

**MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN POLITICIANS: THE  
CASES OF GHANA AND NIGERIA**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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In loving memory of my mother Susana Acheampong who went to be with the Lord few weeks before I submitted this thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

Women politicians have long been marginalised in the political arena, aided in part by gender roles which prescribe what a woman can and cannot do, and patriarchal systems which establish, reinforce and sustain these roles. Increasing the visibility of women politicians is therefore a form of contestation against these structural barriers. It breaks the male dominance in politics while serving as a reference point to encourage more women into politics. However, studies on women politicians' media coverage point to gender biases that favour male politicians in both quantity and quality. While coverage of male politicians is generally issue-based, demonstrating their policy views, that of female politicians is refracted through the gendered lens of marginalisation and sexist reporting. Given the increasing mediatisation of contemporary politics, a trend that has positioned the media as the prime provider of political information, this media bias against women politicians undermines not only their political careers but also the very fibre of representative democracy.

Research evidence on women politicians' media coverage, while growing significantly, is dominated by Western-based studies; not much is known about other non-Western contexts such as those in Africa. There is therefore a huge gap in knowledge concerning how African media portray their women politicians. Against this background, this study aims to address this gap by focusing on Ghana and Nigeria. Using a case study, multimodal critical discourse analysis design, it draws on Mediatisation of politics theory, the Hierarchy of Influence model and Feminist media theory to investigate critical and interrelated problems. Through content analysis, it investigates how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are verbally and visually (where applicable) represented in their national press and radio news. As news texts are created by individuals working within organisational and institutional frameworks which in turn are shaped by the political, economic and socio-cultural milieu within which media outlets are situated, the study also examines the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors influencing news coverage of women politicians. While mainstream media remains the key channel of political information, social media has come to be regarded as a key resource for political communication in recent years. Therefore, this study also considers how women politicians self-represent on social media with specific focus on *Facebook*.

The findings reveal a mixed picture mediated by gender ideology, political and media systems and culture as well as organisational and technological differences which interact in a complex interrelationship to shape coverage of politics. They also suggest that the personal and structural challenges women politicians face with visibility in mainstream media almost mirror those for their online presence. In the end, this thesis shows that women politicians' ability to adapt to news media logic, which in turn shapes their media coverage, is consequently undermined by individual and institutional factors that are embedded in the socio-cultural setting.

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## CHAPTER 1| INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the media have become an increasingly central feature in contemporary politics (Bennett and Entman, 2001), acting as “a dominant space in politics today” (Dahlgren, 2000, p. 313). In democracies around the world, information about political leaders, their ideologies, policies and activities, and of the range of candidates to choose from in elections, is often obtained through some form of media. The media are thus the “primary source of symbolic material out of which people construct their understanding and evaluation of political actors, conditions and events” (Dan and Iorgoveanu, 2013, p.1028). This intrusion of the media into the political space has resulted in political actors having to pay more attention to the media than they would previously have had to (Meyer, 2002; van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017). Contemporary politics is thus highly mediatised (O’Neill et al., 2016).

In addition to these developments, there has been an increase in the number of women entering political offices, particularly higher executive offices (Falk, 2010), causing a disruption to the male norm of politics (Ross, 2017). Women are breaking the barriers of domesticity to which they have been historically confined, and entering into the public arena of politics, a space that culturally has been reserved for men (Sreberny and van Zoonen, 2000; Gallagher, 2003; Wilson and Boxer, 2015). Given women’s increased numbers in politics, the media’s central position in contemporary politics, and the historical

representation of women as subjugated social beings, scholarly interest in the way the media portrays women politicians has grown over the years (Lachover, 2012).

Research has long documented the media's differentiated coverage of politicians based on gender (Falk, 2010; Anderson et al., 2011; Dan and Iorgoveanu, 2013; Ross, 2017; Ette, 2017). Typically, apart from the minimal media attention given to women (Ross and Carter, 2011; Bystrom and Dimitrova, 2013; Lühiste and Banducci, 2016; Ette, 2017), coverage of men is generally issue-based where they can communicate their political views, while women's coverage tends to focus on trivial issues such as their sartorial choices, familial responsibilities and physical appearance (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011; Ross, 2017). Scholars argue that these gender biases in media coverage negatively impact on the political success of women, given that they not only form part of the general discourse on women politicians circulating in the media space but also shape voters' evaluations of women candidates (Dan and Iorgoveanu, 2013).

These findings are however predominantly based in Western<sup>1</sup> democracies; very little is known about other non-Western, 'nations in transition' (Raicheva-Stover and Ibroscheva, 2014). Based on this, there have been persistent calls to expand the scope of research in this area (Ross, 2002; Raicheva-Stover and Ibroscheva, 2014). This thesis addresses this gap in knowledge by focusing on Ghana and Nigeria as case studies to interrogate how national print and radio media content portray women politicians. The key overarching question I seek to answer in this study is **how are Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians represented in their national media?** This introductory chapter first breaks down this overarching

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Western' as used in this study refers mainly to the US and Europe.



question into the research sub-questions, briefly outlining the relevant approaches I use to investigate each. I then present a number of key concepts integral to my study: representation, discourse, ideology, power and gender, before turning to the context for my country case studies, Ghana and Nigeria. Next, I outline the objectives and contributions of the thesis. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure is provided.

As the visual representation of women politicians in general is very much under-researched, much less the study of *both* verbal and visual representations (Boomgaarden et al., 2016), I consider verbal and visual representations (where applicable) in analysing how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are portrayed in print and radio media content. Therefore from the overarching question above, I ask the following sub-questions:

**1. What is the nature of the verbal and visual representation of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in their national media?**

- a. To what extent are women politicians visible, compared to men in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?
- b. What gender frames (if any) characterise the verbal and visual (if applicable) representation of women politicians in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?
- c. In what ways are the representations similar or different between press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria (including visuals for press)?

Analysis of women politicians' portrayal in print and radio content forms the first step into the data presented in this thesis; radio being the most widely used medium in Africa (Gunner et al., 2011; Bosch, 2015). Beyond this, I explore the context of production of political news,

using a dual perspective mediatisation approach that follows Blumler and Esser (2018), to examine the media-related and political-related factors which influence media content on women politicians. Here, I interrogate 49 interviews of women politicians, news workers and civil society experts in Ghana and Nigeria, employing an analytical framework which amalgamates the theoretical framework of Mediatisation of politics (Stromback, 2008; Stromback and Esser, 2014), Hierarchy of Influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014) and feminist media theory (van Zoonen, 1994; Ross, 2016). My interest here lies in unpacking the extent to which the interaction between political logic and news media logic within the broader socio-cultural environment shapes the quality and nature of women politicians' media representations. Consequently, I ask:

**2. What kind of individual, institutional and socio-cultural influences contribute to shaping news coverage in relation to women politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian press and radio?**

Having examined the verbal and visual (where applicable) patterns which characterise media representations of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians, and explored the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors which shape those representations, I consider the women's self-representational practices on social media, focusing on *Facebook* which at the time was the most popular site in both countries (Felicia, 2018). Given the largely marginalised and often negative reporting that women politicians receive in the media, scholars have argued that social media offers an avenue for bypassing the gatekeeping barriers that traditional media pose to women politicians with regard to access as well as nature of coverage (Ross and Bürger, 2014; Ross, 2016). Therefore, I explore how women

politicians engage with this platform. Thus, I probe into their self-representational practices by tackling the question:

**3. How do women politicians self-represent on social media, with particular reference to Facebook?**

- a) What strategies do women politicians adopt to project themselves to the public?
- b) What are the continuities and contestations between women politicians' representations in mainstream media and their self-representations on Facebook?
- c) What are the implications of both media and self- representations for Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians and the field of (gendered) political communication?

These three questions form the focus of this study, resulting in the three-fold objectives that are explained below. In examining the verbal and visual content of coverage on women politicians, the contextual factors which give rise to them, and the self-representational strategies the women adopt on *Facebook*, I argue that women politicians' media representations are a product of push and pull forces (Blumler and Esser, 2018) involving individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors from both political actors (in this case women politicians) and media actors (in this case, news workers). The women's ability to adopt strategies that facilitate their media visibility is greatly reduced by an androcentric political and media culture which are enabled by deeply entrenched gender norms embedded in the socio-cultural context.

## **1.1 Towards a Conceptualisation of Representation, Ideology, Power, Discourse and Gender**

Throughout this study, I engage with the key concepts of representation, discourse, ideology, power and gender. Before providing a background to the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts, I briefly present my conceptualisation of these important concepts. This is to establish my positionality right from the onset, and to provide the appropriate lens through which I approach the topic of this research. In Chapter 4, I develop these concepts further.

First, following Hall (1997), I understand representation to be a meaning-making process which, through semiotic resources including words and images, articulates ideas about how the world should be constructed. These meanings do not come into being by themselves but are socially constructed and culturally dependent (ibid; Machin and Mayr, 2012). This implies that ideas about what women can and cannot do, their cultural location within the domain of domesticity, their ‘othering’ in the public sphere of politics, and their segregation in political news are all meanings that have been produced through the system of representation, and which are sustained through gender ideology. Therefore, media representations matter because they are “inextricably inscribed in relations of power” (Orgad, 2012; p. 25).

Second, if representation is a meaning-making process, then the meanings that are created as a result form a certain knowledge that is referred to here as discourse. Discourse has come to signify many things (Machin, 2007) but for my purpose in this thesis, it is conceived as “a kind of knowledge about what goes on in a particular social practice, ideas about why it is the way it is and what is to be done” (Machin, 2013, p. 352). Because they prescribe how particular things should be talked about, discourses are strongly ideological and serve to

legitimise the social practices which result from representations. Therefore, discourses sustain the power imbued in representations, thereby serving to perpetuate the work of representations.

In this thesis, ideology is understood as a dominant body of socially constructed knowledge, which works politically to produce and maintain unequal power relations in society (Fairclough, 1995; Machin, 2007). Ideology structures social understandings of how things ought to be, evoking consent among the social group within which it operates (Macdonald, 2003). This is similar to Barthes' (1987) notion of myth, which he posits as dominant ideologies masquerading as statements of fact; common sense ideas that are presented as the natural order of things, devoid of any human manipulation or intervention. In this way, it gains hegemonic consent and comes to be accepted as inevitable. Ideologies are worth paying attention to because they legitimise (media) representations, helping the dominant group to maintain their dominance (van Dijk, 2006).

Fourth, representations cannot function effectively without the symbolic power that is invested in them (Hall, 1997). Here, I conceive of power as that which has the ability to "mark, assign and classify" (Hall, 1997, p.259) people into social groups where one group dominates. Power structures social relations along social categories such as gender, race and class (Orgad, 2012). Where representations are concerned, power is characteristically circulatory in that whether consciously or otherwise, those in the dominated group can reaffirm and sustain its effects by their actions or inactions.

Finally, the other key concept that is central to this thesis is gender. Gender is a social construct whose particular iteration is culturally dependent (Cole et al., 2007). This implies

that although there is a basic understanding which assigns women and men to particular socially-defined roles, the level of power given to each gender in particular societies may differ depending on the extent of liberalisation of thought in that society. In Africa, the term 'gender' is preferred to the more politicised 'feminism', and usually connotes 'woman' unlike the Western conceptualisation which refers to both women and men (Cole et al., 2007). Context is therefore very crucial in this thesis in the interpretation of data. As gender prescribes what women can and cannot do based on a particular worldview, it is intricately linked with representations, produced through discourses which are in turn established through the power of ideology and sustained through their reproduction in social institutions, one of which is the media.

As this thesis follows the constructivist paradigm, I use the term 'women' politicians. However, to avoid clumsy phrasing in certain places, I sometimes use 'female' politicians when suitable.

## **1.2 Context of Case Studies**

Having established the theoretical positionality of this study, it is also necessary to provide the geographical context within which this research is situated. This is important because the bulk of the literature on women politicians' media representations is based in the West. As context plays a crucial role in shaping how women politicians are covered in the media, a description of the unique political, media and gender culture of Ghana and Nigeria is essential to understanding the particular iteration of women politicians' media representations as presented in this study. Consequently, in what follows, I briefly describe the Ghanaian and Nigerian political and media culture, both of which are contextualised in the wider economic

environment. After this, I focus on women politicians and how the political and media ecology impacts on their engagement with the media.

### **1.2.1 Political system and culture of Ghana and Nigeria**

The political culture of Ghana and Nigeria share both similarities as well as differences.

Ghana, for instance, has a hybrid governance model which combines a unicameral parliament and an executive president. Parliament is a 275-member house representing an equal number in constituencies. While the president can be elected to a maximum of two 4 -year terms, parliamentarians have 4-year terms. Nigeria, on the other hand, practices a combined federal system of governance fashioned along that of the US with 36 states, and a legislature modelled after the British bicameral parliament. This consists of a 109-member upper chamber senate and a 360-member House of Assembly. The president, who presides as both the head of state and head of government, is eligible for two 4 -year terms while each tenure of members of the legislature is 4 years. The 36 states are fairly autonomous, led by an elected governor and assisted by a House of Assembly which is further divided into 774 local government areas.

Despite these differences, both countries are multiparty democracies although in practice, only two parties dominate the political landscape, creating a strong duopoly. In Ghana, it is the ruling New Patriotic Party (henceforth NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (henceforth NDC). In Nigeria, there is the ruling All Progressive Congress (henceforth APC) and the People's Democratic Party (henceforth PDP). While Ghana and Nigeria were both colonised by the British, the two countries have followed quite different political trajectories. On 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957, Ghana became the first country to gain independence in Sub-Saharan

Africa. After a tumultuous post-independence period characterised by a one-party system and four coup d'états, a democratic constitution was established in 1992, liberalising the political system into a multiparty democracy (Abdulai, 2009). Nigeria, on the other hand, had a longer period of military rule, having become an independent state on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960. This was followed six years later by three decades of military rule interspersed with coups and counter coups until 1999 when it became a democratic country led by elected representatives.

The colonial history and tumultuous post-independence era significantly shaped the political culture in Ghana and Nigeria. The leaders who took over from the colonial regime exchanged the democratic political systems they inherited for a “hierarchical, centralised and autocratic model of government found earlier under colonial rule” (Thomson, 2010, p.116). They believed that was the best way to address the ethnic and regional tensions at the time, and to direct all energies towards national development (Chabal, 2002). Ghana, for instance, has about 75 ethnic groups while those in Nigeria number about 250 with pronounced divisions between the Muslim North and the Christian South. One by-product of the adopted centralised governance was the consolidation of neo-patrimonialism, which Lindberg (2003, p.123) describes as “an informal political system based on personalised rule and organised through clientelist networks of patronage, personal loyalty and coercion”. Within this system, political leaders maintain their power through a patron-client relationship where appointments, projects and other particularistic goods are distributed among their client networks in exchange for political support (Lindberg, 2003). As will be shown in Chapter 8, contemporary Ghanaian and Nigerian politics is still firmly rooted in a clientelist culture where political power depends more on the financial ability to satisfy constituents’ personal needs than on political competence.



Apart from the monetisation, Ghanaian and Nigerian politics is also deeply masculinised to the extent that it is often likened to ‘Big Man’ politics (Chabal, 2002). Popular understandings of who a politician is tends to be men as women are considered not capable enough to occupy political positions (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013). This view of politics as sustained by clientelist networks grounded in money, and rooted in masculinity is important to understand not only the nature of Ghanaian and Nigerian politics, but also the kind of challenges women face in the political arena. Additionally, it explains the structural imbalances that women politicians are subjected to which their male counterparts are not, and which considerably reduces their ability to engage with the media.

### **1.2.2 Media system and culture of Ghana and Nigeria**

Ghanaian and Nigerian media culture can be traced back to the colonial era when the press, the only form of media that the indigenous people could control, became a mobilising tool to wrestle power from colonial rule (Karikari, 2007). As a result, the media have been inextricably linked historically with politics (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Banda, 2008; Okoro, 2012). In fact, those who led the struggle for independence in their respective countries and became leaders afterwards-Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria-had previously been journalists.

Having experienced the power of the media, particularly the press, these political leaders maintained control over the media, using them as “public cheerleaders”(Bourgault, 1995, p.173) to promote “the ideology of national identification, unification, and development” (Banda, 2008; p. 92). State control was particularly rigid on broadcast media, especially

radio, since it had far more scope than the press and therefore was a better medium not only to promote a sense of national inclusiveness among citizens, but also to disseminate the political and ideological propaganda of the nationalist leaders as it could reach those in rural areas (Karikari, 2007). In addition to using the media as a unifying force, the leaders also weaponised the media as a repressive tool for divergent views (Karikari, 2007). Any form of resistance to the authoritarian state control during this period was through the private press but at great risk of harassment, imprisonment and sometimes even death (Tettey, 2001; Abdulai, 2009). To protect themselves, many journalists practiced self-censorship (Chari, 2007), resulting in a 'culture of silence' (Temin and Smith, 2002). It was not until the 1990s when the media was liberalised (Avle, 2011) that private media organisations could endeavour to criticise government with relative freedom.

The relationship between the state and media after independence set a precedence for an adversarial relationship particularly with private media (Tettey, 2011; Diedong, 2016; Chuma, 2018). It also had implications for the economic survival of media organisations in the two countries. As many post-independence African countries including Ghana and Nigeria suffered from underdevelopment in many sectors (Chabal, 2002; Ogola, 2015), it was equally difficult for private media to stay in business. Lack of funding made them more reliant on advertising revenue sourced from a few organisations, with government being the biggest source (Ogola, 2015). Advertising revenue therefore became and still is an overt censoring tool for the state to keep private media from being too critical of its activities. Till date, advertising remains the biggest source of revenue for media houses, and though state-owned media are generally better funded than private media, they still have to compete for the same limited and competitive sources of income as private media (Kafewo, 2006). Because most African media houses currently struggle to stay in business (Schiffrin, 2009;

Mabweazara, 2018a), journalists are generally poorly paid and trained, making them vulnerable to pay outs from politicians (Schiffrin, 2010; Yusha'u, 2018).

Similar to the political culture described above, media culture in Ghana and Nigeria is rooted in an ethos of patronage culture (Lindberg, 2003; Skjerdal, 2018). This is manifested through incentive-driven reporting or 'cash for coverage' (Ristow, 2010), as well as political parallelism where many private media organisations are either owned by political actors or align themselves with particular political parties (Ogola, 2015; Akinfemisoye, 2018). Another characteristic of patronage culture is partisan coverage whereby political interests determine how media content is framed (Afful, 2017). The duopoly of the two main parties in both countries is strongly reflected in political news coverage. It is fairly common for news content to reflect the opposing views of NPP and NDC in Ghana, and the APC and PDP in Nigeria without much recourse to alternative views. Thus, political news coverage in Ghana and Nigeria reflects the indexing hypothesis (Bennett, 1990; 2011; Lawrence, 2019) which posits that the media generally follow the range of viewpoints and voices on political and public policy issues, thereby serving as keepers of elite debates. The problem with this kind of reporting lies in the fact that it inhibits diversity in news content, excluding other marginalised but equally important voices, such as women politicians, from being heard.

The nature of journalism in Ghana and Nigeria as well as much of Africa follows the Western liberal model, whose history dates back to the colonial era (Banda, 2009). Specifically, it orients more towards the American model which is seen as more practice oriented than the European model (Murphy and Scotton, 1987; Mabweazara, 2018b). Therefore, many of the features of journalism in general, and political journalism in particular are also evident in the

professional routines of journalists in these two countries as will be seen in Chapter 8. In general, therefore, the media in Ghana and Nigeria as elsewhere in the continent are “a strong contender in African politics” (Hyde-Clarke and Walton, 2013; p. 117), reinforcing the mediatisation approach taken in this study.

### **1.2.3 Intersection of women with media and political landscape: Ghana and Nigeria**

Post-colonial scholars argue that colonialism destroyed the economic and political status which women seemed to enjoy in African societies (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013; Kolawole et al., 2012). In pre-colonial era, women occupied key public positions, but these were sidelined by the British colonial administration in favour of a Victorian system which conferred power on men and valued their labour over that of women (Oyewumi, 2000; Steady, 2007). The Ashante Queen Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana and Zazzau Queen Amina of Nigeria are notable examples of women warriors. Women were also involved in trade and in palace administration as king makers (Falola, 2002). Other scholars also argue that though gender roles existed during this period, they were complementary rather than hierarchical (Afisi, 2010). With the onset of colonialism, however, the existing gender arrangements were replaced by a gendered ideology which privileged male leadership and business, and firmly placed women in the private sphere of domesticity (Jones, 2015). Consequently, women’s access to education, economic power and political participation were greatly reduced; a legacy whose effects are still felt by Ghanaian and Nigerian women. The regularity of political unrests especially from 1952-1990 further consolidated women’s subordinate position as it entrenched male hegemony in politics (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014).

Political, economic and socio-cultural structures considerably shape women's political participation as well as their representation in and engagement with the media. Because of the clientelist system in both politics and media, and the dominance of men in political and economic positions, women face a multiplicity of challenges which significantly reduce their ability to break free of the structural barriers that constrain them to the private sphere of domesticity. Besides being comparatively less educated than men, many of them are also not as financially stable as men are (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014; Castillejo, 2009; Boyle 2012; Nwabunkeonye, 2014). Efforts at mainstreaming gender into national policy and decision-making to minimise these obstacles have been unsuccessful so far in Ghana and Nigeria. Despite ratifying regional and international conventions such as the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), governments in both countries still seem to lack the political will to actually implement these charters (Sossou, 2011; Bawa and Sanyare, 2013).

Consequently, while more women have entered politics, with some competing for the presidency like Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings (Ghana) and Remi Sonaiya (Nigeria), politics is still approached as "the quintessential male sphere of action, one in which women are both unwelcome and ineffective" (Sossou, 2012, p. 2). Therefore, women's participation in politics still remains tokenistic at best, and negligible at worst. Their appointments in political parties are usually limited to marginal roles such as Women's Organiser, which have no influence on policy but are instrumentalised mainly for mobilising female support for the party during elections. Again, as women are culturally perceived as more morally upright than men, their participation in politics is regarded as a sanitising measure (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013) which subsequently leads to higher moral evaluations and criticisms when they fall short of public expectations. In light of these socio-cultural and institutional

challenges, women politicians are faced with more limitations in their political careers than their male counterparts, and therefore seem more vulnerable to failure even before they start.

### **1.3 Key Aims and Contributions**

As noted above, the thesis has three objectives based on the extant literature on women politicians' media coverage. First, it seeks to identify the patterns which characterise Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media coverage, including highlighting any gender frames if any. The aim is to reveal the ways in which ideas about women politicians in these two countries are communicated through verbal and visual semiotic resources, as well as how the two modes interact to create particular meanings about women politicians. Second, as political news is a product of political-related and media-related influences, I am interested in the kind of factors which shape women politicians' media representations. Beyond this, and particularly because of the gender dimension of this study, I am also interested in how the socio-cultural context interacts with these media-related and political-related factors influence the representations. Third, the study aims to reveal the self-representational strategies employed by Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians on social media, especially with regard to *Facebook*. The objective here is to identify the extent to which these strategies either confirm or contest their portrayal in traditional media, and what the implications are for the women, gender discourses in politics and the field of (gendered) political communication.

Against the background of these three-fold aims, I hope to contribute empirically, methodologically and theoretically to scholarship on women politicians' media coverage. As

already noted above, scholars in the field have called for studies that go beyond the Western, often American-based research that dominates the field (Ross, 2002; Raicheva-Stover and Ibroscheva, 2014). This study makes an empirical contribution by extending the scope of research in the extant scholarship through its focus on the Ghana and Nigeria. Again, the thesis provides evidence of the ways in which verbal and visual modes are deployed to construct women politicians as politically incompetent and therefore unsuitable. Further, it illuminates the power struggle between women politicians and journalists as each group struggles to comply by the logic of their representative institution, and how that interaction impacts on political news coverage. Importantly, I provide novel evidence about women politicians' representation in radio news, something that is missing in the literature.

Methodologically, this thesis makes three contributions. First, by employing both verbal and visual analytical methods to interrogate media content, an area that is under-explored in the field, it reveals particular ways in which the verbal and visual, on their own as well as jointly, serve to project women politicians as inferior political actors. Second, by focusing on the production of women politicians' media representations to interrogate the relationship between the women and journalists, and how the nature of that relationship affects the quantity and quality of coverage, the study shifts the long-standing focus on media content to both media content *and* production studies where journalists and women politicians' contribution to coverage of politics can be interrogated *simultaneously* through a dual approach. Finally, by examining women politicians' self-representation on *Facebook*, another under-researched in the field, this study aims to add to knowledge by providing empirical evidence to show whether and the extent to which social media are used by women politicians in their political communication. These three methodological approaches will

yield more nuanced empirical evidence to shape conceptualisation of the phenomenon in the field.

Theoretically, this study contributes to mediatisation of politics scholarship by highlighting how different types of media organisations and platforms significantly impact on the nature and scope of the mediatisation process. In addition, it reveals a cultural dimension to how mediatisation is adopted through its gender approach. Both of these factors have been ignored so far in mediatisation literature.

#### **1.4 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis consists of 10 chapters. Following this chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of research in the field of gendered political communication, highlighting the two broad areas of quantity and quality that studies have focused on, and the key findings that have emerged from these studies. I stress the paucity of research from non-Western contexts, the under-development of the visual and of news production studies in the field, and the fact that this thesis contributes to tackling these gaps in the scholarship. Importantly, I argue in this chapter that context is crucial to how women politicians are portrayed in the news media.

Having provided an overview of research on media representations of women politicians, I focus on the context of production in Chapter 3. Starting from the assumption that women politicians' media representations are a product of media-related and political-related factors which are in turn shaped by the socio-cultural environment within which they are located, I trace how studies have researched the relationship between the institutions of media and politics and their actors. This leads me to the concept of mediatisation of politics. After



discussing the usefulness of this concept to the study, but also its inability to capture the whole range of media-related factors that are relevant in my two case studies, I draw on Shoemaker and Reese's (1996; 2014) Hierarchy of Influence model and combine the two with feminist media theory to develop an analytical framework that suitably and effectively captures all the aspects of media-related and political-related factors relevant in the contexts of Ghana and Nigeria. The key argument I put forward in this chapter is the fact that women politicians' media representations is shaped not just by institutional structures but also by individual and socio-cultural factors which need to be considered in the general conceptualisation of the phenomenon.

Chapter 4 brings together all the key concepts as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 under the umbrella of multimodal critical discourse analysis (henceforth MCDA). Using MCDA as an analytical framework, I discuss the theoretical assumptions of representation, discourse, ideology, power and gender, unpacking how they are conceived in this study, how they interact to create particular meanings relevant to this study, and how they are useful in interrogating media coverage of women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria. In this chapter, I demonstrate the value in approaching women politicians' portrayal in media texts through a multi-semiotic lens.

Chapter 5 is the methodological chapter where I reiterate the study's research questions and how they are answered through the case study research design and approach I employ. Here, I explain the rationale behind the chosen data collection methods and how each data set is analysed based on the MCDA framework of the thesis.

In Chapter 6, the first of the empirical chapters, I address my first research question which considers the verbal and visual aspects of women politicians' media representation, by presenting results of the content analysis conducted on print and radio news within a month of the general election in each country. As a stepping stone to further examination of women politicians' media coverage, this chapter reveals how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are projected to the public through the verbal and visual (where applicable) patterns characterising their representations. In presenting these findings, I draw out the continuities and contestations with previous literature to situate the study's findings within the broader scholarship in the field. My key argument in this chapter is that women politicians' media representations are shaped primarily by the type of media organisation, media platform and their political function.

Chapter 7 takes a deeper look at the media content under the assumption that certain ideas about women politicians that are communicated in media content are too subtle to be revealed through the 'surface' examination that content analysis tends to provide. Therefore, I further interrogate a selection of press articles through MCDA. The approach proves very useful as it reveals implicit ideas about Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians which are not so obvious in the content analysis, but which also supports the socio-cultural gender conceptions in the two contexts. Thus, in this chapter, I demonstrate the value an in-depth analysis has in revealing hidden gendered meanings in media texts.

Having fully examined print and radio news content in Chapters 6 and 7, I delve into the context of production of political coverage in Chapter 8, looking at the interaction between women politicians and journalists, and how that influences the quantity and quality of the

representations. Using 49 semi-structured interviews as my point of departure, I focus on the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors which shape coverage of women politicians, drawing on Mediatisation of politics, Hierarchy of Influence model and feminist media theory as the theoretical basis for the analysis. The key point I make in this chapter is that perceptions of the media and their influence on political careers greatly shape (women) politicians' attitude and behaviour towards the media, which in turn determines the nature of media coverage.

Chapter 9 shifts the focus from media content (Chapters 6 and 7), both women politicians and journalists (Chapter 8) to only women politicians, thus ending where it all began. Here, based on suggestions that social media present women politicians with an alternative media to counteract the effects of marginalisation and negative reporting in mainstream media, I analyse their self-representational practices on *Facebook* during the campaign period. The objective here is to draw linkages between the identities associated with the women's self-representational practices and their representations in mainstream media. The implications of these linkages (or lack of them) are discussed with regard to what they mean for women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria, gender discourses in politics and the broader field of (gendered) political communication. In doing this, I show that women politicians' adoption of social media sites as political communication tools largely depends on their understanding of the benefits to their political goals.

