

**What issues do female activist groups in Ghana consider significant in their struggle for female empowerment?  
Which social and cultural factors can enhance or inhibit change towards female empowerment on these issues?**

**Agbalekpor, Christian.**

**Master thesis in Social Work**

**University College of Oslo and Akershus, Faculty of the Social Sciences  
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## **FOREWORD**

Writing a masters thesis on a topic such as this has been very helpful in gaining insights into the issues of social justice related to women. I have explored quiet different dimensions of the subject matter contained in this paper. However my efforts towards a completion of a research work, as this one, would not have been successful without the assistance of some individuals. I therefore wish to acknowledge the immeasurable guidance and motivation I received from my indefatigable supervisor Berit Skorpen of the Department of Social Work at the University College of Oslo and Akershus. Her experience, patience and constructive criticism have imparted in me the urge and the strong willingness to accomplish this research work.

I also wish to thank Cassandra Ofori who is also a student at the premier university of Ghana, Legon for her assistance given me whilst I was in Accra to collect data. Many thanks also go to the office of ABANTU in Accra Spintex Road for their willingness to give out documents for this paper.

Oslo, May 2012

Christian Agbalekpor.

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## ABSTRACT

Problemstillingen for min masteroppgave er todelt. Den første delen utforsker hvilke sentrale problemer som har utløst kampen for myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana. Den andre delen har som mål å finne ut hvilke sammensatte faktorer som hindrer eller fremmer realiseringen av myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana. Mine empiriske data for analysen har vært *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana*. Ulike frivillige organisasjoner (NGOer), noen politikere og enkelte organisasjoner som er opptatt av å få til en endring i kvinners livsvilkår i Ghana, samarbeidet om å skrive manifestet. Dette skrivende samarbeidet har bidratt til å identifisere manifestet som et dokument som er både autentisk og representativt for saker kvinner er opptatt av i kampen om myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana. Jeg har tolket de innsamlede dataene for å identifisere problemstillinger som er relevante i kampen for kvinners myndiggjøring. Jeg har brukt Bourdieus begreper *felt*, *habitus* og *kapital* for å analysere hvilke faktorer som kan enten fremme eller hemme endring mot myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana.

Det jeg har funnet ut er at det allerede eksisterer lover i Ghana som er ment å fremme myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana. Det at umenneskelige kulturelle praksiser fortsatt praktiseres i Ghana til tross for disse lovene, kan være vanskelig å forstå. Gjennom mine undersøkelser har jeg kommet til den erkjennelse at noen kulturelle praksiser i Ghana fortsetter å legitimere diskriminerende og undertrykkende praksis mot kvinner i Ghana. Del to av min analyse er derfor konstruksjonen av et felt jeg kaller *the field of female empowerment in Ghana*. Siden visse kulturelle elementer fungerer for å forsterke diskriminering og undertrykking av kvinner i Ghana, forstår jeg maktfeltet som *the field of some negative elements of Ghanaian culture*. Logikken i *the field of female empowerment* er å bygge en konsensus blant alle agentene i feltet. Konsensus bygningen har vært av største betydning fordi agentene ønsker gjennomslag for sine forslag om endringer. Målet med konsensus bygningen har vært å tale med en stemme og felles holdning for å begrense innflytelsen fra de negative kulturelle praksiser. Jeg konkluderer min analyse med at utdanning av kvinner i Ghana gir nøkkelen til myndiggjøring av kvinner i Ghana. Utdanning av jenter i Ghana kan hjelpe kvinner med å sikre økonomisk selvstendighet, økt deltakelse i politikk, og kreve like rettigheter. Fremfor alt kan utdanning hjelpe kvinner til bevisstgjøring og derved til å imøtegå og endre visse diskriminerende kulturelle praksiser som arbeider for å undertrykke Ghanesiske kvinner.

## ABSTRACT

The topic sentence of my research is divided into two parts. The first part is basically concerned with exploring the core issues that have sparked the flame of the female empowerment struggle in Ghana. The other objective has been to find out which factors that collaborate to hinder or promote the realization of female empowerment in Ghana. My empirical data for analysis has been *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana*. Various Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), some politicians and some organizations that are concerned about effecting a change in the life conditions of women in Ghana have collaborated in writing the manifesto. A broad support and collaboration in the writing of the manifesto has helped to identify the manifesto as a document that is both authentic and also represents the issues of women in Ghana. I have interpreted the data collected to identify issues relevant in the female empowerment process. I have also used Bourdieu especially his terms of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* to analyze data collected to find out those factors that can either promote or hinder change towards female empowerment in Ghana.

What I have found out is that there already exist laws in Ghana that are meant to promote the empowerment of women in Ghana. That inhuman cultural practices are still active in Ghana despite these laws can be difficult to understand. Through my investigations, I have come to the realization that some cultural practices in Ghana continue to legitimize discriminative and suppressive practices against women in Ghana. In part two of my analysis therefore I construct my field of study as the field of female empowerment in Ghana. Since certain cultural elements function to reinforce discrimination and oppression of women in Ghana, I construct the field of power as the field of some negative elements of Ghanaian culture. The logic in the field of female empowerment is to build a consensus among all the agents in the field of female empowerment such that consensus building has been of utmost significance for the agents. The objective of the consensus building has been to project one voice and stance in limiting the influence of the negative cultural practices. I have concluded through my analysis that education of females in Ghana provides the key to female empowerment. Education of girls in Ghana can help women in securing financial autonomy, increased participation in government, equal rights and above all education can assist women, through the process of conscientization, to refute and change certain discriminative cultural practices that work to suppress them in Ghana.

## PROLOGUE.

*In each one of us, in differing degrees, is contained the person we were yesterday, and indeed, in the nature of things it is even true that our past personae predominate in us, since the present is necessarily insignificant when compared with the long period of the past because of which we have emerged in the form we have today. It is just that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves. Consequently we have a strong tendency not to recognize their existence and to ignore their legitimate demands. By contrast, with the most recent acquisition of civilization we are vividly aware of them just because they are recent and consequently have not had time to be assimilated into our collective unconscious (Durkheim, 1977:11 in Bourdieu, 1990:56).*



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The excerpt from Durkheim gives a classic example of how relevant the past is to understanding human behavior. It is to say that our present is molded by our past conditions, a phenomenon that Bourdieu (1990) explains vividly through his term of *habitus*. This term is also used in parts of my analysis of this paper. My choice to study social work has been influenced by the devotion to, and the moral and ethical responsibility of social work policy and social work practice to finding solution to the dynamics and consequences of oppression and the quest to encourage the development of social justice in the social world (Suarez et al. 2008). It is this principle and ethical obligation of social work policy and social work practice that has been the motivation behind my choice of topic sentence for my thesis.

The process of writing a thesis of this nature has been an interesting but a demanding task. In the process of writing this paper, I have always reflected on the objective of this material in the light of the impact it can possess. However this task, irrespective of how arduous it has been to accomplish, presents a fascinating material on understanding certain oppressive conditions of women in Ghana and their struggle to emancipate themselves.

As a social work student, I have decided to conduct a research into the plight of women in Ghana. The fortunate issue is that there are already female groups, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other groups that have taken the challenge to fight for women in Ghana. My interest has been therefore to explore the core issues contained in the fight for female empowerment in Ghana hence choosing the topic:

*What issues do female activist groups in Ghana consider significant in their struggle for female empowerment? Which social and cultural factors can enhance or inhibit change towards female empowerment on these issues?*

The research question is such that it demands an answer to two specific areas of interest. The first part is concerned with the identification of the important issues that female activists are concerned about. The other part deals with exploring the various factors that can either hinder or promote the liberation of women in Ghana. The life situations of women in Ghana may not be very different from other women especially in the developing world.

The United Nations' Population Fund (UNFPA) lends credence to this. The UNFPA has established that in many parts of the world, women's equality is compromised by socio-historical imbalances in decision-making power and access to resources. The rights of women and entitlements for women are also compromised by social and historical imbalances. Either by law or by custom, women in many countries still lack rights to: own land and to inherit property, obtain access to credit, attend and stay in school and earn income and move up in their work and also freedom from job discrimination<sup>1</sup>. These challenges faced by women elsewhere in many developing countries also affect women in Ghana.

However, in Ghana substantial efforts have been made and great strides have been achieved in the empowerment of women. This can be ascertained in the legal changes that have taken place in Ghana in the post-colonial era. Ghana has also had female Attorney General, female Inspector General of Police (IGP), female Speaker of Parliament, female ministers and female parliamentarians in recent times. In the area of education the gap between men and women is closing very rapidly.

Considering the above factors one would wonder why there still exists the struggle for female empowerment in Ghana. This is exactly what this thesis is about: to find what the female activists are struggling for and also to find out the factors that can either promote or hinder the realization of the female empowerment ideal.

Collecting data for analysis has been an integral part of this paper. I have chosen The Women's Manifesto for Ghana as the main source of my data. The manifesto is a product of collaborated efforts of distinguished people whose means of participation

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/empowerment3.htm>, downloaded on 15.03.2012.

cuts across political, gender, regional, educational and ethnic boundaries in Ghana. The diversity of the contributors and the research they conducted prior to the publishing of the manifesto renders the manifesto a resource material for this paper. Thus in the methodological approach, I have outlined the processes leading to the collection of data and the rationale behind the utilization of the manifesto. It is here that I have confirmed whether the manifesto is a mere political document or a research-based document that can assist in the investigation of female issues in Ghana.

Even before outlining the steps taken towards the collection of data, I present ABANTU For Development which is an internationally recognized organization struggling for the empowerment of women in Ghana. The presentation of ABANTU has become important as the manifesto was written at the initiative of ABANTU. ABANTU also collaborated in the writing of the manifesto. As regards this, I write about the objectives of the organization and the roles it is playing towards the achievement of these goals. In like manner I do present the manifesto itself and highlight the major issues presented in it.

In the manifesto it is made obvious that certain elements of the Ghanaian culture like the practice of bride price, polygyny, forced marriage and abduction, child betrothal and marriage, widowhood rites, wife inheritance, sexual relations among close relations to produce children for families and female slave marriage are some of the cultural practices that discriminate against women in Ghana (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Others are child labor practices, food taboos, unequal inheritance rights, dehumanizing puberty rites, the banishment of women declared as witches, the ritual servitude practices (also known as *trokosi*), female genital mutilation and domestic violence (ibid).

*Trokosi* or *trokosi system* is the practice where a female is given away to a fetish priest as an atonement for the crimes committed by a family member and the female may live in servitude to the priest in many years.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has in various ways created global awareness about the plight of women especially women in developing countries.

According to its report, the UNDP writes that in recent years, more females than ever

before are participating in the work force, yet almost two-thirds of women in the developing world work in the informal economy with no labor rights or social protection. Globally, women are more likely to be jobless, bearing the worst setbacks of the economic crisis. Seventy percent of the world's hungry people are women and girls and 45 per cent of women in developing countries suffer from anemia and malnutrition<sup>2</sup>.

It is without doubt that in Ghana, like many other developing countries, more than fifty per cent of those living in abject poverty are women. A relatively low percentage of women have some form of formal education compared to men. In the area of employment most women are employed in the informal sector where employees have inadequate legal protection. The condition of service in this sector can also be deplorable.

As such much of what the female activists are concerned about ranges from tackling abject poverty among females, fighting against discrimination against women, promoting the girl child education, the fight to change certain cultural practices that discriminate against women among others (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

In many parts of the paper I apply the term of *gender* instead of sex. My interest has not been to delve much theoretically into explaining the two terms. However the purpose of using the term *gender* is to shift focus from issues internal to women and men in Ghana and draw attention to interactional and institutional *situatedness* of the behaviors of men and women in Ghana (Candace and Zimmerman1987).

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<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2011/03/08/the-100th-international-womens-day-on-the-road-to-empowerment.html>), downloaded on 23.11.2011.

## **Background for the choice of theme**

Choosing a theme for this thesis has been specifically an important aspect of my research. During my early years in school I had plans to further my studies abroad at the tertiary level. However all plans were geared towards academic sojourns in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada or Australia. The thought of pursuing my academic career in another country other than those I have written was virtually not conceived of. This can be attributed to the fact that Ghana was under British rule from about 1874 to 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957. Ghana is therefore an Anglophone country and it is this factor that makes it more feasible to deliberate over an academic career in other countries that use the English language.

It was not until April 2005 that it dawned on me that I would have to further my academic course in Scandinavia and precisely the country of Norway. At that time I had barely passed through matriculation at the University of Ghana, Legon. I knew little about Norway then. At high school I learnt the first secretary general of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, was a Norwegian and the Sogn fjord is the longest in the world. I also learnt about the beautiful northern lights during winter times. On my admission to Legon, I learnt also that females in Norway are among the most empowered women in the world. Apart from these few facts, my knowledge about Norway was limited.

During my six years stay in Norway I have witnessed the tremendous strides that Norway has made in empowering their women. The advantages associated with this development have been immeasurable. Norway is among the nations with the highest standard of living, among the best countries to live in, among the richest countries in the world and offers the best spectacle of a welfare state in the world. These achievements are attributed to both men and women who have put their expertise at the fore and have worked shoulder to shoulder to make Norway what it is today. It is tempting to say that most countries where both men and women have equal access to the national cake, without any form of gender discrimination, are among the most developed nations in the world.

The case of Norway has influenced me to reflect upon the situation in my home country Ghana. If female empowerment has led to Norway being a shining example to the world, then female empowerment in Ghana can assist not only females but also the entire nation of Ghana to make positive strides towards the development of social justice which social work practice is primarily concerned about.

I do not consider gender issues or the issue of female empowerment as a matter for women only. I deem it that men and women are inalienable individuals who co – exist with similar ideals. The idea of freedom from need, oppression or social oppression is relevant and relates to the human race and not the ‘man race’. As Mary Wollstonecraft once wrote so the issue of the rights of women should be considered within the framework of universal human rights. She took England by storm when she published her book: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. Her work was considered radical and groundbreaking because she located notions of women’s rights within the context of universal human rights.<sup>3</sup> Today, about three centuries from the publication of her book, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations has, at least, theoretically cemented the realization of equal fundamental rights for all individuals.

