



Thesis By

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**UNIVERSITY OF
GHANA**

**SEXUAL PLEASURE AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AND
FEMININITIES: UNDERSTANDING
SEXUALITY IN GHANA**

MARCH 2014

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SEXUAL PLEASURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AND
FEMININITIES: UNDERSTANDING SEXUALITY IN GHANA

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Declaration

With the exception of references and quotations acknowledged herein, this work is by Mr. Daniel Yaw Fiaveh, under the supervision of Prof. Clara Korkor Fayorsey, Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Dr. Michael Perry Kweku Okyerefo. This dissertation contains no material for the award of any other degree of the university or other institute of higher learning. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana, granted ethical clearance (NMIMR-IRB CPN 048/11-12).

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Dedication

To Victoria Dordunu

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is a milestone in more than five years of work at the University of Ghana and specifically within the field of Sociology of Masculinities, Sexuality, and Gender Studies. My experience at University of Ghana has been nothing short of mixed experiences, love and not so much love. Since my Master of Philosophy, I have discovered my career, i.e. Feminist Sexologist. Persons with a kind heart have given me unique opportunities: my heads of departments (Prof. Steve Tonah and Prof. Dzodzi Tsikata) and my supervisors (Prof. Clara Korkor Fayorsey, Dr. Michael Perry Kweku Okyerefo, and Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo) and I have taken advantage of the opportunities given me. This includes working at the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) for over three years, starting as a Teaching/Graduate Assistant to Prof. Dzodzi Tsikata and Dr. Michael P. K. Okyerefo since August 2010. Throughout these years, I have learned to appreciate people regardless of colour, genders, strength, physical abilities or disabilities, and sexual orientations. This thesis presents the lessons learned from working at the Centre for Gender Studies and with my thesis committee.

I wish to thank my advisors. Prof. Fayorsey has supported me not only by offering her intellectual contributions (i.e. conceptualization of the problem, analysis, and discussion), but also provided a research assistantship to finish this dissertation. I met Prof. Adomako Ampofo during my teaching assistantship at CEGENSA. It was through the literature that I discovered her special interest in masculinity studies. She obliged to have me as her PhD student. Since joining my committee, Prof. has been very instrumental in the methodology, theory, and analysis. Dr. Okyerefo helped me come up with the thesis topic and guided me over almost five years of academic development. The idea of pursuing a doctoral degree emerged from my master thesis on *Male Perspective on Condom Use*. I found that some men do not use a condom because they claim it reduces their sexual pleasure. However, as women exercised agency, men used a condom. Dr. Okyerefo suggested that I explore the pleasure aspect of sex as a further study. He asked, “So, do men conceptualize pleasure differently from women?” This question led me to think about a postgraduate study with emphasis on exploring sexual pleasure, an aspect of sexuality, from both female and male perspectives. Therefore, it comes as no surprise regarding his interest in the study (although a Catholic Priest) and his useful contributions in terms of the analysis and discussion.

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Akpe na mi loo! Mawu neyra mi. Elava nyo na mí kata kple mia viwo ha!

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Abstract

Although sexual pleasure is an important aspect of human sexuality, we know little about how women and men construct sexual pleasure. Yet, understanding how individuals construct sexual pleasure is key making sense of how they perform themselves in relation to sexual practices. How do women and men portray themselves as active agents in sexual encounters as consequence of their sexual beliefs and symbolic interpretations and meanings of sexual pleasure? Drawing on the narratives of 20 women and 16 men aged 22 to 79 years in Madina, an urban settlement in Accra, Ghana, I investigate how women and men construct sexual pleasure in Ghana and highlight women's sexual agency. Specifically, the study explores how sexual knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform the way women and men perceive sex and initiate sexual intercourse; notions of masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual practices; and meanings of sexual pleasure, factors that stimulate women and men's sexual pleasure, and how they are negotiated. Both women and men were constrained discussing sexual matters due to factors such as protection of privacy, secrecy and sensitivity. Media and friends were the main sources of knowledge of sexual beliefs and behaviour. Sexual experiences varied by age and sex but not by marital status or religion. Women believed sex should be guarded while men perceived sex as a declaration of their masculinity. Although men persuaded women to engage in diverse sexual practices, women used vagina to negotiate sex on their own terms. Women were active initiators of sex. Although women framed 'proper' masculinity in terms of stereotypical reproductive norms, they also acknowledged fluidity and multiplicity of masculinities. Femininity was more uniformly characterised in terms of physical attractiveness and beauty, responsibility, and reproduction. These features, especially those related to morally appropriate sexual norms (e.g., menstrual and bodily hygiene, unplanned pregnancy etc.), influence the way women engage in sexual relations with men. Meanings of sexual pleasure were direct and indirect and were symbolic (e.g., ejaculation, scream, and asking rhetoric questions during sex) based on subjective interpretations. Both women and men reported experiencing direct expressions of sexual pleasure, i.e. ejaculation. The experience of sexual pleasure was a product of sexual negotiation based on complex factors (e.g., eroticism, sex positions, and use of aphrodisiacs) and perceptions of sexual risk (e.g., fear of suffering an ill health). Although the women's agency was expressed within the confines of masculinist ideology, women reported negotiating sex and sexual pleasure according to self-reflecting sexual choices. Therefore, dominant ideologies of masculinity are not threat to Ghanaian women's sexuality. However, the need to address issues that would make sexual pleasure seeking easier for women and men and the removal of barriers of fears is compelling.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

GAC	Ghana AIDS Commission
GDHS	Ghana Demographic and Health Survey
GSS	Ghana Statistical Services
NACP	National AIDS Control Programme
NCA	National Communications Authority
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
P&P	People & Places News Paper
PLHIV	Persons Living With HIV
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In countries in Africa, dominant ideologies of masculinity (e.g., male sexual dominance) are seen as a threat to women's sexuality (see Dako-Gyeke, 2013; Inhorn, 2005; McFadden, 2003; Scorgie et al., 2011). Men are perceived as sexually active while women are seen as passive to sex and less likely to negotiate sexual practices compared to men (see Anarfi, 2006; Macia et al., 2011). However, studies show that in many African contexts, women are sexually expressive (Adomako Ampofo, 2004 & 2006; Oliffe et al. 2013; Pereira, 2003; Scorgie et al., 2011; Tamale, 2005; Tenkorang, 2012). The conception of men's power over women's sexuality in Africa is partly because there is little knowledge of how women exert agency in sex decision making especially in seeking for their own sexual desires and sexual pleasure. Based on in-depth interviews with 20 women and 16 men aged 22 to 79 years in Ghana, the present study provides exploratory evidence that suggests that women are not passive in terms of sexual relations and negotiations and not as 'powerless' as popular knowledge makes them appear. The central theme is to explore women and men's construction of sexual pleasure and highlight women's agentic capacity.

Although there are different perspectives, the discourse on sexuality has been engaged by two major perspectives, i.e. the essentialists' perspective and the social constructionists' perspective. From the perspective of essentialism, sexuality represents a biological drive, a natural given which form the basis for sexual behaviour. It argues that humans are biologically driven to seek sexual gratification (Freud, 1962). Sexuality from a biological perspective, therefore,

encompasses sex and sexual contact in all its forms, as well as medical concerns about the physiological aspects of sexual behaviour (Boswell, 1980). The sociological and cultural implication of sexuality in this regard is the notion for women and men to beget children, and for women, their reproduction is perceived as an important aspect of their femininity (Fortes, 1978; Freud, 1962). In contrast, the social constructionists (e.g., Foucault, 1978; Gagnon & Simon, 1974) emphasize the constructivist nature of sexuality and argue that all human sexual behaviour is socially determined. By thinking of sexuality not merely as a reflection of biological drive but as a product of social knowledge, social constructionism sheds light on the fact that the ways in which sexual desire is conceptualized are always contingent upon specific social contexts. Although the essentialists and the social constructionists present different perspectives about sexuality, they largely do not emphasize agency as central to human sexuality.

Those who note the effect of human agency (e.g. feminists and symbolic interactionists) on the construction of sexuality argue that humans make self-reflecting sexual choices. Feminist scholars (such as Adomako Ampofo, 2004; Bennett, 2011; Gqola, 2005; Kabeer, 2000; Oyewumi, 2004; Pereira, 2003; Tamale, 2005) challenge the portrayal of African women as passively oppressed and visualize women as active agents of their own lives. They argue that different cultures structure women's sexuality differently, suggesting that there is no generality of oppression across cultures, and how sexuality marks a woman's or a man's sexual practices is a complex blend of factors including how sexual agency is utilized (such as Dellenborg, 2004; Diallo, 2004; Niang, 1996; Tamale, 2010). Thus, sexual agency enables women to make choices that contravene cultural norms or social values (Meyers, 2002) although sexual pleasure as a central concept in feminists' discourse has been insufficiently discussed in relation to women's agency (McFadden, 2003). The present study, therefore, explores sexual pleasure as an aspect of

sexuality, which some feminist scholars (such as McFadden, 2003) regard as women's right, with the aim of highlighting women's sexual agency in Africa.

The study contests the discourse in which sexuality is to be understood in terms of male control over female sexuality. Findings have potential to broaden our understanding on constructions of masculinity and femininity and sexual negotiation practices among women and men in urban Ghana. Participation in the study was response driven and purposive using qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with women and men in an urban settlement in Madina, Accra, Ghana. Therefore, caution is exercised not to oversimplify sexuality beyond the interpretations given to the responses of the interviewees at Madina. The choice of Madina was based on convenience; the cosmopolitan nature of the area offers varied contexts from which sexuality was understood among different categories of women and men.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Although sexual pleasure is an important aspect of human sexuality (Foucault, 1978 & 1990; Kennedy & Dean, 1994; Kinsey et al., 1968 & 1998; McFadden, 2003; Mottier, 2013; WHO, 2006; Winks & Semans, 1994), we know little about how women and men construct sexual pleasure. Yet, understanding how individuals construct sexual pleasure is key to making sense of how they perform themselves in relation to sexual practices (see Fiaveh, 2012; McFadden, 2003; Ratele, 2008; WHO, 2006). Using qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with women and men in Accra, Ghana, this study explores narratives of sexual pleasure in Ghana. Findings have the potential to inform efforts to address issues that would make sex more pleasurable for women and men especially in relation to women's sexual rights.

Across the world, sex has a lot to do with the pleasure of partners and although a union between a woman and a man may be intended as a means for procreation, it typically provides a reliable means for the satisfaction of sexual desires (Amidu et al., 2011). As Kennedy and Dean (1994) have argued, 'great sex' has more to do with what is pleasurable. Sexual displeasure could create grounds for conflict or sexual discontent (Oniye, 2008), sexual risk and well-being (Adinkrah, 2012; Fiaveh, 2012; Mariano, 2012; WHO, 2006), and the exercise of sexual rights (McFadden, 2003; Oriel, 2005; Pereira, 2003; Tamale, 2010; WHO, 2006). For example, among the matrilineal Akan of Ghana, the sexual dissatisfaction of a woman could constitute grounds for divorce (see Awusabo-Asare et al., 1993; Pereira, 2003). To McFadden (2003:1), "sexual pleasure is fundamental to our right to a safe and wholesome lifestyle". Essentially, the study is about Ghanaian women's and men's sexuality, cultural beliefs and women's sexual agency.

How do women and men portray themselves as active agents in sexual encounters as consequence of their sexual beliefs and symbolic interpretations and meanings of sexual pleasure? This is the central question I engaged with in discussing the present situation of sexuality in Africa where sexuality is complex. The study will be useful for discourse in the area of sexuality, masculinity, femininity, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), as well as provide understanding of sexual practices and intimacy from an African perspective.

1.3 Study Objectives

The main objective of the study is to investigate how women and men construct sexual pleasure in Ghana and highlight women's sexual agency. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. explore how sexual knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform the way women and men perceive sex and initiate sexual intercourse;

2. explore women and men's notion of masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual practices; and
3. explore women and men's meanings of sexual pleasure, factors that stimulate their sexual pleasure, and how they negotiate for these factors.

1.4 Significance of Study

In terms of empirically grounded knowledge, this study contests the terrain of men's power over women's sexuality by extending the discourse on sexuality to acknowledge other aspects such as sexual pleasure, which has been insufficiently studied. The work, which is located in issues of masculinities, femininities, and sexualities has scientific validity and will contribute to the conceptual space regarding the multifaceted nature of how sexuality is constructed, interpreted and manifested in an African context.

Theoretically, the study explores narratives that show the change in the dominant idea of what it means to be a woman and a man from the standpoint of the sexuality of urban women and men, and highlights the agentic capacity of Ghanaian women. The analytical approach brings to light knowledge on intimate partner relationships especially in relation to sexual feelings and behaviour. This PhD project builds on my earlier Master thesis on condom use and in which the main finding was that men were reluctant to use condoms during sexual intercourse because it would procure them less pleasure. The present study draws on in-depth exploration of the ways sexual pleasure shape the understanding of health risks within complex relations of power and gender. In this regard, the findings are useful for studies on popular culture, masculinity and sexuality discourses on sexual health and sexual rights including the ability to negotiate one's own sexual spaces and wellbeing. I also outline a sexual pleasure model as a theoretical

contribution that will serve as a useful framework for broader discussion on sexual pleasure in future empirical studies.

This study is based on data collected through in-depth interviews with women and men at two distributed communities of Madina, Accra, Ghana. Given the sensitive nature of the study and the difficulties associated with data gathering in such a study, I anticipate that the study (especially in relation to the data collection techniques and procedure) will provide useful methodological designs that may serve as templates for subsequent efforts in this field based on the detailed 'ethnographic path'¹ provided.

1.5 Organization of Study

The study is organised into seven chapters. *The first chapter* deals with the general introduction to the study. It includes the study background, statement of the problem, objectives, and the significance of the study.

The second chapter focuses on the theoretical perspectives and literature review. The first section presents the theoretical approaches employed in this study, i.e. black feminism and symbolic interactionism. In philosophical terms, both perspectives address questions concerning human agency. The second section reviews literature. The areas reviewed include history of sexuality: western discourse, masculinity and female sexual restrictions: reflections from studies in Africa, cultural notions of maleness and femaleness in Ghana, and sexual pleasure and sexual risk construction. The reviews unravel the nuances around female and male sexuality in Africa.

¹ One of the three canons provided by Sanjek (1990: 397) as means of ethnographic validity. It involves taking detailed accounts of field events and presented in a systematic way in order to verify theoretically significant patterns. Thus, the accounts of an ethnographer's fieldwork path should be incorporated in her or his writings.

Chapter three is the study design and research methods. The chapter presents information on the study site, research design used, description of the interviewees, the data collection techniques and procedure, mode of analysis, ethical issues, validity, and the limitations of study. The methodology is informed by the theoretical underpinnings of the study, i.e. black feminism and symbolic interactionism. The study was exploratory and descriptive in nature and used interview guide as the main instrument for data collection.

Chapter four is captioned sexual beliefs, experiences, and female sexual behaviour. The chapter presents a discussion on sexual knowledge (i.e. sources and nature of sexual knowledge, and messages), and how knowledge influence sexual beliefs and experiences. The chapter also highlights how knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform female agentic capacity in sex decision making and initiation of sex within marital and non marital contexts.

Chapter five is on masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual relations with men. Masculinity and femininity were found to be constructed in a variety of ways. Women's construction of 'proper' masculinity had diverse meanings, ranging from stereotypical reproductive norms to fluidity and multiplicity in masculinities. Femininity was more uniformly characterised in terms of independence, physical characteristics and beauty, responsibility, and reproduction. These features influenced women's practices of negotiating sex.

Chapter six presents a discussion on symbolic meanings, stimulants, and female agentic capacity of sexual pleasure. Meanings of sexual pleasure were symbolic and had both direct and indirect expressions. Ejaculation was reported to indicate direct expressions of sexual pleasure. Screams, facial and other expressions were reported to indicate indirect experiences of sexual pleasure.

The experience of sexual pleasure was a product of sexual negotiation based on factors such as eroticism, sex positions, and use of aphrodisiacs. Sexual pleasure negotiations were gendered and derive, at least in part, from differences in demographic profiles (such as age and marriage), meanings, and perceptions of sexual risk (e.g., fear of experiencing pain during sex, fear of suffering an ill health). Women more than men were preoccupied with sexual fear, and invented strategies including the use of threats of sexual refusal to prevent or overcome them.

The last, *chapter seven*, provides conclusions and some reflections on the study. It specifically offers a summary of the main findings, the discussion, and conclusion. The chapter also presents a conceptual model of sexual pleasure, i.e. *Sexual Pleasure Stimulus-Response Model*. The reflections focus on challenges of this study and indicate directions for further research.

1.6 Conceptual Clarifications

- i. **Agentic Eavesdrops/Eavesdropping:** women's strategy of participating in sexual matters through pretense. In so far as a woman has interest in discussing sexual matters, she will eavesdrop. Sexual eavesdropping, therefore, is an indirect indication or invitation of a woman's willingness to discuss sexual matters through symbolic body gestures, deliberate erotic eye contact, use of rhetoric questions, and use of other symbolic gestures.
- ii. **Femininities:** attributes an individual defines as being important elements of femaleness. These characteristics may be based on physical and biological characteristics (e.g., having a vagina, able to bear a child, physical attractiveness) and social characteristics such as beauty, humility, good character, caring, and cleanliness.
- iii. **Foreplay:** a sexual activity involving one or more persons with the aim to stimulate,

sexual pleasure or sexual desire. Foreplay includes caressing, kissing, touching intimately, licking, and 'fingering'.

- iv. **Frottage:** a form of sex that involves sexual stimulation such as rubbing penis against another penis or rubbing vagina against another vagina for purposes of obtaining sexual pleasure. Frottage is a form of sex and can also be a form of foreplay.
- v. **Gender:** for analytical reasons, gender is a social construct specifying ideas about behaviours, actions, and roles an individual performs or follows in a given social or cultural context based on one's sex.
- vi. **Masculinities:** attributes an individual defines as being important elements of maleness. These characteristics may be based on physical and biological characteristics (e.g., having a penis) and social characteristics such phallic competence (i.e. able to impregnate a woman, able to sustain erection, or able to satisfy a woman sexually), financial and emotional support for women, and being a family head.
- vii. **Orgasm:** orgasm is an involuntary contraction centred in the genitals characterised by intensely pleasurable feelings and sometimes experienced as an accompaniment to ejaculation (Winks & Seman, 1994). Although orgasm can be achieved through various means, the definition offered in this study does not include orgasm obtained by inflicting harm with oneself or with another partner or from punishment. Orgasm is stimulated through erotic sexual activities.
- viii. **Power:** there are different forms of power such as 'power over', 'power within', 'power to', and 'power with'. Power in this study means the ability to alter the behaviour of others against their personal choice. This means that a person (e.g., a man) has 'power over' another person (e.g., a woman) to the extent that 'man' can get 'woman' to do what

'woman' would otherwise not do (see Dahl, 1957). This conceptualization of power supports the view that power is exercised rather than possessed (see Foucault, 1978). Thus, by defining power as the ability [of a man] to alter the behaviour of others [a woman] implies that appreciating power demands not only the awareness of what 'a woman' will do but also assurance that it is something that 'a woman' would not otherwise do. In most cases, such assurance of knowing what 'a woman' would otherwise do is situational and complex.

- ix. **Sex as Dutiful/Responsibility:** a form of sexual agency that seeks to place much emphasis on an individual's sexual responsibility towards his or her partner in order to ensure the survival of a sexual union or a relationship. Having sex as a duty or a responsibility is not a suppression of a person's sexuality.
- x. **Sex as Transaction/Transactional Sex:** the exchange of material or non-material rewards for a sexual activity. Although some studies (e.g., Mills & Ssewakiryanga, 1995) claim that women tend to gain during transactional sexual encounters, men also benefit from transactional sex, for example, through female verbal appreciation (e.g., *borsu kena* in Hausa meaning you are the boss, *borsu* in PG meaning performer, *ꞑgbɔrɔ* in Ga meaning 'performer' or boss, 'strongman', etc.) or 'niceties' after sexual encounters.
- xi. **Sex Compromise:** a form of sexual agency that considers a partner's sexual interests (e.g., sex preferences, sex positions, foreplay, etc.) or a group's interest (e.g., stable relationship or marriage) above one's own sexual interest. For example, the decision to give in to unwanted sex to prevent relationship discontents or to 'prove love'.
- xii. **Sex Negotiation:** the agency of an individual to exercise sexual right in order to bargain for sex or have choices in sex decision making including sexual pleasure, reproduction,

and sex preferences (such as penile-vagina sex or penile-anal sex, sex position, foreplay, use of aphrodisiacs, and place to have sex).

- xiii. **Sex Positions:** positions that women and men engage in during sex to enhance sexual pleasure. There are different sex positions including ‘woman on top’ position, ‘man on top’ (e.g., ‘missionary position’) position, ‘side-by-side’ position, ‘rear-penetration’ (e.g., ‘doggy’) position, and ‘standing sex’ position. Within sex positions are sex position variations. For example, the side-by-side position has variations such as ‘spoon’, ‘front to front’, ‘scissors’, and ‘one leg lift’.
- xiv. **Sex Resistance/Subversion:** a form of sexual agency where an individual chooses not to consider a partner’s sexual interests (such as sex preferences, sex positions, and foreplay) above his or her own sexual interest. Sexual resistance may be influenced by sexual beliefs, moral values, sexual experiences, and assessment of sexual risk (e.g., fear of getting caught, fear of sexual displeasure, and disease infection).
- xv. **Sex/Sexual Intercourse:** any activity that a person(s) engage in to satisfy their sexual desires (e.g., sexual pleasure, reproduction, and harm). Sex can be erotic or non-erotic and or ‘penetrative’ or ‘non-penetrative’. The definition of what constitute sexual intercourse in this study transcends the narrow definition of ‘penetrative’ sex (e.g., penile-vagina sex, penile-anal sex, and penile-mouth sex). I use the term penile-vagina sex, penile-anal sex, and penile-mouth sex to avoid ambiguities. For example, using the term oral sex could mean different things to different people. ‘Oral sex’ could mean penile-mouth sex, mouth-anal sex, and mouth-ear sex.
- xvi. **Sexual Agency/Agentic Skills:** sexual agency signifies that a person is responsible for his or her own sexual acts. This means that sexual agency allows people to have control

over their own sexuality and to reshape sexual scripts, beliefs and behaviours in sexual encounters or unions. On the other hand, agentic skills are skills or strategies that enable women and men to make proactive self-reflecting sexual choices (see Meyers, 2002). Women and men employ different agentic strategies such as sex negotiation, sex transaction, sex compromise, dutiful sex, responsibility sex, and sexual resistance.

- xvii. **Sexual Displeasure:** the inability of a person to experience sexual pleasure. This may be due to lack of or 'appropriate' erotic sexual stimulants (e.g. foreplay), uncomfortable sex positions, and lack of a sustained erection by a male sexual partner.
- xviii. **Sexual Orientation:** the attraction of an individual's sexual desire to a particular sex 'category' such as being attracted to the same sex, an opposite sex, or to both sexes. Culture and religious beliefs and sexual experiences as well as personal choice influence a person's sexual orientation.
- xix. **Sexual Pleasure:** a pleasure derived from human beings' erotic and stimulating sexual acts. This definition is not limited to 'penetrative' sex. Although sexual pleasure can be achieved through several ways such as erotic and inflicting of harm (see Bancroft et al., 2003; Parish et al., 2007; Philpott et al., 2006; Steinke & Wright, 2006), the definition of pleasure in this study does not include pleasure obtained from harm with oneself or to another partner (e.g., sadomasochism) or pleasure obtained from receiving punishment.
- xx. **Sexual Risk:** these are biological risks, social and moral risks. Biologically, sexual risk include fear of experiencing sexual displeasure, fear of suffering an ill health (such as STI/HIV), fear of failure of prolonged erection, fear of experiencing pain during sex, and fear of being forced to have sex (e.g., rape). Social and moral risks include fear of losing one's respect as a woman or a man, fear of appearing easy and cheap, and fear of being

seen as too exposed to sex.

- xxi. **Sexual Stimulants:** factors that influence a person's experiences of sexual pleasure. These factors are categorized into erotic factors (e.g., erotic scenes, erotic music or movies, sexual privacy, foreplay, and physical attractiveness), sex positions, aphrodisiacs, sex aids, and sexual risks.
- xxii. **Sexual Stimulation:** includes processes such as caressing of the genitalia, or other relevant body parts such as the 'erotic zones' (e.g., ears, lips, mouth, nipples, armpits, toes, and fingers) to increase sexual desire or sexual pleasure.
- xxiii. **Sexuality:** encompasses sex, sexual beliefs, sexual knowledge, sexual pleasure, sexual health, intimacy, and sexual agency. It is influenced by the interaction of several factors such as socioeconomic, cultural, religious, sexual, health, and biological factors.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research problem and the motivation for the study. It problematises sexuality and sexual pleasure from two main perspectives; that is those who see women as subordinated to men due to biological and social construction, and those who promote human agency in making self-reflecting sexual choices. Following this, the objectives of the study are delineated and details given as to how the study will progress including the significance of the study. Last, each of the chapters included in this report have been briefly overviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The field of sexuality studies has produced a range of arguments and analyses that engaged writers and theorists worldwide. Scholars (such as historians, sexologists, anthropologists, evolutionists, constructivists, feminists, and queer theorists) have been fascinated by sex including the form it takes, the pleasure it gives, the circumstances in which it occurs, and what it means, both for the individuals concerned and to society more generally.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical perspectives (i.e. black feminism and symbolic interactionism) and reviews literature. The reviews focused on the history of sexuality: western discourse, masculinity and female sexual restrictions: reflections from studies in Africa, cultural notions of maleness and femaleness in Ghana, and sexual pleasure and sexual risk construction.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives

Theories are tools to help understand social phenomena, and in this particular case to understand the meanings that women and men in a particular setting give to sexual pleasure. The theoretical perspectives presented are used to interpret the sexual beliefs and behaviour of the people interviewed.

Two sociological perspectives have influenced the study of human sexuality, i.e. feminism and symbolic interactionism. Both perspectives address questions concerning human agency and fall within the broad paradigm of constructionism. The premise of constructionism is that there is no

objective reality, and that reality is collectively constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Such construction rests on language or symbols, which enables humans to form shared meanings of experienced phenomena.

2.2.1 Black Feminism and Female Agency

Feminism is a set of ideas and a political movement that analyses the position of women in society, and seeks to understand its basis and causes in order to address it. Feminists see power as an important characteristic of sexual relations. In principle, they broadly agree that gender relations are socially constructed and are power relations, and privilege as well as disadvantage women and men differently (Thompson, 1992). Feminists argue that gender relations are reinforced by ‘patriarchal²’ institutions and agents of socialisation such as the family, religious institutions, school, media, etc.

Feminism has many strands (e.g., queer theorists, radical feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, African feminism, and black feminism). The different strands are important because they are based on how each perceives power relations and how they seek to promote gender equitable cultures. For instance, those who contest the portrayal of women as passively oppressed (e.g., liberal feminism, African feminism, and black feminism) visualize women as active agents of their own lives, even when not able to control the circumstances surrounding them (Butler, 2011; Collins, 2000 & 2005; Connell, 2005; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2005; Howson, 2006). This section examines black feminism vis a vis female sexual agency.

Black feminism sees power as many-sided and fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how

² Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold authority over women, children, other men (e.g. younger and unmarried men), and property (see Allman, 1996; Fortes, 1978; Foucault, 1978; Ivaska, 2011; Lerner, 1986; Miescher, 2005 & 2007).

we think about power relations. Black feminist scholars (e.g., Adomako Ampofo, 2004; Bennett, 2011; Collins, 2000; Oyewumi, 2004; Pereira, 2003; Tamale, 2005) offer significant contributions toward the important connections among knowledge, consciousness, and women's empowerment. In *Black Feminist Thought*, for example, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) interrogates the relationships between power, self-definition, and knowledge. Collins (2000) argues that knowledge can be power and oppressed people possess power. She identifies various ways of knowledge and suggests that knowledge is built upon lived experiences not upon objectified positions. Collins suggests that knowledge is based on individual subjective construction in dialogical relationship with another actor. Because knowledge is built upon lived experiences, the assessment of knowledge influence actor's beliefs (e.g., fear of infecting a partner with a disease), values (e.g., penile-anal sex is bad), and ethics (sexual right and informed consent). Knowledge from these perspectives is a creative power, which results from negotiation. Knowledge, thus, allows women to reshape cultural scripts, beliefs and behaviours (see Meyers, 2002). The implication of this is that, being male does not confer power over female sexuality.

Black feminism also demonstrates that power goes beyond documenting gender inequality. In sexual politics, for example, Patricia Hill Collins (2005) analysis sexuality as stereotypical, which she suggests, is central to dominant gender discourses. Collins (2000) and other feminist scholars (e.g., Butler, 2011) provide evidence that show that stereotypical beliefs about the dominant man and submissive woman exert power by appearing to be 'normal' and 'natural' reality about women and men that explain sexual relations. What sustains these beliefs as 'normal' as noted by Collins (2000) is their disconnection from the historical and ideological matrix in which they are fabricated. To Butler (2011), although women often have to comply with appropriate, masculine behaviour, women and men interact according to the meanings they

give to gender (see also Howson, 2006). This implies that dominant ideologies of masculinity (e.g., male sexual dominance) may not necessarily suppress female sexuality.

Overall, black feminism addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge by revealing new ways of knowing that allow individuals to define their own sexuality. It encourages research inclusive of other kinds of social categories (e.g., gender, age, sociocultural and religious contexts, persona, perceptions, experiences, and desires) that some mainstream researchers often neglect in understanding sexuality from an African perspective. The perspective shifts our understanding of social categories from bounded (essentialists viewpoint) to fluid (constructionists position) and highlights the processes of self-definition (agency) as constructed in conjunction with others (see Butler, 2011; Collins, 2000 & 2005; Howson, 2006). For example, how does sexual pleasure and agency work together to influence how women negotiate sex with men? Asking such a question might lead us to discover that multiple factors such as sexual beliefs (e.g., sex in menstrual period is irresponsibility), sexual experiences (e.g., forced sex), sexual risk (fear of disease infection) and personal choice (e.g. sex transaction) can create different sexual reality amongst different categories of women such as those married and unmarried.

In terms of the methodology, using self-definition approach enabled the interviewees to state their personal narratives and individual experiences. In this particular research, the use of women and men's own voices and personal accounts of their sexual experience in the form of narratives offered an understanding of how women and men construct their own gender and sexual realities. This aided in deconstructing women and men's sexuality e.g., women and men's sexual constraints and the assertion that a woman's sexuality is constructed around a dominant male

discourse. Interviewees own accounts exemplified the ways in which women and men interpret this discourse, how it affects them differently, and the way they think and experience sexual pleasure. These narratives also provided interviewees and me with an understanding of this process in order to reconstruct it in ways that enhance women and men's own experiences. More importantly, a black feminist approach to sexual agency brought out the sexual diversity and variation that exist among women and men in Madina, the study area.

2.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism and Self-Reflecting Choices

This section looks at symbolic interactionism vis a vis human agency, i.e. the ability of human beings to make self-reflecting [sexual] choices.

In interactionists' theory, as in most feminist approaches, the idea is to uncover the ways in which individuals participate in the construction of their own perceived social reality. For symbolic interactionists, objects acquire meaning through communication (Blumer, 1986). The self is seen as not only subject, but also object, and like other objects, it too becomes imbued with meaning through interaction (Mead, 1982). Importantly, the self is not only an object to others, but also to oneself. That is, people have the ability to take on the role of others, and thus see the self as others see it, objectified. This view of self as 'other' contributes to behavioral decision making, as people act in ways intended to foster certain perceptions of themselves on the part of others. Thus, knowledge is constructed through subjective and symbolic interpretations created in social interaction.

George Herbert Mead's perspective on an "Act" as a symbolic interaction provides an additional understanding to symbolic interpretations of social phenomenon. According to Mead, impulse

(which is the first of four stages of an “Act³” identified by Mead) involves an “immediate sensuous stimulation” and actor’s reaction to stimulation (Mead, 1982 cited in Ritzer, 2002: 208). Mead argues that in thinking [being agentic] about a response to a stimulus, actors (people) do not produce unthinking responses to stimulus. Mead stresses the uniqueness of human beings in terms of their capacity for thinking and maintains that thinking arises in the process of people adjusting to their environment. Mead considers not only the immediate situation but also past experiences and anticipated future results of an ‘Act’.

George Mead’s assertion means that thinking includes defining objects in one's world, outlining possible modes of conduct, imagining consequences of alternative conduct, sorting out and eliminating conduct that is unlikely to achieve desired results, and then selecting the conduct most likely to lead to the intended goals (see Blau, 1964; Dewey, 1922; Homans, 1961). By approaching human behaviour from the perspective of individual interpretations rather than society and biology, the mind becomes a significant instrument in human adaptation. It seems safe to assume that interactionists’ stance inherently recognizes these limitations of strictly biological or strictly cultural construction of complex behavioural phenomenon such as sexual activity. It seeks, instead, an additional level of analysis, one which integrates meanings and individual autonomy [agency] as important analyzable units. Thus, while impulse (such as the desire to have sex) can be influenced by the environment (such as cultural and religious upbringing), the individual engages in dialogical encounter with others based on mutual understanding and meaning of the situation. If situation is mutually defined as suitable for sexual activity they will engage in it.

³ A symbolic interactionists theory written on the Mind, Self and Society.

A symbolic interactionist's perspective was useful to this study. It guided my attempt to explore a set of meanings of sexual pleasure that was based on women and men's sexual interactions. Given that sexual pleasure is a subjective phenomenon, this study is guided by the assumption that individuals construct their own sexual reality and that sexual pleasure has different personal meanings depending on how they are defined and understood by the individuals themselves. Besides the way individuals define and act on their behaviours, interactionists' perspective give meaning to collective sexual experiences through the constructions of sexual identities and definitions, i.e. what women and men consider being a woman or a man. Through symbolism, therefore, the study can identify diversities in meanings of sexual practices and sexual pleasure between and within women and men.

Overall, feminism and symbolic interactionism are useful perspectives because they both have similar viewpoints about the ability of people to make self-reflecting choices, which is the central discourse in this study. For example, how do women and men portray themselves as active agents in sexual encounters as consequence of their symbolic interpretations and meanings of sexual pleasure?

2.3 Literature Review

Sexuality is a complex and multifaceted aspect of human life that has engaged several researchers worldwide. Biologically, sexuality can encompass sexual intercourse and sexual contact in all its forms, as well as medical concerns about the physiological or even psychological aspects of sexual behaviour. Socially, sexuality can span the cultural, moral or religious aspects of sexual behaviour.