Finally, chapter 10 concludes the thesis by bringing together all the key findings and arguments from the empirical chapters against the background of the extant scholarship and within the MCDA framework. It addresses each of the research questions as set out at the

beginning of the thesis. This is followed by limitations of this study and suggestions for further research. Thereafter, it presents the empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions that the study makes to the field of (gendered) political communication, especially to Mediatisation of politics. The chapter ends with policy recommendations based on the findings.

## **CHAPTER 2| POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND WOMEN**

Historically, women have been victims of sex-based discrimination in many sectors and institutions of society (cite). Two of the key domains where this bias (and its contestation) occurs, according to much evidence from feminist, political and communication research, are media and politics (Ross, 2017). As politics has long been regarded as an essentially masculine endeavour (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996; Sreberny and van Zoonen, 2000), women have traditionally been excluded from this space. Thus, their increasing presence in political space in recent years pose a dilemma to the media who generally are androcentric (Gallagher, 2002, p. 18). Given the media's position as the primary source of political information and their agenda-setting role in shaping public views about political actors, it has been argued that these patterns of coverage not only impacts negatively on women politicians' political careers (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003), but also undermine democracy (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; O'Neill and Savigny, 2014). Investigating the ways in which women politicians are portrayed in the media is therefore a worthwhile research agenda.

Before answering the question of how Ghanaian and Nigerian women are represented in their national media, it is important to discuss the body of literature within which this study is

located in order to contextualise the results. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore the key arguments of research in the field. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I focus on the two main strands of quantity and quality of women politicians' media coverage which have preoccupied scholars of gendered mediated politics, discussing each in turn. Next, I explore the visual representation of women politicians followed by their self-representation on social media. Both of these are reviewed as important but often neglected aspects of women politicians' media representations. Following these two sections, I explore the factors that have contributed to the persistence of gender bias in media coverage of women in politics. I end the chapter by emphasising that representations matter, that when aligned with gender ideology, construct women politicians in ways that undermine their political success. Therefore, attention to gender ideology is crucial but since it is conditioned by contextual factors, then context is also essential when interrogating women politicians' media coverage. While much care is taken to focus on African-based scholarship due to the context of this study, the literature review is nonetheless oriented more towards Western research because of the paucity of available research in Africa more generally, and Ghana and Nigeria in particular.

## **2.1 Media Coverage of Women Politicians: a Matter of Marginalisation**

Across the world, there is compelling evidence which shows that women politicians are symbolically annihilated (Tuchman, 1978) either as subjects or sources from the media (Ross and Carter, 2011; O'Neill et al., 2016; Ette, 2017), despite the growing numbers of women in political offices (Kasomo, 2014; Made, 2008; Katembo, 2005). It is more common to see male politicians being featured in political news stories and talk shows as experts, panellists, interviewees and subjects than it is for female politicians. For instance, Kasoma (2014) shows that just 6 out of 18 women MPs were covered by the leading Zambian newspaper *Post* over

a one year period, while its government counterpart, *Zambian Daily Mail*, reported on only 8 of them. Similarly, Katembo (2005) reports that in the 2004 South African general election, only 26 female politicians appeared as news sources in the *Sunday Times* compared with 313 male politicians. Salem and Mejbri (2014) also show that although the Tunisian revolution in 2011 increased political access to women, their voices were almost absent in the local news, sharply contrasting the international media where Tunisian women's political activities were highlighted.

While Salem and Mejbri's (2014) finding suggests that 'international' or non-African media may be better at representing women politicians, the evidence suggests otherwise. For example, drawing from media coverage in 25 EU members' states on the 2009 European elections, Lühiste and Banducci (2016) provide compelling evidence that of lower visibility of women politicians during the campaign period. Despite having 40% women representation, female politicians accounted for only 5% of Spain and Austria's media coverage. In another study which examined the frequency of coverage by gender in 13 American newspapers over a 25 year period, Shor et al. (2015) found that for every fifth man there was only 1 woman mentioned. Bystrom and Dimitrova's (2013) analysis of six leading American Television stations also reveals that, of the 507 stories which focused on a single candidate, only 5% were about the 2012 Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann. Likewise, despite being the second most popular candidate in the polls, Heldman et al. (2005) found that Elizabeth Dole featured in just 19.7% of coverage, significantly less than the front-runner George Bush's 72.9%. Additionally, through a cross-national study of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, Ross and Carter (2011) note that men were twice more likely to be used as sources than women over all three media (press, TV and radio news). Even in Finland where female representation in parliament is quite high (current figure is

41.5%), Makela et al. (2015) found that male politicians received far more media attention. The results above not only show the pervasiveness of women politicians' marginalisation in the news, but also the fact that it is systematic across many countries and different platforms. The pattern of marginalisation of women politicians' presence also relates to their voice in terms of whether their views are heard or read. Women politicians are more likely to be quoted less and given less speaking time. Hooghe et al (2015) illustrate this in their study which reveals that Belgian female MPs were significantly less likely to be quoted, but when they were, they received considerably less speaking time than their male peers, especially if they occupied more elite positions. Vos (2013) also shows that speaking time on Flemish television news for female politicians was approximately 5 minutes, compared to the 17 minutes usually given to male politicians. These findings from countries that have considerably high female representation in politics are both depressing and insightful. While they show that gendering in mediated politics is not a product of low numbers of female politicians per se as was previously thought, they also indicate that media sexism is still an issue for women in politics (Wagner et al, 2017). Falk (2008) for instance, argues that media coverage of female politicians is no better than it was in 1884, and the results above appear to confirm her assertion.

Some scholars have suggested that novelty produces more media attention for female politicians as the media become fascinated with the 'new kid on the block' (Meeks, 2012). In fact, literature on news values show that surprise or unusualness is an important newsworthy feature (Brighton and Foy, 2007; Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). Brighton and Foy (2007, p. 28) define unusualness as "anything which is out of the ordinary, which is unexpected—or is something ordinarily done by somebody who would not be expected to do it". They add that unusual behaviour is when something/body "breaks with expectations of normal social

behaviour” (ibid). Due to women’s historical exclusion from politics (Wagner et al, 2017), their appearance in the political scene marks them out as different, unusual and therefore newsworthy.

Thus, novelty frames resulted in higher media visibility for Liberia’s first female president and Cameroon’s first presidential female candidate respectively as Jones (2015) and Ngomba (2014) both show. Similarly, in assessing media coverage of the most prominent Romanian female and male candidates for the European Parliament, Dan and Iorgoveanu (2013) attribute the surprisingly large amount of coverage that the women received to their novelty. Nonetheless, for other female candidates like Remi Sonaiya, the opposite occurred. Being the first woman to contest the Nigeria presidential slot, she was so marginalised in the media that two weeks before the 2015 general election, the leader of a women’s advocacy group told reporters that she was unaware of Remi’s candidacy (Ette, 2017). This example reflects my own findings in this study as results from the content analysis in Chapter 6 reveal. The argument that novelty frames earn more coverage for female politicians is therefore not conclusive. Besides, Meeks (2012, p.179) notes that “all novelty labelling in news contexts goes some significant distance toward suggesting-sometimes explicitly, much more often implicitly-that women are novel, unusual, *simply different* within the political arena” (emphasis in original). This means whatever the impact of novelty frames are for female politicians, they also serve in some ways to the women’s ‘othering’, as they highlight that by being in politics, the women are contravening gender norms (van Zoonen, 2006; Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014; O’Neill et al., 2016).

It must be noted however that despite this overwhelming evidence of women politicians’ marginalisation in the media, there are a few studies which do not record these findings.



Devitt (1999) and Jalalzai (2010) both reveal insignificant differences in the amount of coverage received by male and female politicians. Others like Wasburn and Wasburn (2009) and Dan and Iorgoveanu (2013) also note that female politicians actually received more coverage than their male contenders in their research. From the US and Canada, some other studies actually suggest a decline in the visibility gap (Jalalzai, 2006; Atkeson and Krebs, 2008; Goodyear-Grant, 2013). While these particular studies do not question that media coverage is gendered, they do emphasise the importance of contextual factors in determining the nature and form that ‘gendering’ takes place in female politicians’ media representations.

Over the years, scholars have stressed the importance of media visibility for political actors. For candidates, it confers importance and legitimacy (Wagner et al., 2017; O’Neil et al, 2016), suggesting to voters that the candidate is “winnable” (Mutz, 1995; Crespin and Deitz, 2010). To this end, Wagner et al. (2017, p. 2) argue that candidates “need to get in the news, stay in the news, and be prominent in the news” as low or near invisibility leads to political dearth (Kahn, 1994). More than that, Alexander (2010) asserts that the struggle for power in modern politics is theatrical; a matter of performance where candidates have to convince voters of their symbolic moral and political competence, although this must be done in a way that is authentic. There is much more emphasis now on how competent a candidate *appears* to the electorate rather than how competent s(he) is in reality. Thus, media visibility is not only crucial for enabling communication between candidates and the electorate, but also because it helps fulfil that aspect of performance that seems to be so important in contemporary politics. As women politicians are generally seen as politically incompetent and unsuitable, media visibility helps them dismantle such preconceptions. Being denied this opportunity through near (invisibility) is therefore very damaging to their political ambitions.

Relatedly, sponsors are more likely to support the campaign of those who they believe have a higher chance of winning (Wagner et al, 2017). Further, as citizens are known to vote for those they know (Hopmann et al., 2010), media visibility enhances women politicians' chances of gaining votes. While rallies and door-to-door campaigning still have their place in Africa societies, using the media to communicate one's views and policies may be a more cost-effective strategy as the media have a wider reach and may require with less effort from politicians. Consequently, when women politicians are marginalised in the media, with their presence not seen and their voices not heard, it delegitimises them, sending a message to the electorate that women are not important or compatible with politics. Such a message has the potential of significantly reducing women's claim to success in politics as it erodes their credibility. Gidengil and Everitt (2000), for example, found a correlation between limited or negative coverage and poor electoral performance. By marginalising women politicians, the media are implicitly denying their skills and legitimacy as political actors (Salem and Mejbri, 2014, p.86). When that happens, it lessens the number of women who will be encouraged to be in or want to stay in politics (Ross, 2004), reinforces masculinisation of politics (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012) and undermines the media's democratic role of informing citizens about the range of choice in political representatives.

Social responsibility theory (Siebert et al., 1956; McQuail, 1992) posits that the media should have some responsibility to the public, uphold high professional standards and be pluralistic. In a democratic society, the media are expected to educate the electorate about political issues and actors (Blumler and Coleman, 2015) in order that the electorate can make informed decisions. Another normative argument holds that the media are supposed to function as a public sphere (Habermas, 1989) where people can claim "participatory equality" (Dahlberg, 2018, p.38). While this seems quite idealistic in the face of contemporary media which are

largely profit making, it is nonetheless the normative ideals the media are expected to uphold. Therefore, when women politicians are rarely seen or heard in the media, it undermines the very foundations of democracy. Their low presence in the media reinforces their low numbers in positions of political power, which in turn “demonstrate[s] the persistence of patriarchal power, perpetuating the secondary political role to which women have traditionally been relegated” (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012, p.422). If the literature overwhelmingly points to women politicians’ marginalisation in the media, what happens when they do appear in media content? The next section addresses women politicians’ qualitative representation

## **2.2 Media Coverage of Women Politicians: a Matter of Sexism**

Early studies on the mediated representation of women politicians focused on their lack of coverage as established above (Gidengil and Everitt, 2000). Later works, however, have become preoccupied with the nature, or ‘quality’, women politicians’ coverage. Findings from much research, though mainly based in the West, reveal that women politicians are typically portrayed through “misogynistic gendered stereotypes or frames” (O’Neill et al., 2016, p.301). These patterns present themselves through trivialisation (Devitt, 2002; Heldman et al., 2005; Curnalia and Mermer, 2014; Walsh, 2015; Conroy et al., 2015) which privileges the personal over the political achievements of women politicians (Ross, 2003; Anderson et al., 2011; Harmer, 2015; Wilson and Boxer, 2015), emphasising their family relationships (Anderson et al., 2011; O’Neill et al., 2016), physical appearance (Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011), sartorial styles (Ross, 2017), emotional fragility (O’Neill et al., 2016), and a generally negative framing that positions the women as less politically competent (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; Falk, 2010; Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014; Finneman, 2015). It is unthinkable

that male politicians will receive this level of sexist reporting which has no direct bearing on their political competences and is therefore unnecessary.

A classic example to illustrate some of the above is Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover's study of the 2005 Bulgarian parliamentary elections where they found an overly sexist press whose portrayal of women politicians was "refracted through the prism of gender stereotypes" (2009.p.117). They note the press' dismissal of the new female parliamentarians' professional qualifications and political views in favour of commentary that sought to imply that they were in parliament because of their beauty and charm. A whole series titled "Vanity Fair" was devoted to describing the male MPs reactions to the women's physical appearance and style in very sexist language such as "pleasantly distracting themselves" and "washing their faces in the sight of beauty", concluding with the statement: "if beauty is said to save the world, then this year's parliament is certainly in safe hands". (2009; p.118). Sexist coverage is therefore a key challenge that women politicians face.

Ross (2003, p.8) argues that for a female politician, her sex "is always on display, always the primary descriptor. She is defined by what she is *not*, that is, she is not a 'typical' politician". Through this consistent highlighting of women politicians' gender, the media succeeds in 'othering' them, casting them as political outsiders and 'deviants' who are unfit for political office, and who have nothing to offer but their sex (van Zoonen, 2006; Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014; O'Neill et al., 2016). As a result, this type of reporting trivialises whatever academic attainment or professional expertise women politicians may have, thereby constraining them to the narrow confines of sex. For example, in Anderson et al.'s (2011) analysis of African and international media's representation of Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, they reveal that while the media, especially the international press, highlighted her

physical appearance, maternal and marital status, while the same was not done for her male rival George Weah. Consider the example below:

*“The 67-year-old grandmother won 59% of the vote in November’s run-off election, beating Liberian football star George Weah.”*

*(BBC, 16 January 2006; cited in Anderson et al, 2011, p. 2513)*

It is interesting how the BBC finds Johnson-Sirleaf’s age to be such an important detail that is worthy of being mentioned, given space limitations and the fact that this is foreign news and therefore not highly relevant for the British audience. While it can be argued that the reference to George Weah being a former football star is also gendered, and that such reporting is in line with the standard journalistic convention of describing a news actor by the characteristic they are best known for, it seems highly unlikely that at the time, Johnson-Sirleaf’s best known feature was as a grandmother and not as a former World Bank economist or even a former Liberian Minister of Finance. Besides, Jones (2015, p.323) points out that being described as a ‘football star’ works in Weah’s favour as it “contextualiz[es] his prowess in one traditionally male-dominated sphere (sports) within another (politics)”.

There is a caveat, however. While it seems that marginalisation of women politicians in the media is a global problem, sexist reporting appears to be contextually determined. Contrary to what the literature largely suggests, research in Africa has not documented the same level and regularity of sexist reporting on women politicians since coverage appears to be issue-based (Ngomba, 2014). On occasion, there have been a few occurrences which usually take the form of descriptions of their familial roles or marital status as these are perceived as normative for African women (see discussion below on gender). Although such references may seem harmless, Anderson et al (2011) argue that it nonetheless portrays married women

politicians as ‘breaking the rules’, as it implies they are ‘neglecting’ their marital or family responsibilities to participate in politics, thus suggesting that they are contravening social-cultural norms regarding women’s ‘acceptable’ behaviour. This position is firmly supported by Caldas-Coulthard (1995) who also argues that such referential terms reinforce women’s minority status in society.

Does the presence of a female leader minimise or eliminate gendered media coverage? Anderson et al. (2011), Fountaine and McGregor (2002) and Lithgow's (2000) studies seem to suggest the contrary. In 2000 when the three major positions of Prime Minister, Governor General and Chief Justice were all occupied by women, Fountaine and McGregor (2002, n.p) still found evidence of “omission, trivialisation and condemnation” of women politicians in the New Zealand media. Similarly, although Asia has produced more female presidents than any other continent, Lithgow (2000, p.15) observed that the Asian press constructed the women in narrow gender stereotypes which “propel[led] these women forward by valorizing their feminine traits, to the exclusion of their political experience or suitability for the job”.

Another aspect of sexist coverage of women politicians relates to issue and trait reporting. Particularly in the US, there is strong evidence of gender-congruency in issue and trait coverage for female and male candidates (Kittleson and Fridkin, 2008). This division stems from the notion that voters’ evaluation of candidates hinges on their competence in handling political issues and their apparent personal character (Banwart, 2010; Hacker, 2004). The evaluation corresponds with gender stereotypes but is oriented more favourably towards masculinity (Meeks, 2012). Thus, “feminine” issues such as health care, social welfare and education correspond to stereotypical roles of women as family-oriented and compassionate,

while “masculine” issues of economy, defence and foreign policy align with the male stereotype of breadwinner and protector (Rudman and Kilianski, 2000). Likewise, “feminine” traits speak to the feminine characteristics of warmth, compassion, emotionality and altruism as “male” traits relate to stereotypical male attributes including assertiveness, strength and independence (Banwart, 2010; Banwart and McKinney, 2005).

Several studies reveal how gender congruency impacts on political news coverage. In analysis of elections in Australia, Canada and the United States, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) show that in all three countries, the level of gender congruency in press reports of issues and traits was far higher than of gender incongruence. Major and Coleman (2008) also confirm that not only did the American press uphold gender congruency in their coverage, but they also validated those who conformed while undermining those who did not. Given that “feminine” issues are regarded as less credible ‘political’ topics (Meeks, 2012; Major and Coleman, 2008; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988), and voters tend to favour “masculine” traits in their leaders (Dolan, 2005; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993), female candidates who abide by gender congruency in their campaigns risk being seen as less politically viable. Besides, Meeks (2012) argues that “feminine” issue coverage is declining.

The issues related to issue and trait coverage illustrate the double bind that women face in politics. In seeking to project themselves as viable candidates in a male-dominated political world, female politicians, on one hand, may have to choose between deemphasising their femininity and assuming ‘masculine’ characteristics perceived by voters as more suitable for political office but risk alienating themselves from voters who may view them as ‘frauds’. Conversely, they can premise their campaign on their femininity and potentially lose the

election (Meeks, 2012). Male candidates, however, do not encounter this challenge as they are seen to be in their natural element and therefore do not need to gain legitimacy or justify their inclusion in politics (Jones, 2015). Besides, confining female candidates to a restricted set of issues and traits reinforces the idea that they are not as competent as their male peers. Moreover, it presents a limited view to voters which does not further the democratic mandate of fair, balanced and accurate representation of all social groups (Kittleson and Fridkin, 2008; Gallagher, 2001).

Is media coverage any different in countries where there seems to be gender parity such as Rwanda, Bolivia and Sweden? There seems to be very little or no available literature on the matter in these countries, at least in English. For example, Hordahl (2006, cited in Aalberg and Strömbäck, 2011) found that 33% of sources on the evening news of the most important Norwegian television network were women politicians, while Jonsson and Stromback (2007, cited in Aalberg and Strömbäck, 2011) show that only 25% female sources appeared in the three most important Swedish television news programs between 1990-2004. Additionally, Krogstad (1999, cited in Aalberg and Stromback, 2010) found strong presence of ‘masculinised’ politics facilitated by the use of aggressive and confrontational language such that Norwegian and Swedish women politicians had to adopt ‘male power language’ in television debates in order to be noticed. She also observed that unlike the men, women politicians suffered more interruptions in their speeches, implying that they had less power in the debates than the men. Similarly, in a comparative study of Scandinavian countries, Krogstad and Gomard (2003) found that male politicians generally had more time to speak in television debates.



The discussion here does not claim that male politicians do not receive any sexist coverage since a few studies have documented this (see Langer, 2010 for example). In the recent shift towards the personalisation of politics in political communication (McAllister, 2007), defined as the decline in party-centredness and increase in individualisation of politicians political process (Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007; Karvonen, 2010), all politicians have been subjected to media personalisation. However, the degree to which gendered coverage occurs for male politicians is yet to reach systematic levels as has been documented for female politicians. Besides, van Zoonen (2006) points out that while personalisation negatively impacts on female politicians' campaign since it reinforces their femininity and hence 'otherness', it works in the favour of male politicians as it 'humanises' them, thereby making them more relatable and appealing.

### **2.3 Visual Representation of Women Politicians in Political News Coverage**

Thus far, I have reviewed literature on women politicians' *verbal* media representations. However, visual representation is also another important aspect of the media coverage. As is argued in Chapter 4, representation occurs not only in written form but also through images—and increasingly so. Yet, despite the growing importance of visual information, facilitated by technological advancements, research on the visual in political communication is woefully scant (Schill, 2012). What is available tends to focus on just the visual (see for example Wicks, 2007; Grabe and Bucy, 2009; Coleman and Wu, 2015); even less is known of the effects of *both* the verbal and the visual on candidate evaluations (Boomgaarden et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, there is a whole strand of scholarship in (social) semiotics as well as visual communication which consider images to be ideological (see Chapter 4). van

Leeuwen (2012), for instance, maintains that text (verbal) and image are interdependent in meaning creation implying that one cannot be disregarded if the two modes appear in a particular piece of communication. Besides, scholars note that candidates' pictures in the media shape evaluations of politicians while influencing voter decisions (Coleman and Banning, 2006; Grabe and Bucy, 2009; Coleman, 2010), especially when there are no ideological considerations (Barrett and Barrington, 2005; Boomgaarden et al., 2016). In fact, information processing research shows that the human brain prefers processing visual information over the verbal (Esser, 2008). Bucy and Grabe (2007) also argue that visual representations of candidates can convey unspoken information that may be of value to voters in assessing candidates, and therefore should not be ignored by political communication scholars. Thus, in political communication, images are as equally important as text, perhaps arguably more as they have a more enduring effect than texts.

Research evidence suggests that visual representation particularly impacts on female candidates. In an interesting study on the effects of favourable and unfavourable texts with accompanying favourable and unfavourable images on candidate assessment, Boomgaarden et al. (2016) found that congruence between text and image yielded higher ratings from respondents than those that were incongruent. What is more interesting is the gender variations they found. For example, while male candidates with a favourable text but unfavourable image still received positive ratings, female candidates in the same instance were rated negatively, meaning that unfavourable images are more harmful to female than male candidates.

Boomgaarden et al. (2016) research highlights the crucial importance a positive visual image has for women politicians. In Ghana and Nigeria where illiteracy rates are high (see Chapter

5), and where it is common practice for people to flip through newspapers without actually reading them, images may hold more evaluative power for politicians than elsewhere. If this is the case, then scholars who research these contexts need to consider women politicians' verbal *and* visual representations in the media as both are heavily gendered and ideological in mediated politics (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996). As Coleman (2010, p. 235) notes, “[i]t is artificial for research to view one channel of communication in isolation as this can result in an incomplete understanding of any media event”.

#### **2.4 Self-Representation of Women Politicians on Social Media**

While women politicians may have very limited control over how traditional media chooses to (not) represent them, an alternative means through social media sites seems to be available where women can self-represent in ways that are largely in their control and therefore can better serve their political goals (Ionescu, 2013; McGregor, 2018). There is a growing body of scholarship that have begun to explore how politicians use social media, although these do not tend to examine gender differences as a main category (Sandberg and Öhberg, 2017). Obama's 2008 election campaign, which Alexander (2010, p. 1) termed a *kairos* moment that “that shifted the arc of history” in the United States, did generate some scholarly interest (Ross and Bürger, 2014). Studies that have been generated so far have examined, among other things, the growth of online campaigning (Gibson et al., 2015), factors shaping candidates' use of online media in constituency campaigns (Marcinkowski and Metag, 2014), benefits of campaigning on social media (Utz, 2009), campaign strategies adopted by American presidential candidates on Facebook (Borah, 2011) and Nigerian candidates (Felicia, 2018), the role of online media in the conduct and monitoring of election communication in Nigeria (Bartlett et al., 2015; Bandipo, 2016), as well as in Ghana

(Gyampo, 2017; Dzisah, 2018). While this subfield is still quite young, research based in Africa is even more limited; a gap which this study addresses.

In recent years, politicians have become increasingly aware of the significant benefits of social media in terms of providing a direct means of interacting with the public (van Santen and van Zoonen, 2010; Dennis et al., 2016; Larsson, 2016) while also increasing their public visibility (Cmeci, 2016). Initially seen as socialising platforms, these sites have fast become “a place to discuss politics, endorse politicians, and learn about candidate positions” (Goodnow, 2013, p.1585). The two most studied social media platforms are *Facebook* and *Twitter* although the latter dominates (Kreiss et al., 2018) because its data is easier to access (boyd and Crawford, 2012).

Despite the differences in platform, there is some similarity in the findings so far. For example, despite the growing popularity of social media among politicians (Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018), some are still not keen to adopt these sites in their political communication. Metz et al. (2019) for instance found that almost 40<sup>th</sup> of German politicians in their sample did not have a *Facebook* account. Similarly, Conway et al. (2013) found uneven use of *Twitter* among the 2012 American presidential candidates during the primary elections.

Other findings suggest that politicians predominantly use a one-way rather than two-way communication style on these platforms (Williamson, 2009; Larsson, 2013; Ross and Bürger, 2014) although a few studies have also reported two-way communication (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018). In terms of adoption, research indicates that SMS use tends to be greater among politicians who are less newsworthy to traditional media by virtue of having a lower political function, coming from a smaller party or being a woman

(Larsson and Kalsnes, 2014; Ross and Bürger, 2014). Nonetheless, there is also strong evidence to suggest that while contextual party and national factors are important (Ross and Bürger, 2014), adoption and strategic use of social media largely depends on the individual politician's personality and skills (Vaccari, 2010; Larsson and Kalsnes, 2014; Kreiss et al., 2018).

Much of the research on politicians' use of social media report an increase in online self-personalisation (Small, 2010; Gerodimos and Justinussen, 2014; McGregor, 2018) that is reflective of the current trend of personalisation in politics (van Aelst et al., 2011). Self-personalisation is characterised by individualisation of politicians whereby they present their personal lives and traits to the electorate (McGregor, 2018). However, personalisation has been identified as a multi-layered concept (van Santen and van Zoonen, 2010; Langer and Sagarzazu, 2018). To this end, van Santen and van Zoonen (2010) propose professional, emotional and private communication as the three content dimensions that comprise personalisation. Relating to politician's use of social media, professional posts detail the official activities and competence of the politician, emotional posts focus on the politicians' feelings concerning issues or events, while private posts reveal details about the private life of the politician outside of their political life (Metz et al., 2019). On the whole, while findings are not very conclusive, the professional style appears to be the most popular form of communication used by politicians (Hermans and Vergeer, 2013; Metz et al., 2019). Interestingly, it is also the least to generate audience engagement while private posts, which are rarely used by politicians are the most likely to stimulate audience attention (Metz et al., 2019). There is therefore a contrast between what politicians do on social media sites and what the electorate actually want them to do. In Chapter 9, I explore this tension further.

As noted in the previous chapter, at the time of the Ghanaian and Nigerian elections which is the focus of this thesis, *Facebook* was the most pervasive social media platform. The platform lends itself as an “inexpensive and widely diffused communication tool” (Geber and Scherer, 2015, p.364). Among other things, *Facebook* enable users to upload images and/or text as they so desires. One of the important features of the site is the profile page where users can present themselves to the public (Caers et al, 2013, p.984). It consists of a small profile image embedded in a large cover photo. As the profile page is the first point of call when searching for a user’s name (Hum et al., 2011), it is plausible to assume that considerable thought will be given to how the online identity is constructed. Enli and Thumim (2012, p.91) observe for example, that constructing the online self is always political, requiring ‘a strategy of representation’ as one has to decide which aspects of the self (s)he would like to project to others, and what form the representation should take. The profile page is therefore a good place to start as a way of deconstructing how women politicians self-represent.

Given that most people are unlikely to physically meet candidates for national office (McGregor, 2018), self-representation on social media offers an important means for politicians to connect with their electorate in a way that closes this geographical and social distance (Baym, 2010; Lee and Oh, 2012; Baldwin-Philippi, 2015). Research also indicates that the way politicians project themselves online considerably influences voter evaluations (Corner and Pels, 2003; Baldwin-Philippi, 2015; McGregor et al., 2017), which in turn may impact on voting decisions (Cmeci, 2016; Grace and Bucy, 2009). From Goffman's (1959) seminal work on impression management, we know that we consciously give certain impressions that suit us while giving off others that may not be favourable. This means politicians’ self-representation on social media must ensure that the online persona they

projects them favourably while being authentic. However, the ability to consistently project an authentic image is one that very few politicians have managed to accomplish (Parry, 2015). Efficient use of social media does require “embracing socio-technical knowhow and competences in mediated visibility” (Parry, 2015, p.427). This implies that (women) politicians without the relevant skillset to manage an active online profile that projects them favourably may be disadvantaged. Besides technical competence, other resources need to be allocated towards maintaining an active and strategic online persona including employing people to manage the accounts. Due to these resource commitments, women politicians who are not convinced of the benefits to their political careers will likely not be motivated to allocate resources towards it as is shown in Chapter 9.