In Ghana as in many other parts of the world, concerted efforts are being made to realize this goal. The analysis of women and human rights issues as I will undertake later will cast more light on this issue.

Thus it should be understood that the premises for my resolve to undertake this research is not geared towards illuminating the power fissure that exists between the genders in Ghana. It is rather an attempt to raise the flag of human rights and social justice high without contempt to any of the parties involved. Thus it has to be an axiom that human rights issues are no respecters of gender: same rights have to be applicable to both sexes.

It does not however matter who is investigating social injustice. To make social injustice issues a matter for females only in itself is also injustice. Having realized the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mcrq.ac.in/pp4.pdf>, downloaded on 08.04.2012.

importance of justice to all humans, it is no denying the fact that a research into the plight of women in Ghana is in the right direction. This research significantly deals with the issue of empowerment and thus focuses on putting areas where the rights of women are trampled upon into the fore. It also aims at helping catalyze the process of social change where women are emancipated and have equal rights as men in the society.

It is my view and hope that this paper can help in attracting external assistance in the promotion of the rights of women in Ghana. It is not to say that women in Ghana do not have rights. The government of Ghana has passed much legislation in areas of gender equality. However there is still more to be done in order to attain and sustain a just society in Ghana where many sociocultural practices in one or several ways continue to reinforce discrimination against women.

Even as I am writing this paper myjoyonline.com an online newspaper reveals this:

A 15-year-old girl could end up as a third wife unless the marriage ceremony scheduled for this Saturday is stopped. Her parents are forcing her to marry a man said to be in his late forties. Though the religion of the girl's family permits such an arranged marriage, she says she is not interested and is pleading with the appropriate authorities not to allow the ceremony to take place.

The girl's plea may just have been heard. Officials of the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit (have) this afternoon stormed the residence of the little girl to rescue her after Joy News reported the issue to them. (Sackey 2011).

The excerpt above shows the relevance of social work practice in Ghana in ensuring that vulnerable groups like women in Ghana are not subjected to undue social injustices.

## **The topic sentence**

Owing to the current power structure between men and women in Ghana, I have chosen this topic sentence:

*What issues do female activist groups in Ghana consider significant in their struggle for female empowerment? Which social and cultural factors can enhance or inhibit change towards female empowerment on these issues?*

The topic sentence is divided into two. The first part is concerned with exploring the major issues that women consider significant in their struggle. The second part seeks to find out the factors that promote or hinder the realization of the empowerment ideal. This will be further explained under *the choice of method* later in the paper. I will begin with the presentation of the Women's Manifesto for Ghana. The manifesto is the empirical material for the thesis. I begin first and foremost with the structure of the thesis.

## **The structure of the thesis**

In the following chapters I will present the Women's Manifesto for Ghana in chapter two. ABANTU will also be presented under the presentation of the manifesto. This will be followed by the methodology of the thesis where I will explain the method used in this research in chapter three. In chapter four the theoretical perspective for the thesis will be presented. The theoretical perspective provides a theoretical framework for the comprehension of key concepts that are applied in the analysis of the manifesto. Key concepts inter alia *habitus, capital, power, empowerment* and *culture* are theoretically explained. Data analysis follows the theoretical perspective in chapter five. Data analysis forms the principal part of the thesis and this is where data collected is analyzed. After this is the conclusion chapter where conclusion is drawn out of the material presented.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WOMEN'S MANIFESTO FOR GHANA

The manifesto was written in collaboration with ABANTU For Development. I will therefore, before presenting the manifesto, present what ABANTU is.

#### **ABANTU For Development**

ABANTU for Development is a non – governmental organization in Africa established in 1991 in London. It is principally focused on the rights of African women. The organization was initiated by a Kenyan, the late Dr. Wanjiru Kihoro in collaboration with other women of African descent in Europe. The organization has many regional offices spread across the continent of Africa. The West African regional office is situated in Accra, Ghana.<sup>4</sup>

As a non – governmental organization, it has a Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN). ABANTU for Development was established in Ghana in 1991 and has since occupied itself with female empowerment issues in the sub region. As a gender and policy advocacy organization, its vision has been, among other things, the desire to eliminate the prevalent structural inequalities especially those structures that function to exclude females from fully participating in national affairs and deny them the right to access national resources equally. It also has a vision of a world where empowered women and men advocate collectively to promote women's rights and gender justice for

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<sup>4</sup> (<http://www.abantu-rowa.org/aboutus.html#about-us>), downloaded on 16.09.2011

transformational change and a just society not only in Ghana but also in the whole of Africa.<sup>5</sup>

### **A presentation of the manifesto**

The thought of using the manifesto is borne out of several factors. In order to conduct an investigation into a national issue as this one, it is necessary for the utilization of a database that covers female empowerment in a national perspective. It is also equally significant to secure an authoritative source of data that can lend more credibility and authenticity to the data used. I will return to explain the major reasons for using the document later in this paper under methodology. However before I embark on data analysis or explaining why I have chosen to use this document, I will describe and present the manifesto.

The Women's Manifesto for Ghana is proclaimed as a political document yet its framers consider it as non-partisan. It is perhaps political because the document aims at influencing the government to address female issues and at the same time having the objective to influence the 2004 general elections in the republic of Ghana. It can also be regarded as non-partisan because in its essence it does not support any political party nor does it attempt to win political power for its writers.

Throughout the document, it becomes crystal clear that the manifesto is devoted to, and has made the issues of women in Ghana, as its focal point. There are many undergirding factors for this. Principal among these factors is the notion that there has been inadequate public focus on the plight of women over the years. By devoting each chapter to a specific theme in the female empowerment agenda, the manifesto summarizes the different social contexts where the rights of women are abused in the Ghanaian society from the past to the present.

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<sup>5</sup> (<http://www.abantu-rowa.org/aboutus.html#about-us>), downloaded on 16.09.2011.

It will be erroneous to assert that the manifesto is a chronological documentation of female suppression in Ghana. However I can admit that the document abridges the account of discrimination against women in Ghana over the years. In many ways the document has succeeded in providing detailed accounts of several dimensions of the seriousness of issues that women are confronted with. Disrespect for, and abuse of the rights of females in Ghana is a part of several relevant issues for women in Ghana contained in the document. The document also sheds light on some of the root causes of discrimination against women in Ghana. Numerous suggestions as to how this social problem can be tackled are also contained in the manifesto. In essence it presents the present situations of women as it was in 2004 and at the same time provides suggestions for a future roadmap to addressing these issues. The processes that have led to the writing and publication of the manifesto are also relevant in my research. The processes that have led to the document can attest to whether the facts in the document are research based or not. Therefore I will now write about the efforts that culminated in the production of the manifesto.

### **The manifesto as a product of coordinated effort**

Although the document is a political document, many groups were consulted in Ghana for information on the status quo of Ghanaian women before writing it. It is in this light that the manifesto can be seen as a product of the various agencies or groups in Ghana that are struggling to address issues pertaining to females. Various Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations cooperated with each other in writing the manifesto. This collaborative process to explore the condition of women in Ghana by the NGOs is a research process.

Other groups that were involved include women groups in Ghana, some political representatives in Ghana, District Assemblywomen from across all the regions of Ghana and media women (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

It is this broad support and collaboration that has helped to identify the manifesto as a document that represents the issues of women in Ghana.

The manifesto has a preamble at the opening page where the foundations of the manifesto are laid. The other sections range from women and economic empowerment, women and land issues, women and politics, women and human rights, discriminatory practices against women, institutions mandated to protect the rights of women among others (ibid).

It aims at drawing the attention of the Ghanaian government and other bodies, national or international, to the plight of women and hence assisting the female emancipation cause. The manifesto explicitly outlines the common demands of Ghanaian women that are prerequisite for truncating the emergence of biased power equilibrium among the genders in Ghana. These demands are also, according to the manifesto, a roadmap to attaining sustainable development (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

I will give a more detailed presentation of these issues in the next pages.

### **Issues in the manifesto**

I have in the earlier pages hinted on the kind of issues contained in the manifesto. These issues range from individual female issues to collective issues of women in Ghana. And Throughout the manifesto, the writers have always projected that the concerns presented in the manifesto are the collective concerns of Ghanaian women. This assertion is supported by the research-based nature of the manifesto. There are also some political issues presented in the manifesto but this, in no terms, transforms the document into a partisan political document (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

The main issues in the document are divided into two categories. On the one hand are those issues that can be addressed by legislations and policy development on the part of the government. Under this lie the issues of high level of abject poverty among females in Ghana, low level of education among women, low representation of women in politics and violence against women. On the other hand are those issues that are embedded in Ghanaian cultural practices. Under this category lie the issues of discriminative cultural practices and power imbalance in the family.

In the manifesto it is made evident that Ghana, as a nation, possesses so many positive cultural values that have assisted and continue to promote the sustenance of peace and tolerance in the country. Nevertheless there are some elements of these traditions and norms that have to be altered in order to fit into the modern world and keep pace with the current trend of development. Cultures that, according to the manifesto, are adamant to change can become outdated and unproductive (ibid). In Ghana, sadly though, some elements of culture tend to impart the lives of women (ibid).

By referring to Article 26 (2) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the manifesto makes it comprehensive that customary practices that undermine the dignity of persons or are injurious to the physical and psychological well - being of all persons are outlawed in Ghana. The manifesto also alludes to The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and its Women's Protocol as having provisions that prohibit cultural practices that discriminate against any persons, including women (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

It is worth noting that Ghana currently cooperates with many international organizations in areas of promoting human rights and justice. Irrespective of this, the manifesto establishes that by hiding behind the veil of culture, many forms of discrimination against women are practiced. The cultural practices in Ghana have a binding force on all individuals but in many cases, as the manifesto reveals, society becomes biased towards women in the compliance to the Ghanaian culture. In certain circumstances women themselves are compelled to enforce some cultural practices on their fellow women although these practices can be detrimental to their health (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Some Ghanaian cultural values accord differences in the status of men and women and thereby helping to undermine the authority of women in the Ghanaian family system. A distinct example is that women are expected within the norms of Ghanaian culture to submit to their husbands notwithstanding the seriousness of the issues at stake. In this case religion also plays a great role in reinforcing the submissive attitude of women (ibid).

There are also instances of injustice towards women permitted by tradition especially in the area where women discharge more domestic responsibilities than men in the home. This situation provides women with very limited time and energy to do paid work and engage in other social activities outside the home. The adage that men are the heads of the family has a deep root in the Ghanaian society and this has adversely affected women in the areas of decision-making and exercising autonomy in the family (ibid).

The issues affecting the lives of women in Ghana have become a national and social challenge to the government of Ghana. Despite this the government of Ghana and its agencies have not been capable to tackle the incidence of discriminating against women in Ghana. The inability of the government and its agencies is more or less due to the fact that these institutions have limitations in their pursuance of equality for all citizen (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Cultural practices such as the practice of bride price, polygyny, forced marriage and abduction, child betrothal and marriage, widowhood rites, wife inheritance, sexual relations among close relations to produce children for families and female slave marriage are some of the cultural practices that discriminate against women in Ghana. Others are child labor practices, food taboos, unequal inheritance rights, dehumanizing puberty rites, the banishment of women declared as witches, the ritual servitude practices (also known as trokosi), female genital mutilation and domestic violence (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

There are also many other issues that are of much interest to the female liberation struggle in Ghana. Equality of women in Ghana also verges on equality in economic capabilities of both men and females. To shed light on the economic conditions of women in Ghana, the manifesto presents a comprehensive account of economic reforms in Ghana since the nineteen eighties (ibid). These reforms have in diverse ways had negative impacts on the lives of women in Ghana. The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) known in Ghana as the Economic Recovery Program is one of the major economic reform policies in Ghana. Although such a program was adopted in Ghana, it was suggested and virtually controlled by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to the manifesto SAP was mainly focused on short - term economic gains and longer – term market liberalization of the major sectors of the

Ghanaian economy. Owing to the adoption of SAP, subsidies have been removed leading to a decline in industrialization and a higher cost of living in Ghana. Consequently certain sectors of the economy have been adversely impacted by this policy and most especially sectors where women are most employed, rendering the condition of the lives of women more deplorable (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

The government of Ghana has not been unconcerned though about the plight of the Ghanaian women. There have been tremendous efforts on the part of the government to allay the fears of women in Ghana. To this end many bills have been passed into law and there have also been numerous legislations geared towards enhancing the living conditions and the rights of women (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Some of the laws passed encompass Marriage Laws, Intestate Succession Law provided for under PNDC Law 111 of 1985, Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law (PNDC Law 112 of 1985) and the Labor Act 651 (2003) (ibid). The Criminal Code has provisions to shield women from obnoxious traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. These laws and legislations provide for protection against sexual violence. The Children's Act insulates minors from underage marriage whilst the Matrimonial Causes Act offers assistance to women seeking divorce (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

The current constitution governing Ghana came into force in 1992 (ibid). It has provided for the guarantee of the basic human rights of the citizens of Ghana. It guarantees all citizens fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in Article 12 of the constitution of Ghana. Protection against discrimination and the state's obligation to take steps to end all forms of discrimination on grounds of gender, race, color, ethnicity, religion and creed, social and economic status falls under Article 17 of the constitution. Article 35 (5 and 6) makes it explicit that it is the state's responsibility to end all forms of discrimination through law reform and affirmative action (ibid).

In addition to the internal legal and constitutional provisions, Ghana is also a signatory to many international human rights instruments like the United Nations (UN) Charter of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. Ghana is also bound by the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and is thus obliged to incorporate these rights into the Ghanaian legal system (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

However there are also other international commitments that require Ghana to respect international human rights. Commitments have also arisen from various UN conferences organized on the rights of women. Among these conferences are the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS), the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) and the 2000 review of Beijing commitments. Others include many UN conferences such as the Vienna Human Rights Conference, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), the Social Summit (1994), and also the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Despite the numerous national and international instruments, the manifesto alleges that women are still discriminated against in various ways. The manifesto makes it clear that little has been done to repeal discriminatory laws from the constitution, an action that has helped in perpetuating discrimination against women. There are also some other issues but the most significant issues are presented here. It is these issues that I shall analyze later under the analysis part of this paper.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will be devoted to underscoring the methodological approach used in my research. I will focus on explaining the reasons for the utilization of the manifesto as a reliable source of data for the thesis. A journey to Ghana led to my access to data. The various obstacles and opportunities involved are also presented. Prior to the commencement of the research project, I had intended to apply the qualitative research interview but this was later abandoned in favor of making use of the manifesto as my source of data to analyze issues on the empowerment of women in Ghana. Some of the reasons are outlined further in this paper.