2.3.1 History of Sexuality: Western Discourse

Historically, the discourse of sexuality is marked by the contestation whether sexual desire is biologically driven (i.e. determined by genes or anatomy) or socially constructed. This contention defines the various perspectives from different historical periods and in contemporary times.

Anthropologists give us a glimpse into the world of sexuality in early cultures. As cities began to grow and people began living together in larger groups, there was the need to structure social life, and so codes of conduct began to develop. For instance, because a great value was put on having as many children as possible (especially sons, for inheritance) sex was confined to reproduction although people had sex for pleasure. Anthropologists (such as Haire, 1945; Lévi-Strauss, 1958; Mead, 1930) were concerned with customs and practices that regulated the sex drive of humans in society. In this era, sex was subjected to different forms of interpretations and the pursuit of sexual desires was dependent upon the extent to which sex was licentious in a particular society (Mead, 1930). For Licht (1932) and Thomas (1959), sexual license was widespread although societies expected higher moral behaviour of women than men, who were allowed sexual license. This enabled men to wield power over women's sexuality although how societies constructed women's sexuality was dependent upon specific historical periods and contexts. For instance, Caldwell et al. (1989) argue that the restrictions on a woman's sexuality are not universal indicating that women's sexuality is not restrictive in certain contexts.

Those who interrogated the universality of the repression of sexuality also include Steven Marcus on *The Other Victorians* (1964). For Marcus, the more society repressed sexual expression, the more people had to find other means to satisfy their sexual desires. Marcus

(1964) argues that sexuality was characterised by excessive western religious repression especially during sixteenth to seventeenth centuries of 'official' Victorian era'. Sex was seen as a troubling condition best contained within the domain of marriage. Outside this boundary, sex was shrouded in mystery, spoken of in metaphor or in abstract scientific terms. It was consequently subjected to severe prohibitions and found illicit outlets in deviancy such as prostitution (Marcus, 1964).

Overtime, especially in the context of sexual revolution and new movements, such as gay rights (e.g., 'homosexual' acts) and the growth of feminism, the debate on sexuality has taken different stands. It spurred different perspectives over the nature of sexuality. They sought to exhibit an interest in uncovering societies establishing a long lineage of sexual lifestyles, subcultures (particularly in early Christian and medieval Europe). Among these scholars were John Boswell and Alfred Kinsey. Boswell considers sexuality as a biological drive, a natural given that applied to people living in different times, regions, and cultures (Boswell, 1980). The works of Alfred Kinsey and others on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1968) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1998) discussed the physical sexual acts women and men engaged in, and suggest that it was based on the pleasure or the orgasm women and men derived. Hence, Kinsey et al. (1968 & 1998) disputed the notions that women are not sexual and that women experience orgasm vaginally.

Other essentialists include Sigmund Freud who also believes that biological forces, such as hormones determine sexual drive. To Freud, humans are driven by biological factors to have sex and claims that women's sexuality is determined by their sexual function to reproduce (Freud, 1962). When we interrogate Freud's writings on sexuality, we find that he considers femininity

and female sexuality as one single unit. Freud considers female sexuality and sexual pleasure as inhibited entirely through male eyes. Freud's postulation on sexuality, however, has seen many revisions and changes over time including his own views that an individual woman may have other motives for engaging in sexual intercourse beside a biological duty (see Freud, 1962 & 1980). Thus, although biology may exert some influences on sexuality, it makes sense, therefore, that humans are free to choose their own sexuality.

Despite the differences between Marcus and Licht's account of sexuality on one hand and Boswell, Kinsey, and Freudian history of medieval sexuality on the other hand, there are some marked similarities in perspectives. Both viewpoints make morally and socially appropriate sexual norms important elements for understanding sexuality. More importantly, both see the history of sexuality as largely one of recurrent periods of tolerance and repression.

In response to the biological theorizing, social constructionists argue that sexuality is not biologically given but a socially constructed behaviour (Gagnon & Simon, 1974: 262). Social constructionists argue that the sources of sexual arousal are to be found in socio-cultural definitions which humans adopt as 'scripts' through interaction with other members of society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Social constructionists, for example, critique essentialists such as Boswell for failing to recognize the fact that the sexual cultures in ancient times and in Western Europe from the beginning of early Christianity were constructed around men who dominated public space. In such a context, therefore, the effort to uncover a sexual past by Boswell is an attempt to impose the past on the present.

Howard Becker's work on *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963) also provides

a framework for understanding sexuality as social phenomenon rather than natural or biologically driven. He views deviance as the creation of social groups and not the quality of some act or behaviour. Becker (1963) maintains that rules are reflections of certain social norms held by those in positions of power and that these norms could change overtime depending on the degree of reaction over time.

The most influential explanation for how externally enforced regulations influence sexuality was provided by Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* (1978). Foucault (1978) argues that sexuality is a social construction having an existence in a society. Thus, a small but increasingly influential middle class made the sexuality of marital reproduction the basis of its personal individuality and class identity, stigmatizing the sexual practices of nobles, peasants, and the working class as morally 'wrong' and medical pathologies. Foucault represents a significant departure from previous understanding of the history of sexuality. His idea that the body and sexuality are cultural constructs rather than natural phenomena has made a significant contribution to the feminist critique of essentialism though with some attention to its limitations. For example, Foucault's view of power to reduce social agents to 'obedient' (or passive) bodies remains a critical discourse among feminists' scholars. That said, Foucault stressed that the idea of sexuality was itself constituted by particular discourses and that sexuality itself was not a thing to discover, but a framework of inquiry.

Other thoughts in the literature include those of 'modernists' and 'post modernists'. These scholars (such as Fischer, 2007; Giddens, 1992; Rose, 2006; Simon, 1996) also consider sexuality as a social construct although they stress the ability of the individual to engage in self reflecting sexual choices. Individuals believe the rules they adhere to are their own choices

although these norms often exist within societal boundaries and sexuality forms the core of individuals' identity (Giddens, 1992; Hawkes, 1996; Simon, 1996). Together, the works of these scholars also exemplify the social constructionists' view of sexuality. Thus, by thinking of sexuality not merely as a reflection of nature but as a product of social knowledge and self-reflecting choices, these perspectives bring into light that the ways in which "desire" is conceptualized both by women and men of a particular period are always contingent upon knowledge and self-consciousness. The lesson learned is not simply that things have changed, but that the self-contained biological view that defines sexuality is contested.

2.3.2 Masculinity and Female Sexual Restrictions: Reflections from Studies in Africa

This section presents some masculinity theories and highlights African researchers contributions to sexuality in Africa focusing on acts of reproduction, cultural practices, religion, and females economic dependence on males

Pioneered by Connell (1995), the concept *hegemonic masculinity* refers to the normative form of masculinity embodied by the socially most powerful males of a society. Central to Connell's (1995) argument is that hegemonic masculinity functions to subordinate both women and men. This means that not all men have power and being male does not necessarily confer power. Notions of hegemonic masculinity have been contested (see Butler, 2011; Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 2005; Howson, 2006; Kimmel and Aronson, 2004; Uchendu, 2008; Whitehead, 2002). Studies (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2005; Kimmel, 1987) have identified multiplicity of masculinities across and within societies, in many cases hierarchically organised in relation to each other as well as in relation to femininities. Butler's (2011) performativity theory and

Whitehead's (2002) work on the sociology of masculinities show that fluidity and multiplicity characterise masculinities and femininities. Butler (2011), for example, asserts that although women often have to comply with appropriate (i.e., culturally sanctioned), masculine behaviour, women and men interact according to the meanings they give to gender (Butler, 2011; see also Howson, 2006).

Yet, in countries in Africa, dominant ideologies of masculinity (e.g., male sexual dominance) are seen as a threat to women's sexual practices (see Inhorn, 2005; McFadden, 2003; Scorgie et al., 2011) with over emphasis on reproductive capacity. This is due to the understanding that women and men should beget children, and for women, their reproduction is perceived as an important aspect of their femininity (Fortes, 1978; Foucault, 1978; Inhorn, 2005; McFadden, 2003). John Munonye, a Nigerian poet, for example, has the following scenes in his novel to depict the perspective of male power over female sexuality.

We [men] could never call her wife until she has produced children for the family; for what use is a kola nut tree if it fails to bear fruit. (Munonye, 1987).

Wole Soyinka also has this to say about women's sexuality and the importance of childbirth in Africa:

You were plump when you first came...But listen girl, I know this new habit of you modern girls don't join them in the foolishness. If you are expecting a baby, have it. A child is a beautiful thing; have it. The important thing is to know the father. (Soyinka, 1987).

However, some African feminists contest the notion that reproduction is what defines a woman's sexuality in Africa and suggest that sexuality is not constructed similarly in all cultures and

contexts. They argue that although a union between a woman and a man may be intended as a source of procreation, it also typically provides a reliable means for the satisfaction of sexual desires (Amidu et al., 2011; McFadden, 2003; Pereira, 2003). Hence, in many African contexts women's sexuality transcend their reproductive capacities.

The literature is also replete with the notion that certain cultural practices restrict women's sexuality. For example, there is the view that the practice of female circumcision or clitoridectomy restricts women's sexual desire and experience of sexual pleasure (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Schwartz & Rutter, 2004). Those who share this view, assert that dominant masculinity embedded in patriarchal cultures (e.g., male sexual dominance) perceive women's sexuality as dangerous and that the only way men could be sure of the biological paternity of children born to them was to regulate women's sexuality (Anarfi, 2006). Karai (2005: 119) argues that among the Masai of Kenya, for example, women's sexuality is seen as a powerful force such that the only way for men to maintain their dominance over women is for them to be circumcised, i.e. to cut their clitoris.

Others argue to the contrary. Researches show that the motivations behind certain 'cultural' practices such as female genital mutilation or circumcision have little to do with the restraining of female sexual pleasure, and the practice can be voluntarily sought-after by women themselves. Dellenborg (2004) reveals that the practice is carried out in order to acquire knowledge that are perceived to essentially transform a girl into womanhood, and also serves as a political tool for female collective identity. Even in societies (such as Ilaje of the Yoruba societies in Nigeria and among Muslim Jola of Senegal) where it is perceived that the cultural construct of female sexuality (e.g., through female circumcision) is to reduce a woman's activeness and sexual

pleasure, researches show that women's sexual pleasure is not considered anything 'bad' that needs control (Dellenborg, 2004; Ojoade, 1983). Diallo (2004) also notes that in Malian societies where female circumcision is pronounced, practices that are perceived to limit the sexual pleasure of women co-exist with those that enhance female sexual pleasure. In many cultures in Africa, women have sexual rights and are taught (especially during initiation or marriage rituals) how to enhance their sexual pleasure; older women who form important part of the practice teach the women various strategies in ensuring that they have pleasurable sex life in marriage.

In addition, during puberty rituals, nuptial advisors (older women) teach young women techniques on how to heighten their sexual pleasure during sexual intercourse (Haram, 2004; Niang, 1996). Among the Laobe in Senegal, for example, women engage in the production and distribution of erotic articles and in teaching about sexuality and traditional erotic lifestyle (Niang, 1996). Certainly, these examples give an indication of the diversity of experiences that exist around female sexuality and the reasons for male control over women's sexual pleasure through circumcision. Moreover, as noted by Manning & Zuckerman (2005), there is no evidence to show that women who undergo circumcision experience less sexual pleasure and are less sexually active than those who do not undergo the practice of circumcision.

Researches also examine the connections between religion and female sexual repression. Sexual regulation within various religious traditions such as African traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam is perceived as different for women and men (Abotchie, 1997; Ammah, 1992; Haram, 2004; Oduyoye, 1992). Some argue that religion regulates every aspect of sexuality in Africa and for what purpose to have sexual intercourse (Addai, 2000: 330). To Caldwell et al (1989), religious doctrines, especially, Christianity and Islam, reinforce a misrepresentation of sexuality

in Africa⁴. Religious texts are sometimes interpreted in ways that seek to reinforce men's power over women's sexuality. Oduyoye (2001), for example, points to how African Traditional religion shapes sexuality, female sexuality in particular. As she explains:

The traditional way of life is closely bound up with religion and religious beliefs in such a way that there is a mutual interdependence of religion and culture ...African Religion provides a holistic view of life. It enables persons to understand and accept their status and identity and passes on beliefs that explain prevailing conditions. African Religion teaches its adherents how to survive and thrive in the world in which they have been placed. This religion undergirds the shaping of the moral, social and the political, and even, at times, the economic. Hence, the moral obligations that weigh so heavily on African women are firmly hooked on to beliefs. (Oduyoye, 2001: 25).

Others suggest that the notion that religion restricts women's sexuality is a misrepresentation of sexuality as espoused in religious texts. This is because in both the Christian and the Islamic text⁵, sexuality is considered as an important part of a 'happy' family life. The Bible, for example, points out that "husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to the husband" (In I Corinthians 7:18). The Quran⁶ also speaks of sex and promises a sensual, erotic life for men and women who live according to the Islamic teachings (Ammah, 1992; Carroll, 2007; Manning & Zuckerman, 2005). According to the Hadith⁷, for example, the prophet Muhammad⁸ [Peace be unto him] was reported to have satisfied all his [eleven] wives and concubines sexually (Manning & Zuckerman, 2005). References are also made to the aspect of the Quran that allows women sexual rights such as rights over their bodies and the right of a wife to divorce a non-sexually performing husband (Haram, 2004: 212; Oduyoye, 1992). Some

⁴ See for example, the Christian text declares that "a woman shall be saved by childbearing" (In I Timothy 2:15).

⁵ The Bible and the Quran.

⁶ The sacred text of Islam, believed by Muslims to record the revelations of God to Muhammad.

⁷ The collected traditions, teachings, and stories of the prophet Muhammad, accepted as a source of Islamic doctrine and law second only to the Quran.

⁸ Last prophet of Islam, whose revelations, encompassing political and social as well as religious principles, became the basis of Islamic culture.

women choose not to exercise this right for several reasons due to social and moral risks such as losing one's respect as a woman or a man, and being seen as too exposed to sex (see Ahlberg, 1994). Although some note the control of women's bodies through the concealments of body parts and face-covering veil such as the *hijab*, the *burqa*, the *niqab* or headscarf (Wolf, 2008), other researchers (Undie & Benaya, 2008) argue that the religious emphasis on women's bodies is rather rooted in the value attached to women's bodies (e.g., the breast, buttocks, thigh, and vagina) as against those of the men (e.g., the penis).

Another issue to note about the discourse on African sexuality is the issue of economic inducement to sex especially as some women tend to depend on men for their economic survival. While it is possible that men have better economic advantages than women due to the social organization that favours men, it is equally important to note that women are expected and strongly encouraged to develop careers of their own in order to support themselves and their children (Kumekpor, 1974). Hence, not all men have control over women economically.

Some studies have argued that men use money and gift giving to procure the sexual services of women (Collins & Rau, 2000; Mills & Ssewakiryanga, 1995). This notion has however been contested because gift as an inducement to sex is a universal phenomenon and does not pertain to African societies alone. More so, materially induced motive for romance or sex in most African cultures are strictly tabooed and are perceived as acts of sex work (see Adomako Ampofo, 2007; Akyeampong & Agyei-Mensah, 2006). Rather, in most African societies, a man's gift to his wife or 'lover' has symbolic meaning and indicates expressions of emotionally committed romance (Poulin, 2005). Part of the reasons is also because women are socialised into believing that men are financial providers, therefore, a man's gift to a woman strengthens the notion of a loving

husband or a supportive boyfriend (Caldwell et al., 1989; Sarpong, 1977: 24-25).

2.3.3 Sexuality and Cultural Notions of Maleness and Femaleness in Ghana

Coming of age is marked within many Ghanaian cultures by elaborate initiation rites. Parents take up the role of educating their wards on sexual matters and the right norms and values of the society during their teenage years especially. However, the societal values and norms on sexuality differ for girls and boys through the significant stages of life (puberty, marriage, and childbearing).

Initiation rites for boys and girls are evident in the rites of passage associated with the transition to adulthood (Sarpong, 1977). The initiation rites for boys centre on a declaration of their masculinity through circumcision as a great number of boys are circumcised shortly after birth and boys who do not undergo circumcision are often ridiculed as *koteboto* in Twi or *bolobolo* in Ewe (uncircumcised penis). Hence, a boy needs a circumcised penis i.e. *abaa* or *dua* (Twi which literally means a stick) in order to have a vagina, i.e. *kolo* (in Ewe) or *tokro* which euphemistically means a hole. As such, a boy who is perceived not to possess a 'good' stick (e.g., if too small) is an object of ridicule and not well placed to be a 'real' man. Indeed, in many parts of the world, a central idea of maleness is underscored by the importance of the penis (see Koedt, 2003; Lehman, 2006; Ratele, 2004; Sackey, 2006; Yamba, 2001). The male characteristics that are approved of or encouraged include leadership qualities (such as bravery, 'potency', power and the ability to bear pain), and the need to control women and support one's wife. Courage and bravery are considered masculine virtues in Ghana. The Akan expressions, *ne bo ye duru* or *ne koko ye duru* (he's brave) has similar understanding with *nye barima* (he's a 'real' man) (Adinkrah, 2012). A boy or a man whose lifestyle does not measure up to the

prescribed expectations is branded as *banyin-basia* or *kwadwo-basia* in Akan, meaning man-woman (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2011) or regarded as ‘useless’ (Nnuroh, 2006: 98).

It is believed that women and girls have less courage and a common expression is *εmaa suro adeε* (Twi, meaning females are cowards) although some women (mainly war combatants, e.g., Yaa Asantewaa) are acknowledged for their exceptional prowess (Boahen, 2003). A girl who veers from the prescribed feminine roles into the domains prescribed for boys is branded *obaa barima*, the Akan appellation for ‘male-woman’, i.e. women who express and present themselves in ways associated with men (see Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2011). Girls are socialised into believing that men have more sexual rights such as keeping multiple sexual partners. One of the key values that young girls are taught is that of the importance of virginity i.e. postpone sex until marriage. Parts of the reasons for this are to prove the uprightness of the family in bringing up their daughter (Darkwah & Arthur, 2006). This means that while boys confirm the level of chastity of the bride to his family, a girl is to prove that her family had done a good job in bringing her up. Among the Asante and the Krobo, for example, puberty rites serve as an occasion to highlight the purity and readiness of girls for marriage and a girl who has not gone through puberty rites is often considered not ready to be married by a man (Opoku, 1978; Sarpong, 1977). During these rites, girls are taught about their sexuality, especially their roles as mothers and how to conduct themselves toward their would-be partners. Although some researchers (Ojo, 2010) maintain that this sort of sex education does not focus on female sexual desire, Sarpong (1977), for example, notes in his *Girls’ Nobility Rites in Ashanti* that the nuptials are taught by older women how to demand sexual pleasure from their husbands.

The Ghanaian cultural values also stress the importance of childbearing⁹ (Naab, 2010) probably due to the part children play in economic activities of parents and their assistance in the home, to the extent that in some cultures (e.g., among the Krobo), parents could induce their unmarried daughters to bear children for them. Across most cultures in Ghana, the importance of a woman bearing a child is expressed in clan totems, traditional symbols (e.g., gold weight; see Figure 1), and some expressions such as *Awoɔ yɛ* (Twi, meaning it is good to procreate), *efɔ bi ha etsɛ* (Krobo, bear a child for your father) (Anarfi & Fayorsey, 1999; Atobrah, 2004). Fortes (1978:45), for example, states that:

There is the deeply ingrained idea that normal men and women should continue to beget and bear children throughout their fecund years... for women, it is their fertility that is considered to be uniquely distinctive of womanhood. A woman becomes a woman when she becomes able to bear children and continued childbearing is irrefutable evidence of continued femininity.

Figure 1 Asante Bronze Figure/Gold Weight Indicating a Woman Breastfeeding Her Child



Source: Institute of African Studies Museum, University of Ghana, Legon, 2013

Although the accepted pattern of Ghanaian life is to marry and have children, the notion of a ‘responsible man’ or ‘responsible woman’ is at the very core of sexuality in Ghana. The concept

⁹ This emphasis on childbearing and motherhood remains strong even in Ghana today. The accepted pattern of Ghanaian life is to marry and have children although the trend is changing within the past few years (see Adomako Ampofo, 2002).

of the 'responsible' woman includes issues of good and personal hygiene practices, good housekeeping including good cooking and training of children (this is expected of the man as well), hard work, modesty, humility, 'motherhood' and marital fidelity. It is for this reason that even though the Ghanaian society is largely patriarchal (excluding the matrilineal Akan), women are often questioned with the phrase *have you seen what has become of your daughter?* This is because while fathers are expected to set up their male children in life through training, and to help their sons in choosing potential female partners, mothers are expected to train their daughters to be 'good' women, i.e. learn personal hygiene practices, good housekeeping, including good cooking, and sexual restraints e.g. not appearing too cheap to boys and men. These socializations which are also steeped in religious codes (i.e., Christian, Muslim, and traditionalist) seek to regulate the situations which can give rise to sexual interest and to influence people's sexual activities and practices (Addai, 2000; Opoku, 1978).

The underlying issue that shapes the duration of sexual relationships is economic in nature since the social position of a woman is often dependent on marital status. As women assume the basic domestic and childcare roles, men assume household headship and the financial needs of the family. Thus, a 'real' man, an *Opanyin* (meaning Akan term for an elderly man) had wives and concubines but cared for them. Although polygyny (i.e. marrying more than one wife) attested to men's power and the enlargement of their estate (e.g. source of labour), it also provided an economic means to some women and their families to live. Hence, remaining unmarried is often not the preferred option for most young women and the society and it is often not encouraged (see Allman, 1996). That said, and as indicated in earlier discussions women are expected and strongly encouraged to develop careers of their own in order to support themselves, their husbands, and their families (see Kumeckpor, 1974).

Religion is also a significant aspect of the Ghanaian social structure. Religious groupings (i.e. Christian, Muslims, and traditionalists) work together to enforce moral codes and sexual practices especially with its attendant arguments on penile-vagina sex as a divine or sacred command (Addai, 2000). Sex is not a subject to be discussed in the open, and blunt questions about sex may encounter resistance (Nnuroh, 2006). As in some other African societies, sexual matters are considerably embedded in proverbs, folktales and are essentially secretive in nature (Nukunya, 1969; Rattray, 1933). Extramarital relationships are abhorred¹⁰ for both women and men although it is possible for some men to marry more than one e.g., men who profess to be traditionalists or those from the Islamic faith. In such instances, a man sought the consent of his first wife and his own relations before marrying another woman (see Nukunya, 1969). Penile-anal sex is considered a sexual depravity against the ethos of the society. Although there have been reports of gender-crossing roles and ‘homosexual’ relations before the introduction of Christianity among some cultures in Ghana (e.g., the Fanti and Nzema men who live close to the coast), these relations were not seen as involving sexual intercourse (see Appiah, 1996). Even among persons who engage in sex work (who are expected to cater for the sexual preferences of their clients) vagina sex is the norm and very few are believed to practice other forms of sex¹¹ (Adomako Ampofo, 2006).

In addition, in most parts of Ghana even in contemporary times, women are encouraged to live up to certain moral standards relating to ‘appropriate’ ways of dressing. Parts of the reason to this is because of religion regarding the notion of being a ‘virtuous’ woman. Another reason is for a woman to indicate to possible suitors that she is already married or attached to another man.

¹⁰ Among the Akan, for example, a crowd gathers around the culprits and hoot *huu huu huu* to emphasize the shameful behaviour of the woman, and also of the male partner she engaged with the act.

¹¹ Such as penile-anal sex or penile-mouth sex.

For such women, the use of cloth around their waist when they wear a traditional dress such as the “*slit and kaba*” is ideal.

Marriage also structures legitimate contexts for understanding women and men’s sexuality across most cultures in Ghana (see Nukunya, 2002). Like other patterns of behaviour, those of marriage are learned from early childhood and are passed on from one generation to another and from parent to child (Nnuroh, 2006). Across cultures in Ghana, it is a taboo for men to have sex with women during their menstrual period because it is seen as ‘unclean’ to do so (Agyekum, 2002). Although as part of the socializing beliefs, spouses are not expected to refuse each other sex, a man is also expected to respect his wife’s decision not to have sex, especially on grounds of experiencing her menstrual period. For example, studies (e.g., Dako-Gyeke, 2013; Nnuroh, 2006: 98) highlight how some discontented or aggrieved wives deny their husbands sex by “facing the wall” in protest at a husband’s behaviour or ‘unfaithfulness’ or on grounds of menstruation.

The media, especially radio and television have tremendous influence on sexuality in Ghana (Addai, 2000). The media has equipped many women and men, particularly the youth with knowledge to define their sexual behaviour through western influence (e.g., Soap Operas and Telenovelas) and cultural influence such as music (e.g., ‘highlife’), movies, drama, dances, proverbs, and jokes.

2.3.4 Sexual Pleasure and Sexual Risk Construction

Sexual pleasure is a complex concept that has been discussed by various researchers. It can be defined as the pleasure arising from a person’s erotic sexual activities. This may include sexual

intercourse although not necessarily 'penetrative' sex. Simply put, sexual pleasure is the satisfaction and enjoyment one derives from any erotic interaction (Philpott et al., 2006).

Sexual pleasure is stimulated by physical and cognitive sensations. It can be stimulated by erotic music, foreplay, sex positions, physical attractiveness, and self sexual stimulation (e.g., use of dildos, vibrators, anal beads, and symbian machine). It may also be sought through discipline, sadism, masochism, fetishism, and bondage. Studies present multifaceted views about the influence of erotic sexual contents on sexual pleasure. For example, while some argue that melodic music and visuals such as pornography produce sounds of *sexual ecstasy* that arouse sexual desires and stimulate sexual pleasure (Kennedy & Dean, 1994; Miller, 2000; Steinke & Wright, 2006), others such as Janghorbani & Lam (2003) think erotic contents such as pornography can lead to aggressive behaviour such as sexual coercion (especially when a partner is refused sex after being sexually aroused). On this note, then, there is the likelihood that the choice of an erotic sexual content may be gendered based on sexual knowledge, beliefs, and experiences.

Foreplay stimulates sexual pleasure (Kennedy & Dean, 1994). Although foreplay is an experience that is a part of a sexual activity, foreplay is a significant component of the attainment of sexual pleasure (Bancroft et al., 2003; Parish et al., 2007). Factors such as odors and smell influence the extent to which an individual is willing to engage a partner in foreplay such as kissing or licking a partner's genitals (Kohl & Francoeur, 1995). While some (e.g., Peplau, 2003) suggests that steady relationships influence the extent to which partners engage in foreplay, others (such as Carroll, 2007; Schwartz, 2000) maintain that foreplay is about power relations. For instance, the fear of losing one's partner for failure of sexual displeasure could create

grounds to fulfill the sexual needs of a partner in an ongoing relationship (Laumann et al., 1994). In this case, then, relationship commitment could serve as a ‘selfish’ incentive to influence an individual’s willingness to engage a partner in pleasurable sex techniques including the choice of foreplay (Byers, 2005; Waite & Joyner, 2001).

Sex positions and techniques also trigger sexual pleasure. There are different sex positions and Hooper (2000), for example, illustrates several types of positions (such as the yawning position, the widely opened position, acrobatic position, erotic sculptures, the elephant posture, woman on top of man, man on top of woman, side by side, rear entry ‘penetration’, and so on) which women and men engage in during sex. Bizimana (2010), for example illustrated how *Kunyaza* as a sexual technique enables the genital erogenous zones of a woman to be stimulated to increase sexual pleasure based on the several sex positions it offers the partners involved. *Kunyaza* is a traditional sexual technique used in Central and Eastern Africa (e.g., in Burundi, Rwanda, the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Uganda and Western Tanzania), which has the reputation of triggering female orgasm during heterosexual encounters. *Kunyaza* is performed in five groups of positions such as sitting positions, lying positions, position from behind, standing positions and positions used during pregnancy (Bizimana, 2010). These positions allow the man to alternate from the external to the internal stimulation and vice versa. The *Kama Sutra*¹² also presents sex manuals indicating different sex positions and techniques that can be performed to enhance sexual pleasure (see Carroll, 2007).

Sex positions decisions are contingent upon sexual beliefs and gendered power relations (Carroll, 2007; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010) with religion and marriage considered as the influence. Some

¹² Written in India in the 2nd century BC, it is one of the best-known ancient sex manuals. It discusses the spiritual aspects of sexuality and presents many sexual positions and techniques for enhancing the enjoyment of intercourse.

women (e.g., unmarried women) are perceived as less able to negotiate their sexual spaces (see Adomako Ampofo, 2006; McFadden, 2003; Pereira, 2003) than other women (e.g., married women). Dominant masculinities that stress on male sexual dominance (e.g., men's sexual 'weakness' or 'unfaithfulness') and notions of a 'good' woman (e.g., should not deny husband sex) and 'love' are perceived as means to suppress women's sexuality. Carroll (2007), for example, notes that in the context where sexual pleasure tends to be defined as a motivation for the kind of sex position employed, women tend to be subjugated, especially as they seek to ensure a male partner's fidelity or 'faithfulness'.

Body images stimulate sexual pleasure (Ggola, 2005; Wylie & Eardley, 2007). Physical attractiveness is perceived as possessing positive influence on a partner's sexual arousal than those perceived as unattractive (Gillen, 1981; Jackson & Scott, 2002). There is also the belief that the larger a male's penis the more pleasure a woman derives from sex. This perception finds expression in the preferences of long penises by some women (Ratele, 2004: 5). Lehman (2006) for example, claims that African American men are allegedly associated with big penises and are more hypersexual compared with Asian American men. Thus, to the extent that men try to exercise and justify their superiority through physical differentiation, masculinity is symbolized as possessing a 'real' phallus, e.g. long penis (Koedt, 2003: 247) as captured by a typical cultural artifacts among the Asante of Ghana below.

Figure 2 Asante Bronze Gold Weights Showing Long Penis in a Vagina



Source: Institute of African Studies Museum, University of Ghana, Legon, 2013

The literature outside Africa supports this notion, i.e. the importance of long penis in sexual intercourse especially with regards to stimulating sexual pleasure. Carroll (2007) notes how the Kama Sutra¹³ categorizes men by the size of their penis (e.g., as bull or horseman) and women by their vagina (e.g., deer or cow-elephant woman). This means that a good match in a penis size for a vagina (especially a tight fit) is important for sexual partners to achieve sexual pleasure.

Others also note how sex privacy (such as fear of getting-caught) can influence sexual response and sexual displeasure (Baumeister et al., 2001). The fear of getting caught due to the non-safeness of where sex is to take place and the assurance of a partner's trustworthiness influence sex decision and the extent to which partners explore sex. This means that an individual's ability to attain sexual pleasure is influenced by the context within which sexual activity takes place.

Sexual pleasure has implications for sexual risks such as high sex frequency (oversexed) and duration, STI/HIV infection, and substance use (e.g., use of aphrodisiac; see Gawin, 1978). Constructions of masculinities (having multiple sexual partners, use of aphrodisiacs) and femininities (such as a being sexually passive to male sexual desires) can serve as avenue to

¹³ Kama Sutra, written in India in the 2nd century BC, is one of the best-known ancient sex manuals. It discusses the spiritual aspects of sexuality and presents many sexual positions and techniques for enhancing enjoyment of intercourse.

engage in risky sexual behaviours. For example, in parts of Africa (e.g., Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa) it is reported that some women use a variety of traditional and modern products for enhancing sexual pleasure of one or both partners. Some of these practices include modifications (incisions, elongation, removal) to the clitoris or the vagina area, interventions on the size of the vagina, the temperature, lubrication, and the application or ingestion of different substances such as soap or medicines (Awusabo-Asare et al., 1993; Bagnol & Mariano, 2012). Metaphors such as “closed” or “open”, “dry” or “wet”, “hot” or “cold”, “sweet” or “not sweet” are some of the symbolic meanings that inform these sexual practices. Another example is also demonstrated in Brown et al.’s (1993) study in central Zaire, where both women and men perceive a ‘dry’ or ‘tight’ vagina as offering immense sexual pleasure, with women going to great (and potentially hazardous) lengths to achieve this effect.

Sexual risk is also associated with male sexual behaviour (Adinkrah, 2012; Awusabo-Asare et al., 1993; Bagnol & Mariano, 2012; Fiaveh, 2012; Ojoade, 1983). There is the notion that men are easily moved to have sex as expressed in an Ilaje proverb that “Okò ma obo yi bí”, i.e. ‘a penis does not recognize the vagina that gave it birth’, thereby, justifying the fact that when men have the desire for sex they would not hesitate having sexual intercourse with their own relations¹⁴ (Ojoade, 1983:203). Also, multiple sexual partners serve as an avenue for sexual risk. Some people (especially men) who are dissatisfied with their partners’ inability to satisfy them sexually seek sexual gratification elsewhere with other collaborators (Bleek, 1976; Nnuroh, 2006). This makes partners (especially women) in such unions run the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases through male extended sexual networking in the quest to seek pleasure.

¹⁴ Also translated in Latin as “penis erectus non habet conscientiam”.

While sex decision making including the choice of erotic stimulants, foreplay, sex positions, and privacy is contingent upon power relations (Carroll, 2007; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010), the decision to compromise to sex is not a suppression of sexuality. Additionally, the degree to which an individual experiences sexual pleasure can also be dependent on factors such as being in the right mood, comfort levels, and wellbeing. This makes sexual pleasure an important issue within the context of sexual health (see WHO, 2013). Sexual risk, therefore, is an important issue for consideration in the study of sexual pleasure in sexual relationships especially regarding how women negotiate their sexual spaces within the confines of masculinist ideologies.