## **2.5 Explaining the Persistence of Gender Bias in Political News Coverage**

The previous two sections demonstrate the level of media bias against women politicians in their qualitative and quantitative representation. From this, a key question that emerges is why gender bias so pervasive in coverage of political news? A number of reasons have been suggested relating to the male dominance among journalists and in journalistic culture. According to Dahlgren and Alvares, (2013, p. 52), the media “are never mere neutral conduits: they have their own varying contingencies and logics, which serve to refract communication and cultural patterns in specific ways”. While appearing to epitomise impartiality, the very profession of journalism itself is so implicitly gendered that its androcentric norms, values and practices “masquerade as professional routines to which all journalists are expected to subscribe” (Ross and Carter, 2011, p.1149).

One of the ways gender bias in journalism is most evident is through newsroom culture. First, in terms of topics, women’s issues have traditionally been disregarded in the news (Holland,

1998; Carter et al., 1998; Ross, 2010). Ross and Carter (2011, p. 1149) further suggest that the binary differentiation between and emphasis on ‘hard’ over soft news, ‘fact’ over opinion and the public versus private among others “all produce a gender-differentiated news agenda”. Second, the use of news frames as “interpretative structures” which guide journalists to identify what is newsworthy and to organise it in ways that are easily understood by audiences, are often rooted in gender stereotypes (Norris, 1997, p. 2, 6). Other news production studies such as Rodgers and Thorson (2003) and North (2009) also reveal how newsrooms are so masculinised that the norms and routines “operate as a conformity mechanism that socialises all reporters, regardless of gender, to maintain the male-dominated power structure” (Rodgers and Thorson, 2003, p. 673). Further, men continue to dominate most media institutions in ownership, leadership and practice. Ross (2011, p. 19) makes the important point that “[i]f what we see and read and hear are men’s voices, men’s perspectives, men’s news [then] women continue to be framed as passive observers rather than active citizens”, and women politicians will continue to be represented negatively in the news.

Because journalism is so masculinised (Ross, 2004; Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015), it has been argued that increasing female journalists’ numbers will help minimise the degree of gendered coverage of female politicians. However, it is also the case that journalists work within institutional ideologies, values and cultures which inform their (individual) practices, and which serve to either facilitate or constrain their personal convictions. Therefore, even if more women enter newsrooms, the institutional practices which historically have sought men’s interests and privilege men’s views over women’s will largely remain the same. As studies show, female journalists do not necessarily differ from their male counterparts in the ways sources are selected (Ross and Carter, 2011) or politicians are covered. For example, Salem and Mejbri (2014) note that despite the increase in the number of female journalists in



Tunisia, female politicians' visibility accounted for only 10.4% on radio, 10.2% on TV, and 2.8% in newspapers. This suggests that addressing gender bias in political news reporting goes beyond merely increasing the number of female journalists (van Zoonen, 2002).

Crucially, it requires that the institutional and organisational structures within which journalists work, and which are largely androcentric be changed to reflect gender equality.

While micro analysis of journalism and its culture is important, more relevant is the wider socio-cultural ecology within which media institutions are operate. From a feminist media perspective as well as for the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts on which this thesis is based, it is even more pertinent to consider the gender ideology that exists within the broader cultural context. According to Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000), the persistent gendered reporting of women politicians in political news is rooted in the private/public debate which links to ideas about femininity and masculinity. Historically, this dichotomy has been used to organise social life, prescribing what relations women and men can have, and the roles they can play in society. Within this socially-organising framework, women are assigned to the 'private' domain of reproduction and domesticity while men are seen as belonging to the more superior public sphere which includes economic and political activity. While this doctrine of separate spheres appears to be natural, it has been argued that they developed as a response to economic and family life arrangements during the rise of European industrialisation (Reingardiene, 2003). Within feminist research, the private/public dichotomy has received considerable critique (Wischermann and Klavina, 2004), particularly as it ensures "women's dependency on men in a range of gender regimes" (Reingardiene, 2003, p. 355).

In the African context, there are two schools of thought relating to the development of binary divisions of gender roles in society. Some scholars such as Amadiume (1987), Oyewumi

(1997) and Steady (2007) argue that gender divisions are Western imports indigenised through colonial arrangements which imposed power in men and valued their labour over that of women (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013). Others like Matory (2003) believe that precolonial African societies were already structured along similar dichotomies. While a discussion on the merits or otherwise of either of these schools of thought is beyond the scope of this thesis, there is generally consensus that post-colonial African countries are largely patriarchal, and “[w]omen’s role in society is ideologically defined in the sexist and often limiting discourses of domesticity, motherhood and passivity” (Media Monitoring Project, 1999, p. 9). In Africa as elsewhere, women are primarily seen as unwelcome in and unsuitable for politics (Sossou, 2011), and these sentiments inform the gendered narratives characterising women politicians’ portrayal in press news and perceptions of journalists as will be shown in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively.

Social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly and Karau, 2002) offers further insight into the binary division of gender identities in the private/public spheres. It posits that men and women are expected to fulfil culturally prescribed gender roles perceived as normative and desirable. Gender roles, defined as “socially shared expectations for men’s and women’s behavior” (Wood and Eagly, 2009, p.109) arise as a result of the belief that men and women “possess attributes that equip them for sex-typical roles” (Eagly and Wood, 2011, p.459). This belief stems from observations of long established division of labour roles relating to family and employment that are typically performed by men and women; that of resource provider requiring dominant and agentive roles for men and that of homemaker requiring a subordinate and communal role for women (Eagly et al., 2000). With time, as men and women adapted to these roles and gained the skills for successful role performance, “people construct[ed] gender roles that are responsive to cultural and environmental conditions yet

appear, for individuals within a society, to be stable, inherent properties of men and women” (Eagly and Wood, 2011,p.459).

Through socialisation, the idea of gender roles being natural is sustained. As children grow, they learn idealised images and understandings of femininity and masculinity (Adler et al., 1992) passed on from especially family members and reinforced through peers, social experience as well as cultural practices and products (Witt, 1997). Through these, children learn to model their behaviour according to what they perceive as socially accepted, thereby perpetuating gender ideology. It is important to note however, that gender roles, like any other social category for organising social life, are not natural or inevitable, but meanings that are socially constructed and assigned (Cole et al., 2007; Pedwell, 2013). From the constructionist point of view, gender roles serve particular purposes of elevating a certain group while subordinating the other (see Chapter 4 for more on this).

Gender roles are a crucial consideration in this thesis because they give rise to gender stereotypes (Eagly et al, 2000; Eagly and Wood, 2011). Following Tuchman (1978), Meeks (2012) argues that gender stereotypes constrain the roles and identities of men and women. As with gender stereotypes, gender roles are ubiquitous and powerful in influencing behaviour (Eagly et al., 2000). They serve not only as regulatory mechanisms against which people’s social behaviour can be evaluated, but also influence the self-concepts of men and women to the extent to which they accept or internalise their assigned cultural meanings (Eagly and Wood, 2011). This is because they prescribe how men and women ought to behave; those who conform to their sex-typical roles receive approval from others while those who deviate are sanctioned. Women in African societies, for example, are socialised

through gender norms to defer to men and to their elders, to be dutiful, obedient wives and to accept their inferior status (Sossou, 2011). The fact that people can internalise gender norms and behave accordingly is a very crucial point worth highlighting as it helps us understand women politicians' differentiated attitudes towards media engagement as discussed in Chapter 8.

As people generally tend to behave in accordance with their gender roles (Eagly and Wood, 2011), it makes deviants even more conspicuous and perhaps more vulnerable to 'retribution'. Meeks (2012, p.176) observes that people create "strong gender-role stereotypes regarding culturally appropriate professions for men and women". Thus, when women are seen in the political realm, a sphere that is traditionally regarded as a "domain for masculinized behaviors messages and professional experiences" (ibid), cultural expectations of women are activated which then inclines people to view women politicians as frauds (Adcock, 2010). As media coverage of women in politics appears to be conforming to these gender discourses, the media are therefore seen as deeply implicated, not only in sustaining gender inequalities but also in reproducing them (Simpson and Mayr, 2013; O'Neill et al., 2016).

It must be noted however, that the pervasiveness of gender roles and its impact on social behaviour does not mean that there is no form of contestation. When the benefits are worthwhile, people are willing to deviate from the norm of their gender role and face reprisal (Eagly and Wood, 2011). Moreover, a person is so affected by gender roles depending on their life experiences, upbringing and the extent to which they accept and internalise these expectations (Wood and Eagly, 2009). For example, a woman brought up in a liberal-thinking

environment may be more willing and comfortable with engaging in gender-incongruent behaviour than one brought up in a conservative one. This may explain why there are individual differences in the level of assimilation of gender roles even among the same sex in relation to conforming or deviating from sex-typical behaviour.

### 2.5.1 Power, patriarchy and representation

An important element to consider in relation to gender roles is the concept of power. Central to feminist media theory, gender and power are seen as important concepts which overlap to create a multiplicity of relations of subordination (van Zoonen, 1994). The individual social location of a female politician is defined by several factors such as economic status, educational level, ethnicity and political party membership, which either open up systems of privilege or oppression. These, together with a clear understanding of the political environment, determine to a large extent, how a female politician positions herself in the political arena, views the media as an ally or foe, and utilises the opportunities available to help her maximise her political career.

This is why intersectionality is a crucial concept to consider here. Originally meant as a critique by American women of colour against aspects of second-wave feminism, intersectionality is an analytical approach which provides a multiple lens through which we can examine the different social categories intersecting with gender to create opportunities of privilege or oppression (Launius and Hassel, 2018). According to Launius and Hassel (2015, pp. 114-115; emphasis in original) intersectionality is “a theoretical framework that posits that multiple social categories....intersect at the **micro** level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the **macro**, social-

structural level". The main issue the American women of colour had against the feminist wave at the time was its failure to acknowledge the multi-faceted permutations that the intersection of gender with other social categories could produce and consequently influence the social location of individual women. Their key argument was that not all women are equally positioned. Although belonging to the same social category of 'woman' and therefore experiencing similar suppression by patriarchal systems, certain factors such as race, class and economic status further shape individual women's social position such that though subordinated, some are more emancipated than others. To those American women of colour, this was an important distinction that needed to be acknowledged.

In the same way, women politicians are not a homogenous group who conform neatly to stereotypical moulds. As with any other group, there are a variety of abstractions of what is known as 'feminine' or the category 'woman'. Depending on factors such as upbringing, education, class, economic status and professional exposure, some women politicians may be more 'liberated' than others in the sense of maximising resources including the media to advance their political careers. As research has shown, women politicians differ in their understanding of the role of the media and how it can be an ally, in the conceptualisation of their role as political actors and in their campaign strategies among others. For example, there are those like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who conform to feminine ideas or nurturing and motherhood and structure their campaigns accordingly (Jones, 2015), while there are also those like Hilary Clinton who deviate from feminine norms and represent themselves along masculine terms just to appear more credible in masculinised political arena (McGinley, 2008; Lawrence and Rose, 2010).

Beyond this, there are also women politicians who may be more powerful by virtue of their high political ranking, membership of a major party or level of contacts among journalists. Certainly, a woman politician who is just an MP and who belongs to a small party cannot claim to be in the same power position as another who is a cabinet minister as well as an MP. Again, as several studies suggest (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996; van Aelst et al., 2010) having good relationships with journalists lends a woman politician more control over the content that they produce about her as such relationships go some way to contribute to more and positive coverage. Consequently, employing intersectionality in the analysis of women politicians and their engagement with the media helps uncover the nuances in the women's use or non-use of media and the reasons behind them.

Notwithstanding the differences that may exist among women politicians, however, they are still viewed collectively as 'women' and therefore face relative forms of suppression through patriarchal social systems and structures. On the whole, gender roles have been undeniably influential in structuring social relations and (self) identity. The construction of private/public domains creates a rigid dichotomy whose influence is still felt in media coverage of women in politics (Sreberny and van Zoonen, 2000; van Zoonen, 2006). Representations, therefore, do matter (Gill, 2007) as the historical stereotyping of women has served to exclude women from politics (Dean, 2013). As noted in the introduction, women's entrance into the political arena presents a problem to the news media as they assume the status of active powerful women who "defy easy categorization" (Gallagher, 2003; p.28). Wilson and Boxer (2015; p.2) argue that "[t]he stereotype of politics is one that is tough and ruthless". How then can the media reconcile women's femininity with the masculinised norm of politics except to adopt a narrative frame that hinges on their gender? This explains why media portrayals of women politicians seems to consistently revert to the gender frame.

One of the key ways in which gender ideology has been sustained is through patriarchy. A central concept in feminist research, Walby (1989; p.214) defines it as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. As an ideological system (Lazar, 2005), patriarchy gives more power to men over women in addition to readier access to the things that are socially valued (Pedwell, 2013). Dating back to the 1970s, feminist media scholars have sought to flesh out the ways in such power structures serve to systematically subordinate women (Gallagher, 2003). Patriarchy, like other forms of power, work to “mark, exclude, control, discipline and regulate” (Pedwell, 2013, p.181) women and is therefore an essential term in analysing gender relations (Walby, 1989).

While patriarchy does not necessarily arise from gender roles (Eagly and Wood, 2011), it nonetheless helps us to understand why there are gender divisions and inequalities in society (Duncan, 1994). Apart from rejecting biological determinism and the rigid notion that all men are dominantly positioned and all women subordinate (Walby, 1989), the suggestion here is that “patriarchy is highly differentiated in how it emerges and operates” depending on how its structures and practices interact (Duncan, 1994; p.1178). Consequently, analysis of gender ideology as explored in this study, should be rooted in the broader socio-cultural context, linking it to the particular gender norms and practices which uphold its existence.

Although the discussion above risks being criticised as too simplistic, it does not in any way describe the workings of these concepts as rigid or static. On the contrary, it recognises their complex and dynamic nature in the sense that it takes into consideration the linkages that



exist and the interactions that occur within the socio-cultural context in which they are situated, allowing for different variations and different levels of abstraction across time and space. For example, it seems likely that a white, heterosexual, working class, uneducated woman living in a western, liberal society may have more agency or be in a less repressed position than a black woman with the same attributes. Similarly, such a black woman, living in an African society, may not be as powerless as her western-domiciled counterpart although all three women may be more disadvantaged than their male peers in similar circumstances. Such is the range of variation and different levels of abstraction which have plagued feminist analyses of the media, contributing to its complexity and plurality.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the key theoretical concepts, arguments and trajectories of research in the field. I have shown how both the quantitative and qualitative representations overwhelmingly point to the media's systematically gendered coverage of women politicians. As core intermediaries between political actors and citizens who contribute immensely in the shaping and interpretation of politics (Adcock, 2010) and of political actors, this generally negative depiction of women politicians serve to undermine their political careers. This is because the construction of women politicians in media discourse largely portrays them as incompatible with politics and therefore politically incompetent.

I have also shown that despite being equally important, visual representations as well as self-representations of women politicians are often neglected aspects of research in the field. This is in addition to the fact that much of the scholarship is Western-based. These have important implications for how the field is shaped. A relatively narrow scope in scholarship stands the risk of excluding relevant information that may shed important insights on the phenomenon,

leading to better theorising. Hence, for a comprehensive understanding of women politicians' media coverage, these gaps need to be addressed which is what this study aims to do. I end this chapter, therefore, by emphasising that while representations of women politicians in the media are generally gendered, the forms that they take and the means by which they are presented are heavily dependent on contextual factors as well as different media formats. Secondly, apart from socio-cultural ideas of gender, the media as a social institution considerably shape the mediated presence of women politicians. In this regard, the next chapter focuses on the media, exploring media-politics relationship, political news production and the journalistic culture which give rise to media content on women politicians.

## CHAPTER 3| INFLUENCES ON POLITICAL NEWS CONTENT

The previous chapter examined the ways in which women politicians are portrayed in traditional media, analysing the associated key issues and trajectories in the extant literature. I highlighted the two broad strands of research agenda in the field pertaining to quantity and quality of representation, and the overwhelming evidence which point to women politicians' marginalisation and largely negative reporting in the media. Having done this, I now turn my attention to the conceptual framework underpinning this study. Broadly, I discuss the development of literature on the media/politics relationship and how that impacts on women politicians' news coverage. The discussion generated in this chapter is geared towards answering the second research question of this thesis: **what kind of individual, institutional and socio-cultural influences contribute to shaping news coverage in relation to women politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian press and radio?**

The chapter begins by making a case for why it is important to study the production process of political news with specific reference to women politicians. This is followed by an overview of the extant literature on media/politics relations. Having reviewed key components of the literature, I focus on the two main conceptual approaches of Mediatisation of Politics (Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b) and Hierarchy of Influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014) from political communication and journalism studies respectively, integrating Feminist media theory (van Zoonen, 1994; Ross, 2016, p.201) in the discussion. Following this, I present the proposed conceptual framework which will be used to analyse the interviews.

### 3.1 Importance of Studying the Contexts of Production of News Media Content

Studying the production process of political news is crucial for several reasons. First, it gives empirical evidence to explain why media representations of women politicians are the way they are, thus informing better conceptualisation of the phenomenon which will in turn lead to more strategic approaches to addressing the inequalities previously noted in the media representations. The latter is essential, especially as I hope that this thesis will be a starting point for dialogue with political news workers on more equitable reporting, and capacity building for women politicians on maximising media opportunities to promote their political goals.

As noted above in the previous chapter, there is a dominance of news text analysis in the scholarship with most employing either content analysis or framing to draw their conclusions. Content analysis allows for systematic analysis of large sets of data to identify patterns in the data set. On its own however, it is “seldom able to support statements about the significance, effects or interpreted meaning of a domain of representation” (Bell, 2001, p.13) or even why the patterns exist. Framing, on the other hand, goes beyond revealing patterns to expose ways in which communicative messages are structured “to promote certain facets of a ‘perceived reality’ and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation”(Entman, 1993, p.51). Framing enables us to identify and describe the specific ways in which the media discriminates between female and male politicians. However, while content analysis and framing analysis are very useful in illuminating patterns of media representation of women politicians, they are less useful in determining the factors that contribute to these patterns as they cannot sufficiently explain *why* the content is the way it is. Examining the

production process is therefore useful as it illuminates the communicative choices which produce the eventual media content we consume.

Second, at the heart of media representations of women politicians is the news texts which portray them. Following Fairclough (1995), Machin (2008) argues that to understand news texts, it is important to examine the production processes behind the texts. Like other scholars (Tuchman, 1972; Schudson, 2005), Machin suggests that news is not a mirror of reality but the product of institutional and professional norms and practices. News texts do not come into being by themselves. They are created by individuals working within organisational constraints and enablement which are in turn informed by norms of practice. These norms and practices need to be examined “if we wish to understand what they (news texts) represent, how they represent and what they do not represent” (Machin, 2008; p.64).

Studying the production process thus sheds light on why women politicians are marginalised in news texts, for example, or why the media tend to offer more agency to male politicians and not female politicians.

Third, as demonstrated in the following sections, the nature of the relationships between news workers and news makers, and the format of the production process shape the final news texts made available to audiences. This point is reiterated by Richardson (2007) who asserts that texts are part of social relations, and Schudson (1995) who sees news as interrelated with culture. In fact, Schudson (1995, p. 14) advances the idea of news as a form of culture, arguing that “news...is produced by people who operate, often unwittingly, within a cultural system, a reservoir of stored cultural meanings and patterns of discourse”. The discussion in Chapter 8 (Section 8.1.5) will show that political actors who cultivate relationships with journalists are more likely to have increased visibility and more positive coverage in the news

than those who do not. In the same way, while professional standards and practices in journalism appear to be similar worldwide, localised journalistic practice may have some vestiges of difference due to the particular range of contextual elements exerting pressure on it (Anderson, 2013; Mabweazara, 2018a). This explains why some differences in news content exist even in areas where the political and media systems are similar (van Aelst et al., 2010). Investigating the production process of political news therefore allows for a better understanding of the particularities of the journalists-( women) politicians' relationship as well as which aspects (if any) of the production process encourage bias against women politicians.

### **3.2 Political News Production**

Political news journalism is one of the most important areas of research in journalism, intersecting the fields of journalism and political communication (Esser et al., 2011). The production process of political news can be viewed as a product of the interaction between the two institutions of media and politics. Thus, it involves news media and its workers at one end, and politics and its actors at the other, whereby the group that exerts more power over the other gains more control over the content of political news (Landerer, 2013). Before I proceed to discuss this two-way relationship, it is important to note here that while much can be found on journalistic practice in African newsrooms (see for example Mabweazara, 2018), political news journalism is an under-developed strand of research. Generally, information about political journalism often forms part of studies examining journalistic culture more broadly (but see Galava 2018; Mukhongo 2010; Tutwane 2018) Therefore, although the context of this study is Ghana and Nigeria, the literature that is reviewed in this section relies mainly on Western political news journalism scholarship, and wherever possible, draws on relevant African-based research. As Mabweazara (2018, p. 10) argues, African news

production is both “radically different but at the same time, similar in many ways to established global practices and norms”. Because the model of journalism practiced in many African newsrooms originates from the West, mainly the US and UK (Mabweazara 2018; Banda 2009), when local influences are accounted for, African journalistic cultures broadly follow Western newsroom practices.

### **3.2.1 Approaches to study of media/ politics relations**

There have been several approaches to the study of this “interactional relationship” between news media and politics (Blumler and Esser, 2018, p.2). Oates (2008) observes that generally, these have either looked at the impact of the media on political systems and culture, therefore a media-centric approach, or examined how politics has shaped the media - a politics-centric approach. While a full discussion of these studies is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few examples are worth mentioning. From a media perspective, Siebert et al.'s (1963) is noteworthy. In looking at how the media interacted with political systems, they classify media institutions into four models- ‘Libertarian’, ‘Socially Responsible’, ‘Communist’ and ‘Authoritarian’ depending on the level of state intervention in the media. For many years, this was an influential model for analysing media/politics relations, and some will argue still is.

Although Siebert et al.'s (1963) model has been heavily criticised for, among other things, being ethnocentric and too simplistic (Oates, 2008), it was important in setting the stage for later studies on the relationship between the media and politics such as Hallin and Mancini's work on media systems (2004; 2011; 2017). After reviewing Siebet et al's (1956) four models, they proposed a more comprehensive but smaller set of Liberal, Democratic Corporatist & Polarized Pluralist (2004, p. 11), which offered a more systematic approach to analysing media systems (Patterson, 2007), especially from a comparative perspective. In a

somewhat similar fashion to Siebert et al.'s (1963) model, Graber's (2005) study categorises news media into four groups according to how they approach news reporting. Her four categories of 'Mirror', 'Organizational', 'Political' and 'Professional' provide more specific ways of looking at news production in particular, as well as media systems more generally.

From the politics perspective, Bennett's (1990) indexing theory stands out. In this theory, he explains how political actors provide material for journalists through the issues they debate on and the opinions they express. In this sense, journalists monitor political actors for material which they 'index' in news content, rather than set the news agenda for political actors to respond to. In this way, Bennett argues that news content usually mirrors dominant political discourses and the views of key political actors. Another notable example is Wolfsfeld's (2011, p.30) PMP (Politics-Media-Politics) cycle which he describes as follows: "political change leads to changes in the way the news media cover issues which leads to further political change".

While media-centric and politics-centric perspectives are both valid, I take the view that to understand political news content, it is necessary to examine both perspectives *together* as "in reality...they operate simultaneously in a dynamic interplay of ebb and flow moments" (Blumler and Esser, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, it is more useful to study the two together rather than separately as has previously been the norm. Against this background, this chapter employs the concept of mediatisation of politics as the analytical framework for examining the data, because of its utility in enabling a *simultaneous* interrogation and analysis of both media-centric and politics-centric perspectives. Additionally, its conceptualisation offers a means of investigating the institutional constitutions of both media and politics through its notion of the logics (see Section 3.2.2). Before discussing the meaning and implications of



mediatisation of politics, I first provide a brief overview of the key findings from studies that have explored the relationship between journalists and political actors, and how that interaction shapes news content.

### **Towards conceptualisation of media/politics relations**

The relationship between journalists and politicians has attracted much attention with scholars describing it variously as a tango (Aelst and Vliegenthart, 2014), push and pull forces (Jay G. Blumler and Esser, 2018) and ‘market exchanges’ of goods and services (Niven, 2005; Fengler and Ruß-Mohl, 2008). Others view the relationship as mutually dependent (Mancini, 1993; Kuhn and Neveu, 2002), reciprocal (Kepplinger, 2007) and contingent (Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006). Generally, most of the research have been more interested in higher level politicians such as those with executive power and how their political status affects political news content (van Aelst et al., 2010). These studies have established that such politicians have greater influence over media content than those without (Bennett, 1990; Gans, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 2011). A few, however, have looked at lower level politicians such as at the municipal level (Baugut, 2019).

In terms of the constitution of the scholarship on journalists/politicians’ relationships, the general concerns have been on frequency of contact between the two actors, autonomy of one over the other, presence of conflict or distrust and role perceptions. Regarding how frequently politicians and journalists interact, studies show that media competition influences the extent to which political actors get access to the media. For example, examining more than 600 political actors in 52 German cities, Baugut et al. (2017) find that the higher the competition among politicians for media attention, the less likely it was for politicians to have closer relationships with journalists at the municipal level. The same seems to be true at the national

level as Aelst et al. (2010) report. Through survey responses from MPs in Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, they reveal that where there was less inter-MP competition, politicians had more frequent contact with journalists.

Another area of concern has been on how independent journalists are from political influence. While one school of thought believes that the proliferation of media organisations and declining audience attention in recent years has resulted in more sophisticated news management processes, allowing political actors to retain some degree of control over political content, another is of the view that journalists exercise more autonomy over the selection and construction of news content due to recent development towards commercialisation and a ratings-driven media as well as technologies which enable journalists to bypass official assistance (Bennett and Livingston, 2003). Here, it is useful to view both political actors and journalists as having their own goals, values and motivations. In this regard, Aelst and Walgrave (2017) observe that “politicians are strategic actors with specific goals and ambitions that try to pursue those goals as good as they can”, while Bennett and Livingston (2003, p. 360) encourage us to think of journalists as “semi-independent players in the news game”.

Research on political agenda setting or the media’s effect on politicians at the institutional level has also received considerable attention (Van Noije et al., 2008; Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010; Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013). While most are concerned with macro level effects, Zoizner et al. (2017) depart from the norm by focusing on individual politicians’ responsiveness to the media using a triangulated data set of surveys, news articles and parliamentary speeches from Belgium, Israel and Canada. Their findings show that politicians who are more oriented towards public needs have a higher response to the media

than those who act on their own judgement. Likewise, those who can be consulted on a wider variety of topics yielded more to the media's agenda than those who specialise in specific areas. Thus the extent to which politicians engage with the media depends on their ideological beliefs and professional expertise.

What is glaringly lacking in the literature surveyed above is a gender dimension to the scholarship. While there is some variety in terms of country, national vs local and institutional vs individual level research, studies with an explicit gender agenda are very rare (notable exception is Salem and Mejbri, 2014). As has been demonstrated in Chapter 2, a gender approach opens up new avenues of inquiry which are often overlooked, and which hold much promise in yielding new insights, leading to better understanding of how gender impacts on the relationship between political actors and journalists. The ways that women politicians perceive their roles and interact with various groups of people may be different from how their male colleagues do based on the gender differences that have been discussed in Chapter 2. In this regard, it is plausible to expect that female politicians may interact differently with journalists than male politicians (see Chapter 8). Therefore, examining the relationship between politicians and journalists and the production of political news content through a gender lens is a valid research agenda worth pursuing. Having said that, I now turn to the conceptual framework within which the interviews collected for this part of the thesis will be analysed.

### **3.2.2 Mediatisation of politics**

Since Mazzoleni and Schulz's (1999) seminal article, the concept has gained increasing popularity among media and politics scholars (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014a; Meyen et al., 2014; Mazzoleni, 2017). Generally, mediatisation refers to “a social change process in which

media have become increasingly influential in and deeply integrated into different spheres of society” (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014a); p.244). It is important to distinguish the term from the sometimes parallel or synonymously used *mediation* and *medialization* as the last two are quite distinct from each other and from the former. According to Mazzoleni (2008a), *mediation* speaks to the media’s more general role of transmitting information from communicators to their audiences. This is a neutral and static process and forms a key part of mediatization (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014a). *Medialization*, on the other hand, is the more popular and preferred term especially among German-speaking and Scandinavian media scholars, mainly for the practical purpose of distinguishing it from the “imperial immediacy” sense in which mediatization has been historically used in Germany (Hepp, 2014; p.22). Finally, mediatisation of politics describes a situation where the media are the key channel through which (political) information is conveyed between political actors and citizens (Strömbäck, 2008).

A range of approaches has developed from the general concept of mediatisation over the years which can be broadly divided into two main branches (Mazzoleni, 2017). One, led by media scholars such as Mazzoleni (2008b) and Hjarvard (2008), is mediatisation of society which looks at the media’s ubiquity and influence in all aspects of social life (Mazzoleni, 2008b; for other works in this area, see Krotz, 2009; Hepp, 2009), while mediatisation of politics captures the “interactional relationship between news media and political actors” (Blumler and Esser, 2018; p.2). It is this latter domain that is more relevant to this study and which will now be the focus of the discussion.