The chapter also deals with the pros and cons that can be associated with the use of the manifesto. I have also reflected on my role as a researcher in the research process.

#### **The choice of method**

In a social research there are two methods in investigating a social phenomenon. These approaches are qualitative research and quantitative research methods (Bryman 2008). I have chosen a qualitative method for my research. This is primarily due to the fact that I am interested in understanding the meaning of female empowerment in Ghana and what it entails. Qualitative method offers a better approach in finding meaning of social phenomenon than quantitative method, which is more devoted to finding cause and effect (ibid).

As mentioned before, the underlying reason for my research is to find out about the struggle for female empowerment and gender equality in Ghana. This involves finding out, based on the manifesto as my source of data, the core issues of female empowerment as well as the various factors that can promote or inhibit transformation towards this. In furtherance I aim at exploring the factors or the conditions that have to

be met in order for the power imbalance between men and women to reach equilibrium. It is an interesting topic to investigate since the quest for gender equality has been advocated for in Ghana for many years. Since this is an issue that concerns a categorized group of people in Ghana and at the same time a national issue, data used in the research has to come from a reliable source hence the use of the Women's Manifesto for Ghana as my data.

The reliability of the manifesto rests on its mode of production. That is to say that the manifesto is research-based and the organization that initiated its production is internationally recognized. Besides, the facts or issues presented in the manifesto can be traced back to its source in the event of verifying the genuineness of the facts presented in the thesis.

### **The twofold nature of the topic sentence**

The first demand of the topic sentence demands that I find out the integral issues that female activists are occupied with. As such I will resort to the interpretation of the data presented to find out the core issues in the struggle for female empowerment in Ghana. The interpretation of data will also constitute the first part of my analysis.

In this first part, I will adopt the use of hermeneutics. There are many reasons for this. In the first place hermeneutics stresses the need for social science to concern itself about the comprehension of meaningful "historico – culturally" specific social activity and not about finding cause and effect as advocated by positivism (Dean et al. 2006, 7). It also focuses on finding meaning in social life by employing interpretation whilst at the same time preserving the truism that humans, as social animals, have historicity (Dean et al. 2006). There is a historical perspective to women's status quo in Ghana but most importantly the notion here is to find the meaning of female empowerment in Ghana. This makes hermeneutics relevant.

In order to meet the second demand of the research question, I employ the terms of Bourdieu (1930 – 2002) such as field, capital and habitus to analyze female

empowerment as presented in the document. Most importantly, I will emphasize the role of culture and habitus in understanding the life conditions of women in Ghana.

### **The process of collecting relevant data**

The process of collecting data has been one of the most important aspects of my research. The research project undoubtedly concerns itself with an important issue on another continent. I had to travel from Oslo to Accra, Ghana prior to the writing of this thesis. My journey to and from Ghana was successful in terms of safety. The actual method that was premeditated was qualitative research interview. It was an arduous challenge to contact personnel at the institutions that I had planned to fetch my data from. In Ghana I tried to interview some personnel from Netright Ghana, which is also an organization focused on the promotion of the rights of women in Ghana. All my efforts at meeting the head of the office proved futile. This was partly because of ill health on the part of the head of the organization. This did not however dissuade me from undertaking the research. Prior to embarking on the trip to Ghana, I had a backup plan to the qualitative interview. On realizing that it was not feasible to conduct the interview, I had to use the alternative that I had – to collect documents as data.

Luckily enough I had close contact with some of my student friends from Ghana's premier university, the university of Ghana, Legon. This was a great resource in my research process. I was assisted in finding addresses to the institution(s) that I had decided to contact. Finding the addresses to these institutions was not an easy task. One could have performed this task with less or no effort in Norway by using the internet but it was much of work in Ghana. I contacted the office of ABANTU for Development on Spintex Road, Accra. My visit to ABANTU's office coincided with the organization's tenth year anniversary. It was a great moment and it was also much of a relief to be at the office where I had the opportunity to have a direct contact with the organization. I informed the office that I was after data for a research paper touching on the issues of women in Ghana. I was presented with some documents including anniversary brochures. These documents contain significant issues that jostle for attention. By reading these documents I got access to the Women's Manifesto for Ghana. This

document was referenced to in one of the documents that I was presented with as an accomplishment of the organization. I then searched for the manifesto itself which I got access to.

### **Reasons for using existing documents as data for my thesis**

In the contemporary world there exists a myriad of texts such that it can be challenging to effect a distinct differentiation between texts that are documents and those that are not documents. The recognition of things as documents is however contingent on how they are incorporated into the fields of action (Prior 2003). In the case of this research the manifesto becomes a document by virtue of its recognition in the field of female empowerment. Many NGOs and many female activist groups as well as some representatives of the government of Ghana at the time of its publication recognized the manifesto.

Therefore, as it is in this writing, the document provides some central issues on the liberation of women in Ghana. I will apply the topic sentence of this thesis to make an analysis of the information the documents provides.

It is worth to note that the manifesto dissects the issue of female empowerment in Ghana to the core such that it provides evidence of scenarios where the very rights of women are unduly trampled. Viewed from this angle the manifesto provides a solid base and a strong argument for the existence of discrimination against women in Ghana.

The document was written in 2004 and there have been continuous efforts to address the irregularities in the Ghanaian social landscape. What was considered significant issues for women in 2004 might not be a relevant issue after a decade. Although the document's relevance may vary in the course of time, its significance could be understood in the field of female empowerment in Ghana.

In terms of its contents, it can suffice to say however that the document presents fundamental concerns of women that have been investigated by various groups in Ghana and compiled into a single document. The issue of whether the document is

research based or politically motivated is illuminated under the presentation of the document. Data available for the thesis is not just the views of one or two persons or one organization. The manifesto clarifies that the document was compiled by a coalition of several NGOs and many other civil society organizations such that the document presents a general view on female issues in Ghana.

### **Coding of data**

Owing to the timeframe of this paper, the manifesto presents an already – existing data that are relevant for the thesis. It does not only make it timesaving but also facilitated the process of data coding and data analysis. Coding is a stage associated with data analysis where I have categorized or organized my data into a form that is easier to comprehend (Payne and Payne 2004). Coding is where I have organized issues that fall under various categories. For instance I have written down key issues that are raised and are relevant to discrimination against women. In the course of reading the manifesto I identified and organized key words and issues that fall under such categories as discriminatory practices, education, empowerment, culture, the government's role, human rights and the laws of Ghana, economic policies and women and development. Each time these words are written down, their references in the manifesto are also registered in my paper of entries. This is where the manifesto is of much assistance. It has facilitated the referencing of these key words as it is already categorized into headings and subtitles. I have neither used computers nor computer software in the coding of data in the manifesto. This is because the available data has already made it feasible for coding and besides this, I have applied qualitative method that is not concerned with measurement and quantity.

In coding culture for instance, I have culture with two subcategories: the negative sides and the positive sides. The elements of culture that tend to accentuate or fortify discrimination are written under the negative category whilst the elements that are progressive and help to sustain peace fall under the positive category with references to the manifesto.

I have taken much effort in identifying what the document highlights as empowerment. Two categories are also identified here. On the one hand I organize areas where women consider themselves as not powerful into one group and on the other hand I identify factors that the manifesto considers necessary for empowerment into another group. That is not all. Under the category of situations where women are not powerful, there emerges a subcategory: factors that account for this.

The process of coding could have been much cumbersome if I had used the qualitative interview where I would have to transcribe before coding. Problems related to the validity and accuracy of the transcribed material are avoided. It has to be admitted that the reading and coding of data have been simultaneously undertaken.

The use of the document is not without problems. The document presents issues in the document as if Ghana has one form of culture that all citizens practice. The regional variations in the status of women are not ironed out. In some cultures women assume high status especially in matters relating to the selection of traditional kings and queens as it is in the Akan culture. Trokosi is not what is practiced in the whole of Ghana but is limited to the Ewes in the southeastern part of Ghana (this is now an illegal practice). Female genital mutilation may be unheard of in many parts of Ghana but it was or *is* practiced in the northern and some other parts of Ghana. There are also variations in terms of religion. Certain practices in the relatively Muslim north are not permitted in the predominantly Christian south. These elements are partially absent in the presentation of the female issues in Ghana as it is presented in the document.

On the other hand, if I were to conduct an interview, I might have had a broader scope of understanding this issue since I might be presented with issues pertaining to a particular region or location in Ghana. This could also have led to the emergence of different voices. Another factor here is also that since the document was used to make an impact on governance in Ghana in the 2004 elections, certain issues might have been rhetorically over emphasized to win political sympathy from the government especially. The professional language used in the document could also have obscured certain nuances in the female empowerment struggle in Ghana. For instance the document have not distinctively coined certain abusive practices to either religion or ethnic groups in Ghana.

## **The issue of objectivity and subjectivity**

If I were to use ethnography or interview, then I might be concerned about how my interaction with the participants have, or might have influenced the analysis of my data. However reflexivity also exists even as I have used an existing document as my empirical data. I deem it important to clarify my position and role in the research process as well as how this can affect the results of the research. My reflexive thoughts relate to the issue of objectivity and subjectivity.

Objectivity in social research concerns itself with how impartial a researcher is in the presentation of his or her data. To put it in Bourdieu's own terms is to say that an objective relation to the object of study implies "distance and externality" (Bourdieu 1990, 36). Distance and externality invoke the sense of being unconnected to the object of study such that one can have an objective and impartial understanding of the phenomenon under study. It can also suggest how a researcher is not influenced by his or her personal values and beliefs in data analysis.

In his reference to Turner (1967), Bourdieu reflects on how difficult or impossible objectivity could be in social research. According to Turner (1967) one could be influenced by various factors like the person's aims and position that can alter or impair the overall comprehension of the situation being studied (Turner 1967 cited in Bourdieu 1990). This impossibility of objectivity is mirrored in the fact that irrespective of whichever viewpoint that a researcher adopts "there must be primacy of logic and structure, apprehended synchronically, over individual and collective history" (Bourdieu 1990, 31).

Subjectivity on the other hand can be understood as the condition where the researcher is influenced by his or her personal beliefs or values. It is a phenomenon where the researcher "imposes on the object his own norms of construction ..." (Bourdieu, 1990, 31).

The distinctive line between the paradigms of objectivity and subjectivity can, most often than not, be blurred in social research like the one I have undertaken. This draws on the fact that the object of social research is a reflexive being who "is both the subject

and object of science'' such that the attainment of subjectivism is more prevalent the closer the object is to the subject whilst there can be more objectivity the farther the object is to the subject (Bourdieu 1990, 46). For Bourdieu (1990), 'social science cannot treat social realities as things'' (Bourdieu 1990). However it must be reiterated that in social research one has to be conversant with the reality that there is always an interchange between subjectivism and objectivism (Bourdieu 1990).

The oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity is also prevalent in my research process. This has been facilitated by certain conditions associated with my relation to the research itself. The fact that I am a man and involved in investigating female empowerment issues asserts my position, in a great measure, towards objectivity more than if I were a female. This offers me the possibility to view issues of women as something external to myself. As a consequence my analysis of data falls in line more with objectivity and with less influence from my personal beliefs and values. In other words I am not a woman and I fall outside the category of females in Ghana. This in essence creates distance between my research object and myself. Although the meaning of the data gathered can be sought, I cannot talk of my experience of discrimination or my suppression in my own society since I am not a woman. This factor can help to render more objectivity to my collection and analysis of data.

Another social condition that can affect the research is my geographical proximity to the object of study. I had stayed in Norway for about half a decade before embarking on this project. My perspective towards female issues in Ghana might have changed during these years especially where Norway is a country where female empowerment issues are taken very seriously. My stay in Norway could affect my data in both ways. In the first place my geographical distance from my home country assists me in getting detached to the issues pertaining to my country. The distance helps to have an out - of - the box comprehension of female issues in Ghana. This orients my understanding of the data collected in an objective perspective rather than in a subjective perspective. On the other hand the fact that I currently stay in Norway whilst undertaking my research can create a sense of nearness other than distance. This stems from the fact that I can be influenced by the female empowerment discourse in Norway and attempt to understand female issues in Ghana in comparison to Norway. Attempting to understand data



collected this way can reinforce the absence of objectiveness whilst promoting subjectivity.

A closer perusal of the manifesto reveals that the writers are mostly Ghanaians. The fact that they are Ghanaians brings nearness of the subject, in this case the writers, to the object, which is female empowerment. This factor of being Ghanaians is further compounded by the truthfulness of the fact that I am also a Ghanaian carrying out the research. My personal experiences and observations over the years preceding my departure to Norway create an inevitable historicity concerning how I comprehend female issues in Ghana. It is impossible to say that my previous conceptions of female issues in Ghana are thrown out of the window because of my stay in Norway. My previous experiences have become a continuous past in the present that will continue to influence my understanding of these issues (Bourdieu 1990). It will be an arduous task, a task whose success is highly doubtful, to attempt to nullify the impact of my direct contact with the condition of women in Ghana in the years that I was in Ghana. Objectivity then would have been possible, perhaps, if my cognitive prowess had turned to a tabula rasa during my stay in Norway. It is relevant to note that the habitus of the authors of the manifesto in conjunction with my habitus function to ensure that an objective account of the female issues in Ghana is more of an ideal than a reality.

However it has to be acknowledged that I do not come from all the ten regions of Ghana. A culture into which I was not born can offer a good opportunity for objectivity. That I am not part of that culture or I was not born into it, affords me the chance to have a distanced approach to understanding the very cultural issues prevalent in that region as presented in the manifesto. Nonetheless my view and comprehension could still be more of subjectivity because of my connectedness to the cultural identity of Ghana. In continuance is the admission of the notion that the very fact that most of the writers of the manifesto are women, can limit the attainment of objectivity of the document. In other words it is difficult to say that the women who have written the document were not influenced by their personal experiences as women in Ghana.