2.4 Conclusion

The review shows that human sexuality has myriad of meanings from different contexts, and although part of the function of sex is reproduction, in many instances, the reasons for having sex for pleasure far exceeds a conscious desire to procreate. Furthermore, studies in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa provide support that patriarchal oppression is not uniform across cultures, and among women within the same culture. Cultures differ, suggesting that although oppression is possible, there is no generality of female sexual oppression in Africa. This explains why it is necessary that any analysis of male power over female sexuality should consider other intervening variables and to not confine ourselves to a simplistic view of male hegemony. Therefore, using two perspectives, i.e. black feminism and symbolic interactionism, I argue that sexual agency allows people to make proactive self-reflecting sexual choices.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

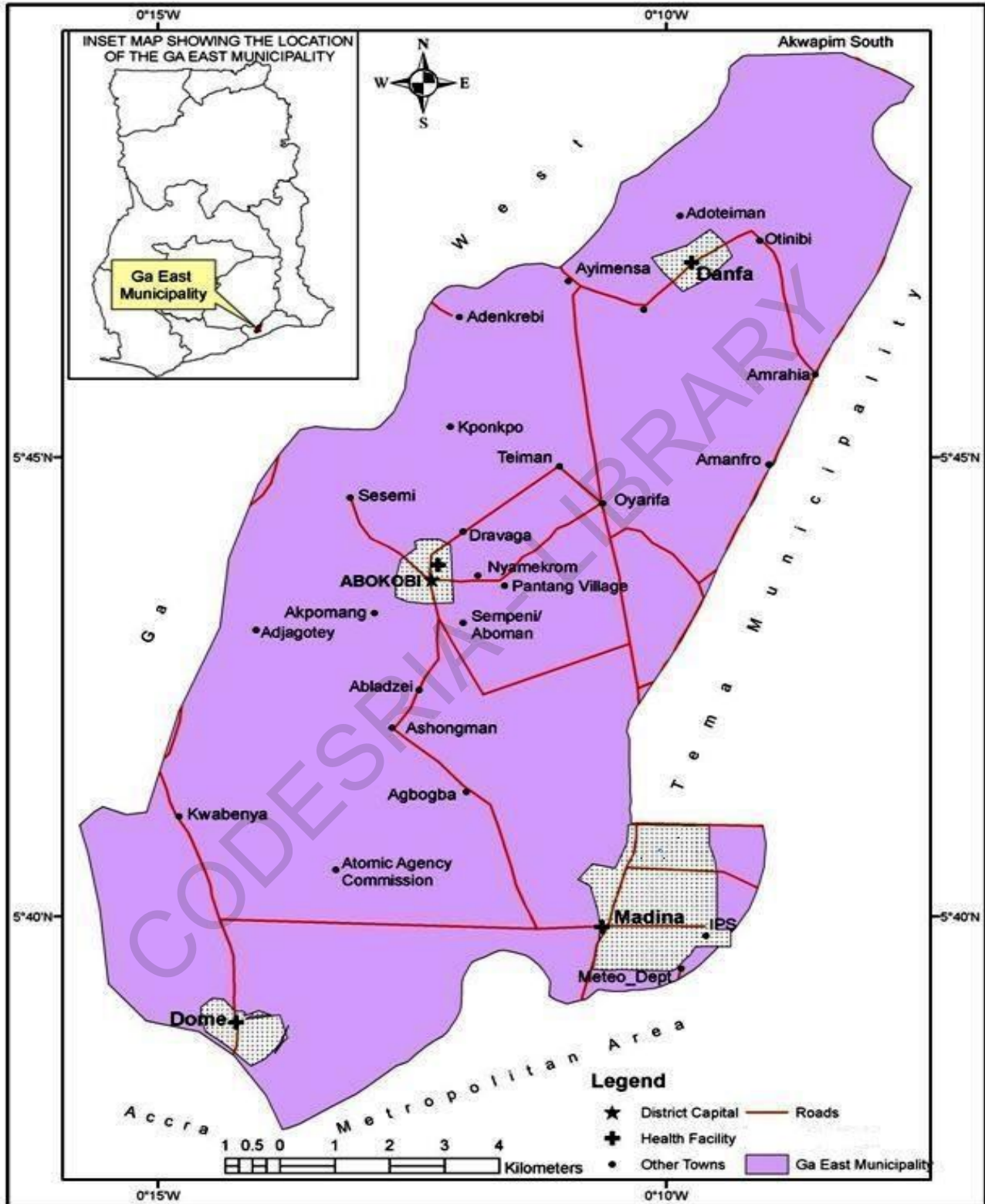
3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature and presented the theoretical perspectives underlying this study. This chapter describes the methodology. It provides details on the study area (i.e. Madina) the research design, the population of interest, the data collection techniques and procedure, mode of analysis and validity. The study is exploratory and used semi-structured interview guide as the instrument for data collection. The choice of Madina was based on convenience and the cosmopolitan nature of the area.

3.2 Study Area

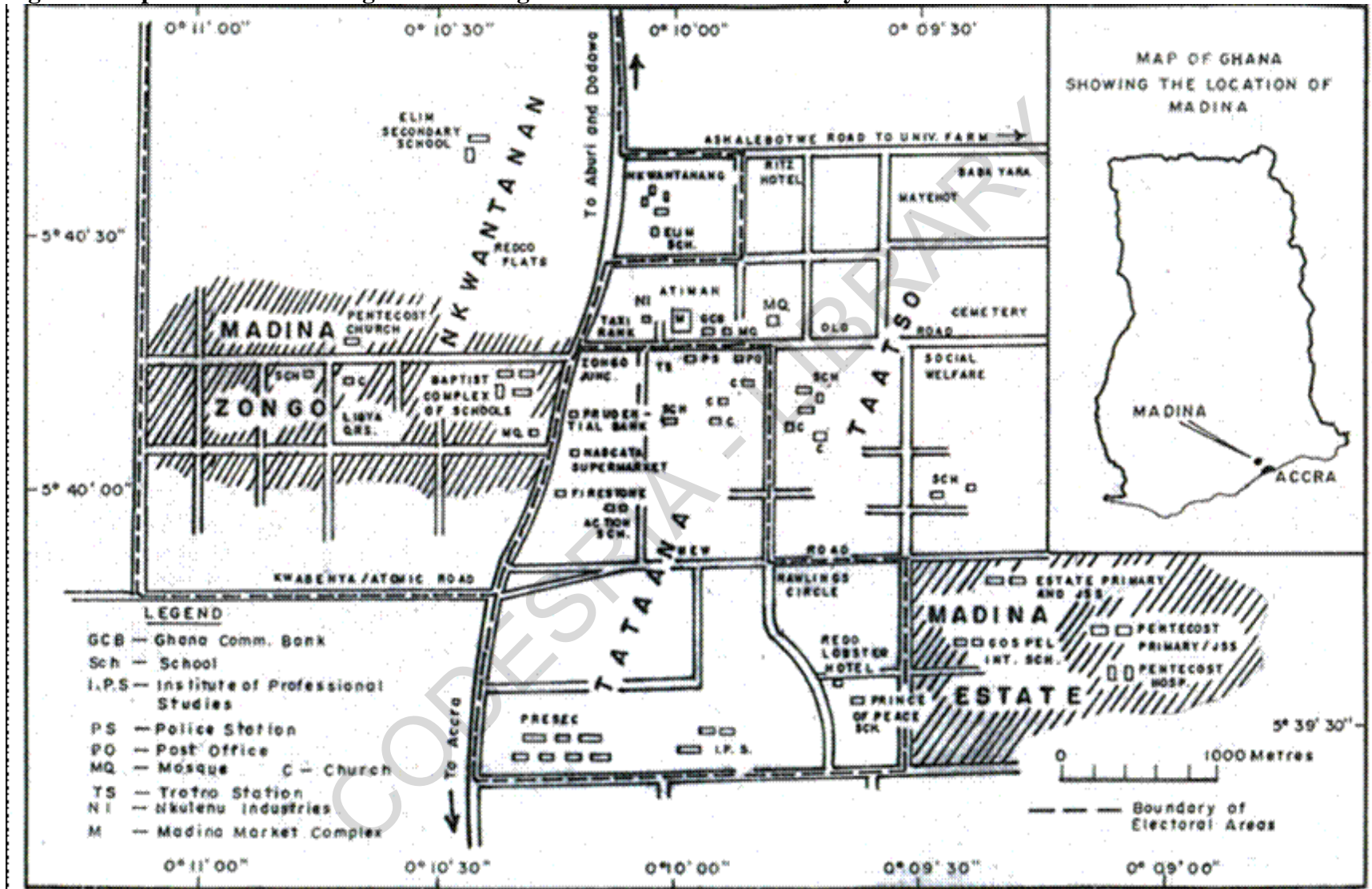
This study was conducted in Madina located in the GA East Municipality of the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The GA East Municipality shares boundaries with Accra Metropolitan Assembly, GA West Municipality and Adentan Municipality (Figure 3). The GA East Municipality is further zoned into Sub-municipalities with Madina being the largest and most economically vibrant district (GSS, 2012). Madina is an urban community with mixed ethnicities. It is composed of five communities, i.e. Madina Zongo, Nkwantanan, Tataana, Taatso and Madina Estate. For purposes of the research, Madina Zongo and Madina Estate were selected (see Figure 4). The choice of Madina Zongo and Madina Estate was based on convenience. More so, a qualitative exploration of women and men's beliefs and experiences of sexual pleasure in these areas could give us inkling about sexuality in Madina.

Figure 3 Map of GA East Municipality Showing Madina and Some Urban Areas



Source: GA East Municipal Assembly-Abokobi, 2012

Figure 4 Map of Madina Showing Madina Zongo and Madina Estate as Study Sites



Source: GA East Municipal Assembly, 2012

Madina is the most densely populated locality within the GA East Municipality with an estimated population of 79, 832 (GSS, 2012). The primacy of the Greater Accra region as an administrative, educational, industrial and commercial centre in attracting people from all over Ghana are factors that explain the rapid population growth in Madina. Several secondary and service industries including banking services, wholesale and retailing of pharmaceuticals and industrial goods, security services, and educational services take place within Madina. Research shows that urbanization has had profound impact on sexuality because of easy access to information and migration especially for those who want more than rural way of life or wish to escape from parental control (Caldwell et al., 1989; Ivaska, 2011). The existence of a growing urban informal sector whose activities are not regularized, particularly the activities of street hawking, prevails within the area. This has led to the indiscriminate development of slums and squatter settlements within the locality (GSS, 2012). It is with this view that some experts have characterised some sectors of Madina as a High Density Low Class Sector (Songsore et al., 2009) although some communities within Madina (such as Madina Estate, Libya Quarters and parts of Madina New Road) have better planned areas. Interviewees were drawn from planned and unplanned class sectors of the Zongo and Estates.

The major ethnic groups in Madina include the Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, and the Ga-Dangme. These groups share a common cultural heritage, history, language, and origin. One overriding feature of Ghana's ethnic composition is that the differences have somewhat been influenced by several factors including wage employment, and Western education and religions such as Christianity and Islam.

3.3 Research Design

The study was exploratory in Character. Although some researchers (mainly quantitative researchers) suggest that exploratory studies can be limiting for the development of generalized knowledge, other researchers (such as Patten, 2005) also maintain that an exploratory study allows certain type of flexibility when conducting research especially when there is little known about the topic of interest. Thus, an exploratory study is useful in examining new and potentially sensitive areas of focus such as sexual pleasure.

An exploratory design provided in-depth understanding of beliefs and experiences of women and men regarding sexual pleasure in Madina. The design provided baseline information on sexual knowledge, beliefs, and how these inform the way interviewees initiated and experienced sexual intercourse as well as the meanings they ascribed to such experiences as pleasure and the construction of their own gender identities. The exploratory design also affords the researcher laxity in the use of probes in seeking clarifications on how people define their sexuality.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

There was a pilot study with two interviewees sampled in March 2012 based on word-of-mouth through some friends. The rationale of this sample was to pretest the interview guide. The pretesting with the two samples took between two to three hours each.

Although the validity of a pilot study of two interviewees can be questioned, the pilot study helped in the modification and restructuring of the final version of the interview guide. In all instances, interviewees kept saying that the questions were too many and that this makes the interview very long. They suggested the need to have more questions addressing the central issue

of sexual pleasure. On one occasion, for instance, one of the two interviewees had this to say:

Aden? [Twi, what!]. The thing [interview] is too long? Dan [name of interviewer], I think you should reduce your questions. There are too many repetitions and unnecessary questions. For instance, how do you expect me to respond to the question: could you tell me ... about your sexual partner?" when I had already told you that I currently do not have a sexual partner. There are several of those questions. It's too repetitive. Please let some friends read through your work for you... [Both laugh]. Sɛ wo na wo se wo bɛ yɛ PhD [Twi, you think PhD is easy]. (Akosua: woman, 33 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

The second interviewee also suggested that some questions were irrelevant and that they should be deleted and I did.

3.4 Population of Interest

The population of interest for this study were Ghanaians, living in Madina; 15 years and above, who have ever had sex, and willing to participate.

The interviewees were mainly recruited using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used because of its effectiveness in identifying potential interviewees (Bryman, 2008). For example, there was the need to capture the experiences of different demographic groups such as married and unmarried, women and men, employed and unemployed, ethnicity, religion and sexual experiences.

I also employed snowballing to identify willing interviewees. Snowball sampling yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some of the characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Although snowballing is criticized for producing homogeneous research population samples due to its

reliance on networks of people with similar backgrounds (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Nueman, 2000), the technique was useful in this study because it provided an entry point to persons that were otherwise difficult to reach because the study was on a sensitive issue, sexual pleasure. Thus, I used snowballing in selecting interviewees I did not know, but who were willing to participate in the study.

Sexual matters are sensitive issues. Participation in the study was response driven based on the willingness of people to share their sexual experiences after their own risk assessment (sexual privacy or discomforts). Except two of the interviewees (Fonyeh and Akosua; see annex 4), I had no prior acquaintance with the rest. I approached potential interviewees and introduced myself and the topic to them through informal conversations.

Access to interviewees was in their homes (sixteen women and men, each) and work (four women) places based on appointment. For women in particular, several strategies (such as general discussions on youth, gender, sexuality, and 'modern' style—see Ivaska, 2011) were employed to recruit them. I approached potential female interviewees (such as female artisans at work i.e., a seamstress) with the view of having a general discussion about young people's sexual behaviour. This approach was useful because in Ghana, adult women and men are willing to share their views on young people's sexuality, especially in relation to what the elderly regard in Ghana as 'immoral' behaviour of the youth. I discovered that a good approach was for me to ask a female interviewee to share her views on young people's sexual behaviour and then redirect the conversation to focus on the interviewee's own sexual experiences. Alternatively, as a strategy, I started the conversation with an oral vignette technique that problematised men's control over women's sexuality. For example,

Please, I am Daniel, and Ewe man, but fluent in Twi, Ga, and Hausa [all these being major languages in Ghana]. I spent my childhood days and youth in Accra New-Town, Nima, Akotes, and Madina-UN. My experience in these suburbs of Accra shows that women really have power, contrary to what some people think of women. To most people, men have total control over their women. I think this is not entirely true. In order to document this and to tell the story of women from their own voices, I am undertaking this study. The study focuses on intimacy among men and women. Please, would you be willing to participate? What do you think? (Interviewer: man, 35 years, unmarried, higher education, not religious).

The stress on the ability to speak the local languages in the above quote serves as a means to building rapport with, and eliciting confidence and trust from the interviewees. It was also a means to helping interviewees feel free to discuss their sexuality in their native language without any inhibition, especially in the case of those who had difficulty in expressing themselves in, or understanding, English.

Interested interviewees (both the purposive and snowball) were given a consent form to sign or thumbprint (see Annex 2) after the study had been explained to them. The consent form included the research topic and problem, process, the research motivations and intentions, and a brief description of me. A local phone number was provided in case potential interviewees had additional questions before they decided to participate in the study.

Women were more willing to participate in the study than men were. Two married men and an unmarried woman withdrew from the study. Persons with higher education were not willing to participate in the study. However, those who were willing to participate had a caveat of commitment of the researcher to confidentiality. In one instance, I sought permission from a male partner based on the interviewee's request. Some interviewees indicated how interesting

and necessary it was to discuss sexual matters in Ghana because they felt “Ghanaians are hypocrites” (hypocritical about sexual matters), i.e. pretend not to be concerned with sexual matters although they are. Others also suggested the need to contribute to knowledge that addresses sexual issues. Most of them requested that I keep them informed of my findings and wished me luck in my research endeavors.

Overall, 20 women and 16 men participated in the study, including four divorcees and a widow. The median age was 36 years. Twenty-four of the interviewees were aged between 22-45 years. Six were aged 50 years and above. The age distribution shows that more than half were under age 40 reflecting the comparatively young age structure of the sample. Fourteen (14) of the interviewees were married and had spent at least 2 years or more in these unions. Twenty-two (22) were Christians, 10 were Muslims and 3 did not belong to any religious group. The religious persuasions of the interviewees reflect the national average of 90 percent of the Ghanaian population who profess being religious (GSS, 2012). With the exception of a man, who had retired from active work and two who were full-time students, the rest were working. Thirty-three (33) of the interviewees had attained at least some basic education or an Islamic school, except of three (two of whom are females) who never had any formal schooling. Fifteen (15) had completed a university or a polytechnic education. Economic activity varied by educational attainment. Persons with no education were self-employed and their economic activity varied by age (Annex 4). For example, older women with less or no education were engaged in tabletop ‘petty’ trading, meaning they had their wares displaced on a table at a particular spot, while younger women were engaged in head-portage hawking.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used in the data collection, and was composed of five sections. The first section captured the sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees. The sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees took a simple form such as: could you tell me something about yourself (with age, marital status, education, religion, occupation, ethnicity as prompts)? The second section asked for information on interviewees' sexual behaviour, attitudes, and sex perceptions. In addition, the interviewees' knowledge and the ways in which they perceive, feel, and experience sexual pleasure were explored. The third section inquired about sexual dissatisfaction and instability in sexual relationships and marriage.

The fourth section focused on sexual pleasure. Areas covered included interviewees' understanding of sexual pleasure and orgasm, factors that stimulate sexual pleasure and how people negotiate these factors. Some of the questions were: what is sexual pleasure? How is it expressed in your language? What makes you have sexual pleasure? Interviewees were also shown pictures of sex positions for them to indicate which positions they engage in and the factors that influence their choice. The pictures served as a prompt for interviewees (females in particular) who had difficulty (i.e. shy or name of sex position unknown to interviewees) indicating which sex position they engage in. The pictures are therefore included in the results and aided in the analyses and discussion of factors that stimulate sexual pleasure.

The final section explored sexual myths, stereotypical attitudes and gender. The section explored whether men desire sex more than women, and also perceptions about women's sex initiation strategies. The questions included: who is a man? Who is a woman? Are women at risk of men's sexual behaviour (probing for why)? Questions on the beliefs about penis size, vagina, and

sexual pleasure were also part of this section. Interviewees were debriefed after the interview.

3.5.1 Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted from February 2012 to March 2013 in Madina, an urban community in Accra. Interviewees were contacted and appointments were then made with willing persons. Interviewees consented to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted by the researcher; and interviews lasted between 80 to 120 minutes, and were audiotaped with informed consent.

Interviews were conducted in Twi, Ga, Ewe, Hausa and English language. In instances where some interviewees indicated their preference to communicate in another language (e.g., Dagbani), I explained to them my inability to use interpreters due to the sensitivity of the study and interviewees confidentiality. The discussions on the central theme of sexual pleasure were introduced when a cordial relationship had been established with interviewees. While some argue that African women's difficulty in expressing their sexuality is due to religious and cultural inhibitions, the interview supports the view that the constraints around women's sexuality have many sources (Bennett; 2011; Pereira, 2003) including the researcher's own personality. I will explain why.

As a male researcher, I anticipated that more males than females would be willing to participate in the study. This is due to the notion that a 'good' woman should not discuss their sexual behaviour with persons they have no sexual relations with (Nnuroh, 2006). Despite this notion, most of the female interviewees willingly shared their sexual experiences with me. This was because I had assured them of confidentiality and the use of the data was for academic purposes

only. Most of the women showed their appreciation for the study and indicated that they (some) had ever engaged in an academic research or were currently pursuing a study. Although, I had anticipated the unwillingness to participate for less educated women, the claim that someday they may also need other peoples help in whatever field they are, motivated their participation. Some said in a joke in Twi that *wo be ye dokota a ware me ba no mame wae?* [Meaning, I want you to marry my daughter when you become a doctor]. This request was premised on the fact that I had indicated to these women in my introduction that the study is part of my doctoral degree requirements.

In addition, the respect I accorded the women through the native way of showing humility such as *Me pa wo kyew* (Twi, meaning please), my strategies (such as creating little jokes during our interaction and sharing with them my own sexual experiences), and the ability to communicate in multiple languages (such as Twi, Ewe, Ga, and Hausa) were very useful. Although some may argue that this assertion amounts to an overstatement of my 'skills' because people tend to talk to strangers (e.g., about sex, love, etc.), I believe these factors to some extent, supported my ability to persuade some of the women in discussing their sexuality with me freely though with some limitations (such as indicting sensual areas).

In one instance, an interviewee during the interview introduced her friend who had been curious (i.e. eavesdropping) about what was going on between the interviewer and the interviewee. Occasionally, these 'curious' women eavesdropped into our conversation and laughed. The women were interested in the sexual conversations and adopted several strategies to participate indirectly. For example, some women often pretended that they needed help (e.g. 'ice water' or a safety match to light their gas or some other reasons) from the interviewees. The interview was

paused to ensure the confidentiality of the interviewee. For instance, a woman deliberately questioned what I was doing with her neighbour, *me ke faru nang?* [Hausa, meaning what is happening here?]. She then turned to me and said in Twi *Menaadaa menua baa no oo, marima nka nokore* [meaning, do not deceive my sister for you men are liars]. Upon explanations by me and the interviewee, the interviewee then requested that I interview her friend afterwards, *mepa wo kyεw se ye wie a εne εno nso nkasa* [Twi, meaning please when we finish, engage her also]. This is what I refer to in this study as *women's agentic-eavesdropping*.

For elderly women who eavesdropped they made some comments in passing and euphemisms such as *hmmm?* For younger women, their expressions were more explicit. A typical expression of a young woman who eavesdropped during an interview at the Madina Zongo was:

Eeeeei nea ekoso nie? Enti etwe ene kote ho nsem nkoa na mo ka. Mo ma yen nka biribi papa bia? Aden, election no nfa mo ho ana? [So, is this what you guys are concerned with? Discussing penis and vagina? Why, aren't you guys concerned about how the election registration¹⁵ is proceeding?]. (Woman, estimated age as late 30s, married, primary education, Muslim).

The curiosities of the women indicated that they were willing to discuss sexual matters. Therefore, the assertion that women are passive in discussing about sexual matters with a person they have no sexual relationship with is not supported by my data. The women in Madina were willing to discuss their sexuality provided confidentiality was assured, discussing sex was interesting, and the researchers appearance and disposition (especially in terms of friendliness and willingness to share his own sexual experiences) allowed them discuss issues freely with

¹⁵ This was about the same time Ghana was preparing to go to the polls to undertake the 2010 parliamentary and presidential elections.

laughter and ease¹⁶.

Nevertheless, some women had difficulty in expressing their sexuality. Two female interviewees had challenges discussing some aspects of their sexuality, i.e. sex position preferences, preferred penis/vagina size, and sex duration. In particular, for women with higher education, they had more difficulties than those with less or no formal schooling. Below is the curt e-mail response from *Naa*, a woman aged 37 years with a doctoral degree after I had explained the objectives of the study to her:

“Hello Dan, I have looked at your interview guide. I have answers for all the questions BUT I am sorry I can’t grant you an interview. Issues are too personal. We can talk generally though if u [you] want my view on say the perceptions on sexuality”. (Married, higher education, Christian).

I accepted *Naa*’s offer to ‘talk generally’ about sexual matters. However, as issues unfolded and discussions became more interesting, she made constantly references to her own sexual experiences and she ended up discussing her sexual experiences. The use of probes was very helpful in this regard.

Women who were not married had more difficulty than those who were married. This also shows that a woman would discuss sexual matters regardless of her marital status. It was not surprising that unmarried women had more difficulty discussing their sexuality than those married. This is because as part of the moral upbringing in across cultures and religious persuasions in Ghana, unmarried persons are not encouraged to have sexual relationships. They may have partners but such relationships are supposed to be devoid of sexual activities including sexual intercourse.

¹⁶ This finding was based on observations and notes I made during interview.

Therefore, discussing their sexual affairs with another person would not be appropriate to do considering the cultural and religious inhibitions. *Koshie*, a female, and married had this to say:

You see, the thing [sex before marriage] is a sin but we all did it. So, something that you know that it's a sin but you did it, then, there is no pride to tell everyone about it. (36 years, higher education, Christian).

Additionally, forced sex also explains why some women would not discuss sexual matters. With the exception of a few women (8) who engaged in sex for the first time to prove love to their partner, the rest (12) were forced (sexually abused) into engaging in sex for the first time. To some of these women, discussing sexual matters is a re-visitation of the ordeals they suffered, events they do not want to recount. It suffices then to say that women who have ever experienced forced sex are less likely to discuss their sexuality than those who have never experienced forced sex.

My aunt's child raped me so I don't like visiting it [the rape incidence]. I cannot forget although he asked his adult friend even to plead. I am sorry but talking about sexual experiences even with my boyfriend, I really feel uncomfortable. He [my boyfriend] forces me aaaa [so many times] before. (Sumaya: woman, 36 years, unmarried, primary education, Muslim).

However, forced sexual experience does not mean a woman's inability to express her sexual desires. Rather, the feel of shame of abuse leads to the internalization of shame (see Borneman, 2012) and the decision not to revisit such ordeal as noted by *Sumaya* in the quote above.

Men (regardless of education, age and marital status) also had sexual constraints. This is to be expected probably due to their fears that I may context their masculinity, i.e. judge them for their sexual inadequacies. Men had challenges expressing aspects of their sexuality. Some

interrogated their masculinities and their relationships with significant others (such as sexual partners, parents, and friends). Others confessed to feelings of 'weakness' and translated those personal revelations into interrogating their masculinity (see Halberstam, 1998) based on the notion that a *'real' man should not show signs of weakness*. Hence, any deviation is seen as a weakness (see Adomako Ampofo, 2006). *Rev.*, a man aged 67 years, for example, indicated that he has sexual deficiencies with regards to 'shyness' and in discussing sexual matters. He had to say:

I'm extremely shy even at my age when there is a gathering. It's difficult for me, let alone talk about sex. My father once told me "you if I don't take care, you will destroy [bring shame to the image of] my family". I am a greenhorn till now. Recently, there was an attempt to remarry. I have attempted twice or so [to remarry] and the women had to leave. Not because we had sex, but they thought I was not visiting their house. I also told them "in fact it [such as dating and or engaging in romance with a female partner] is something I don't know how to do". Going to women's house or even discussing sexual matters, I don't know it. People have been criticizing me that, that is not what I have to do. Openly, my churchwomen say, no, we don't do that [a man should show some affection for a woman]. Other friends also say "no you don't do that". You see? So you have to bear with me [if am shy]. (Divorcee, secondary education, Christian).

Overall, both women and men have sexual constraints (such as difficulty in discussing sexual matters) and that the silences surrounding their sexuality are multifaceted, i.e. influenced by the protection of privacy and secrecy, moral beliefs (cultural and religious upbringing), forced sexual experience, and the individual's persona (such as shyness).

3.6 Data Analysis

Audiotape interviews were transcribed verbatim using expert translators. The transcripts used pseudonyms for interviewees while the location of interviewees and date of interviews were

altered. All records (e.g., interviews and transcripts) were treated confidentially. The transcripts were read three times. The first two readings were to understand the transcript and highlight emerging codes and themes. Notes were recorded for further use. In the final reading, a coding frame was developed. The coding was carried out using a constructivist paradigm (i.e., in terms of socially constructed power relations), interviewees' lived experiences (i.e., in terms of personality), and personal lived experiences (including my interpretations of the quotes). The initial coding enabled me to highlight the emerging themes using thematic analysis (see Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Kumekpor, 2002).

The themes developed include sexual messages, sex and morality, sex initiation strategies, meanings and stimulants of sexual pleasure (i.e. sex privacy and romance, erotic music and movies, foreplay, physical attractiveness, aphrodisiacs, phallic competence, and sex positions), and gender identities (such as expressions of masculinities and femininities) and sexual risk. The themes identified in this study illustrate the shared experiences of the interviewees. The segments with similar meanings were coded under one theme to avoid repetition of themes. New here means whatever we discovered that was unknown to us as researchers and novel for existing theoretical and policy debates concerning women's negotiation skills in matters of sexuality.

I contacted all the interviewees three months after the interview for a meeting or telephone conversation. In this conversation, I presented individuals with some preliminary findings and interpretations of their narratives, and to seek confirmation and feedback regarding interpretations of the data. While I was not able to contact all interviewees (due to their work and busy schedules, relocation, travel, communication problems, and other reasons), the feedback from those contacted (6 women and 4 men) is presented as part of the discussion. The interview

extracts included in this study were the direct translation of the interviewees in their local languages and oral ('broken') English. This is to retain the faithfulness of the transcripts, and to project the interviewees' own voices. Hence, there are some challenges with language (i.e. Twi, Ewe, Ga, Hausa, and PG) as observed in the direct translation of the correct literary rendering.

3.7 Validity

Validity lies at the core of evaluating social science research (Sanjek, 1990). This study can be validated according to three canons, i.e. positionality of the researcher, ethics, and reflexivity.

3.7.1 Positionality

Although the importance of a researcher's positionality is a matter for continued debate within social science, positionality is an important aspect of validity consideration that requires reflection throughout the research process in order to reduce or eliminate personal interferences. Positionality may include aspects of identity (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, etc.) as well as personal experience of research (such as previous projects worked on) that may influence research processes and outcomes of the studies (Hopkins, 2007).

Data for the study were mainly collected in the local language (Asante-Twi, Ewe, Ga, and Hausa) and this offered an opportunity for interviewees to express themselves without the possibility of being misunderstood, or without the danger of not finding the appropriate words in English to express their feelings and meanings about their sexualities. My demographic background (e.g., educational attainment) did not limit my access to the community. Madina is a cosmopolitan area. This also meant that beliefs informing sexuality were understood from varied perspectives. However, it is possible that my name (i.e. Daniel Yaw Fiaveh) could have

influenced some interviewees to respond in a way they know would not offend my ethnic and religious persuasions.

3.7.2 Ethics

Ethical considerations are part of the ways in which researchers ensure professional code of conduct (Simpson, 2011). Informed consent of the interviewees was obtained and participation in the study was voluntary. Ethical considerations are particularly salient in this study because of its sensitiveness and promises of confidentiality were made to interviewees at all times. In this regard, personal information was kept confidential. As such, it has been important to remove major identifying detail like names and other identifiable details of interviewees and replaced these details with pseudonyms.

Interviewees were assured of anonymity and confidentiality when they chose to participate or even withdraw. The study was reviewed by the Department of Sociology and the Board of Graduate Studies, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, University of Ghana, granted ethical clearance for the study (NMIMR-IRB CPN 048/11-12; Annex 3). The IRB advised that the initial statement of the problem be expanded and grounded in literature and conceptual clarifications be provided. The review also touched on moral grounds especially regarding the sensitivity of the topic.

3.7.3 Reflexivity

As the researcher's values, beliefs, culture and interests could influence research, reflexivity was an important part of the research process. In this regard, the use of detailed interview guides ensured that in-depth data were collected and not intuitive or brilliant guesswork (Sanjek, 1990).

The detailed interview guide ensured that the research questions were fully explored. A reflexive approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that fieldwork almost inevitably raises. All the results and discussions were analyzed through the theoretical lenses of symbolic interactionism, black feminist perspectives, the interviewees' narratives, and my own life experiences. In addition, reflection on the research design provided the opportunity for me to explore issues that were not initially on the interview guide but had come out during the interactions with interviewees.

Last, researcher's awareness of the values, interests, and experiences that can influence the research enabled me to be cautious of the research process in order to reduce biases in the data collection, analysis and interpretation.

3.8 Limitations of Study

The sample was completely taken from Madina and was purposive; in this sense therefore findings cannot be generalized. I was also constantly torn between my role as a scientist trying to catch interviewees' point of view and my personal feelings of respect for the people I came to know in Madina, people who generously shared their sexual experiences and behaviours with me.

The interviews were also conducted by a male researcher, who was discussing culturally sensitive topics such as sexual pleasure with female respondents. There is a possibility that some respondents were inhibited in their answers or simply provided what was perceived to be culturally acceptable answers.

3.9 Conclusion

The methodological approach to this study has been elaborated upon and in doing so the criteria for validity is established. The chapter further describes the procedure used in the data collection and the data analysis. The next chapters (chapters four, five, and six) provide analyses and interpretations of the narratives of 36 interviewees in Madina, and urban community in Accra.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SEXUAL BELIEFS, EXPERIENCES, AND FEMALE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

4.1 Introduction

Female sexuality is conceived as being a passive response to male sexual needs. However, feminists (e.g., Collins, 2000 & 2005; Meyers, 2002; Tamale, 2010) argue that human agency allows women to make proactive sexual choices. Based on in-depth interviews with 20 women and 16 men aged 25 to 79 years in Madina, an urban community in Accra, I discuss how sexual knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform the way women and men perceive sex, and highlight women's sexual intercourse initiation strategies. How do women portray themselves as active agents of sexuality in their reflections on their sexual desires and sexual knowledge?

The first section of the chapter explores sexual knowledge, beliefs, and experiences among women and men and the link with age. The second section covers sexual behaviour and explores the link between sex, morality and sexual practice. The section further explores women's responsibility in initiating sexual intercourse and the factors that inhibit this responsibility. The chapter concludes that women are not powerless but instead find ways to exercise sexual agency such as to resist sex or negotiate for sex.

4.2 Sexual Messages, Beliefs, and Experiences

This section discusses women and men's sexual knowledge (i.e. the sources and nature of sexual knowledge and messages), and how knowledge influence sexual beliefs and experiences, i.e. forced sex or consented sex and forms of sex (such as penile-vagina sex, penile-anal sex, penile-

mouth sex, and frottage).

4.2.1 Sexual Knowledge and Beliefs: Gender Differences

The media (TV, radio, newspaper, and internet) and friends (hearsay) were the main sources of sexual messages for the majority of interviewees. Given the proliferation of the media in Ghana and the fact that “sex sells” (i.e. the discussion of sexual matters have become necessary to gain media audiences), this comes as no surprise. Other sources of sexual knowledge include books (e.g., religious texts, fictions and love stories) and personal experiences.

Women reported more access to the media than men did. In particular, younger women patronized media messages that discussed sexual matters than men and older women (those above 35 years). They patronized Telenovela films or Soap Operas and ‘talk shows’ (both local and foreign) that construct sexuality in relation to eroticism or romance or love. Others contain scenes of kissing and sexual messages that centre on ‘real’ men (e.g., loving and caring men/husbands, ‘responsible’ men, and ‘good-looking’ men). Messages also strengthened stereotypical sexual beliefs such as *men like too much sex* and *men lack sexual control*. A young woman had this to say:

Ei! I think now I know more about sex, I’ve read more what you can do to enjoy sex. I remember watching a program on Adom TV [Cine Afrik¹⁷], it’s “Chocolate Factory” where the panel discussed about sex and how to go about it. They talked about more romance [foreplay] to make the woman wet [lubricate the woman] before... [sexual intercourse]. Akuma Mama Zimbi [name of the hostess] sometimes shows some pono [porn] about sex positions on her programme “odo ahomaso” she calls it [one of the sex positions] “Ghana Mali Guinea”. I’m still learning although not married. I’m still young and don’t wanna worry my head too much about men and their troubles [unfaithful behaviour]. (Zu: 26 years, unmarried, higher education, Muslim).