While mediatisation of politics has grown in popularity in recent years, there is still a lack of sufficient empirical studies commensurate with its popularity (Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2011). A key challenge has been developing a conceptual framework that is clearly defined and precise enough to enable systematic and coherent empirical studies. The most widely accepted attempt at operationalising the concept is Strömbäck's (2008) analytical framework in which he identifies four stages of mediatisation of politics. This is based on the theorising of mediatisation of politics as constituting “four analytically distinct, but highly interrelated, dimensions”, each dimension “constituting a continuum, where politics can be more or less mediatized” (Strömbäck and Van Aelst, 2013; p.343). Strömbäck (2008) clarifies that in practice, these four dimensions, though distinct, are highly related.

The first dimension is when the news media becomes the main source of political information and the primary means through which political actors and citizens communicate (Mazzoleni, 2008a). In the second, the media become comparatively more independent and therefore increasingly adopt media logic. It reflects “increasing journalistic professionalism, a more pragmatic and less sacerdotal approach to politics, and increasing commercialization” (Strömbäck, 2008; p. 237). The third dimension is when media logic is so pervasive that political actors have to adopt media logic if they are to have any influence on public opinion. Here, the “selection and framing of news are [now] guided by the news media’s own news values and need to garner audience attention while keeping own costs, rather than by the needs of political actors or what kind of news people need as citizens rather than as consumers” (Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013, p.343). The fourth occurs when media logic determines the selection of media content such that political actors not only adopt but internalise media logic and dominant news values so much so that it becomes difficult, even

for them, to distinguish between the two logics, leading to what Blumenthal (1980; cited in Strömbäck, 2008; p.240) calls “permanent campaigning”; a blurring of the two logics.

Another way mediatisation has been approached is through either a political actor-centric or media actor-centric perspective (Blumler and Esser, 2018). The political actor-centric analysis focuses on political actors, conceptualising mediatisation as ‘a reaction’ resulting from political actors’ ‘perceptions’ of the media’s growing influence in the society (Donges and Jarren, 2014, p. 189). In this view, mediatisation of politics is regarded as a pull process whereby political actors deliberately draw news media logic into their own considerations and action rationales” (Blumler, and Esser, 2018, p. 856). Media actor-centric analysis, on the other hand, concerns journalistic interventionism where mediatisation is “the result of media-driven influences in the political domain” (Mazzoleni, 2014, p. 43). This symbolises “push qualities of the news media” (Blumler and Esser, 2018, p. 856). However, as Blumler and Esser (2018, p. 857) observe, these two perspectives are interrelated in reality, and that “each perspective incorporates many elements of the other”. Therefore, they argue that in order to understand the behaviours of political and media actors in political news production, both perspectives need to be studied in interaction. Following Blumler and Esser (2018), I conceptualise mediatisation as a combination of push and pull forces that results in both direct and indirect or reciprocal media effects. Based on this, I adopt a dual perspective to analysis of the factors which shape women politicians' media representations in Chapter 8. I analyse the interviews using a three tier framework that is described below.

Behind mediatisation is the assumption that “media and politics constitute two separate, albeit interdependent, systems guided by differently logics” (Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013, p.342) namely media logic and political logic. The idea of a logic governing the operations of

media and politics at the institutional level is important to mediatisation of politics as it forms the basis of its conceptualisation. Strömbäck and Esser (2014; p.14) explain that both logics are guideline for “appropriate thinking and acting within each institutional sphere and are based on each sphere’s purposes, interests, needs and institutional structures”. If media logic and political logic compete for prominence in the media/politics relationship, how does that interaction affect political news production? Before discussing that, I look at the assumptions behind the two logics and what they constitute.

### **(News) media logic and political logic: assumptions and implications**

Originating from Altheide and Snow (1979, p. 10), media logic was defined by the authors as consisting of “a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information”. Initially, this was construed as relating to the format of media texts in terms of their organisation, style and ‘grammar’. Later, Altheide (1995; p.11) clarified it as consisting mainly of the selection, organisation and presentation of information. Following Altheide (1995), Esser (2013; p. 166) suggests that media logic can be understood as “encompass[ing] all those imperatives that guide the production of news that ...serve[s] as an authoritative presentation of the political reality”. These imperatives, according to Strömbäck (2008, p. 233) dominate the “social processes of the news values and the storytelling techniques the media make use of to take advantage of their own medium and its formats, and to be competitive in the ongoing struggle to capture people’s attention”. Among these techniques are simplification and personalisation (McAllister, 2007; Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014), stereotypisation, spectacularisation and framing of politics as a strategic game (Patterson, 1993; Mazzoleni, 2008a). The imperatives as noted by Esser (2013) above also relate to particular ways of “interpreting and covering social, cultural, and political

phenomenon” (Stromback and Dimitrova, 2011, p. 33). In Chapters 6 and 8, I demonstrate how these interpretive techniques are very much present and dominant particularly in the radio data, where they serve to limit women politicians’ visibility in news content.

The other spectrum of influence on political news content is political logic. It must be noted that of the two logics, political logic is the most underdeveloped in terms of its operationalisation as most mediatisation of politics studies have been mainly interested in examining Strömbäck’s third dimension which relates to news media logic, and not so much the fourth dimension which emphasises political logic (Landerer, 2013; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b). Consequently, news media logic is comparatively better conceptualised than political logic as there are more empirical studies to serve as reference points.

To understand political logic, it is important to look at the question of what political actors aim to achieve through politics. As Strömbäck (2008; p. 233) notes, “at the heart of any conceptualisation of political logic lies the fact that politics ultimately is about collective and authoritative decision making as well as the implementation of political decisions”. There is an ongoing debate about what politics stands for. At one end are scholars who believe that politics is ultimately about gaining power, while those at the other end contend that what is important is the development and implementation of policies and programmes which solve societal problems (Esser, 2013; Strömbäck, 2014). While these two positions are valid, it must be noted that the concept of politics is too broad (Landerer, 2013) to be reduced to only one dimension (Esser, 2013). Consequently, Meyer (2002) proposes the triad of politics, policy and polity.



Politics is the self-presentational side of the triad (Esser, 2014; p.165) aimed at “garnering support for one’s candidacy, party or political program” (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014; p. 15). Here, political processes are targeted towards the public and include “tactics and strategies for winning public support and publicity, symbolic politics, image projections and branding” (ibid). Policy on the other hand, is the more back stage, ‘production’ side concerned with finding solutions to the societal problems deemed important, and in pushing through preferred policies which fit the ideology of the political actor (Esser, 2013; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). Finally, polity, refers to the institutional framework within which political actors operate, which also serves as a guideline for appropriate behaviour within the political sphere (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014). The key elements here are the type of political, electoral, party, judicial as well as bureaucratic systems in operation. The triad of politics, policy and polity form the framework within which political actors operate.

Given the importance of the media in all political processes (Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013), these three aspects of politics can either facilitate or hinder political actors’ use of the media. Conceptualising politics as constituting three dimensions is useful for me in this thesis as it illuminates how politicians may have different political considerations at different political seasons, which in turn influence how they seek (or not) media exposure for their activities. For instance, a politician focusing on the political dimension may be more inclined towards seeking media attention than one intent on the policy dimension. Similarly, it explains how politicians in Ghana and Nigeria, as elsewhere in the world, ‘hoard’ development projects until the campaign period to announce them so that voters remember how hard they have worked as their representatives. The three distinctions therefore allow me to progress in this study with the assumption that political actors’ attitude to the media are motivated by different kinds of political goals which they each pursue, and that any differences in their

media engagement may be explained, to some extent, by which of these political dimensions they are focusing on.

The assumptions behind the two logics in mediatisation of politics have led to some criticisms. Among other things, both media logic and political logic have been criticised for being reductionist (Couldry, 2008), too vague or ambiguous (Landerer, 2013), and too rigid and narrow to account for the complexity of the media-politics relationship (Lundby, 2009; Hepp, 2009). To address some of these criticisms, Strömbäck (2011) proposes the narrower term of news media logic, where the basic assumption behind news media logic and political logic is that “media and politics constitute two different institutional systems that serve different purposes and that each has its own set of actors, organizations, and institutions, rules and procedures, and needs and interests”(Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b, p. 14). As this is more specific and relevant to this thesis’s preoccupation with political news production, Strömbäck’s notion is useful and is henceforth adopted.

Following Strömbäck (2008), Landerer (2013) offers a model based primarily on the fact that the commercial dimension is a dominant theme running through majority of the studies which have operationalised the logics. Consequently, she suggests that media logic and political logic should be replaced by the terms market logic and normative logic respectively, where market logic refers to the “market-oriented primacy of newsworthiness according to which certain issues are selected, organized, and presented, using particular formats”, and normative logic is the “normative ideals enabling a democratic society to take informed decisions ...according to which issues are selected and formats structured” (2013; p. 248). While this kind of conceptualisation may be useful in some contexts, it is quite problematic when

applied to the Ghanaian and Nigerian media landscape where state-owned media, which still regard themselves as a public service, co-exist with commercialised private media outlets. In this case, it will be difficult to account for state-owned media as their primary aim is not to make profit. Landerer's (2013) idea of a market-oriented logic therefore risks overlooking this crucial difference in my study.

In relation to news media logic, Esser suggests another triad comprising professional, commercial and technological aspects. Professional aspects of media logic speak to the distinguishing characteristics which set journalism apart as a profession in itself with its own culture, routine practices, norms and values, while commercial aspects refer to the journalistic preoccupation with producing content that sells rather than the normative objective of informing citizens of critical issues. Finally, technological considerations refer to how the affordances of particular media platforms shape processes of content production (2013).

Like Landerer (2013), Esser's (2013) news media logic framework leaves out a very important factor for my study which is the journalists themselves. This is because whatever imperatives are in place for guiding the news production, a crucial element is those who implement them. According to Adaja (2014; p. 48), "news represents and presents values shared by the journalists, news organisations and the society". Thus, while professional routines and institutional norms are important in determining news content, journalists also exert some influence either consciously or unconsciously, and therefore cannot be removed from the equation. For example, one key phenomenon that remains largely missing from Western (political) news journalism scholarship but which is pervasive in African newsrooms

is ‘cash for coverage’ (Ristow, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 1, this involves, among other things, politicians paying journalists to publish negative news about their political rivals, and thus highlights the (near) autonomy that certain journalists have in certain media outlets with regard to news selection and content. Against this background, Esser’s (2013) notion of news media logic as constituting mainly professionalisation, commercialisation and technological aspects fails to account for all the layers of influences on Ghanaian and Nigerian political news.

Further, another context-related example is the high regard for the gatekeeping role of African journalists which is seen as very crucial in the news production process (Adaja, 2014; Oso, 2014; Diedong, 2016), and which cannot be disregarded in a study situated in Africa. According to McQuail (2005; p. 308), gatekeeping theory is “a process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions regarding whether or not to allow a particular news report to pass through the ‘gates’ of a news medium into the news channels”. These selection decisions, later extended to include editorial decisions, rest on “professionals working within news organizations” (Shoemaker et al., 2009; p. 77). While the initial theory focused on the individual gatekeeper as being solely responsible for news selection, it has been reformulated over the years to account for other wider contextual factors such as sources, advertisers and organisational routines (ibid; McQuail, 2005). Thus proponents now recognise that while journalists have some level of gatekeeping power, they also have to operate within professional and organisational rules and practices (Omojola, 2014). This notwithstanding, the fact remains that journalists make an important input into the news selection and production process. Therefore, I include them in my analytical framework explained below.

As earlier mentioned, this thesis takes the view that political news is shaped by media-related factors construed here under news media logic, and political -related factors relating to political logic. Because I consider journalists to be an important part of political news production, and due to the gender focus of this study which necessitates a look at the gender ideology in the cultural fibre of Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, the institutional level analysis that mediatisation offers through political logic and news media logic is useful but insufficient to account for these two other relevant factors. Consequently, in addition to employing mediatisation of politics, I also draw on the Hierarchy of Influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014) which helps me address these gaps. Before proposing the analytical framework that I use in analysing my interviews, I first discuss Shoemaker and Reese's model.

### **3.2.3 Hierarchy of Influence model**

Research in journalism have documented the various ways that the news production process can be shaped. However, a framework that allows for a more comprehensive examination of the context of news production, as well as the production process itself and the external factors which either directly or indirectly shape the process is the Hierarchical influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014). Following the sociology of news tradition, the model “takes into account the multiple forces that simultaneously impinge on the media and suggest how influence at one level may interact with that at another” (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p.1), to shape the final content that we see, hear or read. The authors propose five interrelated but different levels of influences on media content, namely Individual, Routines, Organisational, Institutional and Social Systems levels.

The usefulness of the model lies in its capacity to facilitate an analysis of media content which “disentangles the relationships among individual-level professional and their routines, the organisations that house them, the institutions in which they cohere, and the social systems within which they operate and help maintain” (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p.390). All five levels of influence shape news content in important ways and are useful for examining the different factors which shape women politicians’ news coverage. However, given the focus of this study on the individual, institutional and socio-cultural influences contributing to news on women politicians, only four (Individual, Routines, Organisational and Social Systems levels) are most relevant and will thus be examined in detail here. In my analytical framework, I substitute Shoemaker and Reese’s Institutional level influence with the institutional- related concepts of political logic and new media logic that mediatisation provides as Institutional level influences only relate to media-related influences, whereas the logics offer a framework for analysing *both* media-related and political-related influences which is more relevant for my purpose in this thesis. Before presenting my analytical framework where I explain how I incorporate the logics of mediation with the Hierarchy of Influence model, I first discuss the four: Individual, Routines and Organisational influences, situating them within the specific contexts of Nigerian and Ghanaian media environments in order to demonstrate how the model is applicable for my study.

### **Individual level influence**

At the individual level, analysis focuses on the “personal traits of news workers, news values they adhere to, professional roles they take on, and other demographic features” (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.398). This is against the background that even within national cultures,

there are different professional types (ibid). The individual level analysis helps explain what makes journalists tick, the professional values they abide by, the routines they follow, and the perceptions they have which shape their news selection, coverage and reporting decisions. More broadly, it locates the individual news worker within the larger social structure, presenting them as entities who embody socio-cultural values in addition to their professional beliefs. This is an important distinction especially given the gender focus of this thesis. If journalists who produce political news imbibe the gender ideology that exists in their society, then it is expected that they would be influenced by it in their perception of and interaction with women politicians as I show in Chapter 8.

A few things are worth highlighting about the state of journalism in Ghana and Nigeria. First, as a legacy of colonialism, journalism was formerly not seen as a profession requiring training (Abubakar and Dauda, 2016; Ibbi, 2016). Williams (2014) speaks of how in the very early days of the profession, Nigerian journalists for example, entered journalism with low level or no formal qualifications and had to learn the trade on the job. Currently, however, most journalists possess some kind of professional training and/or tertiary education (Amankwah et al 2017). Second, journalists are generally paid very low salaries as most media outlets struggle financially (as noted in Chapter 1) (Ibbi, 2016; Amankwah et al., 2017; Skjerdal, 2018). Journalists are thus quite susceptible to manipulation by sources, contributing to the ‘brown envelope syndrome’ or the phenomenon of ‘soli’ (Olukoju, 2008; Nwabueze, 2010).<sup>2</sup> Some African media scholars believe the financial precarity of journalists has created a situation where they are confronted daily with the dilemma of pursuing personal

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<sup>2</sup> Brown envelope or ‘soli’ (short for ‘solidarity’) is money given by news makers to journalists for attending their events. It is supposedly meant to cater for the travel expenses of the journalist while attending the event, but essentially functions as a bribe for covering the story as it more or less it guarantees the story being selected. News makers who do not give ‘soli’ run the risk of their stories not being printed/aired (for more on this, see Skjerdal, 2018; Sampaio-Dias, 2019).

and family survival at the expense of ethical values (Limor and Himelboim, 2006; Mfumbusa, 2006).

The brown envelope syndrome is worth emphasising because of its pervasiveness in African newsrooms and the implications on political news production. In a recent study in Ghana, Amankwah et al (2017) note that four out of every five journalists in Ghana's largest city accept the brown envelope. They report that many saw nothing wrong with the practice, and that it had become so institutionalised to the extent that media owners factor 'soli' into salary considerations. As a result of this practice, journalists in Ghana and Nigeria, as well as other African countries, may be less inclined to maintain professional standards of fairness, balance and objectivity. The impact of these economic challenges that these journalists face is what differentiates them from their peers in the more economically developed global North (Mabweazara, 2018b).

### **Routines Level Influence**

The routines level forms the symbolic environment within which journalists conduct their work. It concerns the "ways of working" which make up journalistic practices, "including those unstated rules and ritualized enactments that are not always made explicit" (Shoemaker and Reese, 2016, p.399). The power of routines lies not just in the dictates of editors for example, but also in the routinised practices of news selection, coverage and reporting which establish patterns that "serve the needs of the organization, adapt to requirements of information sources, control the workflow, and give it a meaningful structure" (ibid).

Routines are not randomly selected but strategically adopted to maximise scarce resources and the unlimited raw material that can be used as news, while increasing efficiency of



journalistic work and organisational profit (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014). Thus, they are a set of rules imposed on news workers by the organisation in response to technological advancements, deadlines, space limitations and norms (Reese, 2001), which may either constrain or facilitate the work of the news worker. Tuchman (1972), credited as the first to examine journalistic routines (Becker and Vlad, 2009) notes that journalists rely on routines for “processing information called news, a depletable product made every day” (Tuchman, 1972, p.662). Routines are therefore a “mechanism for control and discipline in the news making process and for maximising available resources” (Oso, 2014; p.207), which help create news (Becker and Vlad, 2009, p.62). As will be shown below, routine practices observed in the news production process systematically favour male over female politicians, thus contributing to the latter’s generally negative media representations.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) explain that routines develop from three domains whose consideration are key in the production of media content. These are organisational-oriented routines, audience-oriented routines and source-oriented routines. Organisational-oriented routines create routine practices that “deliver, within time and space limitations, the most acceptable product to the consumer in the most efficient manner” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; p. 109).

Audience-oriented routines, on the other hand, focuses on delivering news stories that satisfy audiences’ interests. To do this, media outlets operate by news values; “a system of criteria which are used to make decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of material” Palmer (2001, p.45) as well as which aspects to emphasise in the news (Becker and Vlad, 2009). While a full discussion on news values here is not possible due to space constraints, it is

important to note that much has been written on it, although key contributors have been (Galtung and Ruge, 1965) and Harcup and O'Neill (2001; 2017). A prevailing list of news values includes Power elite, Celebrity, Entertainment, Surprise, Bad news, Good news, Magnitude, Relevance, Follow-up, and Newspaper Agenda (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017), audio-visuals (Caple and Bednarek, 2015; Dick, 2014), conflict and exclusivity ( Philips, 2015; Schultz, 2007) and shareability (Harcup and O'Neil, 2017). While news values is a Western concept, it is also true that due to the colonial history and the fact that journalism education in Africa was introduced by and patterned after Western models (Banda, 2009), newsroom cultures are considerably influenced by particularly UK and US practices (Mabweazara, 2015), although certain traditions may be contextually informed (Akinfemisoye, 2018). By observing news values, journalists assign them institutional legitimacy which in turn ensures the structural marginalisation of those stories or groups who do not fall within the requirements as stipulated by the concepts.

Finally, source-related routines refer to source-recruitment practices that journalists follow, which also favour the powerful. Some scholars are of the view that the journalistic norm of objectivity (un)wittingly inclines journalists towards the powerful as they are seen as the most credible, possessing the right to speak on issues (Oso, 2014). Gans, for instance, (2003; p. 211) argues that media access “reflect the hierarchies of nation and society”. Similarly, Oso (2014; p. 208) points out that “routine factors privilege the voices of the powerful in the news”, referring to the Nigerian media as “elitist and urban oriented”. All these arguments resonate with Bennett's (1990; 2011) indexing theory (referenced in Section 3.2.1 above and Chapter 1) which describes the dominance of elite voices in news content. It explains why government officials, for example, enjoy a higher level of control over news content than ‘ordinary’ politicians. In relation to gender, research has shown that journalists generally prefer male politicians to their female counterparts. Nonetheless, by virtue of news media

logic, even those in positions less likely to attract much media attention, such as women politicians, may have an opportunity to do so if they adopt certain appropriate strategies to create material that complies with news media logic (as discussed in Section 3.2.3).

### **Organisational level influence**

Apart from Individual and Routines level of influence, a third level of influence on news content is the Organisational level. Analysis at the organisational level considers what sets the media organisation apart as an entity in itself, making it easily distinguished from other organisations. These constitutive elements include ownership, goals, actions, rules and membership (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p.130). The authors explain that as a media organisation “creates, modifies, produces and distributes content to many receivers” (ibid), factors which influence content such as ownership, policies, goals, actions, economic viability and stability can be used as variables to analyse their impact on content. The focus at the organisational level of analysis, is on how organisational structures such as media ownership shape the media content that is eventually made available to the audience. Media ownership is a particularly important consideration as whoever controls the media also determines what eventually becomes news (Ibbi, 2016). Ideally, the media in democratic societies are expected to inform and educate citizens, serve as a public arena for the deliberation and formation of public opinion on political issues, perform their ‘watchdog’ role of checking government excesses, and be a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 2011; pp. 19-20). However, given the partisan makeup of Ghanaian and Nigerian media ownership, it is expected that this will have a strong impact on political news content as I show in Chapter 8.

### **Social systems level influence**

This level speaks to the macro-level ideological view of the media as “agents of social control” in society (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p. 74), working to ensure the maintenance of social norms. The authors explain:

*At the social system level of analysis, the central questions include: Who has the power? On what is it based? How is it exercised? To what extent does the media’s symbolic content systematically serve to further the interest and power of certain groups, through representation of class, gender, or race?*

Analysis at the social systems level therefore focuses on the power of the media and how that enables them to construct particular realities, and to define and maintain social boundaries by prescribing what is acceptable and what is not as well as what is politically legitimate. In Chapter 2, I noted the media’s role in (re)producing and reinforcing dominant social ideas such as those relating to gender ideology. In the next chapter (Chapter 4), I discuss how through the process of representation, the media construct particular viewpoints about the world and about (certain) people through discourses which serve to legitimise as well as sustain these viewpoints. As Shoemaker and Reese (2014) argue, the characteristics of the media at the social systems level affects operations at the other levels including the existence and structure of media organisations, the type of routines adopted and the values of individual journalists (2014, p. 93). I take up the notion of media power in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6).

The Hierarchy of Influence model presents a more systematic way of analysing the different layers of influences on news content while the concept of mediatisation of politics focuses on the institutional logics of media and politics which shape political actors’ behaviour, including how they relate to journalists. Apart from the Individual and Social systems

influences, both Routines and Organisational influences can be said to correspond broadly to the mediatisation's Institutional category of news media logic which constitutes professionalisation, commercialisation and media technology imperatives. Therefore, based on the above discussion, I propose the following analytical framework (see Table 3.1) with which I will analyse the interviews in Chapter 8. Based on research question 2 referred to above, I consider the categories Individual, Institutional and Socio-Cultural related influences on Ghanaian and Nigerian print and radio political news. I discuss these in turn.

### **3.3 Analytical Framework for Analysing Influences on Political News**

#### **3.3.1 Individual influences on political news content**

Donges and Jarren (2014) note that perception is the first step of mediatisation. Before politicians incorporate media imperatives into their political activities, they must first understand that the media are powerful and are important in helping them achieve their political goals, be they re-election or policy related. Therefore, I examine whether and the extent to which women politicians seek to influence their media representations by adopting news media logic in their political communication. Role perceptions do not only affect women politicians' behaviour, however; they also influence journalists. To what extent do journalists' role perceptions impact on their relationship with women politicians, and how does that shape how they portray women politicians in news texts? I explore these questions in this section. Further, I also examine the professional expertise and scale of networks that women politicians and journalists bring to their roles as political actors and journalists respectively. In Chapter 8, I show that these two factors, in addition to role perceptions, all work together to shape women politicians' decision to and the extent of self-mediatisation.

#### **3.3.2 Institutional-related influences on political news content**

Here, I interrogate the components of political logic (politics, policy and polity) and news media logic (professionalism, commercialism and technological aspects) as proposed by Stromback and Esser (2014) and Esser (2013), and how they interact with regard to women politicians on the one hand, and journalists on the other. Stromback and Esser (2014) explain that mediatisation processes are more likely to affect the public facing aspects of political processes. Therefore, the relevant aspect I focus on in this section is politics, although where necessary, I integrate aspects of policy and polity. The questions I seek to answer here are

how the political system and culture as well as the media system and culture inform Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' behaviour towards journalists, and towards self-mediatisation.

### **3.3.3 Socio-cultural-related influences on political news content**

This final section looks at gender ideology in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, how embedded they are in the political and media culture, how that impacts on both the work of women politicians and journalists and their interaction with each other, and the extent to which their interaction shapes political news production. Where journalists are considered socio-cultural beings (Shoemaker and Resse, 2014), so are women politicians. If representations are socially embedded and prescriptive as Hall (1997) argues, then to what extent do socio-cultural gender norms facilitate or hinder women politicians' ability to influence political news content? I explore this question in this section.

**Table 3.1** Analytical framework for analysing factors shaping women politicians' media representations

<b>Relevant Concept (s)</b>	<b>Analytical Category in this study</b>	<b>Areas of Focus</b>
Hierarchy of Influence model (Individual-related Influences)	Individual level Influences	Focus on how women politicians and journalists each perceive their role in society and their relationship to the other, their professional experiences and the scale of networks each brings to their political or journalistic work respectively.
Mediatisation of Politics and Hierarchy of Influence model	Institutional level Influences	Focus on the constituents of political logic (mainly politics but incorporating policy and polity-related aspects where needed), and news media logic (professionalism with particular reference to routines, commercialism with special interest in media ownership, and the technological affordances of print and radio media that shape political news production). Discussion draws on political systems and culture, and media systems and culture in both Ghana and Nigeria.
Hierarchy of Influence model and Feminist media theory	Socio-cultural level Influences	Focus on culturally-informed factors which exist as a result of the gender of women politicians, and which shape the interaction between women politicians and journalists. I also look at how these gender-related factors affect political news selection, coverage and production. Discussion here draws on socio-cultural gender ideology in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies.



## Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed scholarship on media/politics relationship as a way of establishing how research question 2 will be answered in this study. Drawing on the concept of mediatization of politics (Strömbäck, 2008) as well as the Hierarchy of Influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; 2014) and contextual factors relevant to the media and political ecology in Ghana and Nigeria, I adopt an analytical framework which incorporates aspects of mediatisation relating to news media logic and political logic, as well as the Hierarchy of Influence model regarding Individual, Routines, Organisational and Social systems level influences. The framework is based on the assumption that political news is generally shaped by media-related and politics-related factors.

Examining the production of political news, and the complex relationship existing between political journalists and politicians is important as it shows why political news content is the way it is. With particular reference to this thesis, it helps explain why news content about female politicians is predominantly replete with low or no visibility and negative, often stereotypical representations. Having laid this theoretical foundation, I devote the next chapter to explicating the key concepts underpinning this study.

## CHAPTER 4| MCDA AS AN OVERARCHING ANALYTICAL APPROACH: KEY CONCEPTS

In Chapter 2, I presented an overview of scholarship on women politicians' media representations, highlighting the key areas of concern that have interested scholars in the field. Having established the breadth of scholarship and identified the geographical and methodological gaps, I turned to Chapter 3 where I made a case for exploring the context of production of media representations of women in politics, with emphasis on interrogating not just the journalistic routines which give rise to media texts on women politicians, but taking a dual approach that examines the interaction between the key actors of political media texts, in this case, women politicians and journalists. Here, the main concepts addressed were media power and gender.

In this chapter, I introduce the overarching analytical research approach of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), explaining its usefulness as an approach for interrogating the objects of this thesis' enquiry, that is, media texts on women politicians. I show how the theoretical assumptions of MCDA mesh well with the core concepts in this thesis, clarifying the particular perspectives I appropriate in analysing my data. The chapter therefore proceeds as follows. First, I discuss the core theoretical objectives and assumptions underpinning MCDA, showing how these align with representation, discourse, ideology, power and gender. Second, I discuss these five key concepts in turn, building on what was presented in Chapter 1. In discussing each of these concepts, I exemplify the ways in which they relate more directly to the Ghanaian and Nigerian context in that they all work together to shape representations of women politicians. In doing that, I argue that women politicians who venture into the world of politics have much to contend with because of the immense

structural barriers they have to surmount in order to be seen as equally viable political actors. It must however be noted that although presented here as analytically separate, the underlying assumption in this thesis is that these five concepts, in reality, are interrelated, and interact in complex ways to inform how media texts on women politicians are produced.

#### 4.1 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

MCDA is an offshoot of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a “research programme” (Wodak, 2013, xix) or a “range of critical approaches” (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 4) concerned with the ways in which language can be used for ideological purposes, enacting power relations in social interactions in ways that are hidden from people (Fairclough, 1989). These definitions suggest that CDA is not a singular research approach but one that subsumes “a variety of approaches, each drawing on different epistemological assumptions, with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda” (Wodak, 2013, p. xix). To this end, Van Dijk (2013) proposes the term *Critical Discourse Studies* to account for the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches in the field.