The idea of nearness and distance as Bourdieu (1990) writes about in connection with objectivity and subjectivity can thus be noticed throughout the research process. The various dispositions that I have acquired linked with the nature of the manifesto and the

position and disposition of its writers, render the research method as a pendulum that oscillates between objectivity and subjectivity. In fact objectivity that advocates a detachment from the object of study, is difficult to achieve in social research. This view is further stressed in the hermeneutics where it is argued that objectivity is impractical for the social scientist precisely because the social scientist is ‘‘situated’’ in relation to his or her field of study and they are obliged to assume a particular point of view (Dean et al. 2006, 6).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR THE THESIS

I consider it necessary to have a theoretical background and framework for the analysis and comprehension of data collected. The idea of female empowerment is not a new phenomenon, at least in this twenty-first century. All the same the approach to female empowerment can be diverse and meandering. There are many perspectives involved in understanding female empowerment. Understanding the content of the document on female issues in Ghana is also important. The women in Ghana both as individuals and as a collective group constitute a research object. So also are the Ghanaian society, its structures and norms, the laws and customs in addition to the interaction between men and women in the society. All these are phenomena that need to be comprehended within a specific framework. This calls for the application of a theoretical perspective that can succinctly delve into all these aspects of the female empowerment struggle in Ghana.

The Ghanaian society, like all other societies is divided into several segments that Bourdieu (1990) calls *field*. I therefore present the theory of field where the institutions of ABANTU, the government, the Ghanaian media, the writers of the manifesto among others are agents. The field theory also encompasses concepts like *capital* and *habitus*. Therefore I also present the concepts of habitus and capital since these terminologies are central in Bourdieu's works in understanding human practice. *Empowerment* is a term that is a cornerstone in this thesis therefore I take much efforts to theoretically define empowerment. Culture is also another term that is given a theoretical background. As my analysis will later reveal, I will construct a *field of female empowerment* that is in deep conflict with some cultural practices that I understand as *the field of power*. However I begin with the theory of field.

## **The theory of field according to Pierre Bourdieu**

To begin with is to assert the axiomatic notion that terms such as field, capital and habitus cannot be defined independent of the very theoretical framework that they constitute (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Thus a field can be considered in analytic terms as a network of impartial relations between positions (ibid). The positions, probably occupied by agents within the field, are defined objectively such that they exert upon the occupants of these positions limitations and opportunities by situs. In furtherance, a field as an independent social space or microcosm exhibits a form of logic that is peculiar to it. However in terms of the emergence of the field or how it evolves, Bourdieu asserts that field is not bestowed that recognition as an outcome of premeditated determined human efforts but it submits itself to the rules and regularities that are implicit in it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Ascertaining the boundaries of any field is very challenging. However the limits of any field can be comprehended as an autonomous social space within which the various effects of the logic of field are practiced. This implies that field has flexible boundaries that are quite susceptible to change. It cannot however possess parts or components such that one cannot talk of the parts of a field. However field possesses what is termed subfields (ibid).

Concerning the agents located within a specific field, it is quite rational in field terms to suggest that the characteristics of any agent located within the field cannot be solely underscored by resorting to the inherent properties of the agent in question. The position occupied by the agent has to be taken into consideration in analyzing the very characteristics of any agent located within any particular field. Thus the concept of the demarcations of the field draws on the acknowledgement of the truism that, where the influence of the field ceases to be felt connotes the boundary of the field. However a concept that is prevalent within the field is that the interactive forces that exist between the agents in the field, the idea of which agent accumulates which capital and which agent gains which profit, molds the structure and limitations of the field (ibid).

According to the field theory, there is always stakes that exist in the field. These stakes are generated by the very struggles and competitions between the agents on the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). The relation among the agents is such that the agents oppose each other in their efforts to gain advantage over the stakes that exist in the field.

Thus through continuous and resilient efforts to gain profits, the agents make investment into the competition that exists in the field. This investment is termed *illusio* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

In general terms Pierre Bourdieu applies the term of ‘‘fields’’ to mirror the fragmentation of society into different segments or ‘‘worlds’’ (Crossley 2005). The Ghanaian family system, the educational system, the political system, the economic system among others can be considered as fields under Bourdieu’s approach in distinguishing the different sectors in the society. The field is not merely individuals in interaction but there are many other aspects that are more significant. In a field there exists agents who are apportioned various positions in accordance with their access to power and capital in the field. The norms, traditions, schemas of categorization and codes prevailing in the field determine the role of the agents in the field (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Crossley 2005). In continuance Bourdieu (1984 cited in Crossley 2005) establishes that any field is susceptible to change and the agents in it possess diverse and opposing interests that motivates them to accomplish goals that conflict with each other. Therefore in the field there is always a bone of contention, something the agents in the field have dispute over or struggle about. Bourdieu highlights more importantly new generations entering the field and trying to transform the status quo of the structures in the field (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Crossley 2005).

A fact that is worth noting about field is that agents can compete either individually or as a collective group to shield their interest and their position within the field in which they are located (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Agents employ similar approach and struggle to impose upon the field a form of hierarchy that favors their products within the field. In all cases the strategies and views held by agents within the field are directly a function of their relative position they occupy within the specific field in which they are located (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

Agents who dominate the others in a given field are positioned by virtue of their capital that they possess, to influence the interaction in the field to work in their favor but they must also be prepared to face the resistance of the dominated group or agents at all times (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1995). A consequence of domination in the field is that

the struggle amongst the agents in the field and the existent dialectic in the field becomes extinct (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

That which is obvious about the application of field theory in analysis is that it entails the employment of three compulsory elements that are connected and internalized (Bourdieu 1971d cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). These three internalized moments that are connected to each other will be explained. In the first place the location of the field has to be analyzed as against *the field of power* (ibid). Secondly there is the need to outline the objective composition of the connectedness between the *positions* of agents or institutions that struggle for commonly accepted form of power or authority within the field. And thirdly the *dispositions* of the agents or the agents' *habitus* have to be analyzed.

In all cases one has to consider the fact that the position of agents and what the agents do express by virtue of their position are inseparable in analytical terms (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Using field theory in my analysis suggests also that the actual object of study and analysis in my research is not the individual but the field in which they are located assumes the primacy of my analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). This assumption, that individuals as social beings are regarded as agents situated within the field, infers that individuals as agents are socially constructed and transformed within the field in which they are located (ibid). What the concept of the field offers is the ability to understand the primary undergirding rationale of the position of the individual, now considered as agent, within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Since capital is integral in defining the position and power or competitiveness of agents in the field, I shall define capital in relation to the field theory.

### **Bourdieu's understanding of capital in field theory**

Closely linked with the field theory is the concept of capital. The concept of capital as expounded by Bourdieu distinguishes different kinds of resources that social agents can gather in an attempt to realize their goals, and by virtue of the value of these resources,

agents will have the urge to accumulate them such that those agents that possess more of these resources have greater advantage over the other agents (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Crossley 2005). However there are different kinds of capital: economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Crossley 2005). Economic capital encompasses the total wealth of agents and the monetary value of their assets. The economic capital is produced in the economic field but the economic field transcends all other fields making economic capital a valuable asset in many social settings (ibid). Economic capital of agents in the field refers to the amount of money they possess, their assets that can be converted to monetary capital in the form of inter alia land, houses, and ornaments (ibid).

The acquisition of cultural resources can strengthen those agents that possess these resources to have advantage over the other agents. This type of capital is known as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Crossley 2005). Bourdieu argues that cultural capital can assume one of three forms: the ‘objectified’ form which refers to the possession of objects or items such as books, paintings and so on, the ‘institutionalized’ form which refers to academic qualifications and ‘embodied’ form which refers to personal skills or competences that are culturally valued (ibid).

Symbolic capital primarily refers to social status or social recognition (ibid). In situations where some individuals are accorded high social recognition and status, this can lead to the procurement of certain advantages over the others. By virtue of their advantages that they acquire over the others, these individuals can be recognized as having symbolic capital (ibid). This form of capital is less organized compared to the other forms of capital and does not pertain only to a specific field (ibid).

In field terms, the interactive forces between the agents on the field determine capital such that capital is nonexistent and cannot function except in relation to a specific field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). The acquisition of capital empowers those who possess it to have certain categories of advantages over the others in accessing those profits that are at stake in the field and this further makes the possession of capital a determining factor as regards the position of agents in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). The relative worth of the different categories of capital varies from one field to another and are determined by the field or fields within which they are located. It is the value of the

agent's capital within the field that determines the competitiveness and the strategic orientation of the agent in the competition on the field. Thus it can suffice to say that the agent's capital explains the role of the agent on the field: whether submissive or dominant (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

It is significant to admit that agents with quite equivalent overall capital can assume very dissimilar positions in the field within which they are located. This owes to the structure of the capital that the agents possess: whilst one agent may be endowed with more of cultural capital and less economic capital, another agent may have more of economic capital and little cultural capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

It is also quite significant to admit that the strategy, competitiveness and the overall position of an agent in the field are not only dependent upon the size of the agent's capital but also it depends on the transformation or evolution of the size and structure of the agent's capital over time (ibid). What this infers is that the position and competitiveness of the agent within the field is linked with the agent's 'social trajectory and dispositions' that has been produced from their continuous and prolonged subjection to this position enabled by the capital they have possessed over time (ibid).

Agents can act in a manner to either maintain or increase their capital in accordance with the rules and regulations that exist in the field. This means also that agents can also collaborate to transform the relative value of the various forms of capital available in the field in which they are located. This, in Bourdieu's term can be done by undermining the value of capital of their opponents whilst promoting the value of capital they themselves have accumulated (ibid). Since the agent's disposition and social trajectory is a product of a continuous subjection to their position enabled by capital in the field, I shall write about this disposition in the continuing pages. This disposition thus acquired is called habitus (Bourdieu 1990).

### **The concept of habitus according to Bourdieu**

The concept of habitus has become central in my project work. This is due to the application of the field theory in my analysis of the agents located in the field that I will



construct in part two of my analysis in chapter five. I also deem it that a good understanding of the theory of habitus could help in the comprehension of the relationship between the agents in the field of female empowerment, the field that I will construct later, and also the logic that governs this relationship.

The position and competitiveness of the agent within any specific field is linked with the agent's "social trajectory and dispositions" that has been produced from their continuous and prolonged subjection to this position enabled by the capital they have possessed over time (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). This disposition known as habitus, which highlights the agent's historicity, shall be defined here (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus is defined as:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (Bourdieu 1990, 53).

What produces habitus according to Bourdieu (1990) is the very "conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1990, 53). Habitus that is produced by individuals' past experiences forms the individual and collective practice. This habitus allows for the continuous presence of historical experiences that sediment in each individual in the form of the manner of perception, thought and action. As a consequence habitus tends to ensure the "correctness" of individual's actions and their recurrence over time (Bourdieu 1990, 54).

The habitus of an individual is "a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices" (Bourdieu 1990, 54). As an inherited system of "generative schemes" habitus allows for the free production of all the "thought, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production" (Bourdieu 1990, 54). Bourdieu then writes that the structuring structures that produce habitus govern human practice through habitus and within the frameworks

of the limitations that the structures initially impose on the habitus (Bourdieu 1990). In essence it is to say that being produced by certain impartial regularities, the habitus functions in a way as to produce all reasons and characters that are permissible within the parameters of these regularities (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus is an embodiment of the individual's past experiences that have been internalized in the individual – the continuous presence of the past. Owing to the nature of its production and influence on the individual, habitus renders the practices of individuals a matter of spontaneity, that is individuals perform practices without being conscious of why they do perform them (Bourdieu 1990).

As my analysis will show I will both show how habitus has made the action of the agents in the field of female empowerment a matter of spontaneity.

### **The concept of power**

Inasmuch as this thesis is about analyzing among other things the power imbalance between men and women in Ghana, it is equally significant to draw on the theoretical support for the concept of power. I have so far utilized the concept of field as an autonomous social space with its peculiar logic (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). Another dimension of the field theory is how power is produced within a specific field. Bourdieu (1990) considers power as culturally and symbolically produced, and constantly re-legitimized through habitus. He draws on the concepts of field and capital in the understanding of power (ibid). Bourdieu (1990) suggests that the assumption of power is dependent upon the acquisition of capital in the field. As a consequence the totality of all the capital that each agent has accumulated determines the level of power each of the agents possesses. The implication of power being embedded in the acquisition of capital within the field is that the overall amount of capital possessed by any agent explains their level of competitiveness and eventually their position within the specific field they are located (ibid).

The overall level of power wielded by any agent within any field is determined not just by the sheer total amount of capital but also the composition and structure of the capital they duly possess (ibid). It means that agents in the field of female empowerment with

similar level of capital but with different composition and structure may wield different level of power in the field of female empowerment. For instance the agents in the field of female empowerment with more cultural capital and less economic capital can assume a different level of influence than the agents with more economic capital but less cultural capital (Bourdieu 1990). However Bourdieu (1984) suggests that power within any field is a function of both capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). This suggests that power located in any specific field is not only dependent upon capital but also it is equally dependent upon the habitus of the agents located in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

Bourdieu (2000) writes that an agent with much symbolic capital who uses the power this capital bestows on him or her against an agent who possesses less capital, and tries therefore to influence their actions, is said to exercise symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2000). The notion of symbolic violence basically refers to the process where certain categories of thought and perception are imposed upon dominated groups or agents who, over time, accept the conditions imposed upon them to be just (ibid). In many ways it is the internalizing of unconscious structures that continue to reproduce the structures of action of the dominant agents or group (ibid). The dominated agents over time then come to accept their position to be correct. In comparison, symbolic violence can be considered in many ways as more powerful than physical violence. This is because it is entrenched in the minds of the individual and thereby tends to justify the correctness of the social order (Bourdieu 2000). The accepted position of women in Ghana can be said to have evolved as a consequence of the exercise of symbolic violence by men in the Ghanaian society over long period of time.

