards women of a particular political party means that membership in the political party is critical for women to benefit from or participate in the activities of these organisations. Thus the core of the activity of the women's wings is not necessarily addressing gender inequality in general in the country, but to recruit and maintain individual women for their political parties. In addition, most of the activities geared towards women were directed towards practical gender needs rather than strategic needs. Thus the women's wings are arguably doing very little to challenge the underlying gender inequalities within Ghanaian society.

Drawing on the discussion above, the following recommendations are proposed towards the advancement of gender equality in the Ghanaian community specifically within politics and through the women's wings of political parties.

- **Political parties should be encouraged to commit to gender equity policies**

The women's wings within political parties should ensure that the political parties have in place good gender policies that advance the political participation and representation of women within their political party and the country as a whole. They should also ensure that, the political parties adhere to the promises they make in relation to the advancement of women during election periods. This means that the women's wings of political parties should serve as a check on male-dominated parties so that they do not simply exploit Ghanaian woman in communities as a means to achieving power by paying lip service to women's issues during election years. Rather they should be held to promises to ensure that the means and avenues to improve the lives of the majority of Ghanaian women are provided in material terms.

- **The need to address gendered inequality within the Ghanaian community**

In order for the women's wings to be more effective in enhancing women's representation and participation in the political economy of the country, the women's wings need to be more conscious of the core of gender inequality within the country and be focused on this, rather than remain a tool for the recruitment of members to their parties. The activities of the women's wings should thus be geared towards addressing the fundamental issues affecting gender equality and social justice in the country. Thus the women's wings should identify themselves more with women's strategic needs and how to solve these needs rather than identify the political party as a reason for their existence.

- **Sustainable funding for the women's wings should be provided**

In order to advance the political participation of women in Ghanaian politics, the women's wings in Ghana need a sustainable source of funding which is not necessarily within the political parties. This is because the most significant factor that affects the activities of the women's wings is their over-reliance on the political parties for funding of their activities. This affects the direction of the women's wings because the activities of the Women's wings then tend to be controlled by the male-dominated political parties. The consequence of this is

that, most of the activities of the women's wings are not directed towards the core issues that matter in relation to establishing a conducive atmosphere for women to be able to compete fairly with men in politics.

It is thus recommended that NGOs as well as CSOs who are committed to the cause of gender equity, empowerment and development should come on board to more fully support the activities of the women's wings in Ghana. This would enable them to be more independent from the political parties and therefore allow them to be more critical of the policies of the political parties in relation to how they advance the socio-economic and political status of women in the country.

- **The need for female strategic alliance among women's wings in Ghana**

To be more effective in their achievement of gender equality within the Ghanaian community, women's wings in Ghana would benefit from strategic unity towards one common goal. The level of female solidarity among Ghanaian political parties' women's wings emerges, at least in this study, as weak and better collaboration among these women's wings may strengthen their impact and women's overall position in politics. Women's wings in Ghana are divided along political party lines, which is understandable because they belong to different political parties and therefore may have different interests. However, I argue that the interests of the political parties must not override the interests of women, which should supercede their differences and which should be the primary interest of all women's group. Therefore, it is recommended that, if women's wings are geared towards the achievement of gender equality within the Ghanaian community, then working together should be their priority. It is also proposed that NGOs and CSOs dedicated to gender equity, development and economic growth should help create initiatives that promote effective strategic alliance among women's wings in Ghana. Also women's wings need to work more critically with women and men parliamentarians to facilitate and ensure that they promote an agenda directed towards gender equality.

- **The need to address the gendered inequality within the political parties**

It is also recommended that the women's wings of the political parties address the gender inequality within the political parties in order to enhance their chances of promoting gender equality within the Ghanaian community. They should also advocate for the elections of

women into higher positions within the ranks of the political parties in order to challenge the dominance of men to advocate for good gender policies that would impact positively on the lives of women in the country. It would also serve as a motivational factor for other women to aspire to higher positions within politics and this in the long run would create equilibrium between men and women in leadership positions in Ghana and possibly help to enhance sustainable development within the country.

- **The need for voluntary quotas within political parties**

Based on the fact that women in Ghana are structurally disadvantaged especially in relation to finance and as such cannot compete equally with their male counterparts during elections, it is recommended that the women's wings in Ghana advocate for voluntary quotas within their various political parties. The African National Council Women's League (ANCWL) provides an example of how voluntary quotas can be used by women's groups to increase women's representation in parliament. It is thus recommended that the women's wings in Ghana advocate for such strategies to ensure women are located in positions of leadership in the party and in parliament.