As Wodak (2013) explains, CDA studies social phenomena with a view to changing it. Because of this, CDA studies is problem-oriented and necessarily interdisciplinary as the complex nature of social issues often require analysts to adopt a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach in order to adequately explain them. This multi-disciplinary approach is useful to me as it allows me to adopt a triangulation of methods and data which together provide a more comprehensive view of the nature of media representations of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians. As has been noted in Chapters 1 and 2, this thesis not only examines media texts but also the interactions which occur between women politicians and

journalists within the context of production, in addition to interrogating the women's self-representations as depicted on *Facebook*. In doing this, I draw on theories and concepts from a range of disciplines such as Psychology (social role theory), Journalism (Hierarchy of Influence model) and Communication Studies (impression management) to meaningfully explain why women politicians' portrayal in the media is the way it is, persisting as it has since the 1990s when research in the field began.

Originating from Critical Linguistics (Machin and Mayr, 2012), CDA has been strongly influenced by the work of Halliday (1978), who shifted the notion of language as a set of rules for constructing correct sentences, to language as a 'grammar' or system of linguistic 'resources' for making meaning (van Leeuwen, 2005). The multimodal aspect of CDA developed from the recognition that language is not the only means of communication, but that other modes such as images can equally communicate ideas, identities and values about certain groups of people as well as about the wider world, (ibid; (Kress, 2010). Here, mode refers to "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning" (Kress, 2010, p. 79). Given the diversity of approaches in CDA, scholars are advised to be explicit about which perspective they utilise in their studies. In this thesis, I follow the social semiotic approach of MCDA adopted by Machin and Mayr (2012).

According to Aiello (2006, p. 90), social semiotics is "a synthesis of structural semiotics and Halliday's systemic functional linguistics". Because social semiotics has also been influenced by Halliday's systemic functional linguistic (SFL), there are a lot of commonalities in the conceptualisation of key CDA concepts such as 'semiotic resource', meaning potential' and 'affordance' in MCDA. The discussion that follows draws out these linkages, and in so

doing, highlights what makes a social semiotic approach to MCDA distinct from other perspectives as well as why it is useful for my study.

One of the key concepts in MCDA is ‘semiotic resource’. Whereas structural semiotics dealt with the notion of ‘sign’ as a code with a fixed meaning irrespective of the context, social semiotics employs the term ‘resources’ in order to emphasise that the meanings of signs are not pre-given but contextually determined (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). This links back to Halliday’s approach to language as a grammar where meaning is created through the way individual signs are combined with other signs in particular ways (Machin, 2007). In this way, a social semiotic approach to MCDA not only opens up the idea of choice for MCDA, but also the importance of context in determining meaning.

The use of ‘resource’ is based on the assumption that in producing messages, communicators make choices from a range of available semiotic options aimed at fulfilling their particular purposes (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The idea of ‘choice’ in the production of meaning is a critical consideration in this thesis. It suggests that news workers who produce media texts about women politicians make particular choices in content and source selection, and frame these in ways that align with institutional and organisational ideologies. For analysts in MCDA, the interest lies in why certain choices are made over others, and what they could mean for the communicators as well as the represented group. For example, why would a journalist choose to report what a female politician said instead of quoting her? Could it be because of newspaper space or could there be other reasons? Again, why would a female politician wear an attire spotting the colours of her national flag to a press conference; what symbolic associations is she seeking to communicate by doing so? Exploring these choices

will help reveal the potential (ideological) reasons behind the intentions of communication producers.

Also important is the assumption that semiotic resources are socially constructed in that they shape and are in turn shaped by society (Machin and Mayr, 2012; p. 10). For example, through speech, politicians can portray immigrants as a scourge to their country, thus calling for stricter immigration laws to limit the number of immigrants allowed in. From this, the immigration office can set out to refuse a higher percentage of visa applications, and demand documents which are difficult to obtain as a deterrent. This practice may get reported in the news, and depending on the ideological views of individual media organisations, be presented as a valid way of protecting ‘national interests’, thus legitimating the immigration discourse and the action of the immigration office.

Another core term in MCDA is the notion of ‘meaning potential’. To the extent that language, broadly speaking, is a resource which communicators select from to make meaning, it is also assumed that semiotic resources have meaning potential. That is, there are a range of meanings that can be realised from their use based on the context within which they appear. For example, audiences are likely to interpret a picture of a smiling female politician on its own as friendly. However, if this picture is used in a news story that talks about her involvement in corrupt activities, the meaning that will be derived based on the text is more likely to change to that of an unremorseful politician, in which case a negative impression will be created about her. The text of her corrupt practices will anchor this latter meaning by combining with the image. As Barthes (1977, p. 39) argues, images are polysemous, meaning they signify “a floating chain” of meanings whose precise meanings

are realised in combination with other resources such as text through ‘anchoring’. This important work of anchoring meaning is a common function of linguistic texts such as articles in newspapers. A semiotic approach to MCDA, therefore considers how individual resources combine with other resources to create meaning (Machin, 2007). The strength of this approach is explored in Chapter 7 where I show instances where text and image portray women politicians differently, sometimes in contrast to the meanings each conveys, and how the divergent meanings contribute to projecting the women in particular ways.

Besides deriving meaning of images based on their compositional context, images are also interpreted based on the cultural knowledge and personal experiences audiences (Hall, 1997). Therefore, in analysing images from a MCDA perspective, both the immediate compositional context and broader socio-cultural context in which the image is produced are crucial as these shape the particular meanings that audiences derive. This is why I investigate the process of political news production by interviewing the (photo) journalists who produce it for instance. The purpose for doing this is twofold. As news is a cultural product (Schudson, 1989; 2011), the interviews will help to identify the cultural codes which shape and are embedded in the news texts. The second reason is to ground the interpretation of press and radio news content in the socio-cultural and political milieu to yield a more accurate interpretation.

A crucial part of analysing semiotic resources is documenting their histories (van Leeuwen, 2005). This is important because it helps trace the development of the denotative and connotative meanings associated with the particular semiotic resource. Barthes (1977), for instance, talks about the duality of messages that semiotic resources have; denotation being the literal, often ‘objective’ meaning while connotation is the implicit, inferred, ‘invested’ or

culturally-imbued meaning. In the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts, women's subjugated position in society has long been documented, legitimised and naturalised through folklore for instance. There are several proverbial sayings which point to this. In Ghana, one example is "*obaa t)n nyaadowa, na )'n)ton atoduro*" literally meaning 'a woman sells garden eggs; she does not sell gunpowder'. Another is "*obaa nkasa bedwan mo*" meaning 'a woman does not speak in public'. Using MCDA allows me to draw from these historical discourses to explain why, for example, some women politicians may be reluctant to speak on issues in the media (as is shown in Chapter 8). Such discourses significantly influence what and how meanings are made (Lacey (2009).

Within the understanding that semiotic resources offer choices for communicators, MCDA also views each mode as having its own affordances<sup>3</sup> and functions which can be appropriated for different communicative purposes depending on the cultural and institutional conventions (Kress, 2010). In other words, each mode has different levels of truth claims or "epistemological commitments" that it allows communicators to make (Machin, 2013; p. 350), as well as its own set of what it can and cannot be used to do, although these are in turn conditioned by cultural, institutional and historical contingencies (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). For instance, from visual communication research, photographs have traditionally been regarded as 'real' or fact-like (Price, 2004), thereby appearing more representative of the object they depict than say a verbal description of the same object.

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<sup>3</sup> This concept refers to what various platforms can do, perceptions of what they enable people to do as well as the actual practices that emerge as people interact with the platforms (Kreiss et al, 2019).



In the same way, Wodak and Meyer (2016, p. 184) argue, [v]isuals are often able to ‘disguise’ power structures and hegemony as ‘objective’ representations”. Take the practice of using ministers’ images in news stories about corrupt practices of officials in their ministry. While the minister may not be in any way related to the said corruption, the use of his/her image in that news story may imply otherwise. The reporter may not be able to say that the minister should be held responsible for failing to perform his/her oversight duties efficiently, but the image can be used to do that job. In this case, an image would have been employed to locate the story of corruption under a minister’s watch within a broader debate of the level of accountability that ministers must be held to. Another example is a study by Abousnoug and Machin (2013; p. 350) on war monuments. The authors found that heavy stone carved from mountains were used to connote earth and timelessness in a way that pointed to the timelessness of soldiery and nation. They explained that a different material like plastic would have suggested different meanings. Clearly, apart from decisions on content, the choice of mode of communication is crucial to the intended meanings of the communication producer. Consequently, a key research agenda in MCDA is to examine the kinds of modes that are used in a text, the kinds of messages they convey, the functions those messages perform and the truth-claims that can be derived from those messages.

## 4.2 Representation

Underlying this thesis is the key concept representation which has a number of related meanings (Wearing, 2013). In one sense, representation can be understood as a ‘standing in place of’ (Hall, 1997), a ‘re presentation’ (Dyer, 2002) or “the act of symbolically producing presence from absence” (Wearing, 2013; p. 192) like a portrait presents the likeness of a person in the picture even when said person is not physically present. In another sense, it refers to the idea of ‘standing in for’ or being responsible or accountable to a group of people

as is commonly found in politics, where a member of parliament, for example, ‘represents’ her or his constituency. This second notion also relates to the act of symbolising a set of meanings linked to a process of “accruing and acquiring meanings” (Wearing, 2013; p.192) in society. It speaks to representation’s ability to “make meanings rather than simply reflecting them” (ibid). In this regard, Hall, (1997; p. 2) defines representation as “the production of meaning through language”. Representation works as a system in which meaning is fixed, naturalised and legitimised (ibid). Consequently, whatever worldview is produced as a result of representation is then transmitted through discourses, finding legitimacy in social and institutional processes which in turn work to reproduce and maintain it. Against this background, this thesis seeks to identify how, through verbal and visual communication, meanings about female politicians are produced by journalists in the political news production process, as well as how they make meanings about themselves on social media platforms like *Facebook*.

Where the media are concerned, representation has been theorised in two main ways (Orgad, 2012). The reflective or mimetic approach views language as reflecting the true meaning inherent in the object, person, event or idea in the real world (Hall, 1997). In this sense, language acts as a neutral conveyor of meaning, attributing no ideological intent. There is also a long tradition of research which viewed images as having mimetic value (Price, 2004; Orgad, 2012). A mimetic approach to media representations therefore regards news stories, for example, as documenting ‘true’ reality. It underlies the general expectation people have of the media as reflecting reality, and thus their failure to do (Orgad, 2012). However, studies on differentiated reporting by different newspapers on the same event has shown the mimetic approach to be problematic (Tuchman, 1973; Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007).

The constructionist approach, on the other hand, views representation as “inherently and inevitably a construction, a selective and particular depiction of some elements of reality, which always generates some specific meanings and excludes others” (Orgad, 2012, p.20). The important point here is that meanings derived from representations are not natural; they do not inhere in themselves but are fixed or constructed through the process of representation, becoming natural over time (Hall, 1997). As explained in the previous section, this view is consistent with the social semiotic approach to MCDA that this thesis utilises. Hall (1997; p. 7) explains that “it is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about the world meaningfully to others”. In this regard, Lacey (2009; p.100) points out that “all meaning is socially constructed”.

The crucial question to consider here is who are these social actors powerful enough to fix meanings, and whose interests are served in the meanings they construct? Dyer (2002; p. 2) speaks of the “regime of representation” as he notes “the weight of control over representation” lies with the rich and powerful in society, those individuals who have financial or social capital and thus can exert some influence over the creation of knowledge. But meaning making is not just about elite individuals; it also includes (social) institutions in control of the means of production, those who have the means to contribute to dominant societal views such as the media. If meanings produced through representation come down to a few in control of ‘fixing’ it, then it stands to reason that representations only present a limited view of the represented, whether these are individuals or groups of people. It also implies that representation is ideologically inflected and therefore partial, as, in the process of

representing, some things get included while others are excluded (Lacey, 2009). A good example is the long-standing idea that women are inferior to men; a product of a patriarchal system where men dominate and work to see that their interests are met. Although this representation is purely a social construction as there is no scientific evidence to back this claim except the fact that biologically, both gender possess different reproductive organs, it has endured over time. The concepts of ideology and power are therefore intricately linked with representation as they enable the dissemination of the sort of partial knowledge that representation produces.

In explaining how representation works, Hall (1997) presents a two-step system of representation whereby he posits that first, we create mental pictures of the world and how we believe it should work, and second, these mental concepts are communicated through a shared language in the process of representation. While this is a very simplified version of the complex process of meaning-making in society, it nonetheless reveals important insights into how meaning is made in society. Put simply, representation is the use of semiotic resources to vocalise mental pictures of the world and how it should be structured. Representation not only reproduces societal ideas, but also “connects meaning and language to culture” (Hall, 1997; p. 1). This sense of representation being culturally embedded is also noted by Dyer (2002; p. 2) when he argues that representations “always, and necessarily entail[ing] the use of codes and conventions of the available cultural forms of presentation”. These cultural codes and conventions include how gender is conceptualised, practiced and sustained.

Codes (and their related conventions) stabilise meanings within a given society, enabling people of the same culture to interpret the world in similar ways such that there is a “shared

culture of meanings” which “construct a social world” (Hall, 1997; p. 4). This implies that ideas about women’s place in society for example, what roles they can play, which spheres they can operate in or are thought to be effective in, etc. are all understood, shared and often expected as the norm by those living within that society. These in turn are sustained through social norms, values and practices such as socialisation, so that the society does not disintegrate into confusion. In this way, representation helps maintain the stability of the society. Representation can therefore not be divorced from culture; it is culturally constitutive and dependent. Because representations are so culturally embedded, we rely heavily on them to make sense of the world we live in (Orgad, 2012; p. 25), and the meanings they create inform our attitudes and behaviours. When we depend on a partial, elitist view of the world to inform our opinions and behaviour, we deny ourselves the benefit of a plurality of ideas, thereby hindering our (social) development.

### 4.3 Discourse

So far, I have shown that representation is the means by which meaning is created in a society whereby elites present a dominant, preferred worldview to the public which over time naturalises and is legitimised, being (re)produced through social institutions and their practices. Representations cannot occur, however without discourse. Discourse provides the vehicle through which representation are communicated (Hall, 1997).

The term ‘discourse’ is generally considered a linguistic concept that refers to a piece of connected writing or speech (Hall, 1997). Through Foucault (1982) work, however, discourse was reformulated to refer to “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about- a way of representing the knowledge about-a particular topic at a particular historical

moment” (Foucault, cited in Hall, 1997; p.29). Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, is knowledge that “governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about” (Hall, 1997; p. 29). Machin (2013; p. 352) describes discourse as “a kind of knowledge about what goes on in a particular social practice, ideas about why it is the way it is and what is to be done”.

In the previous section, I showed how representation produces meaning through language. However, as meaning is not just produced in what we say (language) but also in what we do (practice), language and practice are connected through meaning (Hall, 1997). A Foucauldian notion of discourse therefore connects knowledge to practice, prescribing what is acceptable and then working to ensure that social behaviour conforms, with non-conformists having to face the consequences. In doing this, discourse serves as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion; legitimising certain ways of talking while simultaneously excluding others.

Following Foucault, (M)CDA views discourse as social practice. This implies a dialectical relationship where discourse is both socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Here, the interest lies in how discourse structures situations, social identities of and relationships between people, and in so doing, enact (un)equal power relations. (M)CDA is preoccupied with how discourse (re)produces and challenges dominance, where dominance is defined as “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality” (van Dijk, 2001; p. 300). For instance, through immigration rules, an immigration officer is imbued with power to accept or refuse an immigrant’s visa application, and the immigrant does not have much choice but to respect the

decision. The rules legitimise the officer's decision while also sustaining the power imbalances that is created between the officer and immigrant. In this sense, discourse serves as an "instrument[s] of power" (Blommaert, 2005; p. 25) which legitimises social practice (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). It creates (social) reality and subjects who in one sense, are creators of discourse, but in another sense, are "created by and subjected to discourse" (Jäger and Maier, 2016; p.112). For example, one of the common ways advertisers depict women is as sex objects (Gill, 2007). This creates a certain knowledge about women which in turn, encourages an expectation of sex from women even when it is not consensual.

Another important characteristic of discourse is the fact that due to its embeddedness in representational processes, it is context-dependent and multi-discursive (Lacey, 2009). This implies that analysis of discourse and its function in society need to be grounded in the contextual environment within which it is produced. Consequently, a study of the discourses produced and circulated in a given society will need to refer to meanings enmeshed in the contextual environment within which the discourses are produced in order to correctly decipher their significance. This is why this thesis adopts a multimodal critical discourse analytical framework to allow me investigate not only how women politicians are represented in media texts but also how meanings, constructed through the production of the texts and from the larger social milieu, shape the media content.

As a product of representation, discourse cannot be viewed as neutral as it is ideologically conditioned. Discourses are "frameworks of interpretation" (Machin and Mayr, 2012; p. 20), through which the world and the things in it are viewed, understood and communicated. As such, like ideology (see next section), whatever knowledge is offered by discourse provides

only a partial view of the world (Lacey, 2009). In representation, Lacey (2009) maintains that what is foregrounded and what is excluded are determined by discourse which in turn is structured by ideology. Thus, in analysing representation, what is included is as important as what is excluded (Fairclough, 1995; Hart, 2014).

Finally, language (narrow conceived) is not the only means by which discourses are realised; discourses are also multi-semiotic (Machin, 2013). They are communicated through different semiotic modes in a process which Iedema (2003; p. 30) refers to as resemiotisation, an important way of naturalising and legitimising discourses. Consequently, an analysis that focuses on only one mode of communication to determine how discourses work risks excluding important ways in which discourses function. Foucault (cited in Hall, 1997) also argues that discourse does not consist in one source but is dispersed across a range of texts, practices and institutional settings. For example, gender is a product of discourse (Lacey, 2009) that has persisted through time, sustained by patriarchal ideology and reproduced through (social and) institutional products such as advertisements and films.

#### **4.4 Ideology**

Ideology is a highly contested concept which has been associated with a range of meanings over the course of its rich history in media studies research (Corner, 2014). From a social scientific point of view, ideology has generally been used as a seemingly neutral descriptive term to mean a “body of ideas or beliefs” (Corner, 2011; p. 139). In more critical work, largely in the cultural studies context, it is understood as the more politically-infused “systematic framework of social understanding, motivated by a will to power, or a desire to be accepted as the ‘right’ way of thinking” within a group of people (Macdonald, 2003; p.



28). This definition refers to the ‘preferred’ sense of the concept widely used in critical media studies research (Corner, 2011; p. 149).

However ideology is regarded, be it neutral or political, contained or pervasive, it fundamentally refers to “ideas’ or ‘belief systems’ that are “socially shared” (van Dijk, 2009) as well as socially determined (Barthes, 1977). Although it serves the interest of the dominant group, ideology is often presented as universally beneficial (Bourdieu, 1991). Expatiating on this ‘pretence’, ideology or what Barthes (1977, p.165) called ‘myth’ is *inverted* in that it “consists in overturning culture into nature”. Therein lies the deceit of ideology; though a product of culture, ideology is presented as a natural course of action, as common sense (Barthes, 1977;1987; Fairclough, 1995), thereby hiding its intentionality. In this way, ideology is able to gain widespread support. Through discourses, ideology is communicated (Barthes, 1977), establishing a social order of hierarchies which is then legitimised and sustained (Bourdieu, 1991). Further, ideology can influence other socially shared beliefs, although the process is gradual which means its influence can equally gradually diminish (van Dijk, 2009).

While ideology is commonly viewed as negative, to van Dijk (2009), this is not necessarily the case in the same way that ideology is not always dominant. His conceptualisation thus allows a rendering of the concept to account for the different ways in which ideology can be harnessed or made to function in society. The fact that ideology can be used both as a tool for the maintenance as well as the resistance of ‘a set of beliefs’ reveals its linkage to relationships of power. In this study, however, the sense of the concept that is appropriated is that of a dominant body of socially constructed knowledge, which works politically to

produce and maintain unequal power relations in society (Fairclough, 1995; Machin, 2007). Specifically, it relates to how the social system of patriarchy works to keep women in subjection, and how social institutions such as the media also reproduce dominant views about women that are largely stereotypical (Meeks, 2012).

#### 4.5 Power

Closely related to ideology is the highly contested concept of power. Like ideology, power is multifaceted (Pedwell, 2013). It can either be understood as “direct physical coercion or constraint” or in terms of its symbolic ability to “mark, assign and classify” (Hall, 1997; p. 259). For this thesis, the concern is with the symbolic use of power as evidenced in “the exercise of *symbolic* power through representational practices” (ibid; italics in original), of which gender stereotyping is a key example.

Symbolic power refers to a tacit form of power that is routinely deployed in social life (Bourdieu (1991). Being invisible, it is ‘misrecognised’ and therefore accepted as legitimate even by those made subject to it. Symbolic power works as a form of social domination whereby the dominant group maintain their power by virtue of the active complicity of the dominated group through the latter’s acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the dominant group. Bourdieu’s symbolic power links well with the concept of hegemony proposed by Gramsci (1999; p. 145) where he argued that the exercise of power is not only through domination but can also be through winning the allegiance of the dominated masses. Here, the dominant group maintains their ‘leadership’ over the masses through the latter’s ‘spontaneous’ consent for the hierarchically ranked social order which the former have created, and which serves their purpose.

In MCDA, power is always conceptualised as involving knowledge; knowledge that translates into discourses which in turn inform social practices. As Gramsci's concept of hegemony shows, this form of power is not always coercive, bringing to mind Lukes' (2005) conception of power as the ability to secure consent in order to prevent conflict. Hegemony, therefore, is a form of ideology which "operates to gain consent for the unequal distribution of power" Lacey (2009; p. 109). Relating it to gender, Lazar (2005 p. 7) asserts that gender ideology, for example, "is hegemonic in that it often does not appear as domination at all; instead it seems largely consensual and acceptable to most in a community". This element of acceptance associated with hegemony explains why historical events like colonisation and slavery endured for the length of time they did, or why some women accept patriarchal domination. As Lukes (2005; p. 1) argues, "power is at its most effective when least observable".

Power, however, is not only constraining or preventive, but also productive (Hall (1997). As well as producing new discourses, power can also shape new practices and institutions. This is illustrated in the rise of the women's movement, for example, of feminism as a new kind of knowledge, of the examination of the 'other' as a new object of knowledge, of gender mainstreaming as a new practice, and of gender ministries as institutions wholly dedicated to the concerns of gender and its practices. The concept of intersectionality makes us aware that power can also be multi-layered; that a woman for example can be in a position of power in one context but less powerful in comparison to others in another context.

Another aspect of power worth noting is the idea that power does not reside in only one group of people, but that it affects everyone, both the dominant and the dominated (Foucault, 1982; Hall, 1997; Lukes, 2005). In relation to representation, the idea of power as having circulatory capacity is most relevant. Take the example of women politicians and their media representations. In response to stereotypes of women as passive, some react by adopting an aggressive behaviour towards journalists which indirectly confirms the stereotype that women politicians are arrogant. Others respond by remaining silent thereby strengthening the enduring trope of women as passive subjects. This is why Hall (1997; p. 263) insists that as a consequence of representation, ‘victims’ of stereotypes “can be trapped by the stereotype, unconsciously confirming it by the very terms in which they try to oppose and resist it”. In this regard, the effects of representation become evident, not only in shaping how the represented group is treated, but also how it affects self-perceptions (Dyer, 2002). As representation is so inscribed in power structures, it cannot be analysed without considering power, and how it works “to mark, exclude, control, discipline and regulate” (Pedwell, 2013; p. 181).

#### **4.6 Media power**

In this section, I explore media power as a distinct form from the general sense discussed in the previous section. The media occupy a focal position in contemporary social systems (Fairclough, 1995), and like other social institutions, generally work to maintain the status quo. In so doing, they (re)produce dominant ideologies and discourses in society (Richardson, 2007; Mayr, 2008; Lacey, 2009). To this end, Corner (2014) argues that the media exercise their power systematically in a way that conforms to the power relations within the broader power structures in society. The sort of power the media wield in society is not monolithic but multifaceted (Street, 2011). Given the (news) media’s role in shaping

public opinion about issues, and influencing how audiences see the world (Fairclough, 1995), their symbolic power remains highly influential and crucial in the maintenance of dominant views (Mayr, 2008; van Dijk, 2009).

One of the ways the media exercise their power is through access (Street, 2011). As gatekeepers to the public, the media's symbolic power is incomparable to other (social) institutions in terms of social reach, relevance, diversity and relevance (Blumler and Esser, 2018). The hegemony of the media is further heightened by the fact that all other social systems depend on them for the scarce resource of public attention. In order to obtain access to this public, actors such as politicians have to adapt to the logic of the media (Donges and Jarren, 2014; Marcinkowski and Steiner, 2014). Additionally, media power is manifested through the voices, identities and interests they allow access to (Street, 2011), raising questions about who/what is included, excluded or given legitimacy through visibility. As was discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.2) these decisions derive from media logic (Meyer, 2002; Esser, 2013; Strombäck, 2008), and have huge implications about the (social) world that is presented to audiences (Street, 2011).

Media power is also exercised through the production of knowledge as discourse (Lacey, 2009). In Section 4.3 above, I showed how discourse constructs a particular view of the 'real' world which in turn shapes public opinion and behaviour. This constructivist view of the media is in line with the MCDA approach taken in this thesis. In explaining the relationship of discourse to the media, Machin and Polzer (2015; p. 1) note that "news and journalism have always been intricately bound into ideas about what constitutes knowledge in a given society". In so far as knowledge is power, the media exercise their power through the

production and control of knowledge that the public consumes (Street, 2011). Research in the political economy of media organisations demonstrate that their financial structuring and political positioning affect the content they produce (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Moreover, media organisations operate fundamentally to make profit (Fairclough, 1995). Because of that, they work to ensure the satisfaction of their advertisers and audiences through producing content that aligns (generally at least) with the views of these groups (ibid). News content is therefore ideologically imbued (van Dijk, 2009), catering to the needs of audiences and other interest groups.

At a micro level, media power is expressed through a news production process that is ideological (Gadzekpo, 2011; Carter et al., 2019). For instance, van Dijk (2009, p.197), argues that “news values, news beats, interactions with sources, news formats, styles and contents” are all ideological. To illustrate his argument, he explains how news values seem to have been influenced by gender-ideological propositions such as the following (p.202):

1. Men are more competent than women.
2. Men’s issues are more important than women’s issues.
3. Women (e.g., feminists) actively resisting the dominant patriarchal order are bad women.
4. Women who directly compete with men (such as political candidates) are a threat to male domination.

This would explain research findings which show that men’s issues dominate the news (O’Neill et al., 2016), that men are preferred sources (Ross and Carter, 2011), and that the media trivialise women politicians’ professional accomplishments, choosing rather to portray them as second-class citizens in order to downplay their expertise (Ross, 2003). In the most recent Global Media Monitoring report (2015), women’s presence in the news stood at only

24%, while since 2000, the number of stories focusing on women has generally remained at 10%. These are dire figures which go to show not only the level of marginalisation of women in the news, but also the insidious and enduring effects of social systems like patriarchy on women's progress in society.

#### **4.7 Gender, Representation and MCDA**

Given that the concept of gender and its workings is considered throughout this study, and based on what has already been discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5), this section will only focus on gender's connectedness to the other concepts discussed in this chapter and is therefore comparatively shorter. As already noted in Chapters 1 and 2, gender is a socially constructed term sustained by the patriarchal order according to which Walby (1989, p.227) argues is "a set of discourses which are institutionally-rooted". Through its discursive power, patriarchy works to produce identities, world views and possibilities that condition the behaviour of social groups (Mayr, 2008) including women politicians. Patriarchal order sustains what Williams (2010) terms the 'domesticity regime' of the private/public dichotomy (see Chapter 2, section 2.5) which allocates women to the private sphere and men to the public. It is a dominant worldview that is granted legitimacy and sustained through media representations that consistently portray women as appendages or inferior to men (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; Falk, 2010), and women politicians as political others (Meeks, 2012). Through their gatekeeping role, news production processes and representational strategies, "the media are gendered and have contributed to women's marginalization in the public sphere, as well as reinforced sex roles and attitudes in society through the stereotypes of women they purvey" (Gadzekpo, 2011; p.392). This is why representation is so important. Machin (2007; p.xiii) summarises the work of representation aptly:

We define things in our world based on how we position ourselves and how we want others to be positioned, and we promote such definitions because they suit our purposes. When such definitions persist, they become normalised over time and thus appear natural, hiding that fact that they are just versions of events promoted by a particular group for their own purposes.

To illustrate how discourses work together with knowledge and representation to create (un)equal power relations in society, take the example of women's marginalised social position which is this thesis' preoccupation: what contributes to its creation, and how is it maintained and reproduced such that it has persisted over time and space? If we take the discussions above on gender roles and stereotyping, patriarchal social structures, discourse, power and representation, it seems tenable to claim that having categorised people into masculine and feminine, locating them in the binary divisions of private and public sphere which allocates power and agency to men and places women in a subservient social position, patriarchal structures then work to normalise and legitimise the social hierarchies thus established, which in turn are perpetuated through institutionalised discursive processes and practices such as socialisation and the production of cultural forms by the media.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to justify why MCDA is a useful analytical approach for examining Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media representations in their national press and radio news. It began by mapping out the core principles of MCDA, and then proceeded to explicate the particular conceptualisations of the key terms representation, gender, discourse, ideology and power that underpin how women politicians are portrayed in media coverage. In doing this, I have shown how structural barriers posed by the media through their gatekeeping role, news production routines and representational strategies all



serve to reinforce patriarchal views of women as domestic beings, thereby undermining their political careers.