Although the field theory will be employed as a major tool in understanding the female empowerment in Ghana, especially in analyzing the inhibitive factors, there are some prominent theorists that have written much about the concept of power. I would like to highlight some of these especially how power is understood.

Of the many theories of power that abound, they can be grouped into two major categories. This is to say that there are those theories of power that concentrate mainly on who possess and exercise power and there are also theories that are occupied with explaining how power is produced (Crossley 2005).

The conception of power in terms of ‘‘who has power’’ depicts power as a rigid asset that gives individuals or group of people the ability to force their will on the others with or without the consent of the others. In effect power under this approach is the ability to subordinate others and realize goals at the expense of the others (Crossley 2005).

However the opponents of this approach to understanding power argue that understanding power in terms of who has power renders power as an asset that some have and others do not have. Critics also argue that the assumption of power as a ‘‘fixed capacity’’ is erroneous. The underlying reason is that an attempt at exerting control over the other agents is subject to the reaction of the other groups. This is as a consequence of the fact that those who are to be subjugated can, under certain circumstances, oppose the will of those who want to exercise control over them. In other words the resistance offered by the less powerful group can force the more powerful group to reach a compromise. Seen in this perspective power cannot be regarded as a fixed capacity that individuals can possess (Crossley 2005)

The other school of thought focuses on defining power according to how power is generated. The followers of this tradition like Barry Hinds (1982) and Foucault (1982) argue that power is contingent on the manner in which agents interact with each other and the influence of other factors on their field of interaction. Power then is ‘‘relational’’ and a product of the interaction between agents on their field of interaction (Crossley 2005). This dimension of understanding power is crucial in that it does not make power the sole property of certain agents or group of individuals. As it is with this thesis, this aspect of power comprehension is very useful in the later parts of this paper where I analyze the issue of female empowerment in the Ghanaian society. The fact that power emerges out of the relationship between agents on a field of interaction, it offers hope for a change in the power relationship among the genders in Ghana.

In the previous pages I have written much about the theory of field and how power is generated within the field as a product of the interactions between the agents within the field. This notion of power according to Bourdieu also can be classified under this category. That is to say that the approach that focuses on how power is produced.

Norbert Elias (1978 cited in Crossley 2005) also has the relational approach to understanding power. This approach falls under what Crossley (2005) calls the ‘‘how’’ dimension of understanding power. Any time individuals interact, they influence each other’s actions. As a consequence Elias (1978) maintains that ‘‘all social relations are power relations’’ (Elias 1978 cited in Crossley 2005, 215). Inasmuch as each agent in a social relationship can influence the behavior of the other agents, no one party has monopoly over power. Power is therefore, according to him, contained in the balance between the agents involved and this balance can be altered over time (ibid). Elias 1978 cites the example of the power relationship between a child and its parents. A child in its infancy is solely dependent upon its parents and therefore subjugated to the power of its parents. However the child, by virtue of the bond that exists between it and its parents, affects the behavior of the parents. Owing to this the child also possesses power over the parents. Over time as the child develops, this power balance changes as the child becomes increasingly less dependent upon its parents. It would even come to a point where the parents will now be reliant on the child such that the power relationship is reversed. For Elias (1978) the power relationship at any point of time will be in favor of one agent or group of individuals but this does not infer at any means that the other partner absolutely has no power (ibid).

If power is as Elias (1978) puts it, then it means that no agent possesses power infinitely and that no agent holds power ad infinitum. This understanding when applied to the female empowerment struggles, suggests that it is the interaction between men and women that produce the power balance between them and that this balance will change over time. Elias (1978) does not offer the impression that there are those agents, in this case men, that have a grip of power and thereby have tremendous capacity to impose their will on women in society. My thought about this approach is that women would have to wait until the time is ripe, that is when the time permits them to have power in their favor, and that there is no need to fight and take power from those who possess it. This approach will make those agents who are dominated to be passive subordinates who endure domination pending the change of circumstances. Although the relational approach creates hope of the possibility of gaining power, in my understanding, it seems not to create a sense of the urgency of taking power from those who possess it.

Unlike Elias (1978), Steven Lukes (1986) is a proponent of the ‘who’ tradition of understanding power. Lukes (1986) suggests that power is about ‘who control who’ or ‘who can adversely affect the interests of whom?’ or ‘who can secure the achievement of collective goods?’ (Lukes 1986 cited in Crossley 2005). For the purposes of this thesis I will not resort to a detailed discourse on Lukes’ theory of power. However it is equally significant to illustrate the focus of his theory. In his 1974 discussion and analysis on power Lukes (1974) projects a three – dimensional methodologies of the study of power. The methodologies are concerned primarily about the agencies in the society that are entrusted with the responsibility of making laws. Thus the approaches adopted by Lukes center on decisions made, ‘suppressed agenda items’ and visible restraints upon the airing of opinions (Lukes 1974 cited in Crossley 2005, 218).

### **Empowerment**

Closely associated with the concept of power is the concept of empowerment. The concept of empowerment is one of the central concepts in the thesis. Although it seems quite to be a simple term, it can be challenging to define. The concept of empowerment can give a broader dimension to the understanding of female issues in Ghana. What does the word *empowerment* mean? Is it just an ideological concept that really has no strong theoretical background? What does it stand for? Is power transferable such that those who do not possess this can be *empowered*? Perhaps the concept of empowerment should be understood contextually such that it can be fathomed from the perspective of those who employ the concept. The definition given by Mitchell Dean (2010) shall be employed here.

The theory of empowerment is the idea that individuals or group of individuals who fall prey to social injustices in the form of social stratification, discrimination, economic hardships and political subordination can be assisted such that they can relieve themselves of the social woes that have plagued them and thereby play a participatory role in the transformation of their life circumstances (Dean 2010). Dean’s (2010)

approach to understanding the concept of empowerment also draws on the participatory roles of individuals in democratic societies and focuses on the self - reliance and determination of individuals. The argument put forward by Dean (2010) is that empowerment defined this way presupposes that the value of governance has to be evaluated according to the level at which citizens are given the possibility to participate in decision – making processes. The concept of empowerment then is coined to the notion of agency. Where individuals are deemed as agents, at least theoretically, then the individuals have to be empowered so as to be agents (Dean 2010).

Barbara Cruikshank (1994) also developed a similar variant of the understanding of the idea of empowerment. Cruikshank (1994) underscores the principle of empowerment as a *technology of citizenship* where empowerment has become a strategy “for the transformation of subjectivity from powerlessness to citizenship” (Cruikshank 1994 cited in Dean 2010, 83). In the year 2000 according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), women’s empowerment is synonymous with acquiring the capability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power, developing a sense of self importance, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes, and the freedom to control one’s own life.

A classical definition given by Gutierrez, Parsons and Cox (1998) states that female empowerment encompasses “personal, interpersonal and culture – changing thoughts and actions that together bring about real increases in the personal and political power of women”(Gutierrez, Parsons and Cox 1998, 35). This definition however links empowerment to the realization of feminist goals, their beliefs and a vision for a world devoid of suppression and oppression of any people for what they are or stand for (Gutierrez, Parsons and Cox 1998, 35). The culture-changing element in this definition aptly suits this paper, as Ghanaian culture is a strong and solid inhibitor of the realization of female empowerment ideals as revealed later in my writing.

Female empowerment is also inextricably linked with the concept of gender equality. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) considers female empowerment as an indispensable tool in nullifying the impact of gender inequality. The UNFPA writes:

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all. (UNFPA 2012).

Throughout the paper I have sought to draw attention to the meaning of empowerment that has been narrowed down to the context of the females manifesto for Ghana. The Manifesto enlists several dimensions of the process of empowerment and has highlighted the necessary mechanisms for the realization of the empowerment ideal. Such conditions as equal access to the job market, more autonomy in making decisions concerning reproductive issues, more representation in the political process, having an equal voice in family deliberations, an unbiased access to the national resources and the annihilation of sociocultural barriers and practices that tend to reinforce and entrench discrimination against women.

The manifesto singles out economic self - reliance as an important step towards female empowerment in Ghana. This implies that economic policies must be drafted in the sense that they create room for equality and equity in the Ghanaian society. The manifesto makes a demand for the government to implement financial policies that address the situation where women perform most domestic chores in the family. The performance of most household responsibilities, a phenomenon that tends to limit women to the home and hinder them from engaging in economic activities, is one of the contributory factors in rendering women less powerful than men in Ghana. By employing the terms of Bourdieu like *field*, *capital* and *habitus*, I will construct a field of female empowerment in my analysis in chapter five of this paper.



## Culture

The concept of culture needs to be clarified in order to grasp the fundamentals of the context of the comprehension of the human interaction that exists in Ghana. Ghana is far from being a culturally homogenous country.<sup>6</sup>

Owing to the diverse cultural patterns in Ghana, culture has become a significant factor to consider in the female empowerment struggle in Ghana. As a consequence of the many cultures that co-exist in Ghana, Ghanaians have been socialized into different forms of living in terms of religion, language, social life and ethics. Some ethnic groups in Ghana especially those in the south can be more open to the idea of female empowerment than those in the north due to differences in their cultural views. The south is predominantly Christian and although Christians make up about sixty percent of the Ghanaian population compared to about eleven percent of Muslims, the Islamic religion is more pronounced in the north. Intercultural disagreements within Ghana about the idea of female empowerment can militate against the goals and objectives of the empowerment philosophy.

The interaction between the genders and the existence of inequality and biases towards females are actions that are executed within the framework of “legitimate” practices in Ghana. Certain practices are for the common benefit of all individuals whilst others are directed towards the domination and suppression of others. Such practices tend to be legitimized by culture in Ghana although there is no legal basis for them. This makes the understanding of the culture of Ghana relevant in the female empowerment struggle.

Practice, like the cultural practices in Ghana, occurs within a given timeframe and it has all the correlative features, like irreversibility, “that synchronization destroys” (Bourdieu 1990, 81). Practice together with all that is associated with it, is not permanent and the structure of practice is “constitutive of its meaning” (ibid).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/tribes/>, downloaded on 10.04.2012.

Culture in its basic form of understanding, in my perspective, is a way of life of a group of people. It comprises inter alia language, music and dance, ethics and moral behavior, artifacts and religion.

There are a myriad of definitions of culture but for the purposes of reference and validity of definition I will apply the definition of Brian Fay (1996).

Culture consists of various common belief systems, values and ideas that underscore the way and manner in which particular group or groups of people live their lives (Fay 1996). Membership into any cultural group is realized through socialization of its new members and through enculturation. Individuals who have been socialized into a particular culture thus become the bearers of that culture and are both product and tend to reproduce the culture that they have been socialized into (Fay 1996). Culture has a psychological dimension. This is to say that the mentality of individuals is affected by the culture they are subordinated to. Culture transforms the physical dispositions of its members such that members of a specific culture depict similar bodily dispositions. Socially culture influences the ways and manner in which individuals interact and relate to one another. These dimensions are what Fay (1996) refers to as mental, physical and social penetrations of culture. He then suggests that it is these ‘penetrations’ that form the uniqueness of the individual’s capacity and behavior (Fay 1996, 55).

Fay’s approach is similar to the notion of habitus as expounded by Bourdieu (1990) that I have written about earlier in this chapter. Bourdieu considers cultural practices into which individuals are socialized as something that has been produced by the practices of the individuals, and this culture produced this way then continues to regulate the practices and behavior of the individuals such that culture becomes a structured and structuring force that allow individuals to possess certain bodily dispositions, the habitus. These dispositions determine the behavior and thoughts of the individual in any given social space (Bourdieu 1990).

Fay’s (1996) approach to understanding culture can be challenging. It presupposes that people with similar culture have a common way of thinking and that individuals of same culture will possess undifferentiated social characteristics and bodily dispositions. It is not farfetched to say that individuals that have been exposed to similar enculturation can have contrasting dispositions. They may think differently and interact

with others in quite different ways. It is no denying the fact that certain characteristics can permeate a whole social fabric due to socialization into a specific culture. However culture may not account for the totality of the individual's identity. This approach uses a conformism strategy in that individuals are, in one way or the other, obliged to conform into the society in which they are born through the process of enculturation such that conformism to cultural dictates become a prerequisite for social acceptance. In the ensuing paragraphs I will delve into the issue of culture in Ghana.

In chapter five where I will do my analysis of the data used in this paper, I will be constructing the negative elements of Ghanaian culture as the field of power in part two of the analysis where I will use the field theory. Part one of the analysis will hinge on the interpretation of data. I will now begin with the analysis of my data.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### **An overall view of the manifesto**

After reading through and interpreting the manifesto, it is evident that the document is basically concerned with the issues of women in Ghana. The contents and the approach used in writing the document make it clear that the writers also have a great interest in exerting influence on the government and political parties in Ghana. The inclusion of some government officials in the writing of the manifesto is precisely to serve this purpose. By including some representatives of the government, it can be more feasible for the document to gain support from the government or some political parties.

The manifesto is also a report on research undertaken by several groups that are interested in female issues in Ghana. For instance the writers conferred with the Ghana Living Standard Survey, some representatives of the government and other non-governmental organizations on the issues of women (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto For Ghana 2004).

In many parts of the document, empowerment can be understood as synonymous with equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, equal access to resources, abolishment of discriminatory cultural practices towards women, equal representation in government and more autonomy in making decisions. It is these issues that I shall analyze later in this paper but first I have to write about the nature of the analysis.

## **The nature of the analysis**

According to my topic sentence the data collected and presented will be analyzed in two steps. The first objective of the topic sentence is to find out what issues the female activists are struggling for. In the first part of the analysis I will therefore analyze the major issues that are considered very significant on the agenda of the female activists who are struggling for female empowerment in Ghana. To achieve this, I will interpret my empirical data by using a hermeneutic approach. This approach is not without problems because the data can be interpreted in several ways and some contents may be left out to pave way for the more important issues. Therefore in the first part of the analysis I have chosen to analyze important issues such as girl child education, economic self-reliance of women, political representation of women, autonomy for women in Ghana and the issue of equal rights and equal respect for women in Ghana.