#### **5.4 Limitations and recommendations for further research**

This study is a qualitative study that used purposive, snowball and convenience sampling of only 30 participants and only in one region of the country. Hence, the selection excluded women from other regions who may have different socio-economic backgrounds and different perceptions about women in politics in Ghana. The data were collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews based mainly on self-reported personal experiences and opinions. Based on the study's qualitative approach, small sample size, selection bias and subjectivity, precautions should be taken in generalising the findings of this study to other groups without further study.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study provides useful information on Ghanaian women's wings and the achievement of gender equality in the country. For further understanding of the feminist consciousness of Ghanaian women and the achievement of gender equality in the country and the challenges they face, further research is needed to explore how women parliamentarians advocate for gender equality within parliament. This should also explore the collaboration between women parliamentarians and women's wings in advancing gender equality within parliament and in the Ghanaian economy and larger

society as a whole. There is also a need to investigate the challenges that women parliamentarians face in relation to advocating for gender equality and how these can be addressed.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The study of women and politics has gained ground over many centuries now, and much work has been conducted on the subject. On the international front, studies have focused on women's political behaviour in electoral policies and gradually shifted to women's participation in formal politics (Beckwith, 2000). In the African context, scholars have focused mainly on women's access to political power in the state as well as participation in general (Lewis, 2004). Aside from studies conducted mostly in South Africa and Uganda, women's wings affiliated to political parties have not received much focus in the study of women in politics. This study represents a step in this direction. The study intended to explore the unique features of women's wings affiliated to political parties and how they either enhance or inhibit women's representation in parliament. Thus the study intended to provide a new perspective to achieving gender equality within a country through more effective use of the women's wings of political parties. Thus the study provides a new perspective on gender equality by putting women at the centre of change. It identifies the significant role women play in enhancing or inhibiting gender equality in a country. In the Ghanaian context the study provides an extant body of knowledge on women's political representation and thus serves as valuable reference material for academics and professionals interested in this important area of study.

Therefore in conclusion, recommendations proposed in this study may go a long way to improving the effectiveness of women's wings in Ghana towards enhancing women's political participation and representation, thereby promoting gender equality within the Ghanaian economy and society.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: LETTER OF CONSENT



*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa  
Telephone : (021) 959 3858/6 Fax: (021) 959 3865*

E-mail: [pkippie@uwc.ac.za](mailto:pkippie@uwc.ac.za)

#### Letter of Consent

#### Study- Women's representation in parliament: The role of party women's wings in Ghana

I....., have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am free not to participate and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain myself.

I am aware that this interview might result in research which may be published, but my name may **be/not** be used. (Circle appropriate).

I understand that if I don't want my name to be used that this will be ensured by the researcher.

I may also refuse to answer any questions that I don't want to answer.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions concerning this research, feel free to call Grace Gletsu at (+27738293593) or email my supervisor, Professor Tamara Shefer at [tshefer@icon.co.za](mailto:tshefer@icon.co.za), [tshefer@uwc.co.za](mailto:tshefer@uwc.co.za)

### APPENDIX II: INFORMATION SHEET (INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS)



*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*

*Telephone : (021) 959 3858/6 Fax: (021) 959 3865*

**E-mail:** [pkippie@uwc.ac.za](mailto:pkippie@uwc.ac.za)

### **Information Sheet**

#### **Study- Women's representation in parliament: The role of party women's wings in Ghana**

The central objective of this thesis is to evaluate the role of the Women's Wings in enhancing women's political participation, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological context in which they operate as well as to assess the constraints and challenges to their effective impact in parliament.

Although it is unlikely, there may be some unintended risks from participating in this research study. You may talk about or recall traumatic experiences in your past and present during the interview. This may be emotionally uncomfortable or cause emotional or psychological distress. If you do become visibly distressed the researcher will refer you appropriate counselling services.

There will be no payment to participants as this is purely for academic purposes and the researcher is also a student.

The researcher will do her best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, your name will be kept anonymous and what you share will be confidential. You will be asked to keep the information discussed with you in discussions confidential. The data will be kept in documents which are password protected.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized in any way.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of **Professor Tamara Shefer** at the University of the Western Cape. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Supervisor: Prof Tamara Shefer  
Head; Women and Gender Studies Programme

University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535  
Phone: +27219592234/3360 cell +27822023570  
Email address: [tshefer@uwc.ac.za](mailto:tshefer@uwc.ac.za)

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT:**

The information above was described to me by Grace Gletsu in [Twi/Ga/English] and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this form

-----

Name of subjects/participation

-----

Signature of subject/participant

-----

Date



**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER:**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to -----  
[name of the subject/participant]. [He/She] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me  
any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Twi/Ga/English/other] and [no translator  
was used/this conversation was translated into ----- by -----.]