## CHAPTER 5| METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In the previous chapters, I established the theoretical framework underpinning the thesis. Having done so, I now introduce the methodological approach. As the key concept examined in this study is representation, which, following Hall (1997), I conceive of as constructed ‘knowledges’ about people and events in society, I adopt the ontological position of constructivism. This holds that knowledge of social objects and categories are not innate but socially constructed (Bryman, 2016). In line with this paradigm, the study is necessarily qualitative. As noted in Chapters 1 and 4, MCDA is the overarching framework employed in this study because it aligns with the constructivist approach, as underlying MCDA is the view that language (broadly speaking) has ideological potential which enacts power relations in social interaction (Fairclough, 1989). Because MCDA has already been discussed in Chapter 4, I only briefly refer to it here before attending to other aspects of the methodology. The chapter is thus structured. First, I reiterate key points of the MCDA framework as discussed in Chapter 4. Then, I explain the research design and the rationale behind it. Following this, I discuss the rationale for and selection of the cases, how data was collected and the various steps involved in data analysis. The chapter concludes with a look at ethical considerations as well as final thoughts on the fieldwork.

### 5.1 Research Approach

This study aims to examine how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are represented in their national media. Specifically, it looks at the patterns of representation of their media portrayals; the factors, discourses and ideological assumptions which shape these underlying representational choices; how women politicians themselves view their media

representations, and the extent to which they contest (or not) these portrayals through their self-representation. The study was designed based on the geographical and methodological gaps identified in the extant literature on women politicians' media representations (Chapters I, 2 and 3). As noted in Chapter 4 and above, this study follows Hall's (1997) conceptualisation of representation that views representations as socially constructed models of the world which find legitimacy through discourses. These discourses, articulated through semiotic modes such as words and images, produce certain meanings while also enacting power relations in social interactions. Because of their socially constructed character, discourses are not natural but purposive, produced by communicators through a system of semiotic choices. Therefore, as a media product, news discourse on women politicians is ideologically imbued and inextricably embedded in the cultural context. Stromback and Dimitrova (2011, p.33) note for instance that the "media should be understood as an ever-present social and cultural system of production and dissemination of symbols, signs, messages, meanings, and values". Consequently, to find out how Ghanaian and Nigerian women are portrayed in their national press and radio news, I adopt a qualitative approach that enables me to deconstruct the news texts while also embedding the analysis in the context of production.

Given the constructivist view of this research, MCDA provides the perfect methodological framework for my purposes. First, it emphasises a kind of textual analysis that seeks to reveal latent meanings and assumptions embedded in texts (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Thus, MCDA is not interested in just *what* is said but also *how* it is said and *why*. Applied to this study, and based on the literature on gendered mediation (Chapter 2), MCDA helps me to deconstruct news discourse on women politicians to identify the ways in which these discourses enact power relations that help to hierarchically structure the social positions of the women.

Second, scholars who use MCDA are encouraged to ground the analysis in the historical and social contexts within which the texts are produced (Fairclough, 1992). This is not always the case as some studies only focus on the text. Against criticisms of interpreting texts without considering contextual factors which may have influenced the production of the texts (Widdowson, 2000), there is now an uptake for grounding research in the context of production such as through interviews. This avoids the risk of attributing intentionality to text producers. In the case of news discourse, interviews with news workers help illuminate the routine decisions that culminate in the eventual product as scholars such as (Machin and Niblock, 2014) and (Aiello, 2012) have found.

Against this background, I employ MCDA as my overarching framework in seeking to answer the following questions:

**How are Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians represented in their national media?**

This broad research question is further broken down into the following sub-questions:

**1. What is the nature of the verbal and visual representation of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in their national media?**

a. To what extent are women politicians visible, compared to male politicians, in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?

b. What gender frames (if any) characterise the verbal and visual (if applicable) representation of women politicians in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?

c. In what ways are the representations similar or different between press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria (including visuals for press)?

**2. What kind of individual, institutional and socio-cultural influences contribute to shaping news coverage in relation to women politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian press and radio?**

**3. How do women politicians self-represent on social media, with particular reference to Facebook?**

- a. What strategies do women politicians adopt to project themselves to the public?
- b. What are the continuities and contestations between women politicians' representations in mainstream media and their self-representations on Facebook?
- c. What are the implications of both media and self- representations for Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians, gender discourses in West African politics, and the field of (gendered) political communication?

Having explained my research approach and the reasons behind its adoption, I now turn to the design of this study.

## **5.2 Research Design**

This section describes how this study is designed. It starts by laying out the comparative case study approach to analysing how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are represented in their national press and radio news. Next, I reiterate the case studies and why they were chosen. Following this, I introduce the three sites of analysis and explain the rationale behind their selection.

### 5.2.1 Comparative case study design

Initially, my intention for this study had been to examine how women politicians in (Anglophone) West Africa are represented in their national media. This would have enabled me to generalise my findings to the sub-region. However, after reviewing the literature on women politicians' media representations, I noted the gap in research from Africa in addition to the minimal studies incorporating contextual factors. Based on these reasons, I opted for a more in-depth, rich analysis which a smaller set of cases will allow instead of a broader study from which I can generalise but which will not enable a detailed exploration. The choice for 'intensiveness' over 'extensiveness' (Thomas, 2011) led me to adopt a case study approach. Simons (2009, p. 21) defines case study research as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a "real life" context". This definition sets out certain conditions that case study research should satisfy. First, the examination should be detailed, providing "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223). Second, it should employ multiple perspectives that capture the complexity of the phenomenon in a particular instance of its occurrence. This ensures that interpretation of data is not based on one-off occurrences but consolidated through several sources. Case studies are therefore invaluable for investigating 'how' and 'why' questions as they allow intensive, in-depth inquiry as well as the analysis of multiple forms of evidence (Yin, 2013).

For the reasons enumerated above, I chose to focus on women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria, and to examine how press and radio news reported them during the campaign period. Blumler and Esser (2018, p. 4) argue that election campaigns "are crystallization points of political communication and particularly suitable for observing mediation processes as if under a magnifying glass". Focusing on the campaign period in each country is therefore a

useful way of obtaining ‘real life’ situation data from which I can interrogate news discourse on women politicians at a time when political reporting is most intense. Press and radio news have been selected to provide multiple routes to analysing women politicians’ media coverage. Additionally, interviews of news workers, women politicians and civil society experts have been added to triangulate the data sources to satisfy the multiplicity of perspectives in case study research. Finally, I add a comparative element to enable me identify the impact of context in shaping women politicians’ media coverage. This adds another layer of analysis to the research, as in highlighting the commonalities and differences between the two countries, I am able to “achieve the greatest possible amount of information” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.229) on how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are constructed in their national media.

### **5.2.2 Rationale**

#### **Why Ghana and Nigeria?**

The two countries were selected as much for their similarities as for their diversity. First, they share a common geographical region and colonial master. Again, Ghana and Nigeria occupy important economic and numeric forces in West Africa, especially Nigeria which accounts for 47% of West Africa’s population (World Bank, n.d.). Further, both countries have similar media systems (Akpojivi, 2014) and have a vibrant media environment, with both public and private participants enjoying varying degrees of independence, diversity and pluralism (Avle, 2011; Okoro, 2012). However, in terms of diversity, Ghana has the highest rate of literacy (65.3% females to 78.3% males) compared to Nigeria’s 49.7% (females) and 69.2% (males). Illiteracy is one of the key factors barring women from political participation (Boyle, 2012). This has implications for women’s substantive representation and the consequent power it

offers women politicians to, for example, contest male hegemony. When numbers of women politicians are small, it greatly reduces their negotiating power, especially considering that they are already in a marginalised position. Furthermore, as explained in Chapter 1, both countries operate different governing models which suggests that the power dynamics between politicians in each country will be different, potentially resulting in quite differential media coverage of women politicians. For these reasons, Ghana and Nigeria seem a good choice for this study.

### **Why press and radio news?**

Historically, radio has been the most widespread form of media in African societies; Ghana and Nigeria are no exception. To the extent that radio is ‘Africa’s medium’ (Hyden et al., 2002) shows the extent of its pervasiveness. Compared to other media, radio is cheaper, more accessible and ubiquitous (Gunner et al., 2011; Bosch, 2013). It is therefore a prime space where discourses in general, and gender discourses in particular, may be (re) produced, legitimised or even contested. The recent ‘digital turn’ (Moyo, 2013) has created a convergence between old and new media as now, many national radio stations have an online presence (Tettey, 2011). Further, radio is the medium that most utilises local languages (Tettey, 2001). These developments have consequently extended the range of audiences that radio serves as well as the potential it holds in shaping public opinion (Gunner et al., 2011). In the same way, these changes have occasioned modifications in the content, practices and culture of radio (Moyo 2013) in order to appropriate the affordances of the new technologies while also meeting the demands of audiences. Radio’s pervasiveness, reach and potential for greater influence in the face of these developments make it an interesting and appropriate site for studying how women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria are depicted on this platform.



On its own, however, radio news does not provide the visual aspect of women politicians' media representations which I am also interested in. Therefore, I combine it with press content. Following radio, newspapers are the second most popular in Ghana and Nigeria. While they may not be read by all audiences all the time because of the high illiteracy rates in both countries, the images in newspapers provide visual cues for audiences even when they cannot read the text, and these cues also contribute to the overall view of women politicians created in media texts. Thus in these two contexts, visual images in newspapers have the double value of speaking to illiterate audiences in addition to those that are literate. Additionally, newspaper headlines (at least) provide topic discussions on other media platforms. In Ghana, for instance, there are several programmes on television and radio which review major headlines published in the main newspapers, sometimes with studio panellists (Nyarko, 2016). A study by Ansu-Kyeremeh and Gadzekpo (1996) also showed that almost nine-tenth of the respondents read newspaper as their main source of information. Further, because of the structure of newspapers which requires more contextual details, Atkeson and Krebs (2008) argue that newspapers provide more political information than television, and therefore, potentially more impact on audiences. Due to the agenda-setting, informative and inter-media functions of newspapers (Sikanku, 2011), newspapers offer another important source of data for analysing how women politicians are portrayed.

### **Why *Facebook* profile cover pages?**

The decision to include a self-representational aspect to this study was partly borne out of the implicit assumption in gendered mediation scholarship that given the chance, women politicians would represent themselves differently. I wanted to check the extent to which this

was true. Initially, I had sought to examine *Facebook* profile cover pages and campaign posters of women politicians in both countries. Facebook was chosen as it was the most popular social media sites in Ghana and Nigeria at the time of election and fieldwork (Felicia, 2018). Facebook was also found to be the most used social media site among politicians (Edegoh and Anunike, 2016). Currently however, Dwyer and Molony (2019) note WhatsApp has overtaken Facebook in popularity. Campaign posters, on the other hand, are the most ubiquitous political marketing medium in the two countries, often plastered on any available space along streets and walls of (popular) buildings. However, campaign posters was dropped from the data set for pragmatic reasons. At the time of the fieldwork (October-November, 2017), Nigeria had already conducted their general election in March-April, 2015, making access to posters of candidates difficult. Again, having seen a few and compared to the *Facebook* pictures, I soon realised that the same images were being circulated on these different platforms. In this case, using the profile cover pages still captures the images that the women generally used to self-market.

### **5.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

In this section, I describe the step by step process I took in collecting and analysing the data.

#### **5.3.1 Data collection**

As noted in Chapter 1, my research interests in this study are threefold. First, I am interested in the nature of verbal and visual (if applicable) representations of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in their national press and radio news. This relates to my first research question as outlined above. In line with this, I analyse press and radio political news within a month of the general election in each country. In Ghana, this was November 7-December 7,

2016 while Nigeria's was March 10-April 10, 2015. Second, I am interested in the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors which shape production of political news. Hence, I interview news workers on their production routines and the rationale behind them; women politicians on their perceptions of their media coverage, and their media engagement strategies both for mainstream media and for social media (the latter being used to answer question 3). I also interview civil society experts who work in the area of gender/politics/media for their views on the challenges for women politicians in the political and media landscapes so as to gain a different perspective on women politicians' media representations. Moreover, to answer my third research question, I seek to identify the ways in which women politicians self-represent on social media with particular focus on *Facebook*, and the extent to which these self-representations either confirm or contest mainstream representations of the women. To this end, I analyse Facebook profile cover pages of women politicians, supplementing the analysis with relevant aspects of the interviews. Where *Facebook* pages of women politicians were found, I used these instead. Table 5.2 below summarises how the research questions connect to the data sets and the methods of analysis. Following this, I provide more detailed descriptions of how each data was collected and analysed.

**Table 5.2** Research questions and their methods of collection and analysis

Research question	Data collection site	Methods
<p>1. What is the nature of the verbal and visual representation of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in press and radio news?</p> <p>a). To what extent are women politicians visible, compared to male politicians, in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?</p> <p>b). What gender frames (if any) characterise the verbal and visual (if applicable) representation of women politicians in press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria?</p> <p>c). In what ways are the representations similar or different between press and radio news in Ghana and Nigeria (including visuals for press)?</p>	<p>Copies of news articles within a month before the general election, collected from 2 pre-selected newspapers in each country.</p> <p>Recordings of 1 selected daily major news broadcast within a month of the general elections, collected from 1 pre-selected radio station in each country.</p>	<p>Step 1.</p> <p>Content analysis of articles from newspaper and recordings of radio news.</p> <p>Content analysis of images accompanying each selected newspaper article.</p> <p>Step 2.</p> <p>(Multimodal) critical discourse analysis of sampled set of newspaper articles to identify gender patterns which characterise references to and descriptions of female vs male politicians.</p> <p>Analysis will also highlight similarities and differences between the countries.</p>
<p>2. What kind of personal, institutional and socio-cultural influences contribute to shaping news coverage in relation to women politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian press and radio?</p>	<p>Interviews with news workers, women politicians and civil society experts.</p>	<p>Interviews are transcribed and thematically coded using NVivo. Relevant aspects of interviews from women politicians and news workers are used to answer question 2. Where relevant, interviews from civil society experts are also incorporated.</p> <p>Interpretations of interviews are grounded in the mediatisation, journalism and gendered mediation literature.</p>
<p>3. How do women politicians negotiate their media representations?</p> <p>a). How do women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria view their media coverage, and what strategies have they adopted to deal with the media?</p> <p>b). What self-representational strategies do women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria adopt and why?</p> <p>c). To what extent do the representations and self-representations reproduce or contest gender and political discourses which frame their media portrayals, and what are the ideological implications?</p>	<p>Interviews with women politicians selected from each country, in addition to their main Facebook profile pages.</p>	<p>Interviews are transcribed and thematically analysed as above. Emphasis will not just be on the themes that emerge but also on the women's agency (or lack of it) and any occurring gender frames. Facebook profile pages are analysed using MCDA, and the findings compared with those from question 1 to highlight similarities and differences between media representations and self-representations.</p>

## Data collection process

### Press and radio

Based on the rationale outlined above for the focus on press and radio, two newspapers and one radio station were selected from each of the two case studies. Due to the assumptions of cultural embeddedness and ideological potential of discourses undertaken in this study, I targeted media houses with the widest reach as the more audiences they catered to, the more widespread their discourses on women politicians were circulated. In Ghana, the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers and *Joy FM* satisfied this criteria. While the *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned paper, the *Daily Guide* and *Joy FM* are private organisations. Further, the *Daily Guide* is owned by a leading member of NPP. At the time of fieldwork, the NPP had won the 2016 election and was almost a year into their term.

In Nigeria, the *Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers were selected. With regard to the radio station, I had initially decided on *Wazobia FM*, which according to Adoi-Elaigwu (2015) was the most popular. However, I was unable to obtain recordings of the news as the station did not keep back copies for more than a few months. Indeed, this was partly the reason I was unable to include more radio data in this study. Another reason for the challenge in getting radio data is uncertainty about the purpose for wanting the recordings. Unless the editor or news manager is known personally, it is very difficult to win their trust sufficiently to be trusted with their recordings. This was the challenge I encountered with *Raypower FM*, my second choice of Nigerian radio station. After countless unsuccessful calls, I abandoned it and relied on my personal contacts to obtain news recordings from *Radio Nigeria*. Even then, I had to find and pay one of the workers willing and with enough free time to obtain the relevant bulletin onto a memory stick for me. Without my personal contact, it would not have

been possible to obtain the data. *Radio Nigeria* is a state-owned station whose major news bulletin comprises news culled from branches across the country, thus providing an overview of key national events. Getting data from *Joy FM* was relatively easier because I already knew key journalists who worked there. I did not therefore have to struggle to get access or pay for the data.

In some respects, my experience of collecting data from Ghana and Nigeria was different to that which takes place in Western contexts, and this informed my sampling choices during fieldwork. First, in the absence of a freely available digital repository of African newspapers, and because most newspapers do not keep back copies available online, I had to pay for the Nigerian newspapers to be scanned and sent digitally to me. This involved finding someone with sufficient time to travel around local libraries to find one that kept the relevant copies, pay the librarian for access and pay extra for the use of a generator for the scans because of Nigeria's unreliable electricity supply, as well as to buy data for the digital transfer. These challenges increased the amount of money I paid while also affecting the quality of newspaper scans. Secondly, email is an imperfect form of communication which is easily ignored, especially when the contact is not known personally. Most people I emailed in preparing for fieldwork wanted me to be locally situated before contacting them to confirm. Thus, I had no confirmed interviews before travelling to Ghana and Nigeria. The challenges I encountered during data collection thus influenced my data set and consequently the findings, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

All the news data was in English and therefore did not need translating. With respect to the newspapers, I used paper versions of the relevant editions as digital copies were not available.

In the case of the Ghanaian newspapers, I was able to get family members to buy the copies in real time as the election occurred after my ethical approval and before the fieldwork. They were later shipped to me. Nigerian newspapers were more difficult to obtain as the election had taken place almost two years before. In the end, I could only obtain scanned copies of the original by paying a friend to collate them from a university library; paper copies were too expensive for me to buy. Because I used hard rather than digitised copies of the news, the quality of the pictures presented in the empirical chapters are sometimes slightly blurry. Table 5.3 provides a list of the selected media outlets where the data was collected.

**Table 5.3** List of selected newspapers and radio station per country

COUNTRY	NEWSPAPER	REASON FOR SELECTION
GHANA	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	Most widely circulated and read state-owned daily newspaper (Fosu, 2014) which follows a policy of ‘political neutrality’ (Mensah, 2016)
	<i>Daily Guide</i>	Most widely circulated and read independent newspaper (Fosu, 2014) owned by leading member in main opposition party.
	<i>Joy FM</i>	First private radio station (Avle, 2011)
NIGERIA	<i>Guardian</i>	A leading private daily (Akinfemisoye, 2013)
	<i>Punch</i>	A leading privately-owned daily newspaper (ibid).
	<i>Radio Nigeria</i>	State owned radio station with the widest reach

## Interviews

The form of interviews used in this thesis are semi-structured interviews. Due to their flexibility (Bryman, 2016), I was able to change the order of the questions when necessary, and to follow up on interesting details which emerged as the interview progressed. Prior to the fieldwork, I prepared an interview protocol (see Appendix C), drawing on the key issues from the scholarship on women politicians’ media representations, as well as on the relationship between journalists and politicians.

Before the interview protocol was designed and fieldwork was undertaken, I had the opportunity to informally meet a current Ghanaian woman MP. The meeting gave me important insights into relevant, context-based information that I could include in my research agenda. For example, I discovered that it is not common for women politicians to work with personal communication consultants as is customary in advanced democracies.



This is due to the additional cost it places on their already limited budgets. During the fieldwork, it became apparent that most politicians, especially the women, generally do not have professional help in their political communication, although since fieldwork, there has been an uptake (see Chapter 9).

There are three groups of interviewees in this thesis. Interviews with journalists sought to uncover routine practices in political news production including personal, professional, institutional and socio-cultural influences, as well as the nature of their interactions with women politicians. With women politicians, I wanted to find out how they perceived the media and their media representations, and what strategies they used to gain media visibility in addition to interacting with people on social media. Civil society experts were selected because their work intersected with media and politics. The aim was to obtain an ‘objective’ view of how women politicians are portrayed in the media as well as their expert take on gender constructions in the society, and the challenges these pose to women politicians. In all, I interviewed 49 people (see list in Appendix B) comprising 24 news workers, 18 politicians (including 3 male politicians) and 7 civil society experts.

I aimed for equal numbers and gender balance among the interviewees across both countries (except for the politicians where the focus was on women). However, this was not always possible. I had 5 more interviews in Nigeria than in Ghana overall, but in terms of gender, I interviewed more female Ghanaian journalists as these were more accessible. Moreover, the makeup of the news workers are predominantly from radio although I got a good mix of journalists and editors. I also managed to interview at least one journalist (including photojournalists) from the media organisations whose content formed my press and radio dataset. This way, I could ask specific content questions and cross check responses with the

data. One of the limitations of doing content analysis is the challenge of drawing conclusions about author intentions without insights from the authors themselves. Using this strategy therefore helped me navigate around this challenge in addition to gaining direct insights about why certain authorial decisions are taken. Most of the news workers I interviewed were through snowballing. This was especially in Nigeria where I was fortunate to be invited to a regional journalists' union meeting, giving me access to a lot of the news workers in one venue.

Getting a good mix of women politicians from all levels, however, proved more difficult than anticipated. Although I got to interview the only women presidential candidates in both countries, in Nigeria especially, it was very difficult to access women senators. This was because it was difficult to find a gatekeeper to link me up. In the end, through contact with the head of a local NGO who works with women politicians, I was able to interview two House of Assembly Representatives and five Nigerian women politicians from the local level. This affected the nature of the answers I got somewhat. Even in Ghana, my home country where I did not envisage much challenge, it was difficult to confirm interviews until an ex-politician friend helped me make the initial contacts. After this, I was able to secure the majority of my interviews within a couple of days, being able to access a wide range of women politicians, from vice presidential candidates to (past) ministers and parliamentarians (MPs). This experience reinforced the importance of gatekeepers in research for me, and how (not) knowing them can significantly shape the kind and quantity of data that can eventually be collected. Overall, and particularly in Ghana, I found, as other scholars have also (e.g. van Aest et al, 2010), that politicians in opposition were more accessible than those in power.

### ***Facebook Profile cover pages***

Before fieldwork, I conducted a pilot study of ten women politicians half of which were selected from each of the countries. They were randomly selected based on lists of elected women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria. The purpose was to obtain a general idea of how the women self-represent on *Facebook*, and to inform the aspects of the interview protocol that dealt with self-representation. The pilot study was very informative and turned out to be generally indicative of women politicians' overall self-representation on *Facebook*. In the interviews, I sought to link questions about women politicians' representations in traditional media with their *Facebook* images, although this was not always possible as some of the women said they did not have an account. For those with Facebook accounts, I analysed screen shots of their cover pages (findings presented in Chapter 9). As I felt that 14 cover pages (representing the interviewees) was too small a sample, I choose to include an additional sample of 14 elected women politicians. At the time, there were 7 female Nigerian senators and 36 Ghanaian MPs. Therefore, I choose all 7 Nigerian female senators and an equal number of 7 randomly selected from the 36 Ghanaian MPs.

### **5.3.2 Data analysis**

Analysis of data in this study generally followed the three-stage process proposed by (Thurlow and Aiello, 2007, p. 313), namely descriptive, interpretive and critical analysis. Although in the actual process, these aspects are interrelated, for analytical purposes I distinguish them here in order to explain the different stages the analysis passed through.

- *Descriptive analysis*: I identified the main verbal and visual (where applicable) elements and patterns in both press and radio news texts, noting down any gender frames used.

- *Interpretive analysis*: I analysed the potential meanings that could be derived from the identified verbal and visual (where applicable) features, drawing on contextual information to explain how the meanings are produced in the news texts.
- *Critical analysis*: I connected the identified verbal and visual (where applicable) features, and the meanings they communicate to power structures, relating them, where relevant, to gender ideology in order to draw conclusions.

This approach enabled me to embed micro-analyses at the textual level in the context of production, and within power relations at the macro level (Aiello, 2012). This process of analysis is also in line with how (M)CDA research is conducted. In what follows, I discuss the analysis of data, highlighting how this three-stage approach was operationalised.

### **Content Analysis**

Content analysis of press and radio data from the selected media outlets as tabled above was conducted as the first step in data analysis. It answered research question one which covers the extent to which women politicians are verbally and visually (if applicable) visible in news content compared to their male counterparts, and the presence or absence of gender frames. As a method, content analysis can be used for analysing both quantitative and qualitative data (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008), allowing analysis of large data to balance the qualitative nature of MCDA. Prior to the newspaper content analysis, I conducted a pilot using three days randomly selected out of the month for each country. This was to give me a sense of the volume of political reporting as well as the features of the news stories to refine the code

book. The result yielded a very high number of stories (262). Based on this, I decided on a purposive sample of ten days from within the month for the press data as reading all the newspapers from the two countries would not have been practical given that the news data was not my only data. The ten days selected were two days from the start of the one month campaign period, three days in the middle and the last five days of the month. This was decided on the assumption that the intensity of coverage will be less at the beginning, increasing as the month draws to the end of the campaign period. In this way, I would still be able to capture the essence of the coverage even if I did not consider all the thirty days in the month. Thus, for the Ghanaian newspapers *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide*, I sampled the following dates: 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016; 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 for each newspaper. For Nigerian newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Punch*, the sampled dates were 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2015; 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. Regarding the radio data, because they consisted of only the major bulletin per each day, I decided to code all of it.

In terms of content, news stories from both press and radio which mentioned or used the image of a 'local' politician (as a subject, reported or quoted source) were chosen. This was irrespective of the genre of the article or whether the story focused on a politician or not. Some studies (e.g. Trimble et al, 2013) have used different strategies such as genre of news article or articles with substantive discussion of election candidates to limit their sample sizes. In this study, however, as my interest partly lies in determining the media visibility of female vs male politicians, using such a criteria risked eliminating some political actors who may be mentioned but not form the focus of the article. While some distinction is made between high and low visibility in news content, I take the view that all visibility is good visibility however minimal. Therefore, every local politician who appeared in the news

stories was coded for news presence. The term ‘local’ implies Ghanaian or Nigerian; thus, politicians from other countries were excluded from the sample. Also, ‘politician’ refers to public officials, both elected and appointed, who serve in a political capacity. The list of those considered as ‘politician’ in this study are as follows:

**Government:** President, Vice President, (Deputy) Minister and Minister.

**State Official:** Commissioner and District Chief Executive (DCE).

**Parliamentarians:** Member of Parliament (MP), Governor, Senator, Representative (of the Nigerian State House of Assembly).

**Political Party Official:** National and Regional executive only

**Other Political Actor:** persons who served in past capacities in any of the above categories.

**Political Actor’s Spouse:** these sometimes play a supporting role in their husbands’ political career, and seem to have considerable power and influence.

Prior to coding, a code book (see Appendix A) was developed incorporating all the details as mentioned above and below (see tables 5.5-7). The software I used in coding was Microsoft Access. After the pilot study, the code book was subsequently revised to reflect unanticipated changes. I started coding with a basic list of politicians from both Ghana and Nigeria who were in government or heads (and deputies) of ministries and updated the list as coding progressed.

The content analysis on each news story covered the general areas indicated as relevant through the literature review in Chapter 2 and with inspiration from Machin and Mayr (2012). These are Visibility (in news presence as well as news prominence) and representations of Power, Agency and Likeability. Table 5.4 below simplifies how these four

key areas were operationalised in the content analysis, although most of them applied only to press articles.

**Table 5.4** Key Areas coded in Content Analysis of Press and Radio News

Key area of interest	Sub-category	Variable(s)
Visibility	News presence	Mention of female and male politician.
	News Prominence (for press articles)	Visual presence, length of article, front page appearance.
Power		Pose, camera angle, page placement, size (for press articles).
Agency		Quotations, eye contact, gestures, mode of activity in images.
Likeability		Facial expression, presence of cheering crowd (or not), type of image shot.

With respect to coding of images, the key aspects, drawn from Machin and Mayr (2012) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006), covered nature of the shot (whether close, medium or long shot), gaze (demand or offer) and pose of the politician (among other things) in each picture. For example, Machin and Mayr (2012) suggest that a downward gaze depicts powerlessness while an upward one conveys power. Similarly, a direct gaze at the viewer establishes a relationship between the viewed and the viewer, but the kind of relationship conveyed depends on whether, for instance, the viewed is smiling or frowning. A pose, on the other hand, can potentially connote broader identities, values and discourses, and show for example if a person is approachable, independent, etc. (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Analysis of

press and radio as presented in Chapter 6 is mainly *descriptive* with aspects of *interpretive* analysis. The table (5.5) below summarise the different aspects of visual analysis included in the content analysis.