The second part of my analysis is geared towards finding an answer to the second requirement or objective of the topic sentence. The second demand of the topic sentence is to find out the factors that promote or hinder change towards female empowerment in Ghana. I will employ the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu to analyze the major factor or factors that hinder the female empowerment process. I begin with the first part of my analysis.

### **Analysis part one**

#### **An analysis of the core issues in the female empowerment struggle in Ghana**

The first part of the topic sentence is to find out what issues the female activists are struggling for in the female empowerment struggle in Ghana. As a consequence, I have, through the interpretation of my data, identified certain significant issues that underlie the empowerment discourse in Ghana. These issues are political in nature as they seek political solutions. These issues include women's economic self-reliance, more representation in government for women, the need for girl child education, autonomy of women in decision-making and equal rights for women.

## **Economic self-reliance as a form of empowerment**

What I have found out through the interpretation of my empirical data is that there is a widespread of poverty in terms of economic insecurity among the majority of people in Ghana and most especially women. The prevalence of poverty among women is deemed as a consequence of inappropriate social and economic development policies over the years in Ghana. It can be understood from the empirical data that inadequate socio-economic policies on the part of the government of Ghana coupled with the overdependence on foreign aid has affected women negatively. The manifesto's point of view is that the failure of the government to take initiatives in the area of making policies that will allow for the creation of jobs for all citizens including women, has contributed to the difference in economic status of men and women in Ghana.

Many women work in the agricultural sector. I have understood it from the data that economic policies implemented by the government have had negative impacts on the agricultural sector. This can be seen in the removal of subsidies and the increase in the mining sector (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto For Ghana 2004). The removal of the subsidies has made it more difficult to increase production and maximize profit. This makes agriculture less lucrative. The expansion of the mining sector has also resulted in the destruction of farmlands and an eventual contraction in the agricultural production. These two situations combine to adversely affect the economic independence of the majority of women in Ghana according to my interpretation of my empirical data.

As regards economic self - sufficiency, it is apparent in the manifesto that the discharge of domestic chores, the majority of which is done by women, is not considered as an economic activity or work in Ghana. The discharge of domestic chores by women seems to be regarded as natural or something that is taken for granted in Ghana. A situation as this can be viewed as a form of injustice experienced by women in Ghana. When the manifesto highlights this domestic issue, it can be interpreted to mean that the performance of domestic chores by women has restrained women from gaining their economic independence. This can be explained in two ways.

In the first place women use much of their time in discharging domestic chores and this can prevent them from engaging in other economic activities outside the home. In Ghana, unlike the very developed countries where technology has come to relieve women of the many tedious domestic tasks, the performance of household chores consumes much of the time of Ghanaian women. For instance women engage in fetching firewood, fetching water, taking care of the children, sweeping garbage, cooking for the family among others. In certain remote villages fetching water can imply walking several kilometers to and fro for several hours. Cooking may not always involve the use of electric stoves and electric cookers. Likewise not all families can afford to buy washing machines and this invariably implies women will have to wash with their hands. All these consume a considerable amount of the time of women such that it makes it difficult for them to participate in or take employment outside the domestic arena.

In the second place the performance of household duties are not incorporated by any social or economic policy in Ghana as an economic activity. Work is the basis for earning income and it forms one of the most important aspects of human life. Work can either be paid or unpaid. At times work can be formal or informal and can also be limited or unlimited to certain areas or conditions (Oppong 1970; Oppong 1977; Oppong 2005a; cited in Christensen and Syltevik editors 2009). Most often than not the works that individuals do tend to generate a form of relationship that exist between individual. It also accords individuals status and creates power relations (Christensen and Syltevik editors 2009).

The exclusion of domestic activities from economic activities in Ghana seems to present a case of injustice to women since the performance of domestic responsibilities constitutes unpaid labor. Where the performance of household tasks represents a form of unpaid labor, I understand it that this tends to undermine the economic self-sufficiency of women in Ghana.

It can also be realized that the issue of who performs domestic responsibilities raises the issue of injustice. The manifesto has on several occasions pointed out that women in Ghana perform more responsibilities at home than the men such that women use twice as much time as men. This distribution of household labor on biological lines in itself can be understood as a form of social injustice legitimized by the Ghanaian culture. It

can then be understood that the exclusion of women from participating in economic activities outside the home, which is due to their performance of domestic chores, and inadequate encompassing economic policies on the part of the government can be interpreted as some of the forces that have contributed to the economic subordination of women to their husbands in the family. This can also partly explain why women tend to assume a subordinated position in the Ghanaian family and subsequently the dominated position they occupy in the Ghanaian society.

To enable women to be economically self-sufficient in Ghana therefore, it is clear that the injustice suffered by women in terms of being the executors of household duties has to be addressed. There is the need for a change in the structure of the domestic roles performed by men and women in Ghana such that both men and women discharge equal responsibilities at home. This will enable women to overcome time constraints and have ample time to engage in economic activities outside the home. Even where women will have to perform these duties, the viewpoint of the manifesto seems to assert that there will have to be an economic policy that will incorporate these activities into economic activities such that women can earn enough money for their domestic work. This can assist in the eradication of poverty among women in Ghana and hence their economic empowerment.

The issue of how to assist women to gain economic independence does not fringe on the discharge of household duties alone. Besides the execution of household chores, women would have to help on family farms where the produce is beforehand earmarked for family consumption. Although farming is an economic activity, directing the produce of the farm to domestic consumption tend to deny women of converting their farm labor into economic gains. In this case there is also the need for a policy on how women's contribution towards food security in the family can be economically rewarded.

Another factor that can be identified from my data as a force behind the difference in the economic status of men and women in Ghana is the employment opportunities of men and women in the formal and informal sectors. Owing to the difference between men and women in terms of formal education, it can be understood that men will have a greater chance of being employed in the formal sectors with women more likely to gain employment in the informal sectors. I will do the analysis of the effect of education in



the subsequent pages. However an underlying factor here is that there is the need for some level of formal education in order to gain employment in the formal sector. In the Ghanaian economic system, as the manifesto shows, employees in the formal sectors enjoy better remuneration and better legal protection than those who work in the informal sector (The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto For Ghana 2004).

What this can mean is that more men than women will have better economic advantages such that a large proportion of women in the informal sector can be confronted with economic insufficiency. The difference in the economic prospects of men and women as a consequence of the nature of their employment possibilities can be interpreted as a factor that can reinforce the economic dependence of women on men, a condition that eventually define the subordinated position of women both in the family and in the society at large.

A phenomenon that is obvious from the standpoint of the manifesto is that women have developed a general resentment towards the government. This is because women seem to be of the view that the government has not adequately protected their economic rights and interests. Ghana's ratification of the International Labor Organization has done little to ameliorate this problem from my understanding of the manifesto. Thus what the manifesto implies, as a condition required by female activists, is that the government will have to make better economic policies that will provide for the protection of the rights of those who work in the informal sector. This, according to my understanding of the manifesto, can provide better economic conditions for women who are mostly represented in the informal sector.

Having presented the above economic life conditions of women through my interpretation of the data, it has become quite clear from the position of the manifesto that women's struggle for empowerment in Ghana is also a struggle for economic self-reliance. However female activists do not seem to consider the realization of economic independence a task for women only. My understanding of the manifesto on this issue is that women are demanding that the government of Ghana on its part has to make fundamental changes in the economic policies that have been implemented over the years to ensure the economic security of women in Ghana.

However this position of women can be interpreted in a way to suggest that women are of the view that the economic policies of the nation have discriminated against them and are therefore responsible for the economic inequality between men and women in Ghana.

This situation has caused them to put pressure on the government to change those economic policies that discriminate against women and rather adopt policies that favor women's inclusion in the production and distribution of goods and services in Ghana.

By interpreting the manifesto it is also evident that the change in economic policies that the empowerment of women require is not limited only to internal economic policies but also Ghana's economic relations with other countries and international financial institutions. It can be understood from the viewpoint of the manifesto that there is the need for Ghana to exercise sovereignty over its economy if Ghana wants to ensure that all citizens are economically secure.

This will enable the country to adopt policies that are in the interest of all citizens and therefore permit the economic development of women in Ghana. In furtherance I have understood from the data presented that there is also the need for women to be involved in the drafting of economic policies in Ghana. This practice could afford women to address their own issues in the process of making economic policies for Ghana. The involvement of women in economic policy planning will require the participation of women in governance, a situation that I will analyze later in the analysis.

In many instances, women in Ghana seem to be driven by the underlying principle that women who are educated and employed dissolve poverty cycles, not just for themselves but also for families, communities and countries.

Therefore it can be obvious that the quest for empowerment of women in Ghana is also linked with the capacity of women to adequately rely and support themselves economically.

Out of the above it can be admitted that the economic empowerment of women in Ghana is inextricably linked with female education. Therefore I will be analyzing female education as an aspect of female empowerment in Ghana.

## **Girl child education**

As mentioned earlier, there is a variation in the level of education between men and women in Ghana. As the manifesto has referred to this on several occasions, it can be understood that the female activists in Ghana seem to consider the unequal level of education between men and women in Ghana as a contributory factor to the condition of women in Ghana. Thus this can be a sign that women in Ghana are demanding a change in the status quo. The statistical figures on female education in Ghana as can be seen under the presentation of the manifesto can be a revelation of the correlation between the level of education among women and their level of empowerment. This can also be an admission of the fact of how much role education can play in changing the life situations of women in Ghana towards empowerment.

By comparing the level of education among women to that of men in Ghana, I have realized that the schism that has so far existed between men and females in Ghana in terms of education seems to have a direct correspondence to the power relationship that has hitherto existed between males and females in Ghana. It can also be realized through my interpretation of the data that education can be a key to the liberation of women in Ghana.

However the role of education has different dimensions. To begin with is the realization that Ghanaian women need the acquisition of some of formal education that can enable them to gain employment in the formal sectors of the economy. In this way education will qualify Ghanaian women to gain meaningful employment, a factor that can assist women in Ghana to reduce poverty and ensure their economic independence. Where Ghanaian women are educated and employed, it can follow that the children of these educated women especially girls will be socialized into the pattern of life where empowerment of women will be taken for granted without thinking about it. This is because the social condition in the family into which these children are socialized will form their habitus.

Education of women in Ghana is not only a key to gain other opportunities but it is in itself a capital that women can acquire. My application of capital here refers to resources or assets that women can acquire such that they can gain certain advantages by virtue of these resources. An increased literacy level among women in Ghana has the potency to effect many changes both in the family and also in the society at large.

In the family where women are educated, women can be equipped with the necessary information that will enable them to make good choices concerning their reproductive health. The implication is this. In too many instances in Ghana the use of contraceptives and other preventive measures requires the acceptance of the husband. This also relates to the decision on whether to take abortion or not. It therefore follows that where women are educated, their education will enable them to gain self-confidence to take bold decisions on these matters irrespective of the husband's position on them. High education among women will also facilitate family planning where women will have children that the family's resources can support. In effect education will provide women with necessary knowledge to make decisions other than accepting cultural dictates that have no scientific or good logical explanation.

There are also those traditional beliefs that structure the norms and practices in the family and the society at large. Some of these practices are also reinforced by some religions. An instance is where women are required by both tradition and religious norms to keep silent in public or in the presence of men but can only voice their concerns through a man. This can be interpreted to mean that there is an ideational aspect of culture, that is to say that there are ideas behind the manifestations of cultural practices in Ghana (Barth 2002). It can be understood therefore that educating women can assist tremendously in refuting, reversing and expunging the ideational elements of some cultural practices in Ghana. This can eventually lead to the extinction of such practices.

More so, to fully enjoy the provisions of the laws of Ghana, there is the need for high literacy among women in order to do this. Women with high education will keep pace with the legal developments in Ghana and defend their legal rights when these are trampled upon. Thus women are implying, by virtue of the contents of the manifesto, that the quest for female empowerment is also a call for the promotion of the education of the girl child in Ghana.

As can be seen from the above, it can be deduced that educating females in Ghana can assist them in the process of conscientization. Conscientization as applied here refers to the process where women in Ghana become aware of the privileges in their lives and the dynamics of oppression within them and outside them, as well as the approach to change these dynamics of oppression: in effect conscientization can assist women in Ghana to refuse to acknowledge and accept disempowering dominant discourses in Ghana (Suarez et al. 2008).

Although women have acknowledged the significance of female education in the manifesto, they equally agree to the eradication of the structures that compel girls not to go to school or to drop out of school. Factors such as poverty in the family, teenage pregnancy and early marriages are some of the factors that coalesce to impede the education of women in Ghana and have to be eradicated.

The manifesto presents facts on these issues so as to suggest that those fundamental, culturally and economically embedded factors have to be eliminated if the educational gap between the genders in Ghana is to be achieved. The manifesto wants a nationwide policy that will dissuade people from betrothing young girls to their suitors at an early age or even abolish underage marriage, something that is illegal but practiced in the framework of tradition and culture in some parts of Ghana. The concept is that where girls are not given in early marriage, they can educate themselves to acquire knowledge and be self-actualizing individuals in the society.

In the area of poverty, education plays a significant role here. However determining which is to be prioritized can be an issue of the egg and the hen. Poverty leads indirectly to illiteracy among women and illiteracy can indirectly lead to poverty. This is a bad cycle that seems to perpetuate the subordination of women in Ghana. The manifesto tends to demand a simultaneous approach from the government to tackle these two issues. The idea in the manifesto is a call on the government to make social policies that are oriented towards promoting literacy among women and at the same time tackle the issue of poverty among females in Ghana. Teenage pregnancy is also a social cankerworm that denies girls the chance of completing their education in Ghana. The document seems to suggest that an effective policy towards eradication of poverty and a social policy

towards the promotion of literacy among women can assist in tackling teenage pregnancy and child marriage as well.

In order to adopt and implement social policies in Ghana that can assist in liberating women, there is the need for the representation of women in government.

### **More representation in government and politics**

From the perspective of the manifesto women seem to present the issue of low representation in governance as an issue that adversely affect their chances of achieving their empowerment goals. The under representation can just be the tip of the iceberg. On interpreting this from the perspective of the manifesto comes the realization that women are not adequately involved in decision-making roles both at the domestic level and at the public domain.