¹⁷ Part of the multimedia group of companies [or MultiTV].

On the other hand, younger men patronized media contents with more explicit sexual messages (e.g., pornography) around the 'proper' declaration of their masculinity and the 'ideal' woman. The media messages and visual representations had common underlying themes of the *sexualized bodies* of women and men. For example, while men's sexuality are often portrayed in a woman's Telenovela with images of 'good-looking' (e.g., slim, tall, athletic, flat tummy, loving and a 'romantic' person), in a man's pornography, the sexuality of women are represented by 'beauty' (e.g., big breast, big buttocks, and what some interviewees referred to as a '*nice shape*'). The messages also typify some stereotypical beliefs about hegemonic femininities e.g., *women like 'stupid' guys* [Twi, "εmaa pε kwasia fu"] and or *women like 'handsome' men*.

In terms of the nature of sexual beliefs, men (younger men in particular) perceived a relationship as necessarily involving sexual intercourse while women stressed that sex is about love, should ideally occur in marriage, and should be guarded. Thus, women had 'person-centred' beliefs regarding sex such as *I did it because I loved him, I fell in love with him*, etc., or relational beliefs (*we've been dating for long, he is my serious boyfriend, my parents [in most cases her mother] knows him*). This suggests that the goal of a relationship for these women is to express emotional affection to a partner in a steady relationship. *Koshie* had this to say:

Oh, "hm asem bisa ben ni?" [What a question], what reason is there? Mmm! Well, it was like I had the feeling for the guy and I didn't want him to go. It was like anytime we are out he is like, "why can't you prove your love to me?" I tell him like can't you wait, and he will say no. You know guys, they have a way of luring you to do it [giving in to sex], so in fact I eventually did it [had sex with him]. But I just got mad after that first experience. I didn't talk to him again and that kind of thing because it wasn't such a pleasant experience. A first time [chuckles] is always painful and all that you know (Woman, 36 years, higher education, Christian).

Men on the other hand had ‘proof-centered’ beliefs to sex such as *if you love me then prove your love to me, ah! why are you refusing me sex if you love me, this relationship is over because there’s no love*, and so on. Whereas to women, being pressured to have sex was forced sex, younger men perceived being pressured for sex is ‘proper’ masculinity because women only express love ‘openly’ to ‘real’ (e.g., *handsome*¹⁸) men, and any man who refuses a woman’s request for sex is ‘*stupid*’ and weak¹⁹. This view is popularly expressed in the local parlance as *emaa pε marima wɔ hu ɔfε* [Twi, meaning women ‘fall’ for *good-looking men*]. Indeed, this typifies that a man (often younger men) should be able to *handle* a woman’s sexual advances regardless of the age. Therefore, in order to highlight the ability of being a ‘real’ man, *Babaana*, a male interviewee indicated that:

This one I have to say that at the age of 15 or 16 or so. It was in our house in Bawku where I grew up. We were the landlords [property owners], we sell water and our tenants had beautiful girls. The girls liked me. Friends were also saying, “how can beautiful ladies like you and you don’t mind them?” One lady in question pushed hard. So being the only strong [smart] guy at the time, some of them [girls] “used” me and I used some also. And so those pressures made me do it [have sex] (28 years, unmarried, higher education, Muslim).

Babaana did not use money to ‘lure’ the women into sexual intercourse. In fact, the word, *used* in *Babaana*’s quote has symbolic meaning. In whichever form it is used, the meaning of *used* connotes power and depends on an actor’s own interpretation. For example, you either *use* someone (in this regard the actor 1 [*Babaana*, a male] has power over actor 2 [a female partner]) or someone *uses* you (actor 2 [a female partner] has power over actor 1 [*Babaana*, a male]). The wielding of power depends on an individual’s own interpretation of the word *used*. This is

¹⁸ Some men are not “good looking” but have well-built bodies and may appear sexually strong while the reverse (may appear sexually weak although have well-built bodies) would also be true.

¹⁹ Also expressed in every day Ghanaian parlance as “Otolege” [a weak man], “gyimigyimi” [an idiot].

because the assurance of knowing what actor 2 (a woman) would otherwise do or not do is very complex and not easy to determine. Indeed, as noted by Dahl (1957) and (Foucault, 1978), power is exercised rather than possessed, i.e. the ability to alter the behaviour of others against their choice.

Babaana's assertion is also useful for interrogating masculinities among young persons (e.g., boys) where those who are unable to measure up to the perceived (peer and sometimes social) standard are often ridiculed or branded as 'weak' boys (Adomako Ampofo & Boateng, 2011). The fact that *Babaana* feels he should live up to the standard of being a 'real' man (such as being able to have sex with a woman regardless of her age) does not necessarily mean power over a woman. According to him, some of the women *used* him, i.e. some of the women overpowered him.

4.3 Sexual Experiences: Age and Gender Differences

Males reported early sex (between ages 12-22 years) at younger ages than females (17-24 years) suggesting that males were initiated into sexual intercourse at an earlier age than females, contrary to the finding that younger women report having earlier sex than younger males (Ghana Demographic Health Survey [GDHS], 2010²⁰). Some researchers suggest that females tend to be exposed to sex at early ages due to their sexual affairs with older men for money (Collins & Rau, 2000; Mills & Ssewakiryanga, 1995). While this assertion may have some validity, sex is often misconstrued to be limited to penile-vagina sex. In the 2008 GDHS report (2010), for example, sex is not explicitly defined but implicit as vagina sex. This often leads to silences and the underreporting of sexual behaviour (e.g., non-vagina sex). In this study, however, the definition

²⁰ According to the Ghana Demographic Survey report, the median age at engaging in sex for the first time for women is 18.4 years, compared with 20.0 years for men (GDHS, 2008: 118).

of sex was open and participants defined their own sexuality. Some young male participants had this to share about their sexual experiences:

[Coughs] you really want to know? My first sexual encounter was with a man but the first sexual encounter wasn't anal sex [penile-anal sex]. It was oral [penis-in-mouth sex]. (Dism: 25 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

It [my first sexual encounter] was frottage in which you rub your private parts, your penises against each other. Up till now I've not had 'penetrative' sex anyway but the first time I had sex, which was frottage, we robbed; we mutually masturbated each other when I was 15 years old and in secondary school where we shared a bed. (Kun: 28 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Younger women indicated they had sexual intercourse as means to express love for their partners more than younger men did. Women who had sex to prove their love for a partner indicated that intimacy is a deep feeling that means doing 'anything' for one's partner. Thus, sex was used to manifest and reinforce love in their relationships. Although both sexes ever experienced nonconsensual sex, younger women compared to younger men experienced a higher frequency of nonconsensual sex due to sexual intimacy blackmails (such as *prove your love, this relationship is over between us, you don't love me*) from young men.

For elderly women and men (persons above age 49), sex is generally a matter of interest (*if I feel for it*) rather than strength as suggested by Van der Geest (2001). An interview with *Uncle*, a 73-year-old male divorcee, for example, indicates that he has an active sexual life regardless of his age and strength. This is an extract from our discussion:

Interviewer: Oh okay! okay. So at your age now, do you still have sex?

Uncle: Are you asking if I feel for sex? [Laughs] oh, if I become conscious of it, I do. Since I left

my wife, I never had sex with anybody. It hasn't been that long. It is about three or four years now.

Interviewer: Oh really? So you haven't slept with [had sex] any woman since then?

Uncle: Oh, as for that one, if I feel for sex once in a while, I have sex [laughs]. "Enu dea yenfa kuntu ase kakraa ansaa na ya kor ebusua fuo no ho" [Akan proverb, as for that, we pass under the 'blanket' a little before we go to the family]. Laughs, oh I had sex with a certain lady, but that was long ago. It's not up to a month though. (Primary education, not religious).

Uncle is very sincere about his sexual life and indicated that he ever had sexual encounters with different women at different times in his youthful and adult life and even at his present age. Uncle's views indicate that some older people have active sexual life which contradicts Van der Geest's (2001) findings elsewhere in rural Ghana. A possible explanation is that unlike that of Van der Geest, which was conducted in rural Ghana, this study was in Madina, an urban community. Therefore, urban sexuality in Ghana may differ from rural sexuality. Because of access to health, urban residents tend to have better health and sexual conditions than those in rural areas, hence tend to be sexually active²¹.

However, I agree with Van der Geest that sex at old age is seen with a considerable amount of ambivalence that it should be done with restraint (Van der Geest, 2001). For example, further probes with *Uncle* revealed that unrestrained sexual activity is often associated with young age. He had this to say:

Yes, it wasn't common in our days. But, at my age now, I don't like women [sex] anymore except that when I am conscious of it. You see when you are busy going about your business, sex wouldn't occur to you. "Or I lie?" [Is it not correct?] At old age, you are only thinking of afterlife so you enjoy minimally if you can. You have finished living your life and should allow the young ones because this is their time. (Man, 73 year old divorcee, primary education, not religious).

²¹ Used advisedly. It does not connote physical strength but sexually active.

Older women did not give a direct answer to questions about their personal sexual experiences probably due to the gender of the interviewer (i.e. a male researcher) and the moral standards expected of them (e.g., it is considered careless for adults to discuss their sexuality either with or in the presence of the young; see Nukunya, 1969). They preferred using indirect expressions in responding to the question. Hence, it was difficult to extract exactly the meanings they attached to those expressions although some of the imports of the expressions were symbolic to understand. For instance, responses to some probing questions (e.g., some people believe that older women are not active in bed, what do you think?) were: *oh, ok you mean that? Oh, you should know; ah we too we are human beings, we have feelings*; and so on. *Hajia*, Muslim woman aged 53 years has her own wiliness about the questions asked:

Interviewer: Could you share with us how you initiate sex with your partner?

Hajia: Oh! You get closer to him.

Interviewer: How do you get closer?

Hajia: [Laughs] oh! You should understand what I mean.

Interviewer: Could you give me some examples?

Hajia: Oh! As for that one I can't tell you. My husband understands. (Married, no formal education, Muslim).

Besides, elderly women responded to some questions (such as sexual positions preference) with interesting phrases and comics –*oh, eno nsoso hia* [Twi, meaning they are also important]. They did not give any direct responses as “I prefer this position” or “I prefer that position”. Some were also somewhat uncomfortable discussing, for example, the number of times they have sex, and would not give their direct opinion on their preferred penis size. That said, this does not mean that older women had difficulty discussing their sexuality or do not have active sexual life.

Rather, some felt that the interviewer was invading their privacy. Some older men also had similar concerns about the protection of their sexual privacy and secrecy. In my view, the indirect responses had significant meanings. For example, *Hajia* responded to my question on how she initiates sex with *oh! You get closer to him*. This in itself is an affirmation that she has an active sexual life. She laughs and said, *Oh! You should understand* based on further probes regarding what she meant by that. In Ghana, the expression “oh” though context specific, is a symbolic expression that a party to a conversation expects the other party to know what he or she is talking about. In this regard, *Hajia*, the elderly woman aged 53 years is sexually active.

4.4 Sex, Morality and Female Sexual Behaviour

While marriage is the socially legitimate context for sexual intercourse, beliefs and practices associated with religion act as social control mechanisms regarding how sexual desires are expressed or experienced (see Abotchie, 1997; Assimeng, 2010; Addai, 2000; Nukunya, 2002). Specifically, the section discusses the relationship between religion, marriage and women’s sexuality; and further explores how women are responsible in initiating sexual contact in marital and non-marital relationships.

There is the conception that religion and marriage provide moral justification for suppression of female sexuality. Some religious texts (see The Christian text on Ephesians 5: 24²²) have been cited to suggest that husbands have power over wives. Further, some women (e.g., unmarried women) are perceived as more able (i.e. ‘free’) to negotiate their sexual spaces (see Adomako Ampofo, 2006; McFadden, 2003; Pereira, 2003) than other women (e.g., married women). While it is possible that women's sexual practices are culturally and religiously defined with reference

²² “but as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything”.

to marriage, this study shows that women make sex decisions in a dialogical encounter with men. I will explain why.

An interviewee, *Nuru*, a learned Muslim man was of the view that he lacks respect in his marriage. His wife does not accord him the respect his father's wives accorded his father. Besides, he feels insulted when his wife questions him on sexual matters. This he claims could inhibit sexual intercourse as he cites some versions of the Quran and the Hadith to support his claims. According to him, Islam allows partners to engage in various kinds of sexual practices (such as fellatio and the withdrawal sex) that will enhance marital satisfaction. However, his Muslim wife does not agree with him.

You see we have this "Hadif" [Hadith] that, you can give your partner "blow job" or even do "coitus interractus" [coitus interruptus]. This "Hadif" [Hadith] was when the prophet [Muhammad] was with his disciples or what we call "khalifat". [He] was narrating stuff to them, when somebody asked the question and he told them you can do that [engage in cunnilingus]. As for this woman [wife] "nye nye nye nye" that is 'bad' [complains that the practice is not of Islam]. (40+ years, married, higher education, Muslim).

The quote shows that women are often sexually expressive. One of the ways by which women exercise their agentic capacity is to refuse men sex. As long as a man seeks sexual gratification with a woman, then, women have *sexual power*. From the quote (see *Nuru* and subsequently *Naa*) the likelihood of a sexual act occurring depends on a woman's *choice*, i.e. willingness. Women draw on sexual consciousness to negotiate dominant masculinities. Different kinds of sexual consciousness emerged including moral consciousness (e.g., penile-anal sex is bad or sinful), health consciousness (e.g., fellatio is unhealthy or 'unclean'), and *hearsay consciousness*, i.e. *yεse yεse* (Twi) and *akεε akεε* (Ga) meaning "they say they say" (hearsay). Expressions

such as *I was brought up as a decent [good] guy, I was not a spoilt girl, my parents were strict on us/me, I did not associate with bad friends, and I am the shy type* were some of the narratives that women and men used in discussing sex and morality. Women exercised sexual resistance through religious consciousness (e.g. *my religion forbids that and it's not good*).

Both women and men had conservative attitude towards sex (e.g., penile-anal sex, penile-mouth sex, fellatio, and cunnilingus) than men were. A woman in question, *Naa*²³, is someone who is very assertive and vocal about sex. She is able to express her sexual feelings although her assertiveness depends on certain circumstances such as partner's open-mindedness. For instance, she was unable to express her sexual feelings or wants with her former partner (husband), who she claims was *lousy in bed* and was not willing to abide by her sexual terms. She divorced her partner because she claims he was very opinionated and not open-minded. For instance, her former partner would resist any attempt by her to deny him of his sexual preference. She is remarried. According to her, the current partner listens to her and he is willing to engage her in sexual negotiations. Therefore, it is easier for her to initiate sex and to resist some positions, techniques or forms. She had this to say:

No, no, just the normal [penis-in-vagina sex]. Oh no, you don't mean that one [anal sex] right? Eh! Anal sex [penile-anal sex] in particular, I don't really like it because I know it is not healthy because it makes your anal muscle lose and all that. So, honestly my current partner doesn't ask for it and even if he does, I will not allow. (37 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Ante Nurse, a divorcee also shared similar concerns:

Interviewer: So did your partner ever insist on exploring other forms of sex?

²³ one of the women who was hesitant to participate in the study because of the sensitive nature of the study.

Ante Nurse: You see, mostly, he was the one in need of the thing [sex]. Me I can stay “aaa” without sex and nothing will happen to me. He knows that I don’t like that thing [penile-anal sex], so when he insists [on an unwanted sexual practice], I just get up and go into the hall and leave him lying there. He sometimes comes and beg me that “let’s go to bed, I will never try that again”. He loves women also too much. Today I’m going to trek tomorrow am going to “afe” [Ewe, his hometown]. I just got tired with all that coupled with the anal sex thing. I was so afraid he will infect me. “I will not die because I’m your wife?” (56 years, post secondary education, Christian).

Women, no matter their marital status, are “free women” and are able to negotiate their sexual spaces regardless of their religious persuasions. They used threats of sexual refusal in negotiating sex and men often adhered to those threats in order not to be denied sex. My Masters’ Dissertation on “Male Perspective on Condom Use” (2011)²⁴ leads me to support the view that sexual resistance as an agentic strategy for seeking a partner’s sexual compliance or ‘obedience’ is a strategy associated with women, especially those in marital relationships. The vagina as a source of power for women to deny men sex was to foster a space in which women can say the ‘unsayable’ and negotiate their sexual spaces in a way that liberates than dominates them (see Adomako Ampofo, 2007; Akyeampong & Agyei-Mensah, 2006; Ensler, 2001²⁵). As long as the vagina remains with a woman, it is a “resource” that a woman possesses and creates power bases for a woman to deny a man sex. Thus, the vagina is a useful asset in sexual transaction.

While I acknowledge that moral upbringing do affect self-consciousness and the terms on which women engage in sexual relationships, the claim that some women are less able to negotiate sexual practices compared to others is not supported by my current study. Even for women who were sexually blackmailed (e.g., threat to end a relationship) to have sex, they still managed to

²⁴ Fiaveh, D.Y. (2011). *Male Perspectives on Condom use: Implications for STI/HIV prevention*. Saarbrucken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing. Pp. 1-97.

²⁵ The Vagina Monologues is a series of narratives written and performed by Eve Ensler in which she narrates how women speak about their vaginas concerning their sexual experiences. The monologues are taken nearly verbatim from interviews, some are amalgam of different interviews, while others are based on personal ideas gathered during her fieldwork (Ensler, 2001).

negotiate sex on their own terms. The vagina is a source of power and form the basis for women's sexual negotiation.

4.4.1 Women's Agency in Initiating Sex

This section discusses sexual behaviour with a focus on the various strategies women employ in initiating sexual intercourse.

The term agency signifies that a person is responsible for his or her own acts. Meyers (2002) defines agentic skills as skills that enable individuals to construct their own self-portraits, self-narratives, and thereby enable them to take charge of their lives. Thus, sexual agentic skills are skills or strategies that individuals possess that enables them reshape sexual scripts, beliefs and behaviours in a given social context.

The findings from this study show that women employ several agentic skills including seductive strategies to obtain sexual contact with their partners. Some of the seductive strategies used included: wearing specific [erotic] clothes or perfumes, text messaging or phone calls, and use of special language 'codes' (concealed) such as *Charlie ha wɔ̃ gbu fio* [Ga for Charlie lets "dig" small], *daddy today we have a match*, *Alhaj, yau dey mun jey Cannan oo* [Hausa, meaning Alhaji today we will go to Canaan]. However, socio-demographic profiles (such as age, marital status, commitment to moral values), past sexual experience (ever been sexually abused), and partners' open-mindedness were found to influence women's sexual ability and inability to initiate sex. Below is an example of the seductive agentic skills recounted by a female interviewee:

I call him "Masoyana" [Hausa, my sweetheart], Charlie I miss you paa! [a lot] What do you think

of it, are you ok? He would say I am ok or not. All these things I'm talking about I could not do while I was with my former husband. Because I had somebody who was much closed minded. But, the person I'm currently married to is very open and we can talk about anything. With him, you don't feel like he is judging you or picking on you. (Memuna: 35 years, married, secondary education, Muslim).

Other strategies included touching of partners manhood and sensitive parts, holding partner down after "first round of sex" particularly due to a perceived dissatisfaction of *first round of sex*. Women exercise their agentic skills regardless of the difficulty surrounding their circumstances. As far as a woman is sexually unsatisfied and needs sexual pleasure or orgasm, she would explore all possible means at her disposal to ensure that her sexual partner meets her desires. However, none of the women used coercive strategies such as threat of divorce or of ending a relationship, lies, or psychological manipulation to obtain sexual contact with their partners. As pointed out by a respondent:

Asantewaa: You see, me if you don't perform I will not be fine kroaa [at all]. I will worry you "aaaa" until you yourself...hmm [laughter] "Hwε" [Twi, you don't know].

Interviewer: So how would you worry him [partner] aaaa?

Asantewaa: Oh! That one "deε" [as for that]. Maybe I will frown for no reason. He will ask [me]: "why you are looking like this?" Then we take it up from there. (Woman, 43 years, married, middle school education, Christian).

There was a limit to women's sex initiation. Some were shy to initiate sex while others stated that their inability to directly express sexual desires or initiate sex very often was due to their past forced sexual experiences. Also, partner's tolerance and or open-mindedness ("partner understands) was important in helping women to express their sexual desires and sex initiation.

Some women perceived *relationship commitment* as an important element to sex initiation. Thus, relationship dynamics and partners' understanding is vital:

Yes, sometimes you can say it or sometimes you can go and lie on the person or just rub [massage] the person or use gestures. But, I think that if you have reached that level of communication, you can call the person over the phone and you are like, "where are you? I feel this way or that way and the person will [also] go like, you too where are you" [both laugh]. Me, it's simple, I call him, "daddy today we have a match?" [Daddy²⁶ we need to have sexual contact today]. But if you really are at the point, you should be able to talk about it or just drop a text message or send an email or something, you see. (Koshie: woman, 36 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Some critics may argue that *partner understands me* as a caveat restricts the extent to which women can exercise agency in stable relationships. A husband's sexual dominance is cited as one of the reasons for men's control of women's sexuality. Anarfi (2006), for example, argues that in a situation where customs give men rights over women's sexuality in Ghana, a husband's sexual dominance is often a precondition for a woman to receive sex. Although that is possible, the findings do not support John Anarfi's assertion. I think a woman is not powerless even if her male partner decides not to "understand" or keep an open mind. A woman may choose to divorce a partner on such ground (as in the case of *Naa*, an interviewee) or procure the sexual services of other men (especially younger men) to satisfy her sexual desires as noted in earlier sections of this chapter. For example, *Korku*, a man (aged 33 years) had this to say about his sexual escapades with a married woman:

First, let me tell you that I don't mean sleeping around with anything [any woman] cos [because] I'm now married. I love my wife. But, hmm, this woman is just good [casual sexual partner is

²⁶ One of those several seductive strategies most married women [e.g. in Ghana] often use in addressing their husbands. From my field interviews, there were several of such appellations: "me wura" (Fanti, meaning my Lord), my husband, sweetie heart, sweedie, "Masoyana" (Hausa, my heart), Me dorfu pa (Twi, my only love) etc. It should be noted that Madina is a cosmopolitan area, which explains why majority of the households communicate in Twi. Twi is widely spoken in Ghana.

experienced in sex]. She is like me [married] so we understand each other. (Married, higher education, not religious).

When asked what might have accounted for his excessive “love for sex” with a married woman, he indicated that:

Charlie, “nle ee” [Ga, I don’t know oo]. She they enjoy the thing [sex]. In hosby no they fit fuck am well. A ask am before but abi you know women, she no fit tell me anything proper. In just they talk say in husby no have time give am [PG, she enjoys sex with me because her husband is unable to satisfy her sexually. I ever asked her about her husband’s sexual performance and she was unable to give any tangible reasons. She says her husband is always busy]. (Married, higher education, not religious).

My point here is that women have sexual options as men do even if not all women would like to exercise this agency e.g., to seek sexual gratification with other men or even divorce a ‘nonperforming²⁷’ partner.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the sexual beliefs and experiences of women and men. Sexual beliefs, experiences, and behaviours are multifaceted as observed in this study. Media, friends, and hearsay shaped women and men’s sexual beliefs and behaviour. Sexual experiences varied by age and sex but not by marital status or religion. Women said sex should be restrained but men understood sex as an affirmation of being a ‘real’ man. In support to popular discourse, although men do persuade women to engage in diverse sexual practices, women know that ‘real’ men need vagina to compliment their penis, hence, women use the vagina to negotiate their sexual terms (e.g., Adomako Ampofo, 2007; Akyeampong & Agyei-Mensah, 2006; Ensler,

²⁷ sexual responsibilities.

2001). Differences in socio-demographic factors (such as age and religion), sexual experience, partners' understanding, and individual factors (e.g., privacy, 'sexual mood', and menstrual cycle) create different barriers as well as enhancers to sex initiation amongst women. Compared with older women, younger women initiate sex with their partners, and hold low commitment to moral and religious values. For older women, in addition to sexual privacy, moral and religious inhibitions posed some barriers to initiation of sexual contact with partners. Although marriage and moral upbringing do affect self-consciousness and hence the terms on which women engage in sex (see Adomako Ampofo, 2006; McFadden, 2003; Pereira, 2003; Tenkorang, 2012), the women were not passive to sex, making women engage in self-reflecting sexual choices.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY AND SEXUAL NEGOTIATION PRACTICES

5.1 Introduction

As shown in previous discussions i.e. in chapter four, women engage in sexual interactions with men based on meanings (sexual consciousness). In this chapter, I explore women and men's notion of masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual negotiation practices.

Studies show that although women often have to comply with appropriate (i.e., culturally sanctioned), masculine behaviour, women and men interact according to the meanings they give to gender (Butler, 2011; Collins, 2005; Howson, 2006). However, it remains unclear whether the sexual negotiation practices of Ghanaian women are related to how they constitute masculinity and femininity, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) risks. How do Ghanaian women and men constitute masculinity and femininity? How are women's notions of masculinity and femininity portrayed in their sexual practices?

The first two sections of the chapter focus on how women and men define maleness and femaleness. Men defined themselves at least by one of three main features identified, i.e. physical characteristics, reproduction, and responsibility. Femininity was more uniformly characterised in terms of physical attractiveness and beauty, responsibility, and reproduction. The third section deals with women's sexual negotiation practices in the face of masculinities and femininities. The chapter provides conclusions that suggest that although women's agency is

expressed within the confines of masculinist ideology, the women negotiate sex according to the meanings they give to femininity and masculinity.

5.2 Constructions of Maleness

The term masculinity is a set of characteristics or roles socially considered typical of, or 'appropriate' to be considered a man such as having a phallus. However, masculinity is open to multiple meanings and influenced by several factors such as age, education, economic wealth, learned behaviours, and geographical locations (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2005; Miescher, 2005 & 2007; Whitehead, 2002), to take just few examples. The central question is: how do women and men in Ghana construct maleness? Who is a man?

Men defined themselves in terms of one of three main features: reproduction (e.g., ability to get a woman pregnant), physical characteristics (e.g., having a penis), and responsibility (e.g., care for one's partner or family for those with children). These three components do not conflict but reinforce each other and the inability to acquire the full compliments does not mean a man is incomplete or has 'failed' in his masculinity. However, some components were subtly superior to others such that the inability to meet the superior constituents could cause discontentment in identity.

With respect to reproduction, the view was that childbearing is not vital to a male identity even though they acknowledged that childbearing is socially valued. Interviewees (i.e. men) comments were mainly 'I' focused when they considered childbearing as not important:

Because everyone with his own destiny. Perhaps, someone might not have a child as a result of an obstacle in his way, or it could even be as a result of some disease. Some people are even born with

certain diseases that will never allow them to bear children. Some people are born impotent for example. For me, I can't refer to someone who does not have a child as not being a man. (Uncle: man, 73 years, divorcee, primary education, not religious).

Physically, having a male identity includes being 'created' as a man and having a penis (i.e., *koteε* in Twi, *ava* in Ewe, *gbεε* in Ga and *bura* in Hausa). The possession of a penis formed an important part of constructions of masculinity among most men because they claimed to have engaged in penile-vagina sex (with the exception of two men). When men identified men as having a penis, the main focus was on men's phallic competence, i.e., the ability to have and sustain an erection, the capacity to perform during sex and satisfy a woman, and the ability for the penis to 'impregnate' a woman. For men who were married and had female sexual partners, the penis was an important aspect of being a 'real' man, i.e. make a woman pregnant. In this regard, the relevance of the penis is more about the fulfillment of a socially constructed role of 'fatherhood' rather than a mere possession of a physical organ.

Men have penis, they impregnate women and take care of their kids. I have three girls (Fonyeh: man, 39 years, married, higher education, Christian).

However, *Dism* also a male suggests that although the penis is an important physical characteristic of being a man, phallic competence does not matter to him. He indicates that at age 19 he had already engaged in varied forms of sexual activity, i.e. a penile-mouth sex and a penile-anal sex. What was important in all his narratives was his claim that he is the one who acts in the capacity of being a woman, i.e. being 'penetrated'²⁸ during penile-mouth or penile-

²⁸ 'Penetration' is used cautiously and not in any derogatory manner. *In fact the interviewee acknowledges that the word is derogatory.* For instance, he keeps saying: "who is penetrating and who is being penetrated", although he also uses the word often. I guess it is because both interviewee and interviewer struggle to find an alternative word that can best explain the context without necessarily losing the meaning.

anal sex with another man. Since he is not the one ‘penetrating’ a partner, the penis, therefore, is a mere physical object to him and does not define his manliness.

The penis does not even define me as a man although I have one. It should be there and don’t “wanna” lose it even if I don’t need it. I’ve already told you I have two personalities. I am a man and a woman. There are instances when I define myself as a man and there are instances when I define myself as a woman. You know they normally say that we take on the roles that are assigned to us by the society. So the society has decided I should be a man because I have a penis. Well, let’s take it like that. (Dism: 25 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

The quote indicates that masculinity is multifaceted in terms of demographic factors (e.g. age and marital status), learned behaviours, and sexual experiences. *Dism* is unmarried, a young male (age 25 years), feels attracted sexually to males, in a sexual relationship with a male (who is also unmarried), and has never engaged in penile-vagina sex. Therefore, being a man to some men including *Dism* is not mere physical characteristics such as having a penis for phallic competence.

Last, responsibility was also identified as being one of the main features of masculinity among men. Engaging in an economic activity, protecting the family, providing for the family (financially), and being the family head were among the facets of being a ‘responsible’ man. These characteristics did not vary regardless of age, marital status, and religious persuasions. To the men, the code of responsibility should start from a household, i.e. the ability to provide for oneself and dependents was among the facets of being a ‘responsible’ man. I call this *monolithic responsibility*. Consequently, *I am a man in my house* and or *I am the man of the house*, indicate the limits where a man’s identity and ‘power’ reach as captured by the following quotes:

I'm a man because I am able to fend for myself, I do not ask anybody for money, I do not beg for food, and if I am a man, I am a man in my house. I am not a man in someone else's house. And if you insult me that "are you a man?", I wouldn't mind because whether I am a man or not, I won't come to you to beg for food to eat and I won't come and ask you for a loan [money]. You see? (Uncle: 73 years, divorcee, primary education, not religious).

Among the men, a subtle hierarchy of maleness was expressed. For example, while those who selected physical characteristics over reproduction and responsibility at home were of the view that women could also adopt these roles, other men considered responsibility as the most crucial component of being 'the male figure', hence, the family head. The ranking of maleness was also intergenerational (based on age and educational differences) and intercultural (i.e. cultural upbringing). For example, the men that ranked physical characteristics and reproduction as the most important male identity were less than 45 years and married whereas those that ranked responsibility as most important were above 45 years. Others also showed an earnest need to redefine their manly characteristics depending on the social context. For example, in the context where an individual is a member of a religious group, the moral code of such group influenced how the individual expresses manly characteristics in relation to responsibility e.g., *God-fearing*, i.e. being godly. As is well known, an explicit aim of religion is to whip adherents into line in upholding moral sentiments. In this instance, religion becomes a coercive mechanism that influences the way individuals continuously manage their gender.

Women also defined men at least by one of the three main features identified especially in the light of responsibility, i.e. the ability of men to provide especially for their offspring, if any. However, the women interviewed indicated that even men who were unable to provide for their family still earned some acknowledgement for their social position. In this regard, responsibility

transcended the financial, to include caring, respect for a woman, fidelity/faithfulness, and giving spiritual, emotional and psychological support through respect for women and being ‘a nice man’.

Here in Zongo, anytime you find a man and his girlfriend or wife quarrelling, the woman often say that “you koraa are you a man [Are you a man at all]?” I think for me I will only ask that question if you are not playing your role as a responsible person, not in bed [sexual intercourse]. For me, bed is only 2 or 5 percent. Financial, emotional, and religious luxury, if you are doing that as a man, respect for a woman, and control [controlling one’s sexual desires], it does not matter what you do in ‘bed’ [sex]. If you are very active in bed and you don’t look after your children, what makes you a man? And that’s what our forefathers were using because they had lots of children.... [pause] then eeei you are a man. You have ten children, you are a man meanwhile you cannot look after them and lack sexual control. Before you say jack, he has infected you with something. (Sitsofe: woman, 31 years, married, higher education, Christian).

The women also stressed on men’s sexual behaviour. The women were of the view that men like sex and are easily moved to have sex. In this regard, they were of the view that the manner in which a man expresses sexual overtures is an indication of a man who has control over his sexual behaviour which is an important element in some women’s understanding of a ‘proper’ man. Women also mentioned good appearance in terms of dressing, being cleanly shaven, and ‘smelling good’. For such women, the presence or absence of body odour provides a good indication of how ‘responsible’ a man is or not, or is likely/unlikely to be. They stated that the ‘appearance’ of a man is indicative of how a man organises himself and his household in general.

5.3 Constructions of Femaleness

The term femininity is a set of characteristics or roles socially considered typical of, or ‘appropriate’ to be considered a woman such as having a vagina. However, studies show that

femininity is also open to multiple meanings and influenced by several factors such as age, education, economic wealth, learned behaviours, and geographical locations (see Boahen, 2003; Butler, 2011; Collins, 2000; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2005; Halberstam, 1998; Howson, 2006; Oduyoye, 2001; Tamale, 2010). The central question that the women engaged with in this section was to answer the question, who is a woman?

The women interviewed distinguished between what they referred to as a ‘contemporary’ woman (*ɛnɛ maa* and *mmabawaa aba*, literally meaning ‘today’s women’) and a ‘traditional’ woman (*yɛn brɛ so*,²⁹ meaning during our time)? A contemporary woman was perceived to have complex identities transcending the narrowness of certain cultural values (e.g., the need to bear a child) with which women are often identified. The identities of women were categorized in terms of four major themes³⁰: physical characteristics, responsibility, reproduction and independence.

The main physical features mentioned was biological (i.e., vagina and breasts) and social, i.e., ‘beauty’, in terms of a woman’s face, her hair, and her shape. One of the women, for example, identified herself as *me gyinaso* [Twi, meaning I have good physical attractiveness]. Six women indicated the vagina was an important aspect of their femininity. They maintained that without a vagina to attract men, you are not a woman. Real women need a vagina to complement men’s penis. They frequently referred to the vagina euphemistically in various ways such as *Akosua Kumaa* or *Akosua Mansa* [Twi, proper names for females], and *buɛmi* [Ga, a hole]. The vagina is, however, known as *ɛtwɛ* in Twi, *toto* or *sɔmi* in Ga, *edo* or *kolo* in Ewe, and *duri* in Hausa³¹.

²⁹ The equivalent of these Twi expressions exist in other Ghanaian languages too, and those interviewed were not Akan-speaking only.