**Table 5.5** Key Areas coded in Content Analysis of Press News

Main Category	Sub category	Variables
Behaviour	Posture	Positive (1) =standing upright Negative (2) = bowed, slumped, sitting Neutral (0) = other
	Arms	Positive (1) =cheering, waving, shaking hands Negative (2) = hanging at sides, folded Neutral (0) = other
	Expression on face	Positive (1) = smiling, cheerful Negative (2) = sad, frowning, worried, tired, solemn Other (0) = where face is unseen
	Eye contact	Demand, Offer, or Other
Context	Activity	Positive/dynamic (1) =shaking hands or in any form of motion Negative/ passive (2) = reading, resting or in a 'non-active' state. Neutral (0) = other
	Interaction	Positive (1) =cheering crowd, with peers but centre stage Negative (2) = alone, inattentive crowd, with peers but not centre stage. Neutral (0) = other
	Background	Positive (1) =cheering crowd, with peers but centre stage Negative (2) = alone, inattentive crowd, with peers but not centre stage. Neutral (0) = other
	Dress	Positive (1) = Traditional wear/formal wear, negative (2) = casual wear Neutral (0) = other
Perspective	Proximal Distance	Positive (1) = Close shot (face and head, head and shoulders or anything less than that) Negative (2) = long shot (full body or anything wider than that) Neutral (0) = medium shot (waist up)
	Camera Angle	Positive (1) = below, looking up at politician Negative (2) = above, looking down at politician Neutral (0) = eye level
	Page Placement	Positive (1) = Top third Negative (2) = bottom third Neutral (0) = middle third
	Size	Positive (1) = ½ a page or more Negative (2) = less than ½ a page

### Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)

All stories with accompanying images in the press data were further selected and subjected to a multimodal analysis. The dataset comprised 70 news stories from both countries. Here, my aim was to conduct a deeper analysis than the content analysis could allow, to partly answer



research question 1. Thus, analysis followed a framework based on representational, interactive and compositional meanings as proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006). At the representational level, I considered important areas such as referential strategies and quoting verbs used for women politicians. The way a person is described or referred to in a text depends on the way the text producer wants readers to view the person. Referential and predicational strategies are therefore very telling as they signal the kind of relationship between the namer and the named (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001), and encode value judgements about the named in terms of their values and characteristics (Richardson, 2007).

At the interactive level, I considered Pose, Gaze, Camera Angles and Size of images. Machin and Mayr (2012, pp.97-103) explain that whereas close shots convey intimacy, long shots depict isolation. Likewise, angles can index detachment, or even togetherness when used in combination with other visual strategies such as closeness. Again, the use of modality reflects the level of power and authority a person views himself/herself as having, and thus point to their sense of identity and values, while colour can be used to suggest emotional intensity or subtlety (Machin and Mayr, 2012; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The MCDA included all these key areas in the analysis. The main consideration at the compositional level was salience.

*Facebook* Profile cover pages were analysed using a similar framework of representational, interactive and compositional meanings. However, because of the visual dominance, the areas of interest here were slightly different (see table 5.6 below). For both the sampled press stories and Facebook profile pictures, I went through all the three-stage process of

*descriptive, interpretive and critical* analysis. Chapter 7 focuses on the sampled news stories while Chapter 9 presents analysis of Facebook profile pages.

**Table 5.6** Analytical Guide for *Facebook* Profile Cover Pages

Main Semiotic Category	Criteria for Analysing Women Politicians' <i>Facebook</i> Cover Pages	
<b>Representational</b>		
	Presence	Is she excluded or included in image?
		Is she individualisation or collectivised (paired with someone or part of a group)
		If collectivised, is she lost in the image or visible?
	Activity	Is she shown in motion (whole body, hands or arms) or passive?
Setting	What dress is she wearing? What is in the background? Presence of symbols (patriotic, religious, etc.?) What do they symbolise?	
<b>Interactive</b>		
	Distance (Size of frame)	Close up, medium shot or long shot?
	Contact (Gaze)	Direct gaze at viewer (demand) or gazing away from viewer (offer)?
	Point of View	Vertical angle (if viewer looks up, looks down or is at eye level) Horizontal angle (frontal, side or back view)
<b>Compositional Meaning</b>		
	Informational value	Where is her image positioned on the cover page: left or right; top or bottom? Is there any written text? If so, where is it placed, what does it say and what role does it play in relation to the image?
	Framing	Are elements of the cover page disconnected or connected to each other?
	Salience	What dominates on the page? Is she made salient on the cover page? If so, through size, colour or tonal contrast?

### **Thematic Analysis**

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and loaded onto NVivo software where I analysed them thematically. The three groups of interviewees had different questions

based on areas I was interested in. For women politicians, the questions sought to find out a) their reason for entering politics, b) their view of the role of politics/ politicians and of the media/journalists, c) their perceptions about how the media portray women politicians, d) their strategy (if any) of engaging with mainstream and social media as well as the reasons for these choices. For news workers, I wanted to find out a) their views on the role of the media/ journalists in relation to politics, b) the political news production routines they follow, c) their views on politics/ politicians, d) their relationship with women politicians and e) their understanding of gender issues especially regarding women in politics. Finally, for civil society experts, the aim was to find out a) their views on politics/politicians, b) what they thought the media should do in relation to politics, c) their perceptions about media coverage of politicians, and d) what they have identified in their work as key challenges women face in politics.

My approach to the interviews had a dual perspective. Due to the overarching framework of MCDA employed in this thesis, I first considered the responses as discourses constructed by each of the groups, the same way as I regarded press and radio data as discourses. Lindlof (1988, p. 165) for instance notes that “interview talk is the rhetoric of socially situated speakers, not an objective report of thoughts, feelings, or things out in the world”. Against this background, I attended to *what* (content) was said as much as *how* (language) it was said, considering that women politicians and journalists were both talking from the particular social positions of political and journalistic beings respectively. From this perspective, responses from civil society experts, to some extent, provided a comparatively ‘objective’ view against which I could evaluate the responses of the other two groups. Second, I considered the interview data, particularly from journalists, as providing insights to help ground the press and radio data in the context of production.

Because the interview protocol is thematically structured, I followed the themes by putting responses to questions together, and then identifying the similarities and differences first between respondents in the same country, then across the two countries. Having done this, I looked for what Foucault (cited in Hall, 1997, p. 29; emphasis in original) called the *episteme*; discursive patterns in the responses that contributed to particular ways of talking about or referring to phenomenon such as women politicians, politicians in general, or journalists. This way, I was able to recognise the micro (words), meso (referential structures) and macro themes relating to political logic and culture, media logic and culture, and how gender intersected these broad themes. In teasing out these themes, I consulted the literature reviewed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Thus, the analysis of interviews, presented in Chapter 8, involved some *descriptive* but mainly *interpretive* and *critical* processes.

#### **5.4 Ethical Considerations and Fieldwork Reflections**

To comply with the university's regulations, I obtained ethical approval (reference number PVAR 16-033) for the project from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research ethics committee on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2017 before any data was collected. Having obtained the approval, I set out to make a list of potential interviews from the three groups of women politicians, news workers and civil society experts. Through Google search, I create a tentative and very basic list using (deputy) ministerial, MP, Governor and Senator lists I found online. For journalists, I relied on the names of those who had authored the articles I had analysed as well as those who worked in the pre-selected radio stations, and then built the list further through snowballing. Concerning civil society experts, I searched for contacts of

those I knew already in addition to lists of groups in both countries, from which I selected a few to follow up based on their work on gender and politics/media.

With funding support from World Universities' Network (WUN), I was fortunate to travel to Ghana and Nigeria for two months, where among other things, I conducted my interviews. Prior to the visit, I had tried contacting a few potential interviewees but the response had been the same; "when you come down, call me and we can talk". Thus, I was not able to schedule any interviews nor did I have any idea of how many I would get before I travelled. Being a Ghanaian, Ghana was the first country I visited. Not long after I arrived in Ghana, I tried contacting my potential interviews but gaining access was difficult, and most did not appear interested. After a week of no confirmation, I called upon personal contacts and soon after, managed to secure several appointments across the three groups of interviews. I had a similar experience in Nigeria.

My experiences as a researcher reinforced the importance of trust for interviewees; the fact that access can be denied if people do not know and therefore trust the researcher. Once I had gained the initial access, it was easier to connect to others through snowballing. While I was still not able to confirm a few key interviews (such as the head of the Women's caucus in the Ghanaian parliament and the head of the only women's radio station in Nigeria), it did help that I knew the right people who could link me up to the people I needed to interview. I was also struck by the fact that contrary to my expectations, women politicians were not particularly interested in my research or to contributing their voice to it although it had a feminist agenda. This lack of interest in making their voices heard is explored in more depth in Chapters 8 and 9.

Concerning individuals who agreed to be interviewed, information sheets (see Appendix D) explaining the project, their role and how their interviews will be used were given, often prior to the interview. On a few occasions, I sent these by email ahead of the scheduled date. Interviewees also signed consent forms (see Appendix D) or gave audio consent before interviews took place. Given the elite status of particularly the women politicians, I was aware that full anonymity could not always be possible. Nonetheless, interviewees were given the option to be anonymised if they so choose. Although none took this offer, some chose to speak ‘off the record’ on certain issues during the interviews.

All interviews were recorded (with participants’ consent) and transferred to an encrypted hard drive according to the ethical and privacy guidelines. Thereafter, the recordings were deleted from the devices. Interviews were later transferred to the university’s secure M drive server, transcribed and analysed according to the framework as outlined above.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have detailed how MCDA as my overarching framework drives the methodological approach of this study while also integrating the theoretical approaches laid out in Chapters 2 and 3 and reviewed in Chapter 4. I explained the reasons behind the case study design and case selection, how each of the different data sites was collected and how they help me answer different aspects of the research questions, as well as how each data site is analysed. Further, I have explained some of the challenges encountered during fieldwork and how that shaped the data collection process. Having done this, I now present analysis of these data in the four chapters that follow. Chapter 6 presents results of content analysis of

press and radio news while in Chapter 7, I explore a sample of press news further through MCDA. Chapter 8 follows by examining how women politicians and news workers interact, and how these interactions impact on political news. Finally, Chapter 9 interrogates women politicians' self-representational strategies, focusing on *Facebook*.

## **CHAPTER 6 | MEDIA COVERAGE OF GHANAIAN AND NIGERIAN WOMEN POLITICIANS: PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study explores how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are represented in their national media. To do this, we first have to identify the patterns which characterise these representations in news content. In this regard, this chapter presents the results of content analysis of press and radio news on women politicians within a month of the general election in each country. As stated in the previous chapter, this comprises a selection of 10 days from the print data and all the radio data. The results provide the empirical basis for more in-depth examination of the news through an MCDA lens (Chapter 7), an interrogation of the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors shaping news content on women politicians (Chapter 8) and the strategies the women adopt to self-represent on social media, using *Facebook* as a case study (Chapter 9). In what follows, I provide a brief recap of key points from the literature review in Chapter 2, highlighting the main areas of interest in relation to women politicians' media coverage. This is followed by presentation of the findings where I focus on the key categories of Visibility, Power, Agency and Likeability, explaining their relevance and importance to women politicians' media coverage. I end by discussing the results and their implications for women politicians as well as for the field of gendered political communication.

### **6.1 Key Areas of Concern in Women Politicians' Media Coverage**

The literature review in Chapter 1 presented overwhelming evidence which showed the media's discrimination against women politicians along gender lines, leading to their marginalisation and (more) negative reporting. From this discussion, two key areas of



concern emerged, namely the quantity of women politicians' visibility in the media, and the quality of coverage. Concerns about quantity border on the extent to which female politicians are "symbolically annihilated" (Tuchman, 1978) from media texts in that they are systematically often less visible than their male counterparts. This relates to both verbal and visual visibility. In terms of quality, scholars have been concerned about the largely gendered reporting where women politicians "are made newsworthy by their sex rather than their politics" (Ross et al., 2013, p. 6) through a focus on their physical appearance, sartorial choices and familial responsibilities (or the lack of it). These representations minimise the women' political potential and position them as less viable candidates, thus impacting negatively on their political fortunes (Norris and Inglehart, 2008; Jalalzai and Krook, 2010).

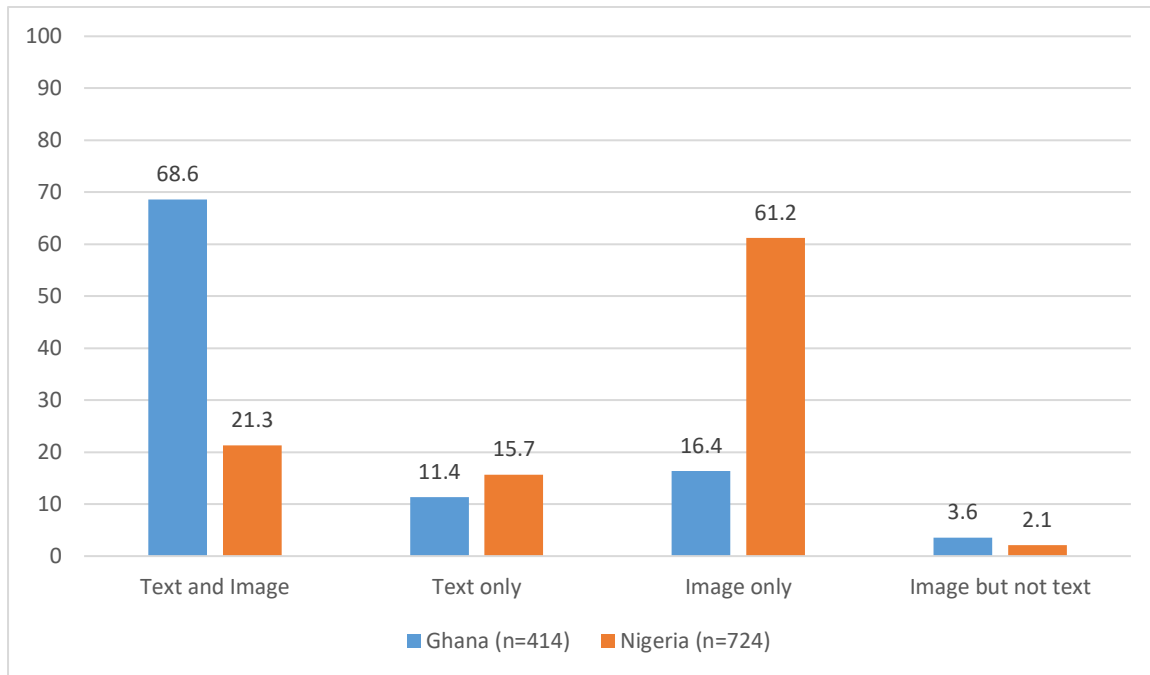
From the two key concerns of quantity and quality, there are a further four related categories that have received considerable scholarly attention: **Visibility, Power, Agency** and **Likeability**, where Visibility relates to quantity while Power, Agency and Likeability relate to quality. For analytical purposes, these will be discussed separately although in many ways, their significance overlaps. While the aim is not to compare media representations in the two countries per se, I nonetheless draw out the similarities as well as differences in verbal and visual representations to highlight the important ways in which context shapes women politicians' portrayal in media texts. In doing this, I argue that the quantity and nature of women politicians' media coverage depends largely on the type of media institution, newspaper format and political function. Below is a table that summarises the various categories of women politicians presented in this chapter and the frequency of their visibility in both print and radio news.

**Table 6.1** Categories of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians per medium and per frequency

<b>Category of women politicians/Frequency of visibility per country per medium</b>	<b>Total no. represented in data (Ghana)</b>	<b>Ghana Print (n)</b>	<b>Ghana Radio (n)</b>	<b>Total no. represented in data (Nigeria)</b>	<b>Nigeria Print (n)</b>	<b>Nigeria Radio (n)</b>
<b>Presidential candidate</b>	1	20		1	1	1
<b>Vice presidential candidate</b>	2	2	1	0	0	0
<b>Party leader</b>	1	1		0	0	0
<b>Political party official</b>	3	4		2	3	3
<b>Parliamentarians/ members of House of Assembly &amp; Senate</b>	27	28		21	17	2
<b>Government appointees (Dep./ ministers, State Commissioners &amp; EC)</b>	13	42		17	38	21
<b>Spouse of politician</b>	8	16	2	15	27	11
<b>Past politician (MP, deputy/Minister, party official, etc.)</b>	1	1		4	0	0

## 6.2 General Patterns of Media Coverage of Ghanaian and Nigerian Political Actors

Before going into the specificities of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' news coverage in press and radio, it is important to provide an overview of the general coverage in both countries to help contextualise the findings. Coverage of political news is heavy in Ghana and Nigeria like in most African countries (Steeves and Awino, 2015). The overall number of stories coded over the 10 days within the one-month election period is 1138 press articles comprising 446 Ghanaian and 724 Nigerian stories. For radio, there were 256 news bulletins consisting of 51 from Ghana's *Joy FM* and 205 from Radio Nigeria. As each article was coded for up to three politicians, the total number of *mentions* of politicians exceeded these numbers. For example, there were 837 mentions of Ghanaian politicians compared with 1349 Nigerian politicians. Stylistic differences were also noted between the countries. Stories from the Ghanaian newspapers generally took more space and were often accompanied by images. In contrast, Nigerian press articles were much smaller and usually without an image. Each news story was categorised into 'Text and Image', 'Text only', 'Image only' and 'Image but not text' (for those that had a picture of a politician but where the text made no direct reference to her or him), highlighting a predominance of 'Text and Image' articles in the Ghanaian newspapers whereas the Nigerian press had more 'Image only' stories. The stylistic differences shaped the way women politicians were represented as will be discussed below. Figure 6.1 illustrates these stylistic differences in press news between the two countries.

**Figure 6.1** Stylistic differences in Ghanaian and Nigerian press news

### 6.3 Media Coverage of Female Politicians: Visibility

Women politicians' visibility in the news has been studied in various ways. While some scholars have been concerned with the frequency of their appearance in the news (Andrews and Caren, 2010), others have counted the number of paragraphs given to female politicians (Kahn, 1992; Devitt, 1999; Miller, 2001; Jalalzai, 2006; Miller et al., 2010; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011). Still others have looked for their prominence in news stories in terms of being the story focus (Bystrom, 2005), appearing in the headlines (Heldman et al., 2005), or in images (Stanley, 2012), type of news organisation (Krijnen et al., 2011; Dan and Iorgoveanu, 2013) or whether they were quoted (Aday and Devitt, 2001; Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2007; Vos, 2013; Hooghe et al., 2015). The results of these studies have generally been mixed depending on the (electoral) context, candidates or news format (Wagner et al., 2017). However, there is strong evidence of the media's preference for male politicians such as in giving them more attention in the news (Vos, 2013) and in quoting them

more (Aday and Devitt, 2001). Thus, studies on news coverage of women politicians point to their marginalisation even when they compete with men for the same position (Heldman et al., 2005; Falk, 2010). In Africa, journalism research indicates women are underrepresented as sources and topics of news (Steeves and Awino, 2015; Gadzekpo, 2011).

In considering women politicians' media visibility, Wagner et al (2017) propose a two-dimensional concept of visibility comprising news presence in relation to frequency of mention of a political actor, and news prominence relating to their noticeability in an article in terms of frequent mention and appearance in the headline. Due to the MCDA approach of this thesis, I adapt Wagner et al's (2017) to enable me to account for the presence of images. Consequently, while news presence still refers to the mention of a politician in a story, *news prominence* is operationalised to consist of *visual presence* (use of images either as an accompaniment to text or as a standalone story), *size prominence* (length of article and size of image) and *page prominence* (front page appearance). As noted in the literature review, the use of images in print stories have added value given the high presence of potential audience without formal education. Therefore, in the tradition of social semiotics, since images contribute to meaning production in society, it is imperative that the way they are used in news stories on women politicians is examined, to account for how they contribute to overall ideas about women in politics. In what follows, I discuss each of the categories in turn.

### **6.3.1 Visibility in news presence**

Given the significant evidence of women politicians' marginalisation in the news as noted in Chapter 2, I expect that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians will have limited news presence well below that of their male counterparts.

### **Verbal visibility in print news**

The results show mixed patterns (see Table 6.2). The overall picture is significantly in favour of male politicians in both countries. The percentages of their verbal presence are consistently above 80% whether they appeared with female politicians or as sole subjects. This reflects the dominance of male politicians in both countries. The number of articles which showed female politicians only are particularly telling. In both countries, the level of visibility falls below their actual numbers in political positions. Nonetheless, Nigerian female politicians' overall appearance in print news is also almost twice the number of the overall political positions. Thus, depending on how it is considered, the patterns represented in Table 6.2 can be seen as either favourable or unfavourable. For example, while definite numbers are uncertain due to government reshuffles and inadequate recording mechanisms, at the time of data collection, female ministers and deputies in Ghana were approximately 17 out of a total of 72, with 29 MPs out of 275. The overall representation of women in Ghanaian politics was therefore 46 (13.3%) at the time. In Nigeria, out of 31 ministers, 6 were women. Furthermore, there were 7 women senators out of 109, and 19 out of 360 House of Assembly, bringing female political representation to 6.4% overall. As these figures exclude District Chief Executives in Ghana, and Commissioners in Nigeria all of whom are often men, the gap between female and male representation in politics is likely to be higher. A good benchmark is the Inter-Parliamentary Union which show female MPs in Ghana at 12.7% while that of the combined houses (House of Assembly and Senate) of Nigeria is 4.5%.

**Table 6.2** Frequency of verbal news presence of Ghanaian and Nigerian politicians in print news

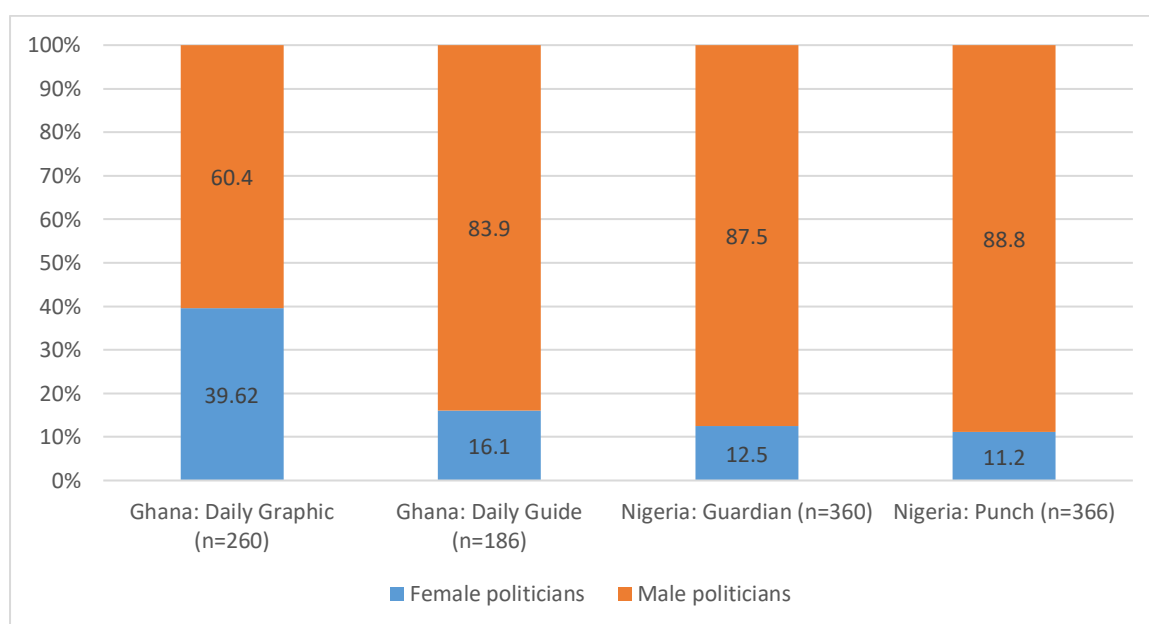
Category of politician	Total (n)	Total (%)*
Ghanaian female politicians	114	25.6
Ghanaian male politicians	410	91.9
Ghanaian female politicians only	52	11.7
Ghanaian male politicians only	362	81.2
Nigerian female politicians	86	11.9
Nigerian male politicians	697	96.3
Nigerian female politicians only	27	3.7
Nigerian male politicians only	674	93.1

\*Note: Percentage values are the totals in each category as a proportion of the overall gender total in the corpus.

Interrogating the patterns further at the individual newspapers' level reveals an interesting picture worth noting (see Figure 6.2). Across the four newspapers, the *Daily Graphic* shows the highest number of women politicians (n=96) while the other three papers have slightly the same lower numbers. The higher representation in the *Daily Graphic* is reflective of both the type of institution it is and the values it observes which set it apart from other media organisations. First, being a state-owned media organisation, the paper reported on government officials more than other newspapers. Therefore, women politicians in government positions likely got more coverage. Second, about a couple of weeks prior to the election day in Ghana, the paper began a series where it featured all the political candidates at the presidential and parliamentary levels. As well as showing the spouses of all the presidential candidates, it also paid particular attention to female candidates. This significantly increased the visibility of Ghanaian women politicians in the data, especially

since I make no distinction between elected, appointed or female spouses of presidential and gubernatorial candidates. Therefore, the content analysis results presented here need to be taken against this background. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that generally, state-owned media covers women politicians more than private media, and was consistent across both countries and media platforms as the radio results below will show.

**Figure 6.2** Verbal news presence of politicians per individual newspapers in each country (in percentages)



### Verbal visibility in radio news

Results here (Table 6.3 below) highlight the fact that different media formats represent women politicians differently. Unlike in print news, Ghanaian women politicians barely had any coverage in the radio news. For example, they appeared in only 3 stories out of 51, reflecting trends in male dominance as found in the overall print news (see Figure 6.3).

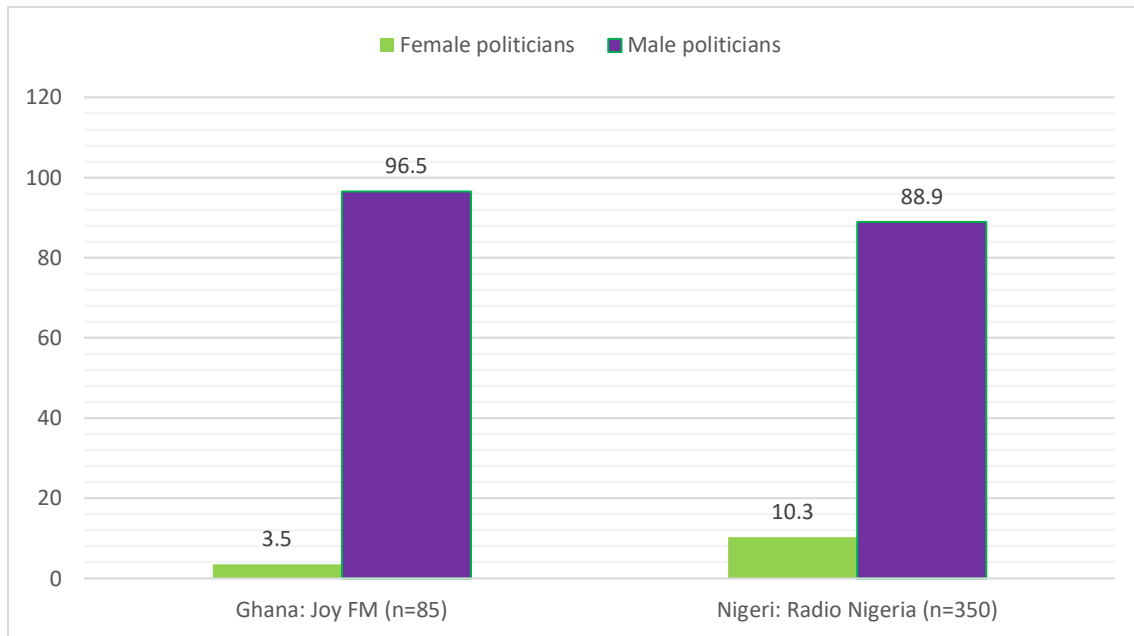


Further, all 3 were not elected women politicians; 1 was a vice presidential candidate while the other 2 appearances was of the wife of a male presidential candidate.

**Table 6.3** Frequency of politicians' visibility in radio news per country

Frequency of visibility in radio news per country	Total (n)	Total (%)
Ghanaian female politicians	3	3.5
Ghanaian male politicians	82	96.5
Ghanaian female politicians only	3	3.5
Ghanaian male politicians only	48	56.5
Nigerian female politicians	38	10.3
Nigerian female politicians only	18	5.1
Nigerian male politicians	314	88.9
Nigerian male politicians only	171	48.9

In contrast, Nigerian women politicians appeared almost twice their number in political positions, showing a higher coverage overall compared to their visibility in print. Thus, we see a clear pattern of increased visibility in the state-owned *Radio Nigeria*, similar to that seen in the Ghanaian state paper *Daily Graphic*.