The major challenges faced by women ranges from economic, political to time limitations. As I have analyzed earlier, poverty is more pronounced among females in Ghana than men. Women can therefore be limited in their efforts to participate in politics as they often lack or have inadequate financial base that can assist them to fund political campaigns and its related activities. Secondly women in Ghana discharge more household duties than men and they spend much of their time in undertaking this. As a consequence women become confronted by the challenge of insufficient time to engage in politics. The time limitations also has to do with the multitasking of women, that is, where they have to put the home in order and at the same time engage in economic activities outside the home.

Besides the above contributory factors one can see a correspondence between high illiteracy rate among women and low political participation in Ghana. Notwithstanding the initiative of the government to allow politicians to use local languages at the local government level, English is the nationally recognized language of Ghana. Where one is handicapped in their ability to express themselves in the English language, this can be a

great barrier to engaging in politics. To engage in politics one would have to keep pace with the political issues in one's country and also equip oneself with adequate information in order to engage political opponents in debates on public issues. Education can therefore equip women to articulate their thoughts and also give them self-confidence.

It can be considered that women in Ghana seem not to have a strong foothold in governance in order to steer major issues in their interest. The laws of Ghana are enacted and promulgated in parliament with the executive having the responsibility to execute them. Laws made are binding on all citizens but unfortunately these laws are passed by an overwhelming majority of men in parliament. This may not guarantee for the protection of the rights and interests of women in Ghana. It can be understood that it is the desire of the female activists that more women in Ghana engage in politics. This can make it more feasible for the voice of women to be heard especially on issues touching on policies towards females in Ghana.

The wide discrepancies between men and women in political representation in Ghana seems to be reinforced by the gap between men and women in terms of education. This seems quite a serious issue considering that females constitute the majority of the population of Ghana. Entry into the formal sector of employment requires some form of formal education and this is not to the advantage of women. Politics in Ghana also demands that one has a good knowledge of political and social situations in Ghana and all these can demand some form of formal education. Thus the idea of increasing women's participation in governance is not only a matter of motivating women to consider entering into politics. It rather involves well-calculated efforts towards the change of social policies in Ghana that can allow women to take higher education so as to be enlightened and change their own life situations. Whereas women view higher level of participation in government as a step towards female empowerment, they equally view the eradication of the reinforcing mechanisms that deny them from this as necessary. The existing political culture in Ghana in addition to some dominant cultural practices in the Ghanaian society that discriminate against women have to be changed. When this is done, it can provide women the opportunity to increase their participation in decision – making processes both at local and national levels.

In many ways, as revealed by the manifesto, it can be understood that the idea of increased representation in government as a key step towards the empowerment of women in Ghana is unquestionable. It seems that the female activists in Ghana have a difficulty in trusting that the higher percentage of men in government can represent the true voice of females in Ghana. This can be as a result of women viewing certain female issues as pertaining to women only and can only be fairly comprehended by women. It is the hope of the female activists, as the document suggests, that social policies in addition to the political culture of the country can be transformed such that women can have a fair representation in government.

The document has however acknowledged that there are different organizations that are struggling for female freedom and empowerment in Ghana. However when it comes to national policy-making and its implementation, it is the government that is vested with coercive powers to execute such functions. This can be a major reason behind the idea of assisting women to have higher representation in government such that they can be in a good position to influence government decisions and government policies that affect their daily lives in Ghana.

### **Autonomy in making decisions concerning self-determinism**

A study of Dyson and Moore (1983) consider autonomy as the ability to influence one's immediate environment and the capacity to access information and to use it as the fundament for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates (Dyson and Moore 1983).

Some Ghanaian women in certain parts of the country are required by custom to submit to their husbands irrespective of the issues at stake (The Coalition on Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004). In my view this depicts a level of subordination of women to their husbands that takes away the autonomy of women in many areas. This kind of patriarchal form of family and communal relationship prohibit women from self-determinism and self-autonomy in important areas of their existence. Patriarchy as



utilized here connotes that sort of gender relations that exhibits male dominance and female subordination (Witz 1992).

Women value among other things the capability to take decisions that concern their reproductive health as integral in the empowerment struggle. Submitting to their husbands in critical decisions concerning their reproductive health undermines their autonomy. However the practice of submitting to their husbands irrespective of the issues at stake is embedded in some cultural practices in some parts of Ghana. As a consequence, the quest for autonomy in the empowerment struggle can be related to the freedom of women to realize themselves and choose the course of life that they themselves want as well as make major decisions without the interference of the husband or family.

It ought to be made clear that there are regional and ethnic differences among the women in Ghana in terms of the amount of autonomy they have. Women in some regions or of some ethnic groups have more autonomy than the others from other regions or ethnic groups in Ghana. In a study conducted by Christine Oppong in Ghana, it is revealed that there continues to be more female autonomy among women in southern Ghana (Oppong 1970; Oppong 1977; Oppong 2005a; cited in Christensen and Syltevik 2009).

Issues of autonomy have many other dimensions: autonomy in decision-making, autonomy in the control of family finance and autonomy in movement. Where the manifesto establishes that men are considered the head of the family in Ghana, it can imply that the autonomy of women is also tampered with. Steve Lukes (1977) suggests that power can be identified in decision-making processes and infers also that silenced groups are powerless groups (Lukes 1977 cited in Eriksen 2001). The inability of women to actively and effectively participate in decision-making processes in the family constitutes a form of powerlessness. The Ghanaian women are struggling therefore to change this life situation in the family and in the society as a whole. The efforts of the female activists are also directed towards the struggle for autonomy in family deliberations including reproductive healthcare and also autonomy in making decisions concerning family finance.

However the realization of female autonomy, out of the facts presented in the data for this thesis, looks to be heavily dependent on female education and economic self-sufficiency. In the modern world where access to relevant information is very vital, it is equally significant to have some form of formal education in order to do so. Closely related to education is also the need for work participation. Gainful employment of women can ensure their financial independence and this can enable them to take bold decisions without fearing economic sanctions from their families.

The significance of education and employment in the female empowerment process is accentuated by the researches conducted by Christine in Ghana. The conclusion of those researches is that there is more equality among couples when females are educated and are employed in Ghana (Oppong 1970; Oppong 1977; Oppong 2005a; cited in Christensen and Syltevik editors, 2009).

Although cultural change is equally important, education seems to provide women the key to this cultural change as regards the role of women in the society.

### **Equal rights, equal respect and equal recognition of women**

Ghana's constitution and other legislations have provided for the respect for equal rights for all citizens of Ghana. There are also many other legislations as can be seen under the presentation of the manifesto, specially those passed into law, with the sole objective of protecting women's rights in Ghana. The inclusion of equal rights for women in Ghana as part of the struggle for empowerment therefore can have a different dimension of understanding than what many may think of. Women acknowledge that there exist laws that require respect for their rights as equal citizens of Ghana. The challenge with the quest for equal rights however is the abuse of these very rights provided for in Ghana in the name of culture. The female activists tend therefore to view some cultural practices in some parts of Ghana as a dominant force that seeks to undermine the realization of equal rights for women in Ghana.

Having identified this, I will, in part two of my analysis focus on the analysis of some negative cultural practices (which will be identified as the field of power) vis-à-vis

female empowerment in Ghana. I will start by constructing the field of my analysis. Before then I will look at using the theory of field as an analytical tool.

## **Analysis part two**

### **An analysis of the limiting and enhancing factors in the empowerment struggle**

#### **Constructing the field of female empowerment**

The second part of the topic sentence hinges on finding out the factors that either promote or hinder the empowerment of women in Ghana. In this part of my analysis I will be using the field theory as an analytical tool. I start with the construction of the field.

The construction of the field of my analysis presents a two-sided issue. My first stage is to construct the field of my analysis and identify the various agents located in it. The second stage is to analyze how the competition amongst the agents within the field affects the lives of men and women in Ghana in the female empowerment struggle. The analysis will focus on the influence of habitus, capital and the positions of the agents in the field of my analysis.

It is important to identify the kinds of capital that are legitimate in the field of my analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). However in order to identify the generally accepted form of capital in the field, I have to investigate the prevailing logic that is operating in the field such that there emerges a form of hermeneutic circle. This is the hermeneutic circle: capital has to be identified in the field, to identify the capital one must identify the kind of logic that exists in the field and understanding the logic in the field demands an identification of capital in the field (ibid). I am recognizant of the fact that the structure of the field that I would now like to construct is defined by the distribution of capital within it (ibid). The field of my analysis thus is the field of female empowerment.

## **The field of female empowerment**

I have identified the field of female empowerment as my field of study. This field constitutes a social space or microcosm with its own logic. The logic in this field can be understood that all the agents have built a consensus among themselves to have one voice. Consensus has been of utmost importance for the agents in the field since it governs the actions of the agents in the field of female empowerment. To speak with one voice can be understood as the logic of the field. At the same time the agents within this field compete with each other within the framework of rules and regulations that are imposed upon them by the field itself. These agents occupy specific positions in the field. These positions are determined by virtue of the distribution of capital in the field of empowerment. The significance of capital within the field implies an identification of the various legitimate capitals that are accepted in order to enable the agents to compete in order to gain certain advantages in the field. Having identified the field of my analysis as the field of female empowerment, the first step is to identify the various agents located in this field.

## **The agents in the field of female empowerment**

In the field of female empowerment ABANTU as an organization has presented itself as an agent. The government or the politicians of Ghana, the media and the writers of the manifesto are also other agents in the field and I myself as a researcher have entered into this field as an agent. I have reflected on my own position earlier under the chapter of methodology. In the field of female empowerment, all the agents occupy specific positions. In the case of this paper the agents have not explained their positions from their own perspectives. Therefore in the analysis, the manifesto has become the sole source of describing the various positions occupied by the agents located in the field. I shall return to describe the positions of each of the aforementioned agents in the field from the perspective of the document.

What is at stake in the field of female empowerment is the empowerment of women in Ghana. The various agents with their varying capitals are struggling to influence decisions on this subject matter. The struggle between patriarchy and female empowerment allows for the agents to compete to either promote the empowerment of women or compete and maintain the status quo. The various agents have different positions in relation to the empowerment struggle and these positions are explained as presented in the document.

As it is in field analysis, in order to describe the positions of the agents that I have identified and the forms of capital in the field of female empowerment, I will have to identify the logic in the field of female empowerment.

### **The logic in the field of female empowerment**

The forms of capital within the field are dependent upon the form of logic that exists in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). It is an arduous task to outline the relationship that exists among the agents in the field of female empowerment. This owes to the factum that the nature of the relationship among the agents is so complex. This complexity rests chiefly on the nature of capital possessed by these agents, the role they play, their position and their habitus. Nonetheless I have analyzed the nature of this relationship to make obvious the kind of logic that governs the relationship between the agents.

The agents in the field of female empowerment have built a strong consensus among themselves to obtain a common voice, which is to fight against the field of some elements of culture, which is the field of power, and diminish its influence on the field of female empowerment. To come to this consensus has been the most crucial for the agents such that this consensus building has become the logic that governs the actions of the agents. The agents in the field of empowerment also tend to concentrate on the positive values in the Ghanaian culture. This is evident in the manner in which they present the manifesto. Throughout their struggle and efforts towards the realization of their objectives, the agents have shunned the categorization of ethnic groups and regions in Ghana. They have not limited any element of cultural practice that hinders the

achievement of their empowerment objectives to any particular group in Ghana. Instead they have consented among themselves to present the challenges that they face as a national one in their presentation in the manifesto. As a result the logic in the field of female empowerment is to struggle and nullify the negative impacts of some elements of culture in Ghana. The elements of culture are regarded as elements of Ghanaian culture. This is deliberately done to avoid attributing certain cultural elements to certain ethnic groups in Ghana. Attributing certain negative elements of culture to certain groups or ethnic group in Ghana can give rise to division and lack of solidarity among the female activists in the fight for female empowerment in Ghana.

The representation of women is implicit in the field of empowerment. Women are represented in the government, in ABANTU, in the research group that wrote the manifesto and also in the media. It has to be understood that the struggle between the agents in the field of empowerment and the field of some elements of culture has a consequence for the females regarding the female empowerment struggle. As part of the logic in the field, the various agents within the field represent women in Ghana. Having identified the logic in the field, I shall now identify the forms of capital that exist in the field of female empowerment.

### **The form of capitals in the field of female empowerment**

Within the field of female empowerment, there exist many forms of capital. These forms of capital have been determined by the logic in the field of female empowerment. The logic has been that all the agents have agreed to have one voice to fight against the influence of the field of power. The field of power is constituted of some elements of Ghanaian culture. One form of capital in the field of female empowerment is economic capital. All the agents as identified above have to acquire economic capital in the form of assets or money capital in order to influence decisions regarding the issue of female empowerment in the field of female empowerment. To create awareness about this issue in an attempt to reduce the influence of some elements of Ghanaian culture demands substantial amounts of money that could assist in accessing the media in order to provide nationwide coverage of the issue. Secondly the agents need money if they are to influence the government in implementing policies that affect the issue of female

empowerment in the area of helping change some of the elements of culture that oppose female empowerment. Money is also needed to make publications that aim at creating awareness about female empowerment in Ghana. Even to solicit support from other organizations both in Ghana and elsewhere requires money capital.

Another form of capital within this field is social status. The agents located in the field of female empowerment need some form of social recognition or social status to earn them respect and eventually the ability to influence the agenda of female empowerment. National and international high recognition has become an important capital in this regard. This allows those who possess them to have some form of advantage over the other agents within the field. Another capital in the field is the acquirement of a good level of education. The acquirement of a broad base of social network is also capital within the field. Thus money, education, social status, access to the media, social network, national and international recognitions are capitals of which those agents who possess more of them can influence the female empowerment issue in the field of female empowerment.

To be precise is to admit that on the one hand the nonexistence of correlation between the laws that allow for the empowerment of women in Ghana and cultural practices on the other hand worries the agents in the field of female empowerment. Consequently all the agents that have been identified in the field of female empowerment are struggling to influence major decisions on this matter that could eventually affect the live situations of both men and women in Ghana.