³⁰ The women interviewed were given the freedom to express these identities.

³¹ These terms have varied meanings depending on the context and emphasis. For example, *edo* can mean ‘he/she has arrived’ depending on the emphasis. Hence, I do not seek to indulge in this analysis as cloth seem to have nothing to do with the vagina.

To all the women interviewed, being a woman is a physiological creation by God.

With respect to reproduction and the construction of femininity, the link was not expressed differently from the way in which women constructed the attributes of men. Women were of the view that ‘if you don’t bear a child’, ‘if you are not married’, and ‘if you are not even in a relationship’, a woman is still a woman. The only stereotypical characteristic women adopted from the ‘traditional’ construction was the concept of ‘motherliness’ (i.e., showing concern for those in need, especially children), something they considered as a given. However, reproduction and their own ability to bear children was not a concept the women often used to identify themselves, just as they had not done in the case of men.

One of the things that define me as a woman is my role as a mother and someone who can bear children. Even before I had my child, I was “mothering” [caring for] my siblings. I think I have some special gifting in mothering people and taking care of myself, my home and playing that role. Even though I say that defines you doesn’t mean that if you don’t have a child you can’t be a woman. You can ‘mother’ other people and be such a blessing. Nieces and nephews will come and tell me or ask me what they won’t ask their parents. So it is that nurturing ability. (Naa: woman, 37 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Although some women said that they were happy to bear a child, there was no narrative whereby a woman with an inability to bear a child signified an incomplete femininity.

Another key aspect of femininity attribute mentioned in the study was independence. The reasons why this was important for women was because they linked it to several facets (such as financial autonomy, intelligence, smartness) of their lives which enable them to have control over their sexuality including the ability to negotiate one’s sexual options. Ideas about being intelligent and smart were not only assigned to women who had received formal education but

all women who are conscious of their wellbeing, although culturally these attributes were traditionally perceived as male attributes.

It's a lot of things [pause]. Okay so physiologically you have been born or created a woman that is one. You don't necessarily need to have a man in your life to feel fulfilled as a woman. It's a combination of beauty and brains. And when I talk of brains, am not talking about just academic brains, because there are some women who are not good in school but whatever business you are doing, you should be smart. If it's a business, if it's being a mother, whatever role you are playing, you should be smart in that area, not just academic prowess. You should be able to take care of your children and your home. It's everything. (Sitsofe: woman, 31 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Further, femininity was constructed in terms of responsibility. Responsibility was constructed around the ability to care for oneself (such as being able to afford clothing and cosmetics), provide for one's children and parents. These attributes did not differ from the way in which the women also perceived men. However, for women, responsibility goes in tandem with the notion of independence because the former propels the latter. For instance, the women were of the view that one's a woman is responsible for her own 'life' (such as the ability to meet one's material needs), then, she has independence and is less dependent on a man whether married or not married, Muslim or Christian, younger or older, and educated or not. *Sumaya*, a female aged 36 years had this to say:

What shows I'm a woman? I can provide for myself, I do provide for my parents, I'm working and at periods when my father and mother don't have I help my younger siblings. I personally feel ok, what I want is what I do, is not like I wait for someone to provide for me before I eat. I feel I'm ok and a woman. (Unmarried, primary education, Muslim).

Others drew on some stereotypical social values and misconstruction. A 'responsible' woman

was perceived as someone who was associated with looking after her personal hygiene, engaging in household duties (such as cooking and keeping her surroundings clean), caring for children, and providing spiritual support (in the context where a woman was a member of a religious group, with several informants citing Ephesians 5: 24³² or the Hadith³³ to support their claims). Others also perceived a 'responsible' woman as someone who could 'handle a man' (through concern for her own health in dealing with men's sexual advances) and had a 'good' character. The women commented on women's sexual behaviour just as they did for men. Women were perceived in terms of persons with low sexual interest compared to men although not meaning being passive to sex. Although this view was steeped in misconceptions, it was partly linked with stereotypical social values which enable women to manage dominant masculinities in terms of sexual desires and sexual risk negotiation practices. The elderly women and those who were married claimed that sex is the least of women's worries as expressed by the following:

We women don't like too much sex like you guys [men] oo. Sex is the least of my worries. Me I don't like sex like that oo. What do men get "kroaa [at all] from excessive sex la? I have more serious issues dealing with. You see when you are young, probably for most men, their mind is filled with sex sex sex. Probably it goes for some women too, but, I bet you such women are few. Only two out of ten women have sex preoccupying their minds. I have four kids, two boys and two girls, what else? What else do I need, ha? My first boy is 18 and the last is a girl. She is 2 years. I love my kids. The demand of work and all that. Me I don't have that time oo. "Sex comes as and when". Sometimes you just have to do one to make him [partner] happy. You [men] people like too much such. Tell me, what's about sex that makes you [men] go crazy like that? (Absu: 42 years, married, higher education, Christian).

The expressions that *sex is the least of my worries* and *I love my kids* are common narratives

³² 'But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything'.

³³ The collected traditions, teachings, and stories of the prophet Muhammad, accepted as a source of Islamic doctrine and law second only to the Koran.

among [married] women in Ghana, claims I wish to interrogate here based on *Absu's* perception. First, there is the availability of a sexual partner because *Absu* is married. It is expected that persons in sexual unions do not have to struggle to have sex compared to those who are not, even if this is not necessarily matched in practice. Second, due to some women's own persona (e.g., *Me I don't like sex like that oo*), they do not like too much sex. Last, *Absu* experiences *sexual fatigue* due to her fulfillment of marital goals (e.g., *I have four kids, two boys, two girls*) and the demand of her busy schedules. *Absu's* sexual experience cannot be viewed in terms of socially constructed power relations between a husband and a wife, where the former wields power over the latter. This because, she also claims that she has sex when she has the desire to do so i.e. *sex comes as and when*.

5.4 Femininity and Sexual Negotiation Practices

In countries in Africa, dominant ideologies of masculinity (e.g., male sexual dominance) are seen as a threat to women's sexual and reproductive health (see Inhorn, 2005; McFadden, 2003; Scorgie et al., 2011). This section explored how women's notion of masculinity and femininity build on their sexual practices. The central question I asked the women was that: are woman at risk of men's sexual behaviour (probing for why)?

Sexual risk influences women's sexual practices and the extent to which women express their sexual desires and accept men's sexual overtures. The women had multifaceted understandings of sexual risks. These included biological risks (i.e. getting infected with an STD, not being able to get pregnant) as well as social and moral hazards (e.g., getting pregnant fortuitously, losing one's respect as a woman, appearing easy and cheap, being seen as too exposed or too traditional, penile-anal sex, poor menstrual hygiene, etc.). For the women, dealing with sexual

risks involved good knowledge of men's sexuality, what they want, 'knowing one's self', menstrual period, being clean, being able to satisfy men, not letting men use one, and being able to manipulate men sexually. For example, physical feature such as 'beauty' was an important factor for some men to gain access to a woman sexually. Some women used beauty to entice men and negotiate sexual practices since they stressed that men like sex and are easily moved to have sex. In particular, younger and unmarried women used expressions such as 'am not a cheap woman' to indicate that not 'any man' could have sexual access to them. Instead, they were interested in men with certain physical characteristics (such as 'good looking' men. Younger women in particular said they would not date or marry a man who exhibited the characteristics that they identified as implying 'irresponsibility', because 'they are not (real) men'.

For other women, especially younger ones and those who were never married, unplanned pregnancy constitutes a sexual risk because men may not accept the responsibility of the child. All the unmarried women indicated that for most men, sex was primarily about pleasure and nothing more. That said, a degree of sexual agency was expressed in women's language through expressions such as *are you ready to marry me? Are you ready to be a father? Please use it [condom] since we are not ready*, as dominant narratives used to negotiate safe sex. *Dzidzor*, a 38-year-old woman, had this to say:

If I had not insisted or managed to convince the guy to use condom, that would have been a big problem. It would have been a big problem, I would have had unwanted baby because am not working now. They [men] don't care oo. As for them, is all about the enjoyment. So it's good for you to decide when and how you have to have sex and where, it's very important. I only asked him one question, i.e., are you ready [to be a father]? And he is always fumbling. That tells me straight away that this guy is not ready, so we need to play it safe. (Unmarried, vocational education, Christian).

The women also indicated that sex should occur by means of a vagina and a penis, and that sex should be hygienic. All the women stressed the unique differences in the reproductive sex organs for men (the penis) and women (the vagina), and the positioning of such sex organs (i.e., located in between the thighs for both sexes) as ideal for sex. One interviewee had this to say:

It's not good. But men too have anus. So you don't you know this? [Questions the interviewer] How can you allow someone to insert that thing [penis] at your back [anus]? Can you give birth by having sex through your anus? I was told that it can cause the place [anus] to weaken and when you go to toilet, the thing [faecal matter] just drops "toom" like that [an onomatopoeic expression for the easy drop of faecal matter from the anus into the toilet]. This can even affect your womb also. Because you are married, so you should allow a man to just "use" you like that [sexually exploit you]? As for men, if you allow them, they will do what they want with you oo. You the woman have to be strong [smart and assertive on your rights]. Me, if you [partner] try that thing with me, I will run away and leave you. (Akofa: woman, 30 years, unmarried, primary education, Christian).

Context-specific meanings of 'cleanliness' such as good menstrual hygiene and or menstrual management is important in women's conceptions of sexual risk. Except for two women, the rest considered sex during menstrual period as 'indecent' and 'unhealthy'. The women used expressions such as *wa bu ne nsa* (which literally means in Twi, she has broken her arm but metaphorically it means she has menstruated), and *efee yei anii* (which literally means in Ga, she is behaving like a woman) to call 'responsible' men to show care because the menstrual period can be likened to a woman in an ill health. The women believe that 'proper' men like decent sex and will not have sex with women who are menstruating. Those with a strong commitment to religious values claimed that their religion forbids sex during menstruation (Twi, *yɛn som no mpene saa*) and that a good and a 'God fearing' man would exercise sexual restraint. So the women use men's value for decent sex to tell the men that they are menstruating, when they do

not want to have sex with them. In the words of an interviewee:

You see, men think they are smart but we women are smarter. I just tell him I'm in my menses since he knows I will not have sex when [I'm] in red [menstruation]. It's not healthy, the scent and all that. A good Christian won't even do that. (Sitsofe: woman, 31 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Related to the above point, even for women who claimed that they ever had sex in their menstrual period, their narratives of sexual risk was still related to responsible behaviour i.e., 'good' hygiene related vaginal practices and unplanned pregnancy. *Zu* is pragmatic about it:

We are often careful, especially when am ovulating because I don't want to get pregnant. You know men, when you get pregnant now then they start their thing, blaming you; "how come?" As if you had sex alone. But in my menses, I wash down and it's ok [no smell and so I can have sex in menstrual period] and I'm safe. "ɔbaa deɛ eyɛ sɛ wase yɛ kama" [Twi, a woman needs to ensure that her vagina is tidy]. (Woman, 26 years, unmarried, higher education, Muslim).

Last, the women said that 'good' (proper) men like reputation (i.e., to be seen as 'responsible' men) and hate embarrassment. So women threaten to scream and in some cases shout if their men want to force them to have sex when they are at risk of getting pregnant or when they suspect the man to have infections or when the man wants to rape them or engage in 'improper' sexual practices. One woman shared her experiences as follows:

He has been forcing me, let's try this lets try that. One day...I don't even know what happened but in changing the [sex] position, he tried that stupid thing. I screamed and he stopped since he didn't want the people around [neighbours] to know what was going on. Some men are very stubborn, but it's because they haven't met someone like me. If a man respects you [a woman], he won't do that [coerce a woman into having sex]. (Akosua: 32 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

From the narratives provided by women, a man's decision to discontinue an unwanted sexual act was also influenced by the need to protect his reputation. In most cultures in Ghana, men who coerce women into sex lose respect. Such men become a focus of ridicule. Narratives depicting such disapproval include *marima enyε saa* (a man should not behave in that manner), *yen forso obaa oo, obaa pε woa na opε wo* [you don't force a woman, if a woman loves you then she does it). These narratives by themselves 'strip' such men of their masculinity or, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne (2005) put it, dislocate it. It comes as no surprise to me based on personal experience when a woman said to me in my attempt to caress her, *if you don't stop [what you are doing], I will shout*. On a second occasion she said, *I will scream oo*. In both scenarios, I had to stop since I did not want others to know of this in order to lose my respect as 'man'. Indeed, this is a common phenomenon in sexual relationships whether married or unmarried, and whether young or old (see Adomako Ampofo, 2006: 149).

Can a man also engage in this agency, i.e. can a man scream to deter a female partner from unwanted sexual overtures? Can he say to a female partner, "I will scream if you don't stop what you are doing"? I do not think so. A man who refuses sexual overtures from a woman is often regarded as a 'weak' man, and described in local parlance as *otoolege* or *kotobonku*³⁴ meaning a weak man, *banyin-basia* (Fanti) meaning 'man-woman' or as Nnuroh (2006, 98) bluntly puts it, a 'useless' man. While women's agency in sex is often triggered by 'decisive' *protest femininities* (see Howson, 2006), those of men remain influenced by more hegemonic forms of masculinity.

³⁴ These expressions are common terminologies in Ghana.

5.5 Conclusion

The chapter examined the construction of masculine and feminine identities linked to the sexuality of women and men in Ghana and highlights women's sexual negotiation practices. While women and men framed 'proper' masculinity in terms of stereotypical reproductive norms, they also acknowledged the fluidity and multiplicity of masculinities. Femininity was more uniformly characterised in terms of physical attractiveness and beauty, responsibility, and reproduction. Strategically, women showed an earnest need to redefine women in response to hegemonic masculinity thereby supporting the views espoused by several researchers that fluidity and multiplicity characterise masculinities and femininities (Butler, 2011; Collins, 2000; Howson, 2006). Although the women's agency was expressed within the confines of masculinist ideology (see Connell, 2005; Whitehead, 2002), the women negotiated sex according to the meanings they give to femininity and masculinity.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SEXUAL PLEASURE: MEANINGS AND AGENCY

6.1 Introduction

Studies show that human beings interact based on meanings (Blumer, 1986; Butler, 2011; Mead, 1982). Indeed, as shown in previous discussions i.e. in chapter four, women engage in sexual interactions with men according to the meanings they give to masculinity and femininity. However, it remains unclear whether the meanings women attach to sexual pleasure also influence their sense of sexual agency. My aim in this chapter is to explore women and men's meanings of sexual pleasure, the factors that stimulate their sexual pleasure, and how they negotiate for these factors. How do women and men portray themselves as active agents in sexual encounters as consequence of their symbolic interpretations and meanings of sexual pleasure? I provide exploratory evidence that suggests that sexual pleasure has important symbolic constructions for women and men.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the meanings women and men attach to sexual pleasure. The central idea is to find out whether meanings of sexual pleasure differ between women and men. The second section discusses the factors that influence women and men's sexual pleasure and how they are negotiated. Three factors are discussed, i.e. erotic factors, aphrodisiacs, and sex positions. Last, the chapter provides a conclusion that suggests that women and men are active negotiators of sexual activity vis a vis sexual pleasure.

6.2 Symbolic Meanings of Sexual Pleasure: Gender Differences

Sexual pleasure has both direct (i.e. physically symbolic) and indirect expressions (Philpott et al., 2006). How do Ghanaian women and men express sexual pleasure? Does the experiencing of sexual pleasure differ between women and men?

The meanings of sexual pleasure include ejaculation ('release' or 'come'), scream, facial expressions, asking rhetoric questions during sex, and 'treating a partner nicely' after sex. These factors were categorized into direct and indirect expressions of sexual pleasure. Directly, sexual pleasure was mainly seen to be *ejaculation* (i.e. "come" or "release"). Words such as *come* or *release* (Twi, "wo ho aba" or "me ho aba", and "atinka"; Hausa, "jiki na [mu] ya zo" or "jiki nki [ta] ya zo"), *feel* (Hausa, "jin daadi" or "naji daadi"; Ewe, "sɛsɛlɛlamɛ" or "vivi sɛsɛ" or "evivi nam ŋut"³⁵ meaning it *sweets me*) were used to express ejaculation. The interviewees (women and men) acknowledged that both women and men ejaculate although ejaculation was more physically associated with men than women. According to the interviewees, ejaculation involves the 'release' of *fluid* either from a man's penis ("wa pi" or "ma pi" in colloquial Twi) or a woman's vagina ("ni hun suo") during a sexual activity which usually involves a 'penetrative' sex. The acknowledgement of female ejaculation and sexual pleasure was articulated in comparative expressions such as *them too they release* and *we too release* by interviewees. A woman had this to say:

Oh! We women too release like men all the time. Ah, but if we don't release, how can we enjoy? From my personal experience, ours [women's] delay small more than men. But when we are "coming" [ejaculating], it's serious. It may not come with a shout but the joy is stronger. Orgasm is different. As for that one, you can't help, but to shout small. (Memuna: woman, 35 years, married,

³⁵ These expressions also have different meanings depending on the context and the subgroups. For example, the expression among the Anlo can be used in relation to food or other general expressions. Hence, one should exercise caution beyond the interpretations offered in this context. This also pertains to the other languages used in this study, i.e. Twi, Ga, and Hausa.

secondary education, Muslim).

Some men also corroborated the view of women's ejaculation in different narrative expressions such as *white white* fluid or things. In a discussion I had with *Fonyeh*, a highly educated man, aged 39 years, he had this to say about his wife:

Fonyeh: For me, especially my wife, I see some “white white” fluid on my penis when she enjoys the thing [sexual act].

Interviewer: Ah! But some people say the “white white” ‘things’ coming from a woman do not mean anything [she has enjoyed sex]? In fact, some say it could be that she is infected [with an STI] or the man has released in her.

Fonyeh: ...Well you can give it your own academic interpretation, but I think she released because she enjoyed the act. Look here ma [my] friend, since you are young let me educate you a bit. You see the “white white things” we are talking about here is different from say a discharge from an [STI] infection or releasing into a woman. A discharge from an infection is not white per se. It's creamy like. Even assuming your argument is true, why is that I'm not infected also since we did it raw [had sex without use of a condom]. In fact, I call this “white feelings” [say amidst laughter]. (Married, Christian).

Thus, both sexes have physical evidence of women and men's sexual pleasure through ejaculation. Given this evidence, therefore, there is no indication of women and men's perception to suggest that men experience sexual pleasure and women do not. Researchers who argue that men experience frequent sexual pleasure than women (e.g., Jackson & Scott, 2002) may be talking about premature ejaculation of men vis a vis delayed ejaculation of women. The findings of this study indicate that women also ejaculate just as men.

Although both females and males experienced ejaculation, women's ejaculation was often

associated with orgasm. Both women and men can ejaculate without achieving orgasm. Words such as *ultimate feelings* [“atinka” in Akan], *ultimate sexual pleasure*, *different level of goodness*, *very pleased*, *contented*, *fulfilled*, *excessive scream* (including laughter), *gets out of breath*, *uncontrollable*, and *grab partner firm* were used as descriptions for orgasm. A female revealed that:

Interviewer: How do you know you’ve achieved orgasm?

Oye-Mansa: Oh the sweetness becomes different. I also release [discharge]. You see when a woman like me gets orgasm you see some “white white” things coming out [discharges]. Maybe that’s when we also reach our ultimate feelings [orgasm]. (22 years, married, higher education, Christian).

The predominant distinction between orgasm and sexual pleasure, therefore, is that the former is the *ultimate* of the latter as indicated by most interviewees. This presupposes that one has to achieve some level of sexual pleasure before experiencing orgasm. Ejaculation can either accompany orgasm or simply be part of sexual arousal. As research shows (e.g., Winks & Seman, 1994), ejaculation and orgasm are two distinct physiological phenomena controlled by different nerve groups. Both female and male ejaculation is contingent upon sexual stimulation expelled through the urethra. However, while female ejaculation results in the filling of paraurethral gland and expelled through the urethra, in men, ejaculation results in the prostate gland (Winks & Seman, 1994). This, for me, is the point of departure between male and female ejaculation.

Sexual pleasure is also indirectly expressed. Asking *sexually rhetoric questions* and *erotic sexual scream* were among the facets of indirectly expressing sexual pleasure. This experience was seen

to be associated with female sexuality than male. *Sexually rhetoric question*, according to both male and female interviewees, is when a sexual partner in the process of a sexual act unusually asks rhetoric questions or statements, either to affirm a partner's love or indicate sexual approval or sexual 'performance', then, one's sexual partner could be experiencing or may have experienced sexual pleasure. Some possible rhetoric questions are: *Yaw [pseudonym for a male partner] do you really love me? Wo suaa wei nso wo henfa?* [Twi, meaning where did you learn this technique too from?], and *me nma woho ma ntɛm oo?* [Twi, meaning don't ejaculate too early oo]. *Oko*, a man aged 33 years, for example, said:

Like after the act, she will ask, "oh will you drink some tea or something?" She will go and prepare then you get to know that you have really satisfied her. (Unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Last, sexual pleasure is expressed indirectly through *erotic screams*. Words such as *ageiiiiii*, *haaahahaaha*, *hmmmmhmmmm*, and *mmmmmm* were used to express erotic sexual scream or what some interviewees referred to as *noise making* or 'noise'. The interviewees indicated that *screams* emanating from a sexual act indirectly signifies that a partner is experiencing sexual pleasure. Although it is possible to argue to the contrary that a scream may also be that a partner (in most cases a female) is experiencing sexual displeasure or pain, the interviewees indicated that depending on the *sexual context* (such as facial expressions, the excitement, and aggression e.g., firm grasp of partner), partners are able to detect whether a given scream is for pain or for sexual pleasure. In this case, then, the symbolic meanings of a *scream* determine sexual pleasure based on symbolic interpretations which are co-constructed by sexual partners in a sexual act. *Koshie* and *Korku* shared their views:

...sometimes the scream, the way the sound goes he will know that it is nice to me [with laughter]. Normally we do this kind of sex when the children have gone to school and neighbours are quite busy themselves. As for me when it's nice I make noise [scream]. Why, are you surprise [with a smile, both laugh uncontrollably]? (Koshie: woman, 36 years, married, post secondary education, Christian).

Oh like... [pause]. You know some women they make noise when the thing 'they' sweet them well well [some make noise when they are experiencing sexual pleasure]. "If the thing they pain am too you go know! In face go change. Some go tell you or push in ass backwards then comort am [PG, you will know if she is experiencing pain or not. Others will employ several strategies such as pushing their buttocks backwards to avoid further 'penetration']". (Korku: man, 33 years, married, higher education, not religious).

Overall, the findings show that meanings of sexual pleasure among women and men were derived from knowledge, beliefs, and lived experiences. There were no differences between women and men's meanings and experience of sexual pleasure.

6.3 Negotiating Stimulants of Sexual Pleasure

Research shows that several factors stimulate the attainment of sexual pleasure (Steinke & Wright, 2006). In this section, I discuss the factors that stimulate women and men's sexual pleasure, and how women and men negotiate these factors. Women and men reported multiple stimulants of sexual pleasure and these were categorized into three broad areas, i.e. eroticism, sex positions, and use of sexual aphrodisiacs.

6.3.1 Eroticism and Female Agentic Capacity

Three erotic factors were identified. These include erotic scenes (e.g., erotic setting/environment, erotic music/sounds and movies, and sex privacy), foreplay, and physical attractiveness.

6.3.1.1 Erotic scenes

The findings show that the location, surroundings, and background factors influence the way women and men respond to sex sexual activities. These factors were captured as erotic scenes focusing on the setting or the environment (i.e. the location where sex is to take place or is taking place), and erotic sounds/visuals. The degree of response and preferences to these factors were gendered. To the women, a serene environment (this does not mean the absence of sounds), 'erotic triggers' (such as the neatness of bed sheets and colour and size of bed, and the ambiance i.e. the 'romantic' nature of room e.g., smelling 'nice' or 'good'), and personal hygiene (i.e. smelling good; men also indicated this view). *Naa* had this to say:

It a whole lot of things that goes beyond the physical even the ambiance in a room can put me off. am very particular about personal hygiene so how is the guy smelling, how is he looking, are his clothes clean, the sheets on the bed all of these build up so once those things are there one part of it is settled. (Woman, 37 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Other interviewees were particular about sex privacy (i.e. having sex without anybody knowing about it) and safety (e.g., one's own residence, day or night, lights on or off) are important triggers of sex and sexual pleasure. The quest for sexual privacy was more pronounced among women than men. This was expressed in three ways, i.e. a third person should not know about the environment (e.g., enter the room) where sex is to take place or taking place, a partner's scream should not be heard by others, and none of the partners should tell others about the act. The fear of someone walking in during sex inhibits sexual activities such as the choice of foreplay (e.g., licking of genitals) or sex position (e.g. 'doggy' style). The inability to conceal sexual acts indicate the lack of *decency and uprightness*. Thus, knowing that nobody will walk in during sex is necessary for stimulating sexual pleasure:

I did not really enjoy it. It's the first time, and in his father's room. It was like you are stealing it. You are in hurry and all that you know. Can you imagine if we were caught in his father's house? [Interviewer: yeah, I can imagine]. My goodness [both laugh uncontrollably], so we had to do it quick and fast. You should have a heavy heart to do that. I wouldn't call it sex, we were just smooching [caressing] each other and he tried to enter but I didn't allow because anybody could just budge [enter] in like that. (Memuna: woman, 35 years, married, secondary education, Muslim).

The fear of being caught during sex creates anxiety. Anxiety inhibited the fuller expression of sex, prevented good and elaborate foreplay, and sexual intimacy. For instance, *Oko* had this to say:

Yeah, I enjoy sometimes but it is always just in a rush. You see, I am living with my elder brother. He is a military man. So, I always have to do it fast [laughs]. I bring the lady home when he [older brother] is not around. "Abi" you know. She comes to visit [laughs]. (Male, 33 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Oko's assertion indicates that persons who entertain the fear of being caught during sex are in a rush. The fear of being caught determines the extent to which partners engage in erotic sexual pleasure. Hence, in thinking about sexual act, the human actor does not produce unthinking response to stimulus such as the sex drive.

Another issue that relates to erotic sexual pleasure is erotic sounds and visuals. Sound and visuals that glamorizes sex also influenced responses to sex and the extent of engaging in erotic sexual pleasures. Interviewees (women and men) described their main sounds for sexual ecstasy as *cool songs*. *Cool songs* included both 'secular' and religious music. Cool sounds expressing female erotic sexual screams (especially those containing "oohing" and "aahing" sexual screams) and sexual ecstasy were found to be very prominent triggers of women and men's sexual

pleasure especially in the absence of erotic visuals such as *love films* or *blue movie* (popularly referred to among the interviewees as *pono*, meaning porn). Some of the preferred songs include Kwabena Kwabena's *Aso* (Twi name of a lady), Kojo Antwi's *Afafranto* (Twi, meaning butterfly), Daddy Lumba's *Aseε hɔ* (Twi, meaning 'under'), Ofori Amponsah's *Emmanuella*, K.K. Fosu's *Obaapa* (Twi, meaning good woman), Oheneba Kissi's *ABC of love*, and Soni Badu's *Let it rain*.

Older women and men indicated their preference for 'cool' highlife. They preferred songs of adult musicians and those with less sexual connotations. They indicated that younger Ghanaian artists are too explicit about sex in their songs. Statements such as *saa mmofra mmofra yi nyansa ben na wɔ beka?* [Twi, meaning what sense do these younger artists have to say] were expressed. An elderly woman had this to say:

Ante Nurse: "Oh nwom papa. Nwom a εho teε Bɔkɔɔ!!!" [I love a good music. A 'decent' cool music, Smooth].

Interviewer: "Na sε wo kunu no pε "gididigi" deε nsoε?" [What if your husband³⁶ likes the hot hip pop?]

Ante Nurse: "Wore pε akyerε sεn? Bugubugu "deε no anaa? Eneε adeε no remaso. ɔno ara nim nea mepε. Eno na εma agorɔ no sɔ" [Twi, are you referring to those lousy ones, then he should forget it [sex]. He knows what I want. My choice is what makes the difference]. (Woman, 56 years, post secondary education, Christian).

For *Rev.*, a male interviewee who indicated being a Christian scholar, the choice of his sound was influenced by his religious beliefs, i.e. what he referred to as listening to 'good' music.

³⁶ Referring to her former husband,

According to Rev, a Christian should avoid *profanity* at all times. He had this to say:

You know, I love music. I mean good Christian music. This will “open the flood gate in abundance and call his rain to fall on us [reciting some sections from one of his favorite Christian songs]. (67 years, divorcee, secondary education).

On the other hand, *Azetiska* who indicated being a “committed Christian” [in using participants own expressions], prefers both ‘*Christian cool music*’ [such as those from Kirk Franklin] and secular music while engaging pre-marital sex:

For me anything goes, once it’s nice for me. I have no specific preference. Sometimes I play cools or R&B, and other times I play Christian songs. My girlfriend prefers Christian songs and I do also. For her (sexual partner), the best way to let her to give in [to have sex] is to play Christians songs like “Imagine Me” [by Kirk Franklin, a gospel musician]. You have to talk her “aaa” to sex before and although she may not be willing, starting with gospel is very good. That’s what I think. (33 years, unmarried, higher education).

Others also indicated that watching visuals with explicit nudity (such as Telenovelas and pornography) triggers their sexual pleasure. They explain that as they watch these erotic movies, their sexual desires are enhanced. The influence of erotic movies in triggering sexual pleasure was also generational, i.e. age specific. For example, younger men in general watched pornographic movies compared to women and older men. Younger men (also some women) claimed that pornography served as a source of sex education, i.e. providing sex performance techniques that increase sexual satisfaction. *Adwoa* had this to say:

I didn’t like it [pornography]. I once watched it and it was very painful seeing the woman in the film screaming. So we started removing our ear rings and wanted to be Roman Sisters [Catholic nuns] but we were told by a friend that she [the woman in the pornography] was enjoying that’s

why she was screaming. Since then we also joined the club. Danny [refers to interviewer], these small small girls use these films to “turn” their waist to our husbands, so we also watch these things in order not to make our husbands go out [engage in sexual affairs with other women]. When they [partner] see us perform well they will not look elsewhere. (Woman, 33 years, married, higher education, Christian).

To *Adjoa*, watching pornography is an exercise of sexual agency because it helps in the survival and or the stability of sexual unions.

6.3.1.2 Physical attractiveness

The physical body is an important aspect of sexuality. Physical bodies perceived as sexually attractive are regarded as more stimulating the desire for sex and pleasure than those perceived as unattractive (Gillen, 1981). Thus, the physic of a partner influences sex decision making among women and men.

In this study, some of the physical preferences that emerged among women and men included penis size (e.g., average penis based on the subjective pictures presented), breast size and type (e.g., pointed breast and big breast), big buttocks, flat tummy, slimness, facial appearance, and complexion (*fair and dark skin*). There were gender differences in physical attractive preferences and these were based on sexual myths and subjective views. Words such as “*a nice man or nice woman*” and “*a handsome man or a beautiful woman*” were used in describing physical attractive preferences with different meanings attached to them. Others associated some physique to ethnicity. For example, *I like Ewe women because they have fair skin, I like ‘Northerners’ because they are tall, I like ‘northern’ men because they have long ‘prick’ [i.e. penises], or I don’t like Ga men with potbelly and big buttocks.*

Women claimed that men with bulging tummy have small penis and can not last long (i.e. have a prolonged erection to stimulate sexual pleasure). A woman had this to say about her dislike for men with bulging tummy:

If you have a big potbelly, I think sometimes it makes your penis smaller and shorter because it's almost like it has taken the space. I watched a program on Oprah where she [Oprah] was saying that the pot belly makes it [penis] appears as if it shrinks, but once you don't have a pot belly you see the full length of a man's organ. (Naa: 37 years, married, higher education, Christian).

The notion of bulging tummy and shrinking penis is an interesting one that needs a bit of interrogation. *Naa's* assertion of big potbelly and shrinking penis has been an age old expression across the world including Ghana. Perhaps it is a valid argument to 'look good' for one's self or to avoid related [heart] diseases due to overweight or fatness. However, my concern is not about the validity, rather, the sexualized nature of the 'body'. Although socially constructed acceptable sexualized bodies are also coercive on women too (maybe more than men), the findings show that women also structure men's bodies. Potbelly and sexual performance is a common discourse in Ghana. It comes as no surprise to me, therefore, that as a solution men resort to *jogging* and or 'gyming' [i.e. a frequent visit to the gymnasium] according to two of the male interviewees with bulging tummies in order to be socially 'fit'. According to the men (who were also married), their female partners 'nag' about their *big belly*. A male interviewee claimed that

The women don't like big belly [bulging tummy] oo and you know women, they are always nagging about this 'thing' [bulging tummy]? (Korku: 33 years, married, higher education, not religious).

On a personal level, experiences with women (intimate and non intimate) supports *Korku's* assertion, producing *ye biribi fa hun* and *ye biribi fa wo ye funu ye hun* (Twi, meaning do

something about your bulging tummy) narratives. Indeed, these are predicaments of men with potbelly in Ghana. Hence, some men have resorted to *jogging* or 'gyming' to attract women.

Men (young and elderly except two men) also interpreted a nice woman or a beautiful woman to have attributes such as 'slim' or 'heavy' bodies, big and 'pointed' breast (also referred by some as *very intact*), big buttocks, and shapes that denote a 'coca cola' bottle. While some men have no attraction to women with 'heavy' physique (or plump; not necessarily overweight) because they cannot engage in certain sexual practices (i.e. certain type of sex positions e.g., standing sex position), others were of the view that 'fat' physique is 'romantic' (i.e. erotic) and triggers sexual arousal compared with those with 'slim' physique. *Gustaf*, a male had this to say:

What I often hear is that the slim ones are very deep [can engage all penis sizes]. "Hwε! omo yε sheegeh" [Hausa, intended to mean deadly, but can also mean sexually experienced]. Some are also say the "Kwasasa's" are very tight [adolescent girls have tighter vagina]. But, charlie, I swear, fat girls be the "shegus" [colloquial Hausa, sexually experienced but can also mean experts]. Them they get wet very well and if you insert am, oh ma guy, e they beeeee kεkε. Them a thighs then ass serf, char...lie [stress], 'doggy' paaa they bee kεkε" [colloquial Twi and PG³⁷, fat girls easily secrete vagina fluid for easy penetration. Engaging in the doggy sex position with such girls is very pleasurable]. (42 years, married, secondary education, Muslim).