-----

-----

Signature of investigator

Date

## APPENDIX III: INFORMATION SHEET (FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION)



*Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa*  
*Telephone : (021) 959 3858/6 Fax: (021) 959 3865*

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### **Information Sheet**

#### **Study- Women's representation in parliament: The role of party women's wings in Ghana**

The central objective of this thesis is to evaluate the role of the Women's Wings in enhancing women's political participation, by exploring the gendered social, political and ideological context in which they operate as well as to assess the constraints and challenges to their effective impact in parliament.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to attend a focus group discussion with approximately six other members of the women's wings, lasting for about an hour.

You may find it uncomfortable to share your ideas and feelings about this topic. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers-this is not a test. All information shared in this discussion will be kept strictly confidential, meaning that I will not tell anyone else asking, about what any individual has said.

There will be no payment to participants as this is purely for academic purposes and the researcher is also a student.

All information shared during these discussions will be considered confidential. I will not report any information gained from particular individuals back to others. All data forms (except the informed consent) form will not contain your name. If you agree to participate in the group discussion then you will also need to undertake to keep information shared in the discussion confidential, and not tell anyone outside the group what another individual said.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of **Professor Tamara Shefer** at the University of the Western Cape. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Supervisor: Prof Tamara Shefer

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**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT:**

The information above was described to me by Grace Gletsu in [Twi/Ga/English] and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this form

-----  
Name of subjects/participation

-----  
Signature of subject/participant

-----  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER:**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to -----  
[name of the subject/participant]. [He/She] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Twi/Ga/English/other] and [no translator was used/this conversation was translated into ----- by -----.]

-----  
Signature of investigator



## **APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISERS OF THE WOMEN'S WINGS**

### **Research Question**

1. What are the demographic features of members of the Women's wings in Ghana?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. How old are you?
- II. What is your highest education?
- III. What is your Employment status?
- IV. What is your marital status?
- V. When did you begin your political career?
- VI. What was your motivation for engaging in political activism?
- VII. What is your Position in the political party?
- VIII. What are your responsibilities?

### **Research question**

2. Do women's wings attached to political parties have the scope to advance the agendas of women and gender equality in Ghana? OR Are they constrained by loyalties to male-dominated parties?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. What is the structure/organisation of the women's wing?
- II. How does the women's wing operate?
- III. Who decides the activities of the women's wing?
- IV. Is the women's wing accountable to any authority figure within the political party?
- V. If yes, what is this authority figure?
- VI. Who occupy this position?

### **Research question**

3. To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically?
4. What structures and relationships influence women's participation and advancement in Ghanaian politics?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. On what grounds are women mobilised into the women's wings?

- II. What is/are the aim(s) of the women's wing?
- III. How do the women's wings achieve such aim(s)?
- IV. What are some of the specific activities that the women's wings are in engaged in?
- V. What are the opinions of Ghanaians about women in politics that you know off?
- VI. If negative; what do you think can be done to change these perceptions?
- VII. What are some of the problems women in politics encounter?
- VIII. What are some of the difficulties that are faced by the women's wing?

### **Research question**

5. Do women's wings of different parties perform different roles, and reflect different strategies for enhancing women's public participation?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. Does the women's wing have any influence on the nomination of candidates for election?
- II. Does the women's wing of your party consult women's units of other parties or non-political women's organisations? If Yes (on what issues)/No
- III. Do women's organisations or NGOs consult you? If Yes (on what issues)/No
- IV. Do you think it is necessary for more women to be represented in parliament? If yes, why, and what can be done, If No, why

**Thank you very much for your time!**

## **APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION AMONG MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S WINGS**

### **Research Question**

1. What are the demographic features of members of the Women's wings in Ghana?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. How old are you in years?
- II. What is your highest education?
- III. What is your Employment status?
- IV. What is your marital status?
- V. When did you start to involve yourself in political activities?
- VI. Are you the first in your family to be involved in politics?

### **Research question**

2. To what extent do women's wings address gendered political structures and ideology within Ghanaian society generally, and Ghanaian politics specifically?
3. What structures and relationships influence women's participation and advancement in Ghanaian politics?

### **Interview Questions**

- I. When did you join this women's wing?
- II. What was/is your motivates for joining this women's wing?
- III. What were your expectations?
- IV. Have your expectations been realised?
- V. What would you recommend to be done different in the women's wing?
- VI. How has the women's wings changed your life? (Politically or in any other form)
- VII. What are some of your personal experience in the women's wing?
- VIII. Have you received any form of training from the women's wing?
- IX. What are some of the activities that you are engaged in as a member of the women's wing?
- X. How do you relate to each other in the women's wing?
- XI. What are some of the problems you encounter being part of the women's wing?
- XII. Do you think it is necessary for more women to be represented in parliament?

XIII. If yes, why is it important? If no, why not

XIV. So do you aspire to be an MP someday?

**Thank you very much for your time!**