The habitus and capital of the agents determine the position of the agents in the field of female empowerment (Bourdieu 1984). I shall therefore analyze the habitus of the agents.

## **The habitus of the agents**

In the field of female empowerment, each of the agents located in the field possess habitus. This habitus of the agents has collaborated with the capital of the agents to determine the position of the agents in the field of female empowerment (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995).

In my reflections over how to analyze the habitus of ABANTU, there arises a complexity of whether I should analyze the habitus of ABANTU as an organization or analyze the habitus of the individual members that constitute the organization. I have chosen to analyze both, as the habitus of the individuals who form the organization and the habitus of ABANTU are inalienable. Thus a thorough analysis of the habitus of ABANTU will also imply an analysis of the habitus of the members that constitute it.

ABANTUS' position, role and power have evolved partly as a consequence of the socio-cultural and historical conditions of which the organization itself is a product. The idea of forming the organization was borne out of women's dissatisfaction with the conditions under which they lived. Their experience of prejudices against women in their respective countries continues to influence them in setting the agenda and the objectives of the organization. The very act of forming the organization can also be seen as a form of solidarity with fellow women in Africa who still live under conditions of powerlessness.

These female founders of African descent are at the same time women who have acquired a good level of education in some European countries as myself. Their education and the sort of life conditions they experienced in Europe have enabled them to acquire a different perspective about the life conditions of women in Africa and for that matter Ghana. The new life that the founders experienced abroad has now formed the basis and the history of the formation of the organization – the habitus of the organization.

The habitus of ABANTU, which is the product of the education and past experiences of the founders whilst in Europe, has culminated in the present past that tends to perpetuate



itself into the future of ABANTU by reactivation in similarly structured practices that led the founders to form the organization (Bourdieu 1990). It is this habitus that has enabled for the free production of all the ideas, visions, perceptions, actions and strategy of ABANTU under the very conditions it was founded (ibid). The habitus of ABANTU renders the position taking and stance of ABANTU a matter of spontaneity, that is to say that ABANTU takes stances in the field of female empowerment without being conscious of why it does so (Bourdieu 1990). The habitus of the organization is also produced and shaped by its cooperation with the United Nations. Where the organization has declared itself as being concerned about women in Africa and for that matter Ghana, it has to confine its activities to this cause.

Thus the social conditions of existence that have led the founders to form the organization, conditions that have formed the habitus of the organization, have generated the practices of the organization. The practice of the organization as can be seen throughout the paper is to struggle for the abolishment of barriers that hinder female empowerment in Ghana. And this very practice of ABANTU continues to be generated and reinforced by its habitus that have formed a system of schemes, and these schemes have produced the 'classifiable practices and works' of ABANTU (Bourdieu 1984). In this manner ABANTU's habitus and capital has positioned it in the field of female empowerment as an advocate for the empowerment of all women in Ghana.

The habitus of the researchers who assisted in the writing of the manifesto is produced by the social conditions in Ghana and precisely the conditions under which they were educated. Different conditions of existence can produce different habitus (Bourdieu 1984). However the education possessed by both members of ABANTU and those who have collaborated in the research into female issues in Ghana make them to acquire similar habitus. Education has conditioned the life experiences of the researchers such that they perceive and understand phenomenon in an academic perspective and thus have the ability to conduct research into female issues in Ghana. This very practice of the researchers, that is to develop interest in, and collaborate in a research into female issues, is propelled and produced by their habitus that is formed by their education. Education has conditioned the researchers such that they are able to view the conditions of Ghanaian women from a different perspective that is dissimilar to the perspective of the local people who have not had education. Their action is rendered an act of

spontaneity due to the knowledge they have acquired through education. This habitus of the researchers has made it possible for them to be critical to the conditions under which women live in Ghana. But the education that has transformed the habitus of the researchers also constitutes a form of cultural and symbolic capital that has assisted in positioning these researchers in the field of female empowerment. Together with ABANTU the researchers assume the position as agents who are agitating for the empowerment of women in Ghana.

### **The position of the agents in the field of female empowerment**

ABANTU has been central in the fight for female empowerment and has presented itself as an agent located in the field of female empowerment. As an organization it possesses many forms of capital. The various capitals it possesses have determined its position in the field of female empowerment. In the first instance is the admission that it has both national and international recognition and is even acknowledged by the United Nations. This guarantees ABANTU a symbolic capital. This international recognition enjoyed by ABANTU allows it to possess and exercise enormous power and influence in the field of female empowerment. Besides the international recognition, the various members that constitute ABANTU acquire a good level of education. The high level of education acquired by many of its members makes ABANTU rich in cultural capital as well. These two forms of capital coupled with the economic support it enjoys both nationally and internationally, positions it such that it assumes a dominant position in the field of female empowerment.

ABANTU positions itself as the main voice of the women in Ghana within the field of female empowerment. It principally competes in the field in a way as to garner a total consensus on the approach to diminish the influence of some elements of culture, which is also the field of power. The field of power (some elements of Ghanaian culture) is against the ideal of the field of female empowerment. ABANTU seeks also to exert much pressure on the other agents in the field especially the government and the media to project, publicize and implement the legal provisions that undergird female empowerment in Ghana. As a dominant agent in the field, girded by its broad array of

capital, it considers the pace of the government's approach to dealing with female empowerment issues to be slow. It has therefore resorted to the use of the manifesto to exert more pressure on the government to quicken its pace.

The researchers also adopt similar position in the field. The researchers with their academic background are posited with cultural capital that allows them to carry out investigations into the issue of female empowerment. They are bent on revealing the elements of culture that hinder female empowerment. In essence therefore, the position of the researchers is similar to that of ABANTU in that both are struggling side by side to persuade both the media and the government to assist in the area of deflating the influence of the field of some elements of culture. The government also occupies a central position in the field.

The position of the government is explained out of the contents of the manifesto. The very presence of the government in the field as an agent is an attestation to the fact that there is a mutual agreement among the agents in the field of female empowerment to struggle towards the realization of the goal of female empowerment. The government is represented by the representatives from the government, both local and national, who partook in the collaboration towards the publication of the manifesto. The government is invested with state resources and acquires a monopoly over the coercive apparatus of the state. It has executive, legislative and adjudicatory functions. This renders the power and influence of the government ubiquitous in the field. This underscores ABANTU's efforts targeted at the government to influence the government to speed up its efforts in the struggle against the field of some elements of culture. In the performance of its roles, the government has succeeded in the provision of legislations that aim at providing equal rights for both men and women. The challenge that the government faces now is the challenge to implement these laws. This also means fighting against cultural undertones that tend to legitimize the abuse of the rights of women. It is this aspect in the function of the government that has necessitated the presence of the government in the field of female empowerment and the collaboration that exists between it and the other agents in the field of female empowerment.

The media enters the field of empowerment as an agent. In the same vein as the other aforementioned agents have positioned themselves in the field of female empowerment,

the media also positions itself in a manner as to collaborate with the other agents to struggle against the field of some elements of culture. The role of the media is determined by its capital. The media enjoys both cultural and symbolic capital. Symbolic capital because of the role media plays in the public domain and cultural capital because the journalists possess quite admirable level of education. Their role in the field is to collaborate with the other agents in the form of disseminating crucial information about the need for female empowerment. Although the media works together with the other agents in the field, ABANTU tends to influence both the media and the government to be productive in the performance of their roles in the field of female empowerment.

As pointed out earlier, I have also entered the field as an agent. My role in the field is discussed earlier under the chapter of methodology.

### **An analysis of the field of female empowerment vis-à-vis the field of power**

It can be admitted that the manifesto has, on several occasions, isolated some cultural practices in Ghana as the most potent force that militates against the realization of the female empowerment objective in Ghana. Whereas there exists a consensus among the agents within the field of female empowerment that the empowerment of females in Ghana is necessary, some elements of the Ghanaian culture strongly oppose this.

Throughout the presentation of my data, I have realized that the influence of culture as a disempowering element has been conspicuous. Despite the many legal provisions that prohibit so many cultural practices, culture continues to be a legitimizing force for the very practices that are legally prohibited in Ghana. Thus I understand the field of power as the field of some elements of culture in Ghana. There exists a relation between the field of empowerment and the field of some elements of culture. The nature of this relationship is such that there is an antagonism between the field of female empowerment and the various cultural practices that discriminate against women (the field of power).

The agents in the field of female empowerment are struggling with a common front and concerted efforts for the empowerment of women. In their efforts, as revealed by the manifesto, they are faced with the fierce and established antagonism of some elements of culture in Ghana. Female circumcision, the headship of the man in the family and the trokosi system are examples of elements of culture that offer much resistance to the female empowerment struggle (The Coalition on Women's Manifesto For Ghana 2004). In essence therefore, it can be understood that there is a power struggle between the two fields. The field of power is struggling for the perpetuation of the status quo. In effect it can be perceived that the power deposited and exercised by the field of power is such enormous that it affects the life situation of males and females indirectly through the field. The struggle of the field of female empowerment is therefore the struggle to dampen and effectively truncate the surging potency of the force inherent in the field of culture.

My analysis here reiterates the identification that some elements of culture as the field of power oppose the ideals of the field of female empowerment. Thus in all cases the struggle of the agents in the field has a common base that is the very interest of the agents: to make void the power of the field of culture.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Female empowerment has gained more momentum in the post World War II era. The demands and objectives of this empowerment struggle may differ from country to country. In recent times there have been a burgeoning in the struggle for female empowerment in Ghana. Quite several organizations and many female political activists and intellectuals have been involved in this liberation movement. The empowerment of women in the western world and most especially in the Scandinavian countries that provides a classic example may or may not differ from that of the developing countries as exemplified by the women empowerment in Ghana.

Ghana is both multiethnic and multicultural society and although there have been many attempts to improve the living conditions of women in Ghana, many Ghanaian women have been subjected to certain elements of culture that function to suppress their rights and personal freedom. The terminology of culture is complex to explain (Barth 2002). However concerning the understanding of culture in this paper I have relied on the definition given by Brian Fay (1996).

In terms of culture Ghana is not a culturally homogeneous country. There are so many cultural practices from region to region. One can think of the Ewe culture, the Fante culture, Akan culture, the culture of the Dagombas and the Mamprusis and so on. It is like living in a country with federal government so that once you cross a boundary you experience a different cultural practice that is unique to the people living there. Even within one ethnic group there can be different cultural phenomena. For instance there are some slight differences between the culture of Ewes in northern Volta and the Ewes in southern Volta in terms of cultural practice. I would not say that Ghana is a conglomeration of cultures, but the truth is that there are so many cultures to the extent that it can be very difficult to attribute a practice within the context of one culture to the entire nation. However there are certain cultural practices that are common to all the

ethnic groups in Ghana. What the manifesto has in focus is those practices that reinforce discrimination against women.

The social injustices faced by women range from domestic to societal injustices. Some women in certain parts of Ghana are born into a culture that dictates their limited roles in the society and thus have limited opportunities to control their own lives. In some other cultures women are given away as an atonement for crimes committed by a family member whilst in other traditions women are given away in marriage against their will. In the countryside most especially, women bear the brunt of economic hardships yet they contribute in terms of child upbringing and doing family business. It is not uncommon to see pregnant women, especially in the villages, in tattered cloths with heavy loads on their heads coming from the farm. But they still discharge most of the domestic responsibilities.

The limitations imposed by certain traditions and norms in some parts of Ghana, coupled with the time constraints produced by women's role in performing many household duties, has resulted in both educational and economic inequalities between them and their male counterparts. I consider this phenomenon very much as a form of social injustice suffered by women in Ghana. Whether this practices experienced by women in parts of Ghana are undergirded by the cultural norms or not, they constitute a form of cultural bondage for women. However I have not chosen in this paper to focus on the dichotomy between western female empowerment struggles and female empowerment movements in Ghana.

The use of the Women's Manifesto for Ghana as my empirical data has helped me to investigate the major concerns of the female empowerment struggle. It is evident in the paper that there are several factors that have led to the struggle for female empowerment in Ghana. Women in Ghana are occupied with first and foremost social justice towards them in many aspects and arenas. Domestically women are agitating for a just division of labor at home that will relieve them of time constraints that prohibit them from engaging in economic activities outside the home. This calls for an equal distribution of the discharge of household chores between men and women in Ghana.

The quest for empowerment also draws on the process of instituting mechanisms that will enhance the financial independence of women in Ghana, a phenomenon that can lead to a reduction in abject poverty among women. Financial self-sufficiency is a condition that will also allow women to make decisions that are in their interest and refuse to accept decisions that will compromise their dignity and self-respect. In effect women are struggling for economic independence in order to guarantee their autonomy in decision-making processes in the social situations that they may find themselves. The idea of economic independence is also a call on the government to make economic policies that are geared towards addressing the ills of the sectors that women are mostly employed. It is a demand for policies that will provide for better conditions of work with adequate remuneration and better legal provisions.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 one of the deputy regional ministers in Ghana was quoted as saying the following on International Women's Day:

The low literacy level among women and their lack of vocational skills were major factors inhibiting their progress. To help tackle this, she said, it is important to aggressively promote girl child education and to economically empower them to become self-supporting (...).

Ghanaweb.<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/regional/artikel.php?ID=236516> (downloaded on 20.04.2012).

What the deputy minister was quoted as saying on the International Women's Day in Ghana has supported my findings in the research. Much of what the women in Ghana are occupied with is the abolishment of certain elements of culture that has reinforced discrimination of women despite the fact that there exist legislations that outlaw these cultural practices. Changing such elements of culture requires creating awareness through the process of conscientization. This invariably calls for an increased level of literacy among women. Whilst there already exist laws that permit the freedom and self-realization of all individuals in Ghana including women, what is to be done is the education of females in Ghana. Education apparently holds the key to the emancipation of women. Where women are educated their prospects of being employed in the formal sector is higher and this can lead to financial self-reliance. In addition education will



assist women to be informed about their rights as citizens of Ghana and know the appropriate measures to take in the event their rights are trampled upon. Efforts towards the promotion of education of women in Ghana can be one of the most effective means of promoting the empowerment of women in Ghana.

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