Natuama, another male prefers slimmer girls because he feels they have tighter vagina, which stimulates pleasure:

I like slim women with tight vagina. Even penetrating her [referring to his sexual partner] is even difficult so I use KY jelly or the Durex [these are lubricants for easy sexual 'penetration']. So I find a lot of pleasure doing it. Unlike the other two [non slim sexual partners] that you easily enter, this

³⁷ Poor Grammar. Some also call it broken English and this often popular among Nigerians and Ghanaians. It is commonly spoken in among students in Ghana and Nigeria.

one even entering in itself, the sound of...the way she even struggles. The pain she feels and other things give me some kind of satisfaction. So whenever I'm with her it's something else. So because of it I have sex with her once every month. (31 years, unmarried, higher education, Muslim).

I do not contend with those who may consider *Natuama* as a male chauvinist, and that he does not seem to care about his partner's satisfaction. However, I do not think that he has selfish reasons about the pain he claims his partner(s) experiences. This is against the backdrop that he claims that he uses sexual lubricants for easy sexual 'penetration'. More so, '*pain*' as noticed in earlier discussions (under meanings of sexual pleasure) does not necessarily mean hurt or harm. Among the women, I noticed the idea of '*good pain*' i.e. sexual pleasure. Further probing questions revealed this as additional strength to my view:

Interviewer: The problem is that you say she has pain so how does she also enjoy it?

Natuama: That's a mystery that you should ask women. Why I say you should ask women is that umm whether she is faking it or. Not....to be honest with you that is the reality. I remember the day that I broke her virginity, there was blood all over and that one is not something that someone can just fake. And since that day, whenever I'm to penetrate her...okay the "mouth" [vagina opening] is very small up to date. That's why I often use the KY jelly thing. I can always bet with my last coin that she doesn't sleep around [have multiple sex partner]. If she doesn't enjoy it I don't think she will come to me again or she would have informed me about it. I love her so much. So it's still my penis that has been in it. So if there should be other penis that is bigger than mine, it would have at least caused some kind of... [looseness].

Furthermore, some men prefer an average breast size; *ehɔ ne hɔ* (Twi) was used to express this preference. "Big breast" [anecdotally referred to as gargantuan breasts by some men] was considered as very sexually stimulating for most men. The breast in addition to a woman's thighs have seductive powers that influence some men to go "sexually wild" as Andrew Ivaska puts it

(Ivaska, 2011: 101). Hence, some women use the breast to entice men to have sex.

The media (TV, radio and newspaper publications) has major influence on how women and men construct their sexuality. In most newspapers and TV stations that report on sexuality in Ghana (e.g., the Ebony, P & P, Peace FM on *wo ba ada ana*, and the Multimedia Group: Cine Afrik on *chocolate factory* and Adom TV on *odo ahomaso*), it seems safe to suggest that 'big breast' is seen as very sensual and stimulating at least for some men. There is no single day or week that newspapers do not display 'big breast'. Throughout my fieldwork in Madina at newspaper vending joints, you find people, men in particular, bending their waist or stretching themselves to catch a glimpse of front-page nudity of 'big breast'.

The question is what has newspaper sexual publications got to do with sexual pleasure? These publications present some understanding of representation of women's bodies (such as eroticism and sexual nudity e.g., exposures of the breast, nipples, and belly; see Figure 5) and popular culture (such as decency e.g., concealments of 'erotic' body parts) in the media in Ghana.

Figure 5 A Newspaper on Display of Breast



Source: Fieldwork, 2013 *GH means Ghana

Indeed, some of the male interviewees think that exposures of the breast are erotic and important in stimulating sexual arousal as well as sexual pleasure even without engaging in sexual intercourse with a partner. *Oko*, a male interviewee had this to say:

Interviewer: Do you think that for you the breast is important in sexual intercourse?

Oko: Oh very very important. For the breast, you can be fondling and other things without ejaculation. You can extend the satisfaction a little bit longer because doing that is a form of satisfaction. But immediately you start the intercourse, then that means the time has been...[phone rings]. Yeah, as I was saying the stop watch has been started and it will end at a certain time when you ejaculate. But, when you fondle without inserting the penis and other things, you extend the time of satisfaction, both for you and the woman. (33 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Perhaps the reason why some men have much preference for a bigger breast has to do with *fondling* during intercourse. However, I suppose to most Ghanaian men, *fondling* goes beyond mere touching or rubbing the breast. As a Ghanaian male and based on personal experiences, *fondling*, as I understand it to be means playing with the breast, which includes sucking the breast. Thus, a smaller breast may not offer the fantasies of playing and sucking. *Wiafe*, one of the male interviewees shared his view on this:

Interviewer: so this whole ‘thing’ about breast breast breast what is it about “kroaa” that some men are crazy for? I thought the concern of most Ghanaian men is just about their ejaculation?

Wiafe: [interjects] No no no no that is where you are wrong. That is mere perception but we have the experience. You know for the purpose of sex, I like breast. They matter a lot. For example, my ex [former girl], her breasts are bigger, softer and it has fallen [sagged] but I still enjoy it. With my current girl, don’t go there. She has pointed big breasts, the one that has not fallen [sagged]. One that is hard, like that of fresh apples. When I see her breast alone, at times I get satisfied just by

being with the breast, sucking and playing with it, and fondling her. You see sex is all about personal fulfillment oo. You may even not 'enter' [penetrate] someone, but romance with the person and will get satisfied. This girl, everything of hers is very intact. (38 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

In addition, penis size was another vital physical characteristic for sexual pleasure. Both women and men, indeed a considerable number of women, preferred an average size penis (*ehɔ ne hɔ* in Twi). What men considered as a small penis or an average penis did not differ considerably from women's view on the subject. A small penis, they mentioned, cannot stimulate their sexual pleasure satisfactorily and could not perform certain sexual positions. A woman had this to say:

Mede beyi m'asom anaa deen? Kote ketewa dee enye!. At least *ehɔ ne hɔ* [Twi, what will I do with a small penis, use it to clean my ears or what? A small penis is bad. At least an average penis is ok]. (Oye-Mansa: woman, 22 years, married, higher education, Christian).

That said, others (mainly elderly women) had contrary views about the influence of penis size in stimulating sexual pleasure. They think that the size of a man's penis does not necessarily matter (this is not to suggest that it is not important). Rather, they stressed on the ability and skills of a man to satisfy a woman sexually regardless of the size of his penis.

....sometimes you can have a big penis but you may not know how to please [sexually satisfy] a woman. It's more of knowing what to do not the size per se; knowing how to do it and what to do with it. I guess for those who just see it as a physical act, it's because of how big and tall they perceive it [the penis]. But, I think it's more than that. For me, it's how the person does it and not necessary the size. (Gyamfua: woman, 22 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

The findings indicate that physical attractiveness has influence on sexuality for both women and men (Gillen, 1981; Lehman, 2006, Peplau, 2003; Ratele, 2004). Women preferred men with

varied attributes and vice versa. To some women, the penis (as well as the size) is very important in stimulating sexual pleasure, and to other women it is not the penis (or the size) per se.

6.3.1.3 Foreplay: Gendered Preferences

Foreplay is an emotionally and physically intimate act that a person (s) engages in that is meant to stimulate sexual arousal or sexual pleasure (Steinke & Wright, 2006). Foreplay can take several forms such as caressing or fondling, kissing, licking the genitalia (e.g., cunnilingus and fellatio), and masturbation (Hooper, 2000), just to mention a few.

In this study, almost all interviewees indicated that their attainment of sexual pleasure depended on foreplay. For women and men kissing, genital fondling or caressing by self or partner (e.g., suck breast or penis or nipples, play with *balls* i.e. the scrotum, and *fingering*) or with the aid of sex toys (such as vibrators or artificial penises), fellatio (*blow job*), and or cunnilingus (e.g., licking the labia or the vagina) were very central in stimulating sexual pleasure. The meanings women and men attached to foreplay influenced their foreplay negotiation strategies.

You can fondle her, play with her clitoris, suck her breast. That is why doing foreplay a woman can easily get satisfaction...they get wet and getting wet sometimes they 'come' [release and have sexual satisfaction]. With me, the woman will have to do some fondling especially with my nipple; she holds my nipple and put it in her mouth. She hardly holds the penis. (Fonyeh: man, 39 years, married, higher education, Christian).

According to some interviewees, with a *good foreplay*, one does not need penile-vagina intercourse in order to experience sexual pleasure. The interviewees noted that female sexual pleasure unlike male depends on a *good foreplay* so the women can "get wet" (be prepared for sex). Hence, both the women and men acknowledge the need to ensure that partners engage in

foreplay before any sexual activity. In addition, a good foreplay is also an important construction of dominant masculinity, i.e. being 'proper' man. This means that men who are unable to engage their female partners in well pleasing foreplays are '*failed*' men. A 73-year-old divorcee had this to say:

Hwe!, barima dee nea ehia nese wobe nya abotere adi obaa no ho agro yie ansaana wo ne no beye biribi a wo ne no aye. Enye se wofitii preko ara pe na hwintin [Twi, the pride of a man is to have a good foreplay with a woman before having sexual intercourse and not just a straight 'penetration']. Since it is often we men who convince the women to have sex, you need to put her in the mood. Else, you will get "blue balls" if she refuses you. With a good romance, even if a woman doesn't want to have sex, kissing and sucking or finger[ing] will make her wet. You young men of these days don't know the trick. (Uncle: man, primary education, not religious).

The extent to which a woman accepts to engage in a particular kind of foreplay also depends on her beliefs (e.g., fellatio or cunnilingus is a bad sexual practice), experiences (e.g., '*fingering*' *hurts* or *partner is not good at 'fingering'*), persona (e.g., *don't like kissing*), and relationship dynamics. These factors including those based on sexual myths and misconceptions influence women's sexual negotiation skills and sexual practices. The women indicated that 'real' men do what their "women" (i.e. female partners) prefer. The women were of the view that men like too much sex and will do as a woman pleases in order not to be refused sex. This assertion lends further support to the notion that women structure their agency based on how men themselves construct dominant masculinities and femaleness. The women knew what men think and structured their agency based on how they conceived men and how they perceive men to conceive men.

Interviewer: Does it mean you enjoy being fingered by your husband?

Asantewaa: Sometimes he fingers me and that's all, am satisfied. Kissing doesn't work for me. For me is fingering and sucking my nipples. I like the fingering thing more than sucking though. Kissing is once a while not that I prefer it [being kissed]. Is once a while. I know some men don't know how to do it [finger a woman] and can hurt you and all that. My husband too sometimes in the quest to have sex "gidigidi" [in hurry] like that, he can hurt you not deliberately especially when his fingers are grown [too long]. But, I calm him down [controls the pace of the sexual encounter]. He knows, if I'm twisting and shaking my waist with the pain and all that, he sees it from my face. You have to teach them [the men]. If a man wants sex badly, he will do what you want trust me. It doesn't matter the stature [status] of the man. I have my way, you have your way. This is not about challenging your "man" [husband] ooo. (Asantewaa: woman, 43 years, married, middle school education, Christian).

But, *Absu* also a female interviewee indicates among other factors that the choice of foreplay depends on the relationship dynamics such as marital status, steady sexual relationships, mood swings (e.g., being in a good mood), no tension or disagreement, and more importantly partner's respect for each other. Hence, marital status and steady sexual relationships were associated with the choice of foreplay techniques.

Yeah!! You see you should sometimes play with the person. It's not as if we are targeting, but it's like just maybe...touching the unusual places. Maybe touch somebody's ears or rub somebody's hands. You don't target the breast or the vagina even though that's ultimately where you would get to. Touch other areas such that before you get to your destination the place is ready for you. So, you don't just go to the destination like that [laughs]. It's all of those things. And of course if the relationship between you is good, there is no underlying tension. Nobody is angry about anything. Because, personally, when I'm angry about something there is no way I will open up. So, it also has to do with that. If we have issues, let's deal with them. Or, if we are not dealing with it immediately, at least, say that okay this issue is on my mind and I'm thinking about it. So, at least, I know that you respect me, you are not taking me for granted and I am not just a sex tool; somebody you're using to get your pleasure and move off. That is not to say that all these touches don't matter, but it's when you do it and how you do it that matters. It also depends whether you are married to the person or not. You know men, if you show them too many styles [sex techniques]

trouble, if you don't too "na wahala" [trouble]. They say you "shε" [colloquial Ga, 'promiscuous'] and all that. So some women choose to restrain until marriage. So, it's complex. (42 years, married, higher education, Christian).

In addition, the preference for a particular foreplay is also about sexual myths and misconceptions. For example, regarding the choice of fellatio and cunnilingus as foreplays, most of the interviewees were hesitant to engage in it for mythical reasons. For the most part, although the men had no issues concerning fellatio (i.e. their female partners linking their penises), they were not willing to engage in cunnilingus, i.e. to lick their female partner's genitals. To some men, *vagina is too hot* and *vagina is not clean* because of fluid discharge. They had equally forgotten the possibility of a penile discharge should a female partner engage fellatio with them.

Baba, a 53-year-old man had this to say:

Interviewer: Have you ever 'licked' [performed cunnilingus on] your girl's clitoris?

Baba: I have never [performed cunnilingus]. Yeah, I can't do it. I see the vagina as something very filthy to me, but penis, you know it's always clean. You can just hold it [the penis] like this and stick [suck] inside. Unlike the vagina that you don't know whether there are some discharges and you go and stick [put] your tongue in it. You are dead! (Married, technical education, Muslim).

The women (especially unmarried women) also exercised agency in performing fellatio based on notions of a *smell* [often very unpleasant] especially around the scrotum. Words such as *scent no* [the smell], *aseε hɔ bɔn* [the catchment area of the scrotum smells], *aseε yε shi* [the catchment area of the scrotum is hot], *ɔmo hwε hɔ so yie* [the catchment area of the place is untidy] were used to describe the condition of the scrotum. Hence, if we accept that women and men refuse each other sex based on several factors including the meanings they attach to a particular kind of

foreplay, then, it suffices to say that human beings act toward things based on the meanings that such things have for them (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1982). Hence, the meanings women and men attach to a particular kind of foreplay stimulate their sexual pleasure influence their sense of sexual agency.

Women also have access to several sources of foreplay of what I call ‘*monolithic sex*’ or ‘*monolithic foreplay*’ or masturbation, i.e. self or mutual sexual stimulation. The women claimed that some men have early ejaculation which leaves them “half-way”, i.e. sexually unsatisfied. Expressions such as *ne ho ba ntem dodo* [Twi, meaning he ejaculates too early] and *se eba me mo na me mpe se me ne marima foforɔ enda* [Twi, meaning if I feel for sex and do not want to cheat on my partner] were used in expressing agency for ‘monolithic’ foreplay or sexual stimulation. This experience was also common among women who indicated sexual dissatisfaction due to unsatisfactory foreplay or lack of foreplay. A woman noted that:

Akosua: [chuckles] because I often have phobia for sex, so what I do mostly is, if I feel like having sex, when I’m having the libido, I masturbate. I use vibrator. It's called dildo too...I use it maybe once in two, three months. Because it comes along with lid, it's not easy using it on your own. When you want to release, it comes [flips]. To me personally after using it, I use to have migraine [Headache].

Interviewer: Okay, so does it mean that you have never had vagina intercourse, like a man sleeping with you?

Akosua: Sure now! The last time I did it is over two years now. I got separated with the guy I was dating. And I don't really enjoy sex with a man because he's so hard on me [Chuckles]. He is the fast type, he is too hard on me and I like to have it gently when I’m having sex so that I will not feel pains...I feel as if somebody is trying to give me an injection you know. So I often used the dildo after sex when we were together [dating]. Sometimes too I used it before [sex] (32 years,

unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Access to alternative foreplay was not an option for only women. The men also indicated the choice of '*monolithic sex*' or '*monolithic foreplay*' to achieve their own sexual pleasure as well as enable them to perform sexually during 'penetrative' sex:

Korku: You know one thing, when my girl is not around [available to have sex with], I often choose to masturbate, you know. I think I perform better in bed with her anytime I try this masturbation thing. I keep longer and with more rounds [takes longer time to ejaculate].

Interviewer: So do you get pleasure from masturbating?

Korku: Why not! You know in the process of masturbating, I picture a nice woman I've been longing for or I admire. Not my girl. I like it big [prefers bigger breast] with romantic blue bra [brazier] or any other colour beside the usual white and black [bra]. I just picture removing those two things [the breast] and the next thing is I'm all into it. (Man, 33 years, married, higher education, not religious).

Some of the interviewees also engaged in '*mutual*' *sexual stimulation* or masturbation or frottage—a situation where two women or two men or a woman and a man stimulated each other before 'penetrative' sex (as a foreplay technique) or after an unsatisfactory 'penetrative' sex (a complementary sex) or as an alternative preference for sex. This condition was not necessarily associated with sexual orientation where the women identified themselves to be sexually attracted to persons of same sex.

To conclude, both women and men acknowledge foreplay as important in experiencing sexual pleasure. The choice of the type of foreplay was based on individual selfish reasons. Women and men exercise monolithic or self or mutual sexual stimulation in responding to sex drive and

stimulate sexual pleasure whether a partner was available for sex or not, making foreplay decision an issue of sexual agency.

6.3.2 Aphrodisiacs and Female Negotiation of Phallic Competence

Aphrodisiac have been substances that enhance sexual drive or libido (Gawin, 1978). This section focuses on the use of aphrodisiac and the perception regarding its influence on the size of the penis, sexual duration, and the stimulation of sexual pleasure.

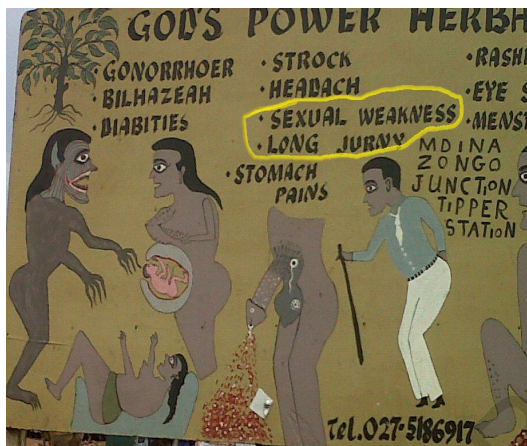
There are different forms of aphrodisiacs in Ghana such as locally brewed gins (e.g., *Akpeteshie*, *Madingo*, *Herbal Afrik*, and *Alomo Bitters*), licensed traditional medicines (e.g., *GIFAS Papapaaa*, *Angel Natural Capsule*, *Kingdom Ginseng Power Capsule*, *Rockman Capsule*, and *Gidi Powa*), unlicensed foreign and traditional medicines (e.g., *gbamaa gbamaa*, *power*, *bura*, *man-woman*, *for men*, and *for women*), and illicit medicines (e.g., *wee* or *marijuana*). The street of Zongo Junction, one of the study communities in Madina, is noted for the popularity of the sale of unlicensed traditional aphrodisiacs by traditional medicine healers also known as *Maimaganis* (Hausa, meaning dealers in medicines or herbs) and *Mallams*³⁸ (Hausa, meaning traditional healers). The medicines of *Maimaganis* are from 'traditional' trees and have sources from Ghana, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Senegal. A *Maimagani* had this to say about the source of his medicine:

This is from a pounded tree I manufactured from Niger. It is not a tablet but a tree I pounded. This tree is not in Ghana except in Niger. The name is "anza" [name of the tree in a Nigerien language], it prolongs erection. (Man aged 46 years, married, no formal education, Muslim).

³⁸ Can also be used in different contexts to mean different things.

Some of the unlicensed traditional aphrodisiacs on billboard advertisements and those mentioned by interviewees include *man-woman*, *power*, *soldier*, *matso*, and *bura* (Hausa, meaning penis). Among the unlicensed traditional medicines dealers, it was possible to distinguish their religion based on their expressions and language used in their advertisements e.g., billboards. For example, a non-Muslim *Maimagani* typically has an inscription such as *God's Power Herbalist* (see Figure 7), thereby appealing to Christians (mainly men) with sexual 'weakness'.

Figure 6 Advert of an Unlicensed Non-Muslim Traditional Medicine Healer



Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Aphrodisiacs are associated with the construction of phallic competence, i.e. the ability to satisfy a woman sexually. In Ghana, especially in male-female sexual unions, men are expected to satisfy their wives sexually in order to qualify in the scheme of socially constructed norms as 'real' men. Such expectation exerts pressure on men to seek help with sexually enhancing medicines than women do. Men who were married had more responsibility (i.e. satisfy a wife sexually and be able to make her pregnant) than those who were not married. A *Maimagani* in Madina below (Figure 8) gives a specimen of men's phallic competence or what some referred to as "manpower" on a billboard advert:

Figure 7 Construction of Phallic Competence on a Billboard Advert



Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Although several reasons were offered for the use of sexually enhancing medicines (such as adventure), men who used aphrodisiacs did so because they wanted to delay their ejaculation. The meanings attached to ‘early’ ejaculation were located in issues of ‘failed’ masculinity (e.g., *Seisei ara na chrododododo dee ’ye enim goasie* [Twi, meaning releasing too early is very shameful], *onye na se dee se marima* [Twi, meaning he has ‘failed’ in his duty as a man]). Men or husbands who are able to sustain erection and able to satisfy women or wives sexually were described in local parlance by women and men in particular as *borsu kena* [Hausa, meaning you are the boss], *borsu* [PG meaning performer], *ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ*³⁹ [Ga meaning ‘performer’ or boss], ‘strongman’, etc. Therefore, it is not surprising that considerable numbers of aphrodisiacs advertised target men and erectile dysfunctions. Even for female unlicensed traditional healers who sold aphrodisiacs (see Figure 9), the target was for men. Thus, the idea was to sustain erection, prolong sex, make sex pleasurable, and possibly propel conception for partners in need of children. *Aduro wora*, a female Maimagani said:

I’ve been doing this work for thirty years. I work at Makola. I’ve helped a lot of people to give birth. As soon as I get to 37 or Korle-Bu they start saying that’s the woman coming. Then they will

³⁹ This is a common expression in Ghana and pertains in other local languages.

tell me that they will tell their friends that this woman is very good. She can make you go ten rounds. “Wε ni bε gye. Wo bε wo afa wo hun afa wo ba” [Twi, you will have pleasure, and bear a child without any complications]. After some time, may be next month, you’ll tell me that the woman is pregnant for you and I will say, I told you. (79 years, widow, no formal education, not religious).

Figure 8 A Female Maimagani



Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Men indicated that because the unlicensed ones are most often locally manufactured, they have more ‘potency’ than the foreign ones. A man had this to say:

Some think that the local ones are the best. For that one [locally manufactured aphrodisiac] is not good....it prolongs sex too much and you even get tired. It gets to a time you don’t feel the thing “sef” again [you experience fatigue because it over prolongs sex]. I can conclude boldly that it is the orthodox one that is more effective with me. (Wiafe: 38 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

Although the men had knowledge of the health implications regarding the use of sexually enhancing drugs, ‘manpower’ *i.e. sustain erection* (see Figure 10) took precedence over sexual health. This shows that although people may have sexual health knowledge, knowledge sometimes does not often translate into behaviour.

Interviewer: Did the medicine [sexually enhancing drug] from the Maimagani make your penis large?

Fonyeh: No, those ones are there, I did not go for that one. They are different, different, different, if you want the penis enlargement ones, they have it. This one I took, they call it ‘power’, they call it power...It gives power because the guy told me himself that he will not use [it]. I asked him why and he says he is a small boy, he will not do that thing. It tells you straight away that it has side effect. (Man, 39 years, married, higher education, Christian).

Figure 9 Prolong Erection of Phallic Competence from Local Aphrodisiacs



Source: Fieldwork, 2013

While women also had concerns about the health risk of aphrodisiacs, some encouraged the men to patronize the services. The benefits women derive out of men’s use of aphrodisiacs are to delay men’s ejaculation in order to prolong sexual intercourse and stimulate sexual pleasure. Pressures from their female partners indirectly induced men’s use of aphrodisiacs. These pressures came in subtle ways through conversations after sex and through text messages. In most cases, the imports of these messages were expressed as *today deε why?* [What happened today or made the difference today?]. Alternatively, *what makes you come early?* The import of these conversations coupled with the notion of being a ‘real’ man, made men patronize

aphrodisiacs. Yet, these men do not recognize the power of women regarding the subtle ways (verbal and nonverbal) they “control” them in using these medicines to enhance their pleasure.

Nuru, a married Muslim man aged 40+ had this to say:

You see these things are just for the fun of it oo. When it takes long it’s nice to them and you too you want to... She [wife] does not complain of any extraordinary thing, she hardly talks about those things but maybe her question “today deε why?” [PG, what made the difference today] can speak volumes. (Higher education).

A female also showed me a text message [through a social media known as *WhatsApp*] she had sent to her partner regarding her persuasion to patronize a locally manufactured aphrodisiac in order to enhance her sexual pleasure. She claims that she is able to tell her partner to do ‘something’ so they can both enjoy sex. This was what she said including the text message:

Let me show you a text ok, but please it’s between you and me oo. See this [interviewee shows the text message to the interviewer]. “Miss U paaa. Our romance is good but when it comes for U [you] to penetrate, U don’t last even ten minutes. U do come too early. What makes U come early like that? Or should I get U a natural medicine?” (Akofa: 30 years, unmarried, higher education, Christian).

To my mind, inasmuch as the meanings the use of aphrodisiacs for men is to prove their phallic competence, in the process women also have sexual pleasure and therefore orgasm. Thus, women strategically negotiate hegemonic masculinity as men seek to prove their phallic competence. Phallic ‘incompetence’, therefore, is a threat to masculinity and can dislocate masculinity (e.g., ridicule, and loss of respect).

6.3.3 Sex Positions and Gendered Negotiations

Studies show that sex position decision making is power related and it forms an important aspect of sex of sexual pleasure (Bizimana, 2010; Carroll, 2007). There are different sex positions and Hooper (2000), for example, illustrates several types of positions (such as the yawning position, the widely opened position, acrobatic position, erotic sculptures, the elephant posture, woman on top of man, man on top of woman, side-by-side, rear entry ‘penetration’, and so on) which women and men engage in to stimulate sexual pleasure.

The interviewees mentioned different kinds of sex positions, which were categorized into five main sex positions, namely *woman on top position* (e.g., *me tenaso*, literally meaning in Twi “I’m sitting on it”), *man on top position* (e.g., *bo no asendua*, which literally in Twi means “crucify her”), *side-by-side position*, *rear-penetration position* (e.g., ‘doggy’ style or *koto hɔ gye*, in Twi meaning “bow to receive”), and *standing sex position* (some interviewees referred to this in Twi as *gyinahɔ gye* meaning “stand to receive”), in order to understand the beliefs surrounding the decision to engage in these positions or not. The reasons for choosing these five main categorizations are based on our assumptions that regardless of which positions partners are engaged in, a partner is either on top of another partner or vice versa, none of the partners are on top of each other, which we classify as partners lying *side-by-side* of each other (third category), or engaging in what is known as *rear entry ‘penetration’* (fourth category, i.e., squatting or kneeling for sex e.g., the ‘doggy’ position), and *standing to have sex* (fifth category). Any other sex positions involve position variations.

Sex position decisions were gendered and derive from differences in sexual awareness, the desire to maximize sexual pleasure, and perceptions of fear. Both women and men indicated that their

preference for a particular sex position is because of the pleasure they derive from engaging in that position. For women, sexual discomfort experienced through deeper penile ‘penetration’ or during their menstrual cycle trigger their refusal to have sex. Women negotiated for their sexual pleasure based on sex position preferences, for instance the preference for the *woman on top* position (e.g., Figure 10).

Figure 10 Woman [Sitting] on Top Position



Source: <http://omgghana.com>

Being on top of a male partner makes some women have power to control the sexual pace. For example, some interviewees claimed that a “woman on top” position enables them to delay their partner’s ejaculation (what they referred to as ‘release’ or ‘come’) especially in situations where such partners tend to experience early ejaculation. A woman had this to say:

I enjoy sex more when I’m on top. You see, being on top makes me feel am in charge [in control]. Although my husband prefers the missionary position [being on top of me during sex], I feel it more when I’m in-charge. With this one (points to the man on top sex position) he does everything and I do not matter to him [Memuna, married, 35 years, Muslim].

The women were not inhibited in any way regarding sex position decisions irrespective of their religious persuasions. *Memuna* a married Muslim woman who has ever divorced on grounds of relationship dissatisfaction indicated that though her current husband prefers being on top during sex (i.e., husband prefers man on top sex position), she does not, because that position makes her ‘*insignificant*’ during sex. Therefore, she mentioned that she negotiates for her preferred sex position, to be on top not only for pleasure (*I enjoy sex [have sexual pleasure] more when I’m on top*) but also for power and recognition (*in-charge*). *Memuna*’s assertion indicates that inducing a female partner to engage in ‘unpleasurable’ sex positions could constitute grounds for sexual discontent and refusal.

Adventure and fun were important as partners sought to explore varying sex position techniques for pleasure. Some interviewees reported that the ultimate aim of sex is for pleasure, hence the need to explore varying options to stimulate sexual desires and the pleasures of women in particular. Women and men were of the view that women do not like as much sex as men do hence the view that women’s interest in sex could be heightened by making sex more pleasurable. However, engaging a woman in difficult sex positions could constitute grounds for her to refuse a man sex.

Marriage and steady relationship also explain women’s decision to engage a male partner in sex positions for adventure or for fun. From the perspective of some male interviewees, the ability to perform certain sex positions (e.g., standing sex position; e.g., Figure 11) depends on the physical characteristics of partners such as how muscularly or athletic they look.

Figure 11 Standing [Carrying Woman] Position



Source: Illustration by Bizimana, 2010

Hence, some sex positions are most preferred with casual female sexual (unmarried) partners than a regular (married) partner in order not to give grounds to be refused. A male aged 73 years corroborated this:

You see there are some women who don't like "too" [very] much sex just as some men. So you don't worry them too much with these difficult styles [sex positions]. They may not be willing to do them. Some of the styles [giggles] unless you get an outsider that you can have this style with [standing and kneeling]. This one, man on top, can be with your wife. So this is what I usually do with my wife. (Uncle, divorcee, not religious).

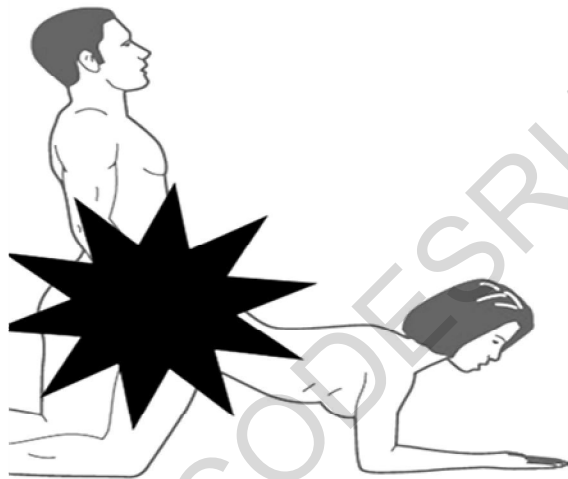
The women, thus, draw on men's notion of women and sex to negotiate sex position decisions. Since men assume that women do not like too much sex as men do, women's agentic capacity in negotiating sex positions was aided by hegemonic assumptions of female sexual disapproval.

Both women and men in the sample had sexual fears. The fears included 'bad' or unwanted sexual practices due to lack of sexual restraint, in particular, the choice of a sex position. Moral

upbringing (with religion as an important factor) and sexual consciousness informed this view. For the elderly (those above 35 years) in particular, moral upbringing informed ‘conservative’ sex positions (e.g., man on top position) and the need to exercise some restraint in sex whether one is married or not married. A woman aged 30 years had this to say:

Oh, for example, if we change from one position to another to say what you people call “doggy” [see Figure 12], he has difficulty locating the place [the vagina opening]. I know that thing [anal sex] is bad and painful even from my little experience if he is trying to enter the wrong way. That’s why I am careful when doing these positions. Sometimes, I redirect him by holding the penis using my left hand into the place [vagina]. Sometimes too, I tell him, “my friend you are entering wrongly”, and he listens. (Akofa, unmarried, Christian).

Figure 12 ‘Doggy’ [Rear Entry Penetration] Position



Source: <http://omgghana.com>

Even men who are expected to perceive sex as a declaration of their masculinity, *Rev.*, a devoted Christian aged 67 years, a divorcee, and now a marriage counselor, had interesting views:

Interviewer: What about your personal experience. Did you have something like this [interviewer shows pictures of sex positions]?

Rev.: Like what? I told you the desire for these things wasn't there. So [pause], it's another when one doesn't like...Honestly, let me tell you, if there is any other style apart from what some pastors call "bo no asenua mu"⁴⁰ [crucify her—"man on top"], if there is any other style, I have never tried that.

Women used threats of sexual refusal in negotiating for sex positions. *Sitsofe*, a married woman gives us some inkling of how she goes about her sexual negotiation strategies:

You see, mostly, he is the one in need of the thing [sex]. Me I can stay aaah without sex and nothing will happen to me. I only feel for it occasionally. So he knows this. He knows that I like this position or I don't like that position, so if he insists, I will just get up and go into the hall and leave him lying there. I have ever tried this before. He will come and beg me that "Let's go to bed, I will never try that again". (31 years, Christian).

Even for women who were blackmailed (e.g., threatened that the relationship would end) to have sex, they still managed to use the vagina to negotiate sex on their own terms.

Further, both women and men also shared fears about their reproductive health in relation to sex positions. Some sex positions (e.g., the doggy-style) were perceived as causing harm to the human reproductive sexual organs, especially to the uterus of a woman and the male testicles (e.g., the woman squatting or sitting on top). The *standing sex* position, for example, was seen as a risky sexual practice especially on men's sexual health as it can cause stroke. This perception was steeped in myths and misconceptions. A woman, for example, had the view that due to the discomforts associated with the performance of some sex positions, they could affect the ability to bear children since it can "push the womb far" [Twi, a pia wa wodie no ko ekyre]. She had

⁴⁰ A popular saying in Akan, a kind of sexual intercourse position where the woman lies with her back facing downward with the arms widely opened especially as adopted from some Christian religious motives regarding how Jesus Christ was believed to have been crucified by the Romans.

this to say:

This style can affect your womb. A friend told me that her friend who was fond of [enjoyed] this particular position, I mean the “doggy style” [rear entry], now has challenges in getting pregnant. I hear when she visited the hospital the doctors said that her womb has been pushed far. Me too my experience shows that the thing [penis] enters too deep when you do this style [rear entry]. Sometimes you see blood after [wards] (Sumaya, unmarried, 36 years, Muslim).

Even for some men, some positions (e.g., woman on top sex) could have negative effects on their phallic competence, i.e., the inability to make a woman pregnant in future. *Rev.*, a man aged 67 years and a divorcee is afraid of losing his testicles should he allow a *woman to be on top* during sex. He had this to say:

I’m not saying that this one can cause pain or not but am saying that some postures like this one [woman on top] is not just woman on top. In fact, some women would say “me teanaso” [Twi, I’m sitting on it] and to me this is very risky. For what? I mean, I believe that for a woman to be on top-sitting on that thing [testicles] could have an effect on your manhood. Whether it’s true or not I believe it. Over my dead body will I allow anyone to sit on this thing [testicles] (Christian).

It is obvious that both women and men resisted sex positions that they perceive could cause harm to their reproductive sexual organs and this is mainly because people would want to have these organs throughout their lifetime even if they claim that such organs do not define their femininity or masculinity.

The preference of sex positions depict power relations (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010) as a result of changing roles, i.e., from a *man on top* (male control) to a *woman on top* (female control). For some women, gaining ‘control’ during sex is a good feeling and a reverse of sex roles which enables them to negotiate their sexual pleasure and gender. The study also found a strong

tendency to define women and men primarily by their looks and bodies (see Peter & Valkenburg, 2007), along with the performance of sex positions. Agency exercised through sexual resistance formed the basis for women's sex positions negotiations in this study.

6.4 Conclusion

Women and men construct sexual pleasure in a variety of ways. Expressions of sexual pleasure are symbolic (e.g., ejaculation, scream, "good pain", treating a partner nice after sex, asking rhetoric questions during sex, and a prolonged sex). The experience of sexual pleasure for women and men is a product of sexual negotiations based on complex factors such as eroticism, sex positions, and use of aphrodisiacs. Women in this study reported negotiating sexual pleasure according to self-reflecting sexual choices. Women's own accounts of their sexual preferences such as sex positions, and varied body attributes and the meanings attached (such as pleasure, sexual discomfort, and health) present an understanding of how women construct their sexual realities in relation to men (see Butler, 2011; Howson, 2006) based on sexual agency.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings, conclusion and reflections. The reflections focus on the limitations and challenges faced during the fieldwork, and offer suggestions for future study. The conclusions suggest that dominant ideologies of masculinity are not threat to Ghanaian women's sexuality. A conceptual model that serves as a useful framework for broader discussion on sexual pleasure is provided.

The study explored aspects of sexuality among women and men in a suburb of Accra, Ghana. The objective was to examine how women and men construct sexual pleasure in Ghana and highlight women's agentic capacity in sex decision making using in-depth interviews with 20 women and 16 men aged 22 to 79 years. Specifically, the study sought to explore how sexual knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform the way women and men perceive sex and initiate sexual intercourse; women and men's notion of masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual practices; and women and men's meanings of sexual pleasure, factors that stimulate their sexual pleasure, and how they negotiate for these factors.

Interviewees were recruited by word-of-mouth using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Access to interviewees was in homes and work places (based on appointment). The study conformed to the required ethical guidance. I conducted all interviews with informed consent and confidentiality. Interviews were conducted in four local languages (Twi, Ewe, Ga, and Hausa) and English. Interviewees were Ghanaians. The data were analyzed using thematic

analysis. The findings were based on themes derived from the objectives and interviews. Some of the themes identified included sexual beliefs, experiences, and behaviour (with sub-themes such as sources of sexual messages, morality and women's agency in initiating sex); sex, pleasure and symbolic meanings (examples of sub-themes included symbolic meanings of sexual pleasure, eroticism [with concepts such as erotic scenes, physical attractiveness, foreplay], aphrodisiacs, and sex positions). In addition, there was a theme on masculinity, femininity and sexual practices (sub-themes included narrative constructions of maleness, constructions of femaleness, and sexual negotiation practices).

7.2 Major Findings

The majority of the interviewees (32) were in sexual relationships with partners who belonged to the same religious faith. Both women and men had constraints discussing sexual matters based on privacy and sensitivity of the study. While most interviewees would look at me with dismay when asked about their sexual life, they would laugh when asked about their last sexual encounter. Most of the women, for example, would typically begin with the words *Eye Asem oo* [Twi, meaning it is a problem!] to hide their excitement. Women eavesdropped to ensure their participation indirectly in sexual matters⁴¹. This is what I refer to as women's *agentic-eavesdropping*. The italics here are my own construction, which do not derive from any study, as far as the sexuality discourse is concerned. It is meant to underlie the fact that in so far as a woman has interest in discussing sexual matters, she will eavesdrop.

The media, friends, and hearsay shaped women and men's conception of sex and sexual behaviour. For younger men, sex was about the declaration of their masculinity. The younger

⁴¹ Although some of the women were not included in the 36 interviewees sampled.

women in particular (those married and unmarried) stressed that sex is about love, should ideally occur in marriage, and should be guarded. Several factors (e.g., age, marriage, moral upbringing, sexual experience) influenced how women engage in sexual relationships although the women were not passive to sex.

Women employed several skills to obtain sexual contact with their partners regardless of their religious beliefs. The reasons offered for initiating sex (e.g., to prove love, for duty, to satisfy sexual desire, for pleasure, due to sexual dissatisfaction from 'first round' of sex) varied from person to person regardless of gender, age, marital status, educational attainment or religion. The preconceived notions of sexual displeasure, partners' lack of open-mindedness, moral and religious restrictions, 'mood swings' for sex (e.g. 'bad mood'), and menstrual cycle challenges explained the various contexts (when and how) women initiated or accepted sexual advances from their male partners. The women used the vagina to seek men's compliance to their sexual terms.

The centrality of gender also has implications for sexual practices and sexual risk negotiations. Female and male construction of 'proper' masculinity had diverse meanings, ranging from stereotypical reproductive norms to fluidity and multiplicity in masculinities. Femininity was constituted in terms of independence, physical characteristics and 'beauty', responsibility, and reproduction. These features, especially those related to morally appropriate sexual norms (e.g., menstrual and bodily hygiene, unplanned pregnancy, etc.), influenced women's sexual practices including safe sex negotiation strategies.

Sexual pleasure has symbolic meaning. Ejaculation, screams, facial and other expressions were part of the symbolic meanings of sexual pleasure. The symbolic value of sex was also evident in all aspects of women and men's sexuality, from preferences of erotic scenes (e.g., music, movies, foreplay, and physical attractiveness) to sex positions and use of aphrodisiacs. None of the interviewees (female and male) of any religious persuasions ignored the importance of sexual pleasure in sex decision making. The findings indicate that physical attractiveness has influence on sexuality for both women and men. Whereas some men differentiated between women in terms of their physical attractiveness (e.g., big breasts, big thighs/buttocks, 'coca cola' shape, etc.) and preferred fondling bigger breasts, some women also differentiated between men based on their phallic competence (ability to satisfy a woman sexually) and preferred *eh* *ne* *h* (average) penis for sex. The penis has to perform satisfactorily to stimulate a woman's sexual pleasure. In reality, however, the size of a penis does not necessarily matter once it can sexually satisfy a woman even if it is a small penis. The use of aphrodisiac was mainly to sustain erection and prolong sex in order to satisfy a woman sexually. Women were selfish in their quest to seek sexual pleasure and exerted indirect pressures on their male partners to seek sexual virility by recommending and providing them with aphrodisiacs.

For both female and male interviewees, special contexts (such as marriage or steady relationship) strongly determined the choice of foreplay technique or the sex position to engage in. Gender differences about sex misconceptions typify refusal attitudes towards certain sex positions. The willingness to perform certain sex positions or not derives, at least in part, from sexual myths and misconceptions related to beliefs that one could suffer from an ill health such as stroke as a result. For example, whereas some men were of the view that they would lose their phallic competence ('manhood'/penis), some women were also cautious of losing their femininity

(womb/‘womanhood’) should they engage in certain sex positions. The study also found a strong tendency to define women and men primarily by their looks and bodies, along with the performance of sex positions. Although both women and men were of the view that certain sex positions are influenced by one’s physical characteristics, the study could not demonstrate the influence of body looks on women’s or men’s sex position decision making.

7.2 Conclusion

The study examined the construction of sexual pleasure linked to the ‘modern-day’ sexuality of women and men in Ghana, and highlights women’s agency in sexual negotiation. Differences in meanings of sex and the expression of sexual desires for women and men can be explained by the degree to which a particular sexual act was understood; sex might be pleasurable, painful, shameful or morally condemned. But it is not only about whether or not to have sex, but also about the risk involved; fear of unplanned pregnancy, fear of being heard or discovered, fear of being rejected, fear of appearing easy and cheap, fear of being seen as too exposed to sex, fear of sexual displeasure, and fear of suffering an ill health. Although women more than men are preoccupied with these fears, women invent strategies to prevent or overcome them.

Female sexual agentic strategies may take the form of sexual negotiation (e.g. concern for sexual risk or sexual pleasure/displeasure), sexual transaction (e.g. use vagina to have sex on terms), dutiful or responsibility (e.g., have sex to avoid relationship discontent), compromise (e.g., have sex to prove love to a partner), and resistance (e.g., refuse to have sex due to a partner’s failure to abide by sexual terms). The study indicates that in most instances women are aware when being coerced or blackmailed into having sex, in that they know and understand the deception by men, and the idea of being forced into sex. Their response is a personal choice e.g., a *scream or a*

shout to deter a partner or a compromise to have sex. Women negotiate sexual practices based on the meanings they give to masculinity and femininity

Although cultural and religious training shape sexual beliefs and behaviours, the findings indicate that sexuality is a complex blend of factors including symbolic meanings. The dominant narrative I encountered during my fieldwork was a deviation from the notion that men control women's sexuality. Female and male sexuality had diverse meanings. For instance, women did not exclusively define masculinity in terms of reproduction (i.e. the ability to make a woman pregnant) or being able to provide for their family. Both women and men acknowledged, "*women also provide*" for the family. This then supports the view that the masculinity of men from women's perspective is quite different from masculinity investigated independently of women (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 2005).

Even if an important chunk of narratives provide evidence of skewed power between women and men, women in this study had choices and made sexual decisions based on knowledge, meanings (i.e. self-consciousness), and lived experiences. Hence, the claims by feminist scholars (such as Adomako Ampofo, 2004; Bennett, 2011; Butler, 2011; Collins, 2000 & 2005; Connell, 2005; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2005; Howson, 2006; Meyers, 2002; Oyewumi, 2004; Pereira, 2003; Tamale, 2005 & 2010) who contest the portrayal of women as passively oppressed and visualize women as active agents of their own lives based on meanings and lived experiences are supported by the findings from this study. Although the women's agency was expressed within the confines of masculinist ideology, the women negotiated sex and sexual pleasure according to self-reflecting sexual choices. Therefore, dominant ideologies of masculinity are not threat to Ghanaian women's sexuality.

7.2.1 Proposed Sexual Pleasure Model

Figure 13 presents a proposed conceptual model of sexual pleasure that is derived from the narrative study of the women and men in Madina. The central question is that, how do people portray themselves as active agents of sexuality in their reflections on their sexual desire and sexual pleasure? Based on this question, I develop a proposed sexual pleasure model that suggests that people make sexual decisions in a dialogical encounter with others. In this model, theoretical constructs are shown in bold face type and in capital letters. The theoretical construct is informed by Herbert Mead's theory of the "Act" in the construction of meanings (1982).

According to Mead, impulse (the first of four stages of the 'Act' identified by Mead) involves an "immediate sensuous stimulation" and the actor's reaction to stimulation (Ritzer, 2002: 208). Mead considers not only the immediate situation but also past experiences and anticipated future results (e.g., risks) of the 'Act'. This means that in thinking about a response, the human actor does not produce unthinking response to stimulus. Rather, the human actor develops agentic skills that allow her or him to make proactive self-reflecting choices or decisions (such as to have sex or decline to have sex).

Several assumptions underlie this model. These are: sex is both socially and symbolically constructed, sex does not necessarily involve two actors, an actor's characteristics inform her or his sexual stimulants, sexual stimulants influence an actor's sexual response (sex decision making), and an actor does not necessarily have to experience all sexual stimulants simultaneously in order to have sexual pleasure. In addition, the framework is not an in-input output framework, i.e. response does not necessarily trigger another stimulus.

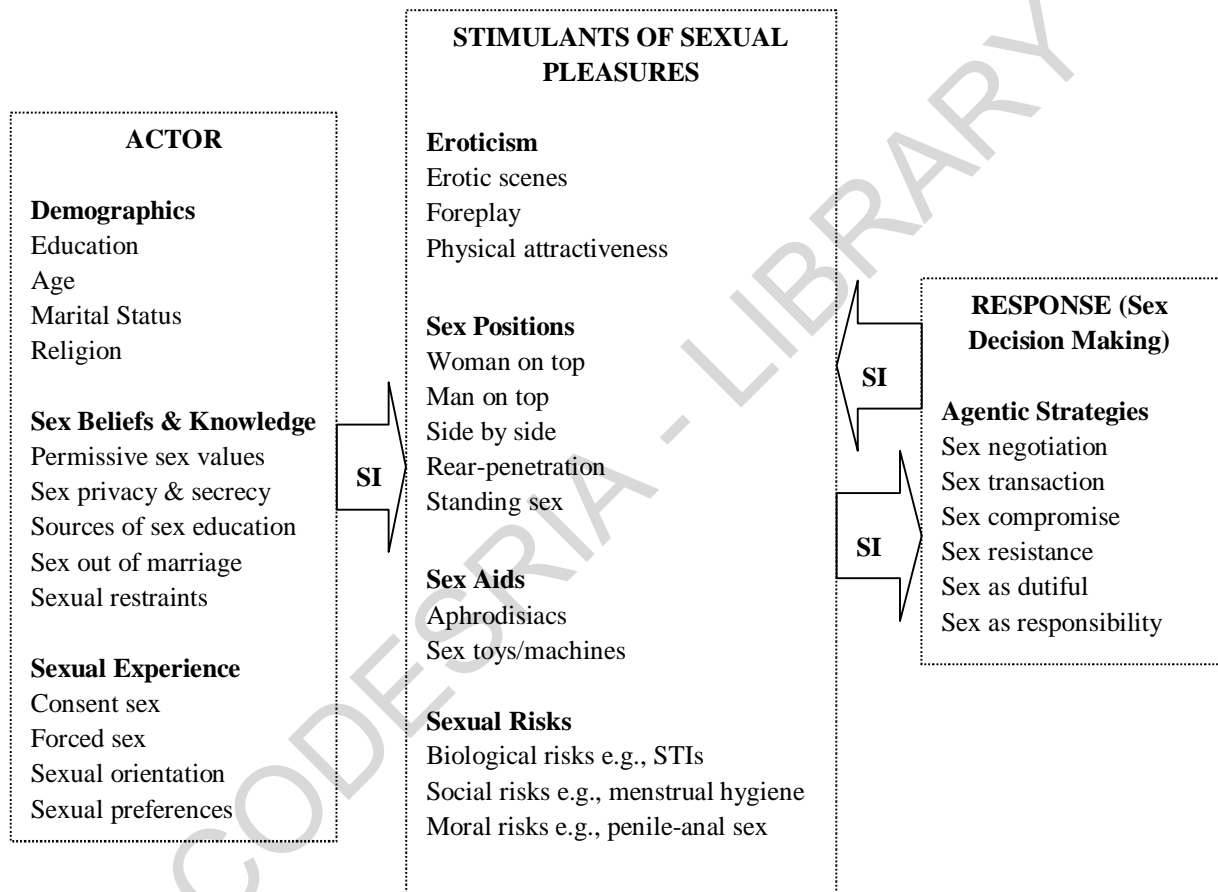
From this model, actor(s) would prefer those factors that they perceive as the most suitable stimulants of their sexual pleasure. The model identifies four characteristics of an actor; four stimulants of sexual pleasure, and an actor's sexual response. The characteristics of an actor include her or his socio-demographics, sexual beliefs, sexual knowledge, sexual experience, and sexual behaviour. On the other hand, eroticism, sex positions, sex aids, and sexual risks are the stimulants of sexual pleasure. Actors' response to sex (i.e. the decision to engage in sexual activity) is dependent on how agentic skills are utilized. The agentic skills (power) of an actor, for example, include sex negotiation (which may include safe sex, sex preference, etc.), sex transaction (also referred to in this study as transactional sex), sex compromise, sex resistance, sex as dutiful, and sex as responsibility.

The more an actor perceives a stimulus as an important constituent to her or his own sexual impediments, the different the response strategies that are adopted. For instance, an actor who perceives 'man on top' sex position as painful would either refuse that sex position in order to negotiate for a desired position or decline to have sex entirely. This means that an individual's response to sexual intercourse is influenced by the symbolic meanings they attach to a particular sexual stimulant or how they perceive their own sexual impediments, e.g., fear of contracting an STI could influence the extent to which partners would engage in a particular foreplay. In this model, then, the agentic skills an actor possesses and uses would influence sex decision making and the extent of sexual pleasure that is experienced.

My own ideas regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of this model is that such construction of sexuality is individualistic and does not claim universality. Therefore, it is important to note that difficulties have attended my attempt to exhaust all possible impediments to sexual

intercourse and stimulants of sexual pleasure. It is the case that this model is for analytical purposes only and an exploratory study of Medina. More so, other factors (such as love for a partner, children, etc.) can stimulate sexual pleasure.

Figure 13 Sexual Pleasure Stimulus-Response Model



Source: Fiaveh, 2013 (informed by Herbert Mead’s theory of “Act”, 1982)

***SI:** Sexual Interaction (Domains of Sexual Power)

7.3 Reflections: Challenges and Future Research

Sexual pleasure is an important aspect of sexuality and the present study has given us some inkling of understanding of how women and men negotiate their sexual spaces in reflecting on their sexual desire and sexual pleasure.

My emphasis on sexual pleasure as an important construct of sexuality has encouraged some to call me an optimist. In fact, prior to the defense of my thesis proposal, both faculty and colleagues said to me, *Malaria* (also my nickname), *you are too ambitious of this your sexual pleasure 'thing'*. Now, I think maybe I am an optimist, if by that is meant that sexual agency allows people to make proactive self-reflecting sexual choices including sexual pleasure.

It is difficult, based on the sample size of 36 interviewees, to draw general conclusions about sexuality in Ghana. From the start, I set out to interview 50 interviewees estimated to be 25 females and 25 males. However, upon reaching a meaning saturation and based on the willingness of interviewees, I interviewed 36 instead. The choice of Madina was because of convenience based on the cosmopolitan nature of the area. Nonetheless, the study has helped to unveil some contentious issues about sexuality. Both women and men reported multiple sources of sexual pleasure based on complex factors such as eroticism, sex positions, and use of aphrodisiacs. The findings would engender further debate and research to explore the issues raised in detail.

First, the definition of sex as 'penetrative' is incomplete, especially for persons who engage in self sexual stimulation or mutual sexual stimulation (e.g., frottage and 'masturbation'). I define sex as any activity that a person(s) engage in to satisfy their sexual desires (e.g., sexual pleasure, reproduction, and harm). Sex can be erotic or non-erotic and or 'penetrative' or 'non-

penetrative'. The focus of this study has been erotic sex.

Second, the idea of perceiving women as passive to sex and the misconception of men's control over women in sexual matters, including the expression of sexual desires, is misleading and need to be reoriented. Women employ several strategies including *eavesdropping* in communicating the willingness to discuss sexual matters. An exploratory study of women's *agentic-eavesdropping* would enable future studies have in-depth understanding of women's sexual agency in general. Researchers cannot assume that sexual pleasure is irrelevant to women. Rather, they should work from the notion that sex matters to women, and that recognizing and addressing this aspect of women's lives will positively influence sexual behaviours, and more broadly, their sexual health and well-being.

Further, there is need for strategic education (behavioural change attitude) campaign through research dissemination to deconstruct stereotypes and misconceptions about women and men's sexuality in Africa. For instance, there is need in demystifying beliefs that reinforce pressure on men to fulfill expectations as sexual performers. This perception contributes to men's vulnerability and over elaboration during sex for fear of being labeled as "failed men" or useless as observed in this study. Sexual pleasure presents a number of challenges as well as opportunities for interventions such as addressing sexual health and understanding and appreciation of sexual beliefs and attitudes.

A final call is to engage in relevant programmes that do more to address the broad social and individual forces that make pleasure seeking easier for women and men, such as strategies emphasizing partners to explore their bodies (such as touching for pleasure) during sex

irrespective of whether it is a casual sexual encounter or with a regular partner. The point here is that erotic sex is supposed to trigger pleasure, therefore, there is need for partners to make the maximum 'gain' of their erotic sexual encounters. Well-intentioned sexuality programmes about sex positions and techniques, and foreplay for women and men (including those not in marital unions) could enhance women and men's sexual pleasure and thus reduce complaints of sexual displeasure.

7.3.1 Future Study

There is need for greater theoretical rigour in conceptualizing African sexuality and the need to explore differences and interrogate sexual practices. This would prove indispensable in scaling up research as well as policy advocacy in the areas of sexual pleasure, marriage, and family stability and other aspects of sexuality that may become evident in the course of those dialogues. More research on both women and men's sexual preferences and needs would provide large-scale understanding of sexual pleasure.

Specific in-depth exploration of the factors that stimulate women and men's sexual pleasure (for example, foreplay) would be useful. Further exploration of issues of women's ejaculation and the differential experiences of women's and men's *scream* during sex as part of the sexuality discourse in Africa are useful for understanding the nuances of women's and men's sexual pleasure. For example, can a man's sexual scream during sex also have double meanings as in the case of women where a *scream* may be described as a *good pain* (experiences of sexual pleasure) and also described as *pain* (i.e. sexual displeasure)? It will also be useful to explore the differential experiences of sexual pleasure among other sexual minorities such as persons with disabilities and LGBTI people.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Interview Guide

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. I would greatly appreciate your help in responding to some personal questions for about an hour and half. Your answers will help us better understand and appreciate how power play out in sexual processes involving men and women. Participating in this study will not cause any risks or discomforts, aside from possibly being a little bit sensitive and personal. The study seeks to explore women and men's sexual behaviour, attitudes, and perceptions about sex, and how these influence the ways they perceive, feel, and experience sexual pleasure. I assure you that any information given will be treated as strictly confidential and would be for academic purposes. Are you willing to participate?

SECTION 1: Background Characteristics

1. Could you please tell me something about yourself? I would like to know the following: your sex/gender, age, level of education, religion, ethnicity, occupation, place of birth.

SECTION 2: Sexual Behaviours, Attitudes, and Perceptions about Sex

2. Have you ever had sexual intercourse? What was the main reason for this first experience? Probe for forced, willing, money, marriage, adventure, to show love)
3. When did you engage in sex for the first time? What form did it take (anal/vagina). Did you enjoy having sex in that form?
4. How often do you usually have sex [in a month]? When was your last sexual intercourse? Would you want to have sex the same way as your last sex? Probe.
5. Have you ever tried any other form of sexual intercourse? Probe
6. How often do you initiate sex with your partner (s)? How do you initiate sex? Probe
7. Have you ever used any form of contraception (withdrawal, condom, Pill, IUD.)? What is your reason for using this form of contraception? Probe for Pregnancy, sexual pleasure, STI/HIV.

8. Would you say that there is a difference between your first and last sexual experiences?
(Probe for pleasure/satisfaction)

SECTION 3: Sexual Displeasure and Instability in Sexual Relationships

9. What do you understand by marriage? What makes a marriage successful?
10. Are you currently married or in a relationship? Is this your first relationship? How long have you been in this relationship? (Probe for widowed, divorced, separated, or cohabiting).
11. Could you please tell me something about your partner (s)? I would like to know the following: sex, age, level of education, religion, occupation, place of birth, ethnicity.
12. Does your partner have any sexual partner besides yourself? Probe for number of sexual partners.
13. Do you have any needs in your relationship? What are they? (Probe for love, respect, communication, support, childbirth, sexual pleasure). What is the most important thing for the survival of your relationship? (Probe for love, childbirth, sexual pleasure, respect). Why?
14. Who decides when to have sex, you or your partner? Probe for how to have it, technique, where to have it, number of rounds to have.
15. *Have you gone into menopause? How was your sex life before you stopped menstruating (if any)? (Probe for passive, active). Would it change? Probe for why?
16. Would your sexual displeasure create instability in your relationship? (Probe for stress, thinking too much). Would your partner's inability to satisfy you sexually make you change to another partner? Why?
17. What factors influence your decisions to have or not have sex? Probe for occasions (Christmas, valentine), gifts, money religion, pregnancy, sexual pleasure.
18. What are the things that matter in sexual intercourse? Why? Probe for the size of the penis, breast. Which of these penis sizes would you prefer (show interviewee pictures of penis sizes to choose)? Probe for the reason?
19. Who would you talk to if you have sexual concerns (such as sexual displeasure)? Why?

SECTION 4: Sexual Pleasure/Satisfaction

20. Have you ever watched a pornographic film? Why? What about watching TV shows that discusses or show sexual issues? Why?
21. Have you ever heard of orgasm? What do you understand by orgasm? Is orgasm different from sexual pleasure?
22. Is it possible for men/women to fake orgasm? How do they do that and for what reason? What is your personal experience?
23. What makes you have sexual pleasure? Probe for kissing, caressing, sexual positions, stimulation (e.g., the clitoris [G-spot]), and size of the penis?
24. Which of these sexual positions do you prefer (show interviewees pictures of sexual positions). Probe for why?
25. What kind of men/women do you prefer? Probe for stature, sexually experienced, sexually inexperienced.
26. Do you use sexual aids? Probe for sexually enhancing drugs/aphrodisiac, vibrators, sex toys. What about your partner(s)?

SECTION 5: Sexual Myths, Stereotypical Attitudes and Identity Formation

27. Would you have to be closely attached to someone before you would enjoy sex? Probe for ethnicity, religion, education, economically
28. What makes you a man/woman? Probe for respect, ability to provide, good job, strength ability to bear children, sexual pleasure.
29. Does sexual pleasure influence your identity as a man/woman? Do you feel a failure if your partner fails to have sexual pleasure?
30. Should men desire sex more than women? Should women enjoy sex? Why?
31. Should women initiate sex? What about being passive and indirect to sex? Is it desirable in a relationship? Probe for personal experience.
32. Are men more sexually active compared to women? What about promiscuity (multiple sexual partners) for women/men. Probe?
33. Is sexual intercourse limited to the penis and the vagina? What about a man's erection? Probe.

34. Is sexual pleasure/satisfaction based on how long the sexual intercourse last? How many minutes should a sexual intercourse last? Probe for personal experience
35. Do people use the vagina and penis as tools for sexual bargain? What is your personal experience?

Section 5b: Debriefing

36. Thank you statement, and recap (the purpose of the study and review of the procedures they just undertook)
37. IRB
38. Questions/Concerns: Do you have any question or comments for me? Probe for the sorts of questions asked?

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Annex 2 Consent Form

Title: Sexual Pleasure and the Construction of Masculinities: Understanding Sexuality in Ghana.

Principal Investigator: Daniel Yaw Fiaveh

Address: Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, P. O. Box LG 65 Legon- Ghana.

General Information about the Study

Sexual pleasure as a central concept has barely been studied although regarded as an important aspect of sexuality. Prior researches argue that men control women's sexuality and part of the reason for this is because women's ideas of sex and their sexual negotiation practices are poorly understood. Across the world, sexual intercourse has a lot to do with the sexual pleasure of partners and that although a union between a woman and a man may be intended as a source of procreation, it also typically provides a reliable means for the satisfaction of sexual desires. Sexual displeasure or displeasure could create grounds to sexual resistance, negative health behaviours, and sexual right.

The present study, therefore, investigates the constructions of women and men's own understanding of sexual pleasure in Ghana. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how sexual knowledge, beliefs and experiences inform the way women and men perceive sex and initiate sexual intercourse; women and men's notion of masculinity and femininity, and how they influence women's sexual practices; and women and men's meanings of sexual pleasure, factors that stimulate their sexual pleasure, and how they negotiate for these factors.

Possible Benefits

Your participation in this study would help us understand how sexuality is constructed in Ghana. This will enable us appreciate how power and legitimacy play out in social processes involving men and women.

Possible Risks and Discomforts

Participating in this study will not cause any risks or discomforts, aside from possibly being a little bit sensitive and personal when, for example, I ask you some questions relating to what

makes you have sexual pleasure or orgasm: Is it stimulation of the clitoris (G-spot), sexual positions? Or say, which sexual positions/penis would you prefer (where you would be shown pictures of some sexual positions)?

Withdrawal from the Research

You may leave the research at any time. If you choose to take part, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw.

Confidentiality

We recognize that sexual matters are sensitive issues, therefore, you may choose not to participate in this study. If you choose to take part, we will protect information about you and your taking part in this research to the best of our ability. You will not be named in any reports. I assure you that information given will be treated as strictly confidential and is for purely academic purposes.

Compensation

You will not be given any financial reward for participating in this study.

Notifications of Significant New Findings

You will be notified of any significant new findings from this research. You may also be invited to participate in a dissemination workshop that will be organised to share the findings from this research.

Who Has Reviewed the Study?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR-IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as an interviewee you can contact the IRB Office between the hours of 8am-5pm through the landline 0302916438 or email addresses: nirb@noguchi.mimcom.org or HBaidoo@noguchi.mimcom.org . You may contact Mr. Fiaveh Yaw Daniel through +233244792696 in case of any difficulty or clarifications, or also contact the chairman, Rev. Dr. Ayete-Nyampong on 0208152360 when necessary.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

The above document describing the benefits, risks and procedures for the research title “Sexual Pleasure and the Construction of Masculinities: Understanding Sexuality in Ghana” has been read and explained to me. I have been given an opportunity to have any questions about the research answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate as a volunteer.

Date

Signature or mark of volunteer

If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

Date

Signature of witness

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Date

Name Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Annex 3: Ethical Clearance

NOGUCHI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH
Established 1979 *A Constituent of the College of Health Sciences*
University of Ghana

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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Telex No: 2556 UGL GH



Post Office Box LG 581
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Ghana

My Ref. No: DF.22
Your Ref. No:

30th January, 2012

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE FWA 00001824

IRB 00001276

NMIMR-IRB CPN 048/11-12

IORG 0000908

On 30th January, 2012, the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR) Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your revised protocol titled:

TITLE OF PROTOCOL : **Sexual Pleasure and the Construction of Masculinities: Understanding Sexuality in Ghana**

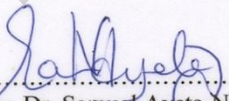
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR : **Daniel Yaw Fiaveh (PhD Candidate)**

Please note that a final review report must be submitted to the Board at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to NMIMR-IRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

This certificate is valid till 29th January, 2013. You are to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Signature of Chairman: 
Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong
(NMIMR – IRB, Chairman)

cc: Professor Alexander K. Nyarko
Director, Noguchi Memorial Institute
for Medical Research, University of Ghana, Legon

Annex 4 Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Interviewees #	Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Duration of Relationship	Education	Religion	Occupation
#1	Sumaya	F	36	Basaare	Never Married	1 year	Primary	Muslim	Seamstress
#2	Fonyeh	M	39	Ewe	Married	10 Years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Lecturer
#3	Asantewaa	F	43	Asante	Married	8 Years	Middle School	Christian	Trader
#4	Memuna	F	35	Mossi	Remarried	2 years	*SSS/SHS	Muslim	Trader
#5	Naa	F	37	Krobo	Remarried	3 months	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Lecturer
#6	Sitsofe	F	31	Ewe	Married	2 years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Teacher
#7	Dism	M	25	Ewe	Divorced	2 years	Tertiary: Undergrad	Christian	Social Worker
#8	Dogl	M	28	Asante	Never Married	Not in relationship	Tertiary: Undergrad	Christian	Medical Doctor
#9	Dzidzor	F	38	Ewe	Never Married	2 years	Vocational	Christian	Social Worker
#10	Natuama	M	31	Dagomba	Never married	7 years	Tertiary: Undergrad	Muslim	Consultant
#11	Babaana	M	28	Dagomba	Never Married	4 years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Muslim	Civil Servant
#12	Kun	M	28	Krobo	Never Married	Not in relationship	Tertiary: Undergrad	Christian	Medical Doctor
#13	Aida	F	37	Fante	Married	11 Years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Lecturer
#14	Hajia	F	53	Sisala	Married	26 years	Never attended	Muslim	Trader
#15	Zu	F	26	Dagomba	Never Married	6 Months	Tertiary: Undergrad	Muslim	Student
#16	Azetiska	M	33	Sandema	Never Married	Not in relationship	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Teacher
#17	Akosua	F	32	Asante	Never Married	Not in relationship	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Business Woman
#18	Rev	M	67	Asante	Divorced	20 Years	*SSS/JHS	Christian	Pub. Servant/Pastor

#19	Uncle	M	73	Asante	Divorced	8 years	Primary (Three)	**Not religious	Retiree
#20	Nuru	M	40+	Ewe	Married	5 Years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Muslim	Health Admin
#21	Ante Nurse	F	56	Ewe	Divorced	10 years of Divorce	Post Secondary	Christian	Nurse
#22	Oko	M	33	Ga	Never married	1 year	Tertiary: Undergrad	Christian	Student
#23	Koshie	F	36	Krobo	Married	1 Year	Post Secondary	Christian	Admin Assistant
#24	Gyamfua	F	25	Kwawu	Never married	6 years	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Student
R25	Akofa	F	30	Ewe	Never married	2 years	Primary	Christian	Health assistant
#26	Korku	M	33	Ewe	Married	6 years	Tertiary: Postgrad	**Not religious	Teacher
#27	Gustaf	M	42	Gonja	Married	5 Years	*SSS	Muslim	Businessman
#28	Baba	M	53	Sisala	Married	10 years	Technical	Muslim	Contractor
#29	Maimagani	M	46	Fulani	Married	12 years	Never attended	Muslim	Traditional Healer
#30	Aduro wora	F	79	Akwapim	Widow	25 years	Never attended	**Not religious	Traditional Healer
#31	Oye-Mansa	F	22	Akyem	Married	4 months	Tertiary: undergrad	Christian	Student
# 32	Maame	F	30	Asante	Never married	5 months	Tertiary: Postgrad	Christian	Teaching Assistant
#33	Adwoa	F	33	Akwapim	Married	10 years	Undergrad	Christian	Teacher
#34	Jun	F	31	Ewe	Never married	Not in relationship	Postgrad	Christian	Nurse
# 35	Wiafe	M	38	Asante	Never married	2 years	Postgrad	Christian	Businessman
#36	Absu	F	42	Fante	Married	8 years	Postgrad	Christian	Administrator

Source: Fieldwork, 2012 *Senior Secondary School/Senior High School **Do not belong to any religious sect

Annex 5: Sample Interview Transcript (Direct Translation)

Natuama: Man, aged 31 years

Interviewer: As I told you, I am investigating into people's perception about sex and the pleasure they derive from it and how they see it. You know some people argue that because sex is seen as childbearing men control the way women enjoy sex. Others also argue differently and suggest that women are very powerful when it comes to sexual intercourse and that men do not control the way women feel about sex. My argument is that it could be both but the pleasure people derive from sex could be paramount and even be more than the childbirth. Also, I am suggesting that men do not control the way women experience their sexual pleasure. What do you think? So we will be discussing some series of issues ranging from your beliefs to your personal experiences. I will begin by asking you some few questions about yourself. Please, are you willing to continue with this discussion?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Thank you a lot. Just for purposes of clarification, this study and has been approved by the Noguchi memorial institute and I assure you of confidentiality. Any discussion we have here is for academic purposes only. Let me remind you that issues are very personal and sensitive. Are you still willing to participate in the study?

Respondent: very willing

Interviewer: Thank you. I will begin with your background characteristics where i will ask you to tell us a bit about yourself. So kindly tell us about yourself excluding your name. So your age, level of education, religion and...

Respondent: okay am from Salaga and ummm am an investment consultant. I'm born in 1981. So am 31 years.

Interviewer: when you say you are born in Salga what tribe could that be?

Respondent: am a Gonja, Dagomba. My mother is a Gonja and my dad is a Dagomba. but am born and breed in Salaga. But am fortunate to have stayed in almost all the towns in northern Ghana due to this civil service where I move from one place to another

Interviewer: what about your level of education?

Respondent: I have a first degree from university of Ghana. I would have loved to say from commonwealth hall because I see myself attending commonwealth hall and not university of Ghana. in BA political science and information studies

Interviewer: but you said you are an investment consultant what specifically do you do

Respondent: what I do specifically is from my business point of view, what I do is that I'm into real estate development and I run contracts for the government and aside that I give expertise to people that really need it. That's where the consultant comes. You know in Zongo community most of our people are illiterates so before they go in to any transaction concerning real estate, i go in to explain the rudiment of everything to them.

Interviewer: where did you live your adolescent life? Where did you grow?

Respondent: I grew up in Navorongo

Interviewer: now I will like to probe a bit into your sexual life. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?

Respondent: several times

Interviewer: when was your last sex?

Respondent: last night

Interviewer: before I even go to your last sex, at what age did you engage in sex for the first time?

Respondent: this one I have to say that at the age of 12 or so. Yes at the age of 12. I grew up in a house in Boku, we were the landlords there so there tenants there with beautiful girls. So being the only strong boy there, some of them used me and i used some too.

Interviewer: what do you mean by being the only strong boy?

Respondent: we were all in the same age group and i was the only boy of age that understands sex at that time due to these movies that we watch so i experimented on some of the girls around. And some too they are older than me and they easily lured me to have sex with them. At least I have had sex with two girls older than me.

Interviewer: when you say older than you what do you mean because you were 12 and how old were they?

Respondent: they were around 15 years [phone rings]

Interviewer: at that age how did you see sex?

Respondent: I saw sex as ummmmm...i was just doing it for doing sake. Though I enjoyed it because at that time i cannot say that i do get tired so it looks as if at that time am not removing anything from my system. So it was just going in and coming out for the pleasure of it at that time

Interviewer: so at this age, what was the main reason for having sex?

Respondent: at that time there was limited forms of entertainment and also because we are always home, especially during holidays the house is always empty and what Satan finds more pleasurable, ideal minds. So we do a lot of things for doing sake.

Interviewer: so in growing up have you had any form of sexual intercourse?

Respondent: no

Interviewer: as in maybe anal sex?

Respondent: no, no, I have never experienced that

Interviewer: is there a reason.

Respondent: maybe I have not been exposed to it or I have not seen it happen for me to think of experimenting.

Interviewer: what is your personal view about it?

Respondent: [fumbles] I, I think, for...umm today am totally against it because it unnatural

Interviewer: what do you mean by unnatural? What do you mean unnatural?

Respondent: unnatural in the sense that, we know the natural sex is between the man and the woman. That is being said in the scriptures because it's a divine...

Interviewer: [interjects] but did God specifically say that a man will use the penis and the woman will use the vagina?

Respondent: we can take cue from what happen between Adam and eve. It wasn't Adam and Adam, it wasn't Eve and eve. It was Adam and Eve.

Interviewer: how would you guarantee that Adam did try anal sex with eve?

Respondent: ohh that, even if it happened with eve, it's with a woman and not with a man

Interviewer: how often do you have sex say in a month?

Respondent: whenever I feel like having sex, I have sex. i may have sex everyday in the month till the day that maybe the girl in question is her menstrual period, or I will decide that the whole month i will not have sex.

Interviewer: so you don't have a plan. It is when you feel like it?

Respondent: no I don't have a calendar for sex. It when I feel like having sex

Interviewer: what about if your partner doesn't feel like having it.

Respondent: when I feel like having sex, I must have sex

Interviewer: why is that so?

Respondent: it's like when am in the mood for it, I could organise and have sex.

Interviewer: so what if your partner...

Respondent: I will convince her to have sex with me

Interviewer: or you have other partners that...

Respondent: [interjects] ohh to be honest with you I don't fuck only one girl. I have at least three girls that I have fuck

Interviewer: so are they all your regular partners

Respondent: they are my regular partners

Interviewer: but they don't know each other?

Respondent: they don't know each other. And they all know that they are not the only ones though they don't know each other

Interviewer: then that is clear. And are they still willing to be with you?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: could you tell us a bit about you regular partners? What tribe are they, religion?

Respondent: one is a Muslim, the rest are Christians

Interviewer: and how old are they?

Respondent: The youngest just turn 20 years

Interviewer: what about their level of education?

Respondent: one is diploma, one just completed SHS but she is working and one is a drop out.

Interviewer: you said the youngest just turned 20, what about the oldest?

Respondent: the oldest is 25.

Interviewer: I wanted to make some link but you said two are Christians. There is this assertion that Muslim, because of your scriptures, it gives you the liberty to have more than one partner. So would you say that is a ground upon which you have three sexual partners?

Respondent: no,no,no I see it as my desire for them but when i decide to settle... am a western

man though am a Muslim. It's not every Muslim that sees marriage as a compulsory thing that you marry four. Even the scripture doesn't say you should marry four. Our Quran says that if you know you can treat them equally that is the key word. But if you know you can't treat them equally there is no way you should marry four. At least you should marry.

Interviewer: so if you don't marry then it means there is something wrong with you?

Respondent: if you don't marry then you should not desire to have sex. Because they see it as fornication, as something that is not good, religious wise

Interviewer: so would you say you are fornicating?

Respondent: ohhh for now usually it's not everything that the scripture says that we do. We do go contrary. But God is all forgiving. Maybe it is circumstantial

Interviewer: in growing up, having these sexual partners, have you ever used contraceptive with them?

Respondent: [silence] yes

Interviewer: when was the last time you used contraception with any of them?

Respondent: yesterday

Interviewer: where yesterday means?

Respondent: last night, I had sex with one of my girls and i used condom

Interviewer: is there a special reason why you use condom?

Respondent: I use condom whenever I doubt the sincerity of my partner. But there is one partner that I had her a virgin. And since that day, we have been having unprotected sex. Because I trust her, and apart from that, I donated blood every year so what I do is that every year I go to donate and ask the nurses to test this HIV test. So every year i know my status. But whenever i doubt the sincerity of my partner I use condom. Though I don't like using condom.

Interviewer: what makes you doubt the sincerity of your partner? For example the one you make love to yesterday?

Respondent: ummm, it's like whenever she is with me, she receives certain calls that am not comfortable with. But I do desire her so much. So I can't say that she should go. So I decide to take precautions since I have some doubts about her

Interviewer: does she know you doubt her?

Respondent: I told her, I made it clear to her that the last time I checked my HIV status, i was negative and now that she keeps on receiving calls up and down, I don't trust her because the possibility of she having sex with other partners id great. So in order not to mess up with my own life i guess I have to take precautions

Interviewer: is she the oldest person

Respondent: she is the oldest among them

Interviewer: and the Muslim?

Respondent: [silence] no she a Christian

Interviewer: okay thank you so much. Now I will like to probe a bit further about issues on marriage. So what do you understand by relationship not marriage?

Respondent: you know we are not animals, so you should be able to define who your partner is,

in doing that, you should be able to identify the person, understand and move with the person, because you can't have sex at random. You should be able to define who your partner is. So you definitely be in a relationship with person so that whenever you need it, the person will be there for you

Interviewer: so how different is that from marriage?

Respondent: marriage is between two families and two consented adults that have agreed to stay under the same roof. This one we are not staying in the same roof. I can decide to follow her in her place and have sex with her, she can come here, or take her to a hotel and we have sex. so the place of sex is undefined. But when you are married, you have your matrimonial bed and when you are travelling, you will be identified as couples.

Interviewer: amongst your sexual partner, which of them would have preferred to get married to?

Respondent: the youngest one. The one I had a virgin.

Interviewer: what religious background?

Respondent: she is a Christian

Interviewer: but given that you are a Muslim, how do you think that is going to play out

Respondent: that's why am not married until this time. Because I cant just see myself loosing that girl. So we are in talks to see... she will be entering the university this year... to see if there is the possibility of us coming together. She is saying that she would pray, she would be a Muslim but i don't know true that one is. If it works, I will marry her

Interviewer: that's if her parents agree?

Respondent: the parents have agreed

Interviewer: the parents know you?

Respondent: the parents know me. I started dating her when she was 16 years.

Interviewer: so you started having sex with her when she was 16?

Respondent: no i waited till she turned 18 before

Interviewer: how did you wait? For 2 years?

Respondent: for 2 years I waited

Interviewer: are you sure?

Respondent: am telling you. She was in secondary school so I did everything for her that am suppose to do

Interviewer: so the parents are the one who gave you the responsibility to...

Respondent: they didn't give me the responsibility officially but it's just that we were doing it together but the mother is aware.

Interviewer: do you think that having met this girl a virgin is she able to sexually satisfy you?

Respondent: they say practice makes perfect. In the beginning it was difficult, it is just one sided, me initiating everything. But now she is coming up a little bit and I'm okay with...

Interviewer: does she have the courage to be able to initiate the sex?

Respondent: she doesn't have the courage. I always initiate.

Interviewer: what about your other partners?

Respondent: none of them ever initiated am the one who always initiates
Interviewer: would you say it's because you are not married so they don't have that...
Respondent: maybe, maybe
Interviewer: including the Muslim lady? She doesn't have that courage?
Respondent: no
Interviewer: what about when it comes to the technique?
Respondent: yeah that one at times they do ask for a different approach. The sideways or maybe stop lying on them. They prefer you squatting
Interviewer: including the virgin?
Respondent: all of them
Interviewer: I have a list of techniques here. Which of these would you prefer the most?
Respondent: my favorite is this one
Interviewer: rare entry
Respondent: yes that's my favorite followed by this.
Interviewer: standing and kneeling. But do they prefer that?
Respondent: yes they are okay with it. I get constant and perfect penetration whenever that happens
Interviewer: there is this argument out there that men who are fat a bit with pot belly are not able to have sex
Respondent: it's not true. As you can see am a little bit big. But...
Interviewer: but am not your woman so... but would you say that you are able...
Respondent: [interjects] no perfect. Because I think it's the first round that usual beats some of us. Maybe the first round let's say I will always try, 5 to 15 minutes maximum. But after the first penetration, I can go in for 30 minutes and come out
Interviewer: but do you use some sexually enhancing drugs?
Respondent: I have never, all my life I have never
Interviewer: are you sure? Because there is this people coming up called the "Maimaganis" if you go to Zongo junction...
Respondent: noooooo I've never attempted them. i see it that at this stage of my life this is the time that I should be strong. Using these drugs, it is only when you get to a certain age after the 50's when you are becoming weak, that when you start using aphrodisiac to enhance your performance. I will be like this like 45 to 50 before I will attempt
Interviewer: during sexual intercourse what matters to you the most?
Respondent: [pondering...]
Interviewer: the most important thing to you during sexual intercourse?
Respondent: just to ejaculate
Interviewer: is that so?
Respondent: I get satisfaction whenever i do but to be able to satisfy the woman, that to know that I have really knocked her down.
Interviewer: how would you know?

Respondent: yeah you could see that she will come. When she is okay you know and if you is not okay you will know.

Interviewer: because some women fake it, that's what I understand?

Respondent: that is it whether you fake it, it's just the satisfaction of the eye. As to whether the person id faking it or not, if you are okay with your performance, it's enough

Interviewer: what if you think you are okay but the woman is not?

Respondent: that's up to her, the most important thing is that I should know that am okay.

Interviewer: you should know and not her?

Respondent: if she is bold enough to say she is not okay then I will continue.

Interviewer: have you ever had the experience where any of them had been bold in telling you?

Respondent: never, never. It's only that I will always ask whether I should continue and sometimes they say yes and other times they say they are okay.

Interviewer: what about if it comes to the number of rounds. How many rounds are you able to go?

Respondent: the maximum I have ever gone is 4

Interviewer: with which of them?

Respondent: the youngest

Interviewer: how is she able to cope with that?

Respondent: I do it intermittently. After coming in, she would ask me to wait then we continue.

Interviewer: but does she really enjoy sex with you?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: am asking because she has no experience...[pause...] you were talking about the fact that if you had your own way you would have married the young lady. But the issue has been because of religion. You said she has given you the assurance that she will become a Muslim. What about you also are trying to be a Christian?

Respondent: yeah. It's always the issue that we are facing. Especially on our part. Mostly it's the women that become Muslims hardly do you see a Muslim man becoming a Christian for a woman. It's one in a hundred. It's something that is still a mystery to me. I have no explanation

Interviewer: so personally why wouldn't you become a Christian to marry the one you love?

Respondent: no for me I cant

Interviewer: what is the special reason?

Respondent: yeah it's the orientation that I have had in Islam. Since you are in Islam, you are in forever. You can't be in it and leave it. Firstly when you are born, you are born a Muslim, then you will decide what to do next but I have decided that I will still stay.

Interviewer: so if it happens that your religion acts as a barrier what will you do?

Respondent: I will forfeit it

Interviewer: even though you love this girl?

Respondent: I will or the only thing that I will do is she can maintain her religion and we will get married

Interviewer: will you be willing to do that

Respondent: yes, if it comes to the worst, i will do that one there is no reason for me to ask my people. I can decide to go and marry her in church with the consent of her parents she will stay with me and we will be giving birth. There is nothing wrong with it. The children should decide what they want to be

Interviewer: remember i was asking you what is important to you?

Respondent: personal satisfaction

Interviewer: okay. So what about the breast? Do you prefer bigger breast to smaller breast?

Respondent: I prefer pointed breast. The one that has not fallen. One that is hard, like that of my young girl. When I see her breast alone, at times I get satisfied just by being with the breast sucking and playing with it. Fondling her.

Interviewer: how would you know that its sagged or falling? Because I understand that some people naturally because they have softer chest or something...

Respondent: [interjects] yeah you know for the purpose of sex, my bigger girl who is 25 years, her breast are bigger softer and it has fallen. But i still enjoy it. But I enjoy the younger one's most.

Interviewer: you haven't spoken about the middle one.

Respondent: the middle one she is in between, see am someone with a very good taste. The middle one is a Lebanese. But she is a Ghanaian when you see her you might think that she is a white woman. But with black hair. For her, to be honest with you, it's for sex. I just enjoy having sex with her. And to have different taste and the younger one is chocolate in colour and the older one is an African black beauty

Interviewer: she is the Muslim?

Respondent: she is the Muslim

Interviewer: which one of them do you think satisfies you the most?

Respondent: the younger one

Interviewer: but you seem to say that she doesn't have experience.

Respondent: yes. You see sex is all about personal fulfillment. You may even not enter someone but you have oral sex with the person and will get satisfied. This young girl, everything of hers is very intact. Even penetrating her is even difficult. So I find a lot of pleasure doing it. Unlike the other two that you easily enter, this one even entering it self, the sound of...the way she even struggles. The pain she feels and other things give me some kind of satisfaction. so whenever am with her it's something else. So because of it I have sex with her once every month

Interviewer: is it because of the pain?

Respondent: not the pain as such. It's the whole day affair. whenever am going to have sex with her... there is a day that she is off.. so that very day she will come for morning till evening. We will just be indoors. Have sex, rest, have sex. So we can continue having sex till..

Interviewer: my problem is that you say she has pain so how does she also enjoy it?

Respondent: that's a mystery that you should ask women.

Interviewer: why should I ask women?

Respondent: why I say you should ask women is that. ummmm whether she is faking it or...to

be honest with you that is the reality. I remember the day that I broke her virginity, there was blood all over, and that one is not something that someone can just fake. And since that day, whenever am to penetrate her...okay the "mouth" is very small up to date. I can always bet with my last that she doesn't sleep around. So it's still my penis that has been in it. So if there should other penis that is bigger than mine, it would have at least caused some kind of...

Interviewer: what if the penis is a smaller than yours

Respondent: maybe it may be another reason. But to the best of my knowledge the girl is very faithful. Because I have followed her so much and done a lot of things, even put spies on her. I even paid a guy to spy on her for a month, when I was travelling and I didn't get anything.

Interviewer: does she leave around

Respondent: she leaves with her elder sister

Interviewer: in Zongo here?

Respondent: no she stays at Labadi

Interviewer: she is a Ga or what?

Respondent: no. she is a Northerner. But born in the south. Half south half Northerner. The father is a Northerner

Interviewer: but a Christian?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: so are all your ladies Northerners?

Respondent: no, the Lebanese, the father is an Asante

Interviewer: am wondering why she is not the most pleasurable to you because you said for its because of the sex.

Respondent: yeahhhh, you know. She is pleasurable alright but the younger one is most pleasurable. It is gratifying to know that in my life I started having sex early. To the best of my knowledge I have dated over, if to date not to sleep with, I have dated close to 100 girls in my life, to be honest. But out of them I can say that I have had sex with about 40 girls in my life. Currently, am with the three. But when I travel and I see a very nice girl, I do go to sleep with her. But they are professionals that one I have never gone to sleep with them. So because of that when I went to South Africa, I decided not to have sex there. Because I had to some extent an oral sex, but I have never penetrated any South African girl. And again when I travel I never go to sleep with a girl without a condom because I don't know the person's life style. She may be a prostitute without you knowing. So every day, anytime, I have condom with me because sex can happen anytime. I once had sex after making a transaction in the bank, the lady followed me trying to find out something and we had sex.

Interviewer: the lady works at the bank or?

Respondent: she works at the bank. I went to withdraw money and she followed me. She came and said that she wants to have my number and I said lets go and have lunch. So she excuse the chief cashier and left with me. So finally we came to my hotel and we had sex.

Interviewer: just like that? But not in Ghana?

Respondent: here in Ghana, In Kumasi, and even I do a lot of transaction, at times a cashier

will give you her card. But to be honest with you now women are so vulnerable and most of them are so desperate to get married. So when they see a responsible person on their way, they easily give in

Interviewer: what do you mean by responsible?

Respondent: responsible, in the sense that you appear decent and they see that you have a well paid job. Or you are in good transaction. They can deduce that you can take good care of them. And most of them are vulnerable

Interviewer: have you ever had any infection before?

Respondent: never, never in my life?

Interviewer: not Chlamydia?

Respondent: nothing, because the issue is that i go in for check constantly. Every three months to korle bu

Interviewer: have you ever watched pornographic movie before?

Respondent: I have different, different versions of it

Interviewer: when was the last time?

Respondent: a week ago

Interviewer: why do you watch it?

Respondent: when am bored or i want to be in the mood for sex, I watch it

Interviewer: do you watch it alone?

Respondent: yes or at times with my fellow guys. We just watch and laugh

Interviewer: so you don't masturbate afterwards?

Respondent: never. Because if am watching and I feel like having someone, I will just excuse the guys to go and I will let a girl come in

Interviewer: what if the girl doesn't come at that time?

Respondent: that's why I'm not having just one. If I try, at least one will respond. And the easiest way is to tell them to take a taxi. There is also one thing that I have not said to you. In every area that I go you will always find a beautiful apple, a beautiful girl that you can easily fall on

Interviewer: you mean you establish a contact?

Respondent: a contact so that when everything fails, that one will not fail me. So there is a constant person on stand by

Interviewer: so you would say that throughout your sexual life is it this girl that you think you are enjoying sex with?

Respondent: even hearing her voice begins to arouse me. I feel for her. And when am with her I don't get tired

Interviewer: have you ever heard of orgasm?

Respondent: orgasm, yes

Interviewer: what do you understand by orgasm?

Respondent: when you erect, when you go into a woman and when she also get her discharge from her organ. Maybe that is reaching orgasm. That is my understanding.

Interviewer: to a man, what makes you have orgasm?

Respondent: when you come

Interviewer: when you come. So it means that anytime you have sex you have orgasm?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: what about your woman?

Respondent: my woman, you can't tell. It is only once that I saw a discharge from a woman's vagina and that's the younger one and that's after continues penetration. You know usually, my first round, I don't last, so after the first round we bath together and we continue even from the bathroom. And you see that she starts coming

Interviewer: how do you see it? You touch it?

Respondent: you see it at the mouth of the vulva

Interviewer: my problem is that after sex when you are satisfied you are not concerned about vulva so how do you know?

Respondent: usually, I don't even watch the woman's vagina. But out of curiosity. Because I watched one of these pornographic movie and i saw it. You know guys will be bringing their views that that is when she gets satisfied. So I wanted to also see whether I performed adequately

Interviewer: what about the other girls?

Respondent: the other girls, I don't even care to check

Interviewer: why?

Respondent: no, no, I don't have anything to prove. With them I have sex with them 5 minutes and that ends it. I don't care if they are not satisfied.

Interviewer: but do they make noise because they say that when a woman is enjoying, she screams?

Respondent: to be honest with you, anytime I enter a woman she screams. Whether it's the feeling or the pain, I can't tell. And usually unless you play with the person and she is a little bit wet and you are going to enter, definitely there will be some friction because the place is not well lubricated. That's why other people will just try to oil their penis before going there. But for me I will suck your breast play with you in away if I want to make love with you.

Interviewer: even the other ones?

Respondent: definitely. I will fondly the breast in a very good way. At times I even make love to the breast. Hold it in between to penetrate it. When I realize that... some of the girls when you fuck them and you come, even if it is 5 minutes they will not let you go back again. So at times I hold the breast play with it and I come. So when I enter I will be able to last for about 30 minutes.

Interviewer: you hold only the breast

Respondent: you hold it... she herself will hold it and you will come in between it

Interviewer: but how will that cause you a man to release?

Respondent: it's the mind set. If you feel that where you are entering you are getting somewhere you will come. And you can decide to have sex without coming when you control your mind

Interviewer: is that possible?

Respondent: that is possible. Let me tell you something. The 'halfco' girl is someone that when you come into her she doesn't want you to go back again. So what i usually go is that I will when am about to come I will withdraw for some few seconds. I will go back with that i can fire for so long.

Interviewer: but when you withdraw, sometimes you are forced to come, and other times...

Respondent: [interjects] at times you are forces to come but in most situations I don't come. You just control your mind. You may be even inside vagina and do as if you are not inside vagina.

Interviewer: but without condom. So it means the half cast you do it without condom as well?

Respondent: noo definitely

Interviewer: but you said you don't trust them.

Respondent: no the one I don't trust is the grown up one

Interviewer: so which of them where you dating before meeting the rest of them?

Respondent: you have asked a question. The half cast girl, I started fucking her when I was in the hostel at the University of Ghana.

Interviewer: which year was that?

Respondent: 2007

Interviewer: so it means you were with the others.

Respondent: I have been fucking her since that time. But the younger girl i got her on the eve of 2008 on 31st night, action in 2009. I was sitting in front of my house when she passed and we became friends. So because she goes to school I wasn't getting time to be with her. She was 16. So by the time that she completed she became 18, 19 years. The 25 years old girl, for her I proposed to her, she is a dropout but she is very beautiful. When you see her body you will like her. She will call you by her moves

Interviewer: so were you dating her also earlier.

Respondent: not really. For her it was almost the same time that i was fucking the half cast. She used to visit me on campus.

Interviewer: it means you met the half cast first?

Respondent: yes I followed her for almost two years before i had her. We were both doing political science. And up till date we are still fucking each other

Interviewer: but is she in Ghana?

Respondent: yes she is still in Ghana.

Interviewer: people have all these assertion that if you are a fat guy with a pot-belly, beautiful girls do not like you?

Respondent: I can open my album for you to go through it and you will see the kind of girls that are there. It's not true. In Ghana here, it's not about your size. Your handsomeness is your ability to either fuck them or convince them and to be able to pay up bills. Take her to expensive restaurants even if you don't have a car you should be able to give her a good life. At least she will feel vulnerable to you.

Interviewer: what kind of women do you prefer?

Respondent: I prefer tall women, not too dark, chocolate but not too fair. And in my statement, there is a grown up woman that I had on facebook. She is in USA. Through talks, I manage to bring her to Ghana and when she came we made love. She even got pregnant but she had a miscarriage.

Interviewer: in Ghana here?

Respondent: no over. She got pregnant and left with it.

Interviewer: but do you think she came to Ghana purposely because of you or she came to do other things here?

Respondent: she came for business. But one of the reasons why she came is because of me. She said it that though she has business interest, but she would like to see me in person. And when she came down she came to me first.

Interviewer: in this room?

Respondent: no I paid for a hotel. She spent one week in the hotel with me and she even paid the bills. She is rich. She is big but with flat tummy, big ass, big hips.

Interviewer: but you didn't use condom

Respondent: I didn't use condom. The first day, I used condom but the second day, it's like, the people who came to do business with her, made me to trust her though it was a gamble that I took. And seeing her CV, she is a lecturer in some college. She even said that when she gets pregnant she will take care of the baby. And you know guys with adventure I decided to go in without it. She never gets tired and she is one of the most active sexual partners that I have had though she is big. Because one thing is your ability to show where the 'hole' is, the vagina, I mean. she always bend down just like the position I showed you and when she does that thing is inside but you will never release and her waste is very small. So you hit her from the back.

Interviewer: to you, it's the ability to show where the whole is?

Respondent: yes and at the end of the day she will also find a way of you getting into her well because she enjoys it.

Interviewer: so it's not the traditional mission way of lying on top?

Respondent: no, no. when you lie on top of her, you will not get total penetration because the hips are so big. So you only enter inside the hips not inside the vagina. But when you let her bend from the back you will be able to hold the ass open in a way from down.

Interviewer: but don't you think that will cause the man to easily release or?

Respondent: no it depends on you. That's why I say that with sex, a man releases from the mind. No matter how the woman is.

Interviewer: to you it means that to have sex with someone you don't need to be closely related to the person?

Respondent: that's my understanding. I understand sex to be a game that you play but you have to take precautions.

Interviewer: so what makes you a man?

Respondent: my penis. Yes that's the only thing that makes me a man.

Interviewer: if someday something happens and you don't have your penis again you can't call yourself a man?

Respondent: I can't call myself a true or a full man. I will be half man because of my ability to lift maybe a load but i will not call myself a man because I may not be able to enter a woman. I will not be able to perform the primary function of a man, which is being able to fuck a woman. there is a situation that I was called to solve a woman's husband is in abroad and she stays here and during the big 'Sanla', he sent money for them to buy big cow and to give her 5000 dollars for her up keep. When we took it to the woman she asked that, "is that all that he sent?" What of penis? All these things she can get them but the penis is something that he has confide her, if not she can't take from any other person. That's what she wants. That is the man should come down. So without your penis you are half man.

Interviewer: does sexual satisfaction influence your identity as a man?

Respondent: though it is something that is private but there are some women who discuss their sexual life with other. So it is a very big thing to me

Interviewer: ahhhh because if you are not able to satisfy them they will go and say it or what?

Respondent: they will go and say it may not say it but rather since they need satisfaction and you give them an incomplete sex, the possibility of they going out to get satisfaction is great

Interviewer: my problem is that you said with your other partners even if it five minutes you don't care so what if they are not satisfied?

Respondent: let me tell you something about me. When I meet a girl for the first, before I make love to her, I programme myself in a way. I will wait when am in need of sex, I will be with you. That way I will do it well. You know what I'm capable of doing so any other time that you come it's just a matter of me trying to do some impurities in me...

Interviewer: but you are not afraid as you said that the person will go and have it somewhere?

Respondent: no that one I'm not married to you. The only one that I try to satisfy is the young girl.

Interviewer: do you think men should desire more sex than women?

Respondent: no

Interviewer: why?

Respondent: at times some women desire sex more than men.

Interviewer: so should men desire sex more than women?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: why?

Respondent: ahhh we are those doing it to them so we should desire.

Interviewer: so women should not desire?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: if they are there and they also feel for sex

Respondent: that should have been an ideal way of doing things. A woman should be able to approach you to say that I feel for sex. But in our part of the world it's not possible. Even if you are married hardly will a woman request sex from the man, and to me it's always bad.

Interviewer: so you think it should change?

Respondent: it should change. They should be in sexual education.

Interviewer: I interviewed some women and they said that if you tell the Ghanaian man, “ohh am feeling for sex”, he will say you are spoilt

Respondent: that is it because we have no education. If now we are being conscientized that it’s a normal thing that your partner can freely tell you when he is feeling for sex, perceptions will change

Interviewer: to be sincere, if you had a girl who is always asking for sex, don’t you think that ah what kind of woman is this that she can’t be gentle small and be a lady?

Respondent: that is because of the orientation that we have all had. But if it had started that way, i would have seen as a normal thing

Interviewer: even when she brings up a strange position, won’t you question where she learnt that thing from?

Respondent: that one if I enjoy it, I will just keep quiet. Usually when you are in a relationship, if you try to find out everything about the person at times you cause yourself some harm. Let me give you a scenario. You have a girlfriend and some other people are fucking but she will always show you love and sincerity...[door opens] [pause]

Interviewer: [Resumes] okay so you were trying to explain ummmm...

Respondent: the fact that a woman can ask for sex and that there is the need for the education of the public for us to see it as a normal thing. Because in South Africa, it normal in some part of South Africa. Because a woman approached me to tell me she loves me. After shopping she asked for my name and nationality and she said, “oh I will like us to date”

Interviewer: do you think men are sexually active them women?

Respondent: this is something that I can't tell unless it is scientifically proven

Interviewer: your personal experience

Respondent: for me, I will say men

Interviewer: what about promiscuity? Who do you think is more promiscuous?

Respondent: men. Because just imagine where we are coming from. Hardly ill you see a woman cheating on a man. But for us men we do it always because when you are married there are certain things that you can’t do and the way you are being conscientized as to what to do and what not to do is great. And where am coming from, hardly will you see a Muslim woman cheating on her husband. It is only one in a million.

Interviewer: would you say it is because of the interpretation of the text that Muslim men can marry 4 women, that’s why they cheat?

Respondent: no, no, it’s just the nature of man. i have Christian friends who are doing it. At times they bring women to sleep with them in my room. Christian men

Interviewer: do you think that sexual intercourse is based on how long it takes

Respondent: no I see sexual intercourse to be the penetration. If you enter a woman, is sexual intercourse. It does mean how long it takes but since you have used it as a channel to come.

Interviewer: Is satisfaction based on how long?

Respondent: satisfaction if it two sided then that is how long you may reach but if it is one sided as a man you know, if you enter a woman and you come you satisfy your needs. Even if it is once.

Interviewer: for someone to have satisfaction, you don't think some number of minutes.

Respondent: no, no. because I know of a friend who always confides in me. He can't have sex more than 10 minutes and he has given birth to 2 kids

Interviewer: but the point is will the partner have satisfaction?

Respondent: yes that's what he does all the time.

Interviewer: some people are arguing that sexual intercourse is always about the penis and the vagina, is that true?

Respondent: no, no, you can play you fondle a woman. Play with her clitoris, suck her breast, and hold her. That is why doing foreplay a woman can easily get satisfaction, that's why they get wet and getting wet at times they come.

Interviewer: what about the men?

Respondent: the men...the women they suck me. One of my girls, the half-caste girl sucks me.

Interviewer: but the small girl you have licked her before?

Respondent: I have never

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: yeah I can't do it. I see the vagina as something very filthy to me, but penis you know it's always clean. You can just hold it like this and stick inside. Unlike the vagina that you don't know whether there are some discharge and you go and stick your tongue in it.

Interviewer: what about after bathing? Don't you think the place is clean enough still suck?

Respondent: I play with the clitoris but I can't use my tongue. Not even the virgin girl?

Interviewer: but you will feel comfortable if she sucks you?

Respondent: yeah if she wants to suck I will not say anything but I will not force her.

Interviewer: but has the young girl sucked you before?

Respondent: no she attempted, I attempted but she is not in for it so I told her that this is another way and other things. But the other two have sucked me before.

Interviewer: and have you ever released in them?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: but did they swallow or something.

Respondent: no they couldn't swallow it. But according to two of my friends some swallow it.

Interviewer: so it means if a woman sucks you you can release, you can have satisfaction?

Respondent: definitely, because the mouth will serve as an outlet. Because when she is doing it, she is pulling it. So you can come

Interviewer: the last question is, some people say that people use the vagina as tools for sexual bargain.

Respondent: sexual bargain yes. I use to have an uncle who always buys malts and kebab for the wife. But whenever she is sad, she tries to stay away from him but when he does those things he comes closer. And I used to have a girl that will not like you to sleep with her in your house,

you have to go to neutral grounds to fuck her. She doesn't want any place that they know her. When you go she can get mad and does it well for you.

Interviewer: does it mean that your friends who bring their ladies here it's because they do not want...

Respondent: no. no. not like this place. It's like it should be a neutral place that is neither mine or you. But I will just pay to use the place

Interviewer: but this one for example

Respondent: oh it's someone that I have been with all my life so you don't have a problem, if I come to fuck a lady here, because I can actually do the same thing in his place

Interviewer: it means you have been doing the same thing at his place

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: but this is not his real lady?

Respondent: this is about the 15th one that he has brought here.

Interviewer: but do you know her?

Respondent: no. but I pretended as if I know her. That's the game.

Interviewer: do you think that thing give men an edge to be able to sleep with women?

Respondent: let me tell you something. When you spoke about the issue of these aphrodisiac, if you know that you have bargained with a woman who says that you have to do this before you sleep with her and you meet those demands, definitely, if you want to use aphrodisiac if only it works. You prepare yourself for that on then you will be able to win the battle that day. Because you prepare and when she comes it's the phone you want, this is it take it and then you also open up.

Interviewer: it seems like for example if you want to sleep with a woman for instance and maybe you call her and give the phone to your friend who is a guy and speak with her, saying ohhh this my friend is good guy, he has been talking about you positively. You are our wife just like what you friend did it serves as a good ground to be able to woo the girl to your side.

Respondent: that is it and at times too what we do is that I can let the girl's friend to go and start praising me to the girl. So when I go there she will easily fall for me. Initially that was the method I was using.

Interviewer: okay so thank you very much for this interview. I appreciate it

Respondent: it's a pleasure. [1:02:53]