**Figure 6.3** Frequency of verbal news presence of politicians per radio station in each country

Apart from the near invisibility of Ghanaian women politicians in radio news, there were other examples of omissions in coverage which strongly suggested symbolic annihilation. The last general election in Ghana (2016) and Nigeria (2015) were significant in that it was the first time a woman (Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings and Remi Sonaiya respectively) had been approved to contest the presidential position: For Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, this was her second attempt, having been disqualified by the Electoral Commission in the previous election (2012) for not meeting the criteria. Given their novelty, it was expected that both women will attract much publicity in the media as some scholars argue (e.g. Falk, 2010; Meeks, 2012). However, the results show that Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings was completely absent from the Ghanaian radio data while Remi Sonaiya was missing from the Nigerian newspapers. Although for print, this constitutes absence from only 10 days within the month, it still presents a significant finding given that 5 of those days immediately preceded the election day. To the extent that a presidential candidate is absent

from a nationwide, popular newspaper at such a crucial time as five days to the election, while other gubernatorial candidates were present speaks to the value accorded women politicians by these news organisations.

In essence, news favours the powerful (Wolfsfeld (2011)). Women politicians who belong to smaller parties as both Nana Konadu and Remi Sonaiya do, find it more difficult to access the media. To the extent that they are women further decreases their chances unless they get involved in controversy, in which case they are likely to obtain some (negative) coverage. While many reasons account for their absence in the news, I show in Chapter 8 that key considerations are whether they satisfy organisational news values or whether they pay for their coverage. However we look at this finding, the media's institutional power needs to be acknowledged. In choosing not to report on these two women, these media houses (*Guardian*, *Punch* and *Joy FM*) delegitimised their candidature, sending the public an implicit message of their lack of trust in their ability to win the election. As some scholars have suggested, their absence in the news also contributes to normalising a male norm of politics, as well as the notion that women do not belong in the political sphere (Falk, 2010).

The key conclusion that can be drawn from the results concerning Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' *verbal* representation in the print and radio data is that state-owned media provides more coverage than private media. As state media tend to report on the activities of government officials, often portraying them positively, women politicians in government generally have a higher chance of accessing visibility and positive coverage through state media than those not in government. However, as the number of private media organisations far outweigh those owned by the state in both countries, it seems that women politicians,

especially those in smaller parties and positions, face a daunting task in relation to overcoming the barriers which threaten to exclude them from being seen and heard in the media.

### **6.3.2 Visibility in news prominence**

Having looked at the frequency of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' visibility in print and radio news, I now turn to how prominent they were in the news stories. Here, I consider Visual prominence and Size prominence (in print news), and Page prominence in print and radio news. The equivalent of 'page' prominence in radio news is conceived as being the first person to be mentioned in the bulletin. Thus in this section, I examine News prominence consisting of the sub-categories a) Visual prominence (use of images either as an accompaniment to text or as a standalone story), b) Size prominence (length of article and size of image) and c) Page prominence (front page appearance in print; first mention in radio bulletin). Similar to their visibility discussed above, the expectation here is that women politicians will be disadvantaged with regard to their presence in images, and prominence in size and page.

#### **Visual prominence**

Given that the general visibility of women politicians compared to men in each country was lower, the interest here was to determine how visually visible women and men are when they appear in the news. The results indicate a significantly high visual prominence of women politicians across both countries.

**Table 6.4** Frequency of visual presence per gender in Ghanaian and Nigerian press news

<i>Politicians per gender and country/ gender totals according to number and percentage</i>	<i>Total number of mentions without image</i>		<i>Total number of mentions with image</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Ghanaian female politicians (n=128)</i>	28	21.9	100
<i>Ghanaian male politicians (n=705)</i>	379	53.8	326	46.2
<i>Nigerian female politicians (n=93)</i>	57	61.3	36	38.0
<i>Nigerian male politicians (n=1251)</i>	978	8.2	273	21.8

\*Note: Percentage values are the totals in visual representation per gender as a proportion of the overall gender total in the corpus.

### **Size prominence: length of article**

Size prominence was determined from the length of article and the size of an image in each article, both of which were categorised into ‘More than full page’, ‘Half page to full’, and ‘Less than half page’ articles as well as ‘News in brief’<sup>4</sup>. Based on women’s historically obscured position in society, the anticipation was that women politicians will likely be represented in smaller articles and with smaller images.

Results show differentiated prominence between the countries. Compared to the men, Ghanaian women politicians were less visible in the smaller articles and more visible in articles that were half page or more long. This made the women more prominent in the

<sup>4</sup> ‘News in brief’ articles were the very small articles occupying a small column while ‘Less than half page’ articles were bigger than ‘News in brief’ but still less than half a page.

articles than their male counterparts. In contrast, Nigerian women politicians dominated the smaller articles as well as being less prominent in the bigger articles. Thus, their prominence in the articles overall conformed to the expectation of marginalisation as predicted above. The results suggest that in terms of prominence in article size, only women politicians in Ghana seem to have an advantage over their male counterparts. This means once Ghanaian women politicians overcome challenges with gaining media visibility, they are more likely to be usually represented prominently in articles than male politicians.

**Table 6.5** Size prominence by article length featuring politicians in Ghana and Nigeria

<i>Categories of length of articles/ politician per country</i>	<i>Ghana</i>		<i>Ghana</i>		<i>Nigeria</i>		<i>Nigeria</i>	
	<i>female politicians</i>	<i>male politicians</i>	<i>female politicians</i>	<i>male politicians</i>	<i>female politicians</i>	<i>male politicians</i>	<i>female politicians</i>	<i>male politicians</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>
<i>Half page or more articles</i>	80	(62.5)	407	(57.7)	9	(9.7)	286	(22.9)
<i>Less than half page articles</i>	34	(28.6)	203	(31.1)	40	(43)	477	(38.1)
<i>News in brief articles</i>	5	(4.2)	43	(6.6)	45	(48.4)	88	(39)

### **Size prominence: size of image**

Similar to the previous section, my interest here was in determining the extent to which women politicians who were visually represented appeared more in smaller rather than bigger images. To do this, all the images in the articles were categorised into ‘Mug shot’, ‘Less than

half page’ and ‘Half page or more’ (see Table 6.6). The percentage values shown are gender totals in each category over the total number in that category.

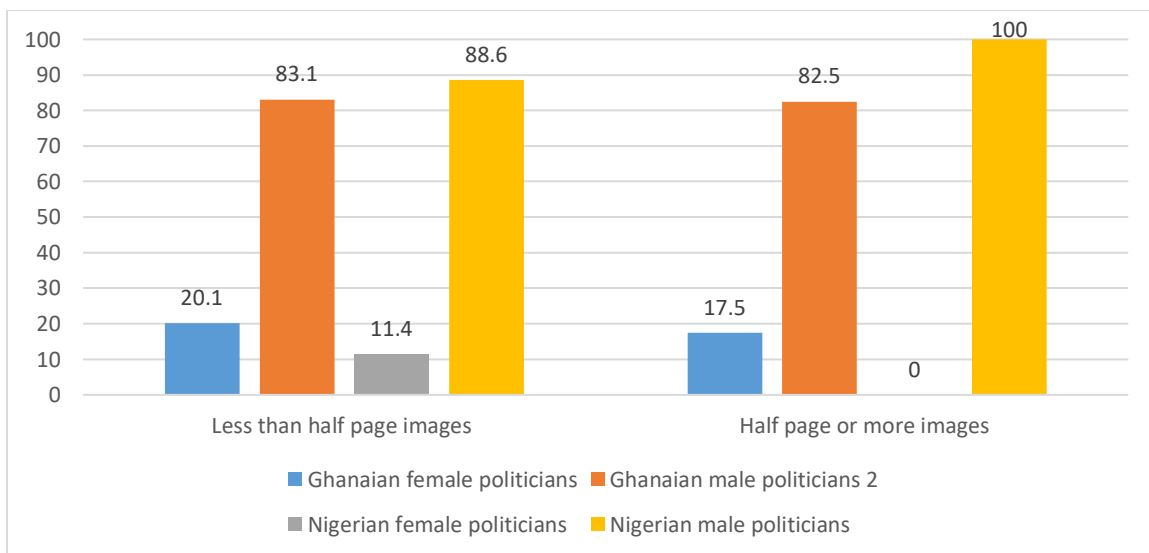
**Table 6.6** Distribution of politicians according to size of image in print news per country

<i>Size of image /Gender representation per country</i>	<i>Total Ghana</i>	<i>Ghanaian female politicians</i>		<i>Ghanaian male politicians</i>		<i>Total Nigeria</i>	<i>Nigerian female politicians</i>		<i>Nigerian male politicians</i>	
		<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>(%)</i>
		<i>Half page or more</i>	30	7	(0.9)		33	(2.9)	16	0
<i>Less than half page</i>	325	71	(57.1)	268	(39.4)	308	38	(40.9)	270	(21.6)
<i>Mug shot</i>	113	17	(14.3)	96	(14.7)	52	3	(3.2)	49	(3.9)

When we look at the results in each category, we get a mixed picture, but when the values for ‘Less than half page’ and ‘Mug shots’ are added up, it becomes clear that women politicians in both countries were not dominant in the smaller images as predicted although they are also less prominent in the bigger images (see Figure 6.4). What is striking is that none of the women in Nigeria appeared in any of the big images. Given that Nigerian newspapers generally use less images in their newspapers as noted above, and the fact that majority of these big images were full pages, it seemed that the big images were paid for. In this case, it would confirm what women politicians told me in the interviews that they did not have the

financial means to pay for coverage or advertisements in the media (I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 8). From the predominance of male politicians in the smaller images, however, we can conclude that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians were not less prominent visually in the print news represented here. When these results are taken together with their visual prominence discussed above, it appears that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' visual visibility and prominence in print news as represented in this data is higher than their verbal representation.

**Figure 6. 4** Distribution of politicians according to size of image in print news per country



### **Page prominence: front page visibility**

Apart from identifying patterns in the verbal and visual representation as well as prominence in article length and image size, it is also important to explore front page visibility of female politicians compared to male politicians. As already mentioned, not all audiences may get to read newspapers cover to cover; some may only see the front page in passing. Therefore, this aspect of visibility cannot be disregarded in the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts.



Additionally, appearance on the front page of media texts (not just newspapers) speaks of the high importance ascribed to that particular topic or person. Consequently, if women politicians appear on front pages on newspapers, this needs to be accounted for.

Given the high importance of front page placement in newspapers, I expect female politicians to be less frequently visible on front pages than male politicians. As the total number of front pages per country was less than politicians' gender totals due to the number of *mentions* being more than the number of front pages, I sought to find out what percentage of women politicians in each country was represented on the front pages, rather than how many front page articles featured women politicians. According to the results (Table 6.7), women politicians in both countries were indeed less visible on the front page. However, it must be noted that despite having comparatively lower verbal and visual representation than their Ghanaian women counterparts, Nigerian women politicians were more likely to appear on the front page.

**Table 6.7** Front page visibility of politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news.

<i>Number of articles/ Country</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>
<i>Number of all front page articles</i>	32	54
<i>Number of female politicians in front page articles</i>	8	10
<i>Percentage of female politicians in front page articles</i>	6.72%	10.75%
<i>Number of male politicians in front page articles</i>	55	117
<i>Percentage of male politicians in front page articles</i>	8.42%	9.35%

### **Visibility of women politicians in print and radio news: conclusion**

In summary, the results seem to indicate that the visual representation of women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria is generally higher than their verbal representation. A male dominance of a consistently above 80% visibility is noted in the verbal print representation reflecting a male norm of politics in both countries. There is also evidence of systemic exclusion from the news, chiefly of individual high level women politicians such as Nana Konadu Rawlings in Ghanaian radio news and Remi Sonaiya in Nigerian print news. In the case of Nana Konadu, the evidence is particularly compelling given that she is absent from *all* the days within the month before the election. However, we also see that certain media organisations represented women politicians more. This is the case for the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* and the *Radio Nigeria*, leading to the conclusion that state-owned media tend to represent women politicians more than private, commercially- driven media. That says something about the growing commercialisation of the media and its impact on women politicians' media visibility. This issue is taken up in Chapter 8. It must however be noted, that while state-owned media has been found to be more 'inclusive' of women politicians, it applied more to those in government. Therefore, distinction has to be made between which women politicians when making this claim.

There is also evidence of personalisation in both print and radio data. A further look at the individual level across both print and radio data shows the dominance of certain high level politicians. For example, in Ghana, the two (male) front runners for the presidential position together appeared 205 times in the print data, accounting for 41.58% of the total number of male politicians who were present. The distribution for radio was even higher; 42 (51.2%) visibility from the 82 total appearances of male politicians. The two Nigerian (male) front

runners for the presidential position accounted for 335 appearances (47.7%) out of the total visibility of male politicians in the print data, while for radio, they appeared 98 (31.2%) times out of 314 total appearances of male politicians. These results confirm what Vliegenthart et al. (2011) call ‘presidentialisation’ of the news. The results also support what interviewees said about the media’s focus on a few key politicians, usually those belonging to the two main parties in each country; what Balmas et al. (2014) call ‘centralised personalisation’.

#### **6.4 Representations of Power**

So far, I have presented results from content analysis of Ghanaian and Nigerian print and radio news which relate to how female and male politicians in those countries are verbally and visually represented. At the micro level, I have demonstrated the extent to which country, and sometimes gender, variations pertain within the data. Having provided the patterns characterising coverage of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in print and radio news, I now turn to the kinds of power relations that are constructed in these patterns.

In MCDA as well as feminist media studies, there is an assumption that representations are mediated by power. In other words, questions about who is included/excluded in representations, who does the ‘representing’, and what kinds of (power) relationships are set up between those represented and the audience are all worth exploring as they shape representations in important ways. Sassatelli (2011) for instance, argues that constructed identities (in this case gender identities) have a relational character. Given the historical dominance of women as subjected bodies and their entrance into the male-dominated sphere of politics as well as political journalism, it is important to interrogate what sort of relations are imbued in women politicians’ media representations in terms of how they are

symbolically positioned in relation to the audience, even if only to draw lines of continuities or contestations with discourses of power in gender discourse.

With that in mind, in this section, I consider the power relations enacted through women politicians' media representations as portrayed in news texts. Verbally, I consider the extent to which they appear as the sole politician or as the first of three politicians coded in each print or radio story. This is because being the sole subject of a story or the first to be mentioned ascribes much importance to the politician. In the former, it speaks to their newsworthiness; in the latter, it suggests their value as being first among a number of politicians in a hierarchy of importance. Another verbal measure that has traditionally been studied under news prominence is being quoted, which essentially implies giving voice to the represented. However, in this thesis, I chose to code being quoted as an agentive characteristic as it shows politicians speaking for themselves rather than being spoken for. Especially for those seeking votes, it is important that they speak for themselves as it enables them to present their views to the electorate and to project themselves as qualified for the political office being sought (Devitt, 1999). Additionally, it reduces the risk of being misquoted which is a major concern that was noted in the interviews (see Chapter 8). For these reasons, in this thesis, I choose to code being quoted under agency.

In terms of visual representation of power of women politicians, I explore how many appear as sole subjects in images as well as how they are depicted in camera angles, pose and page placement. As discussed in Chapter 4, language (broadly speaking) can (re)produce social life in the sense that semiotic resources can be used to communicate certain kinds of power relations between those represented and the audience (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Against this background, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) offer a set of

categories for analysing power relations in images. For example, camera angles can be used to ascribe power to the represented whereby a high angle can symbolise powerless over the viewer while a low angle reverses the power relations to position the viewer as having more power. This is associated with Western metaphorical associations of looking up as implying a higher status while looking down suggests a lower status (Machin, 2007). Applied to newspaper layout, it can be assumed that barring any technical layout choices, stories which appear at the top half of a page will be deemed more important than those appearing at the bottom half. Additionally, Barthes (1973) notes that poses are important as they carry connotational meaning, signifying broader ideas, values and behaviour. For example, from one's pose, we can determine if they are terrified, bold, comfortable or even individualistic. Thus, in seeking to communicate ideas, values and behaviours about politicians, photojournalists rely on these established conventions (Machin and Mayr, 2012) to shape viewers' evaluations. Camera angles, pose and page placement are therefore worth considering when evaluating power relations imbued in media representations of female politicians.

To sum up, in considering how women politicians are visually represented in Ghanaian and Nigerian print and radio news, I interrogate the kind of power relations that characterise their portrayal through the verbal categories of 'First mention', 'Sole Subject' in the story (comprising 'Text only' and 'Text Image' categories) as well as the visual elements in 'Sole subject' in image (comprising 'Text Image', 'Image only' and 'Image but not text' categories (see Table 6.8)). I also consider 'Upright pose' (Figure 6.5) in images (Visual Behaviour), 'Looking up' (Figure 6.6) camera angles (Visual Perspective) and 'Top 3<sup>rd</sup> page placement' (Figure 6.7) in the articles. The key question of interest here is finding out to what extent

female politicians in print and radio news are positioned as powerful. I begin with verbal representations of power and then move on to visual representations.

#### 6.4.1 Representations of power: verbal behaviour

The figures from Table 6.8 suggest a more balanced gender pattern for politicians in Ghana while in Nigeria, the picture is mixed. Despite having comparatively lower numbers in all categories, the percentage values imply that in all 4 categories, Ghanaian female politicians have a higher chance of being the sole subject of a news story in both media compared to male politicians. In contrast, Nigerian female politicians are more likely to be the first politician to be mentioned and the sole subject of a bulletin but only in relation to their representation in radio news. In fact, under sole subject in radio news, this likelihood is almost twice than for male politicians. With regard to print, however, although Nigerian female politicians are more likely than male politicians to be sole subjects of a newspaper article, it is also extremely unlikely for them to be the first politician to be mentioned in print news. This means their representation on radio is much better than in print news, confirming earlier results presented for their radio visibility. Nonetheless, the number of elected women politicians (MPs, presidential candidates, senators and members of the House of Assembly) who were represented as sole subjects in print news was woefully scant. Out of the total 43 from Ghana, there were only 8. Similarly, there were only 4 out of the total number of 19 women politicians in the Nigerian print news. The number of 1<sup>st</sup> mention **elected** women politicians in print news were 28 from Ghana and 8 from Nigeria. For radio, the numbers were 0 from Ghana and 2 from Nigeria. However, all the elected women politicians featured in radio news in both countries were sole subjects of the news.

**Table 6.8** Verbal representations of power for politicians per category

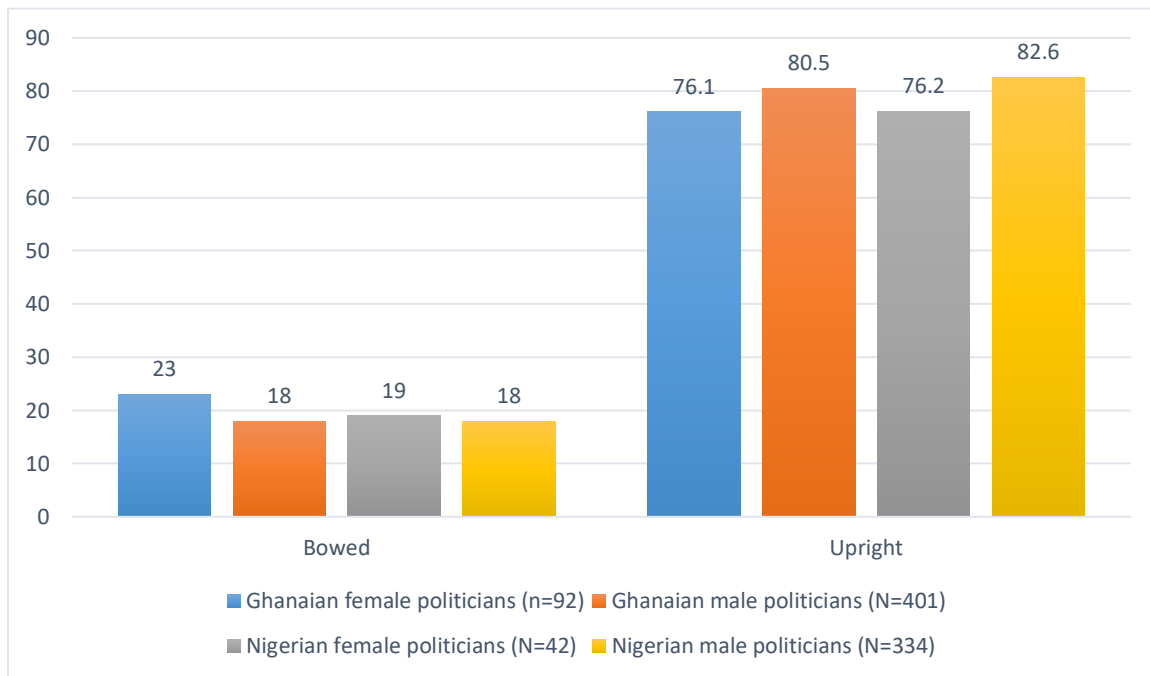
Categories of verbal representations of power/ gender distribution of politician per country	Ghana				Nigeria			
	Female politicians		Male		Female politicians		Male	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> mention (print)</b>	80	(2.5)	366	(51.9)	8	(8.6)	716	(57.2)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> mention (radio)</b>	3	(100)	48	(58.5)	25	(65.8)	178	(57.1)
<b>Sole subject (print)</b>	43	(33.6)	147	(20.9)	19	(20.4)	231	(18.5)
<b>Sole subject (radio)</b>	3	(100)	25	(30.5)	18	(47.4)	84	(26.9)

#### 6.4.2 Representations of power: visual behaviour

Before presenting the results of women politicians' visual representation of power under visual behaviour, it is important to provide a background to some of the categories represented here. The categories under 'Visual Behaviour' provide a second level analysis of how politicians are visually represented. Images were coded under 'Upright' featuring politicians who were either standing or in close ups, or 'Bowed' showing politicians who were seated. To determine whether politicians are represented as powerful, I focus on the extent to which all (fe)male politicians who appeared in images overall are likely to be

portrayed as ‘Upright’ or ‘Bowed’. Therefore, the percentage values seen here are the results of the total of each gender in each category over the gender total in images overall.

**Figure 6.5** Patterns of politicians’ *Visual Behaviour* in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news (percentages)



The results depict a remarkable similarity in the categories across both countries, especially with ‘Bowed’. In MCDA, the conventional interpretation given to representations of persons in upright positions is that it signifies power, while those who are seated or in bowed positions are seen as disempowered. Against this convention, it can be said that overall, male politicians in both countries had a higher chance of being depicted as powerful. However, the gender differences are not very significant. Even so, it does appear that compared to their Nigerian female counterparts, although Ghanaian women politicians were visually more visible in the corpus, they also had a slightly higher chance of being portrayed as less powerful in those images as they tended to be seated more than actively engaged.

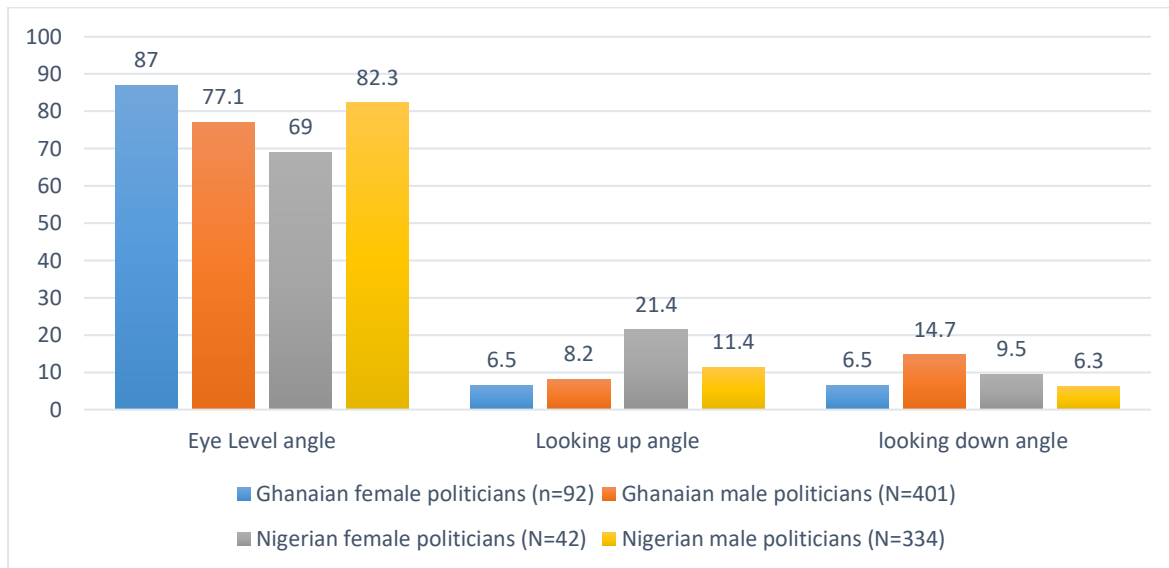


Nevertheless, it must also be noted that these binaries, when placed in context, reveal a far more complicated situation than is conventionally determined. For example, a woman politician who is pictured seated in a meeting but who is chairing that meeting is in reality in a powerful position. Therefore, while these results hold true against the selected categories, it is important to bear in mind that they only present a partial view in the absence of context, and can only be sufficiently interrogated in a more qualitative analysis. This is why I present an in depth analysis of selected news stories in the next chapter.

#### **6.4.3 Representations of power: visual perspective (angle)**

The broad category of ‘Visual Perspective’ indicates the point of view by which those depicted in news stories are positioned in relation to the reader through camera angles. Thus, they signify the particular perspective that readers are encouraged to view subjects. Overall, images that were at the ‘Eye level’ dominated the data set, followed by ‘Looking down’ and ‘Looking up’. In reference to the literature which suggests ‘Eye level’ images construct equal relationships between those depicted in an image and the audience, we can conclude that the newspapers represented here tend to represent politicians in both countries, irrespective of gender, through a relatively neutral perspective that signified equality between politicians and viewers. Nonetheless, Nigerian women politicians appeared more powerful given that they were lowest in the ‘Eye level’ values and highest in ‘Looking up’.

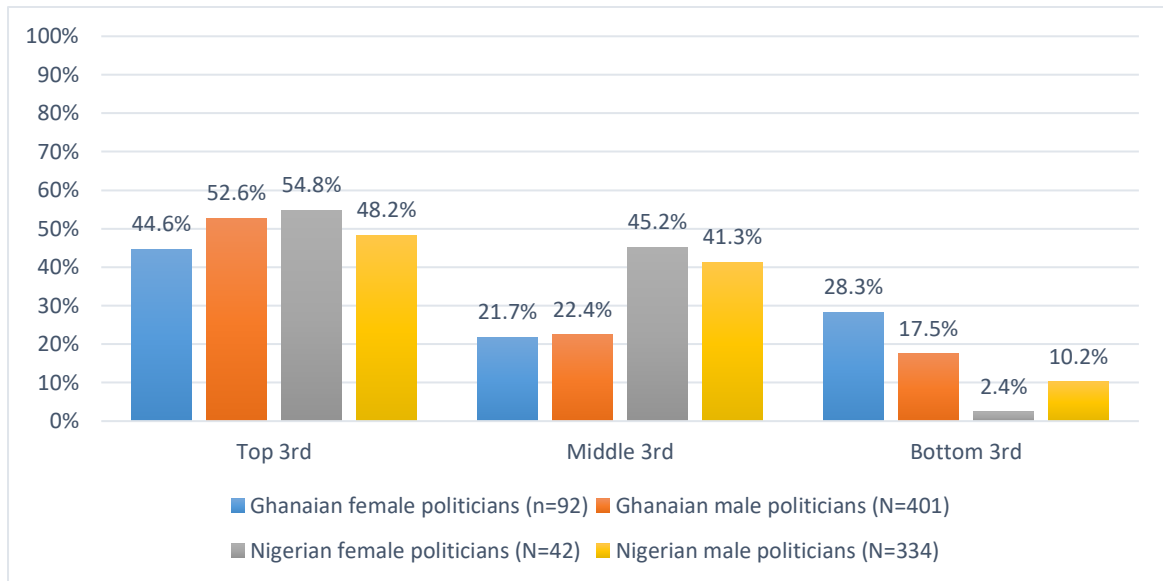
**Figure 6.6** Patterns of politicians' *Visual Angle Behaviour* in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news (percentages)



Note: percentage values are gender totals in each category as a proportion of the gender total in all images.

#### 6.4.4 Representations of power: visual perspective (page)

Another broad category under 'Perspective' is 'Page placement'. From the corpus, it was noted that the 4 newspapers tended to place political news at the 'Top 3rd', implying that politicians whose stories were at this position of the newspaper page were viewed as important. Therefore, what I was interested in was how many female politicians were depicted as important through placement in the 'Top 3rd' position compared to male politicians. The results show an interesting picture. By virtue of having the highest value in 'Top 3rd' position and lowest in 'Bottom 3rd', Nigerian female politicians were given more prominence relative to Ghanaian female politicians as well as the male politicians. Overall, female politicians in Ghana were the least to be depicted as prominent among the four groups.

**Figure 6.7** Patterns of politicians' *Visual Page Behaviour* in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news

Note: percentage values show gender totals in each category as a proportion of overall gender totals in images

#### 6.4.5 Representations of power: conclusion

Taken together, the results show a mixed picture. The strongest evidence of depiction of power is for female politicians in Ghana under the 'Verbal representation' where they scored higher values across all categories. In relation to 'Visual Page Perspective', Nigerian female politicians' stories tended to appear more in 'Top 3rd' position of the page than both Ghanaian female politicians and the male politicians. The results for 'Visual Perspective' was also very strong, suggesting a tendency for the four newspapers to position politicians in equal relation to the audience. Apart from these, the rest of the categories show a relatively mixed picture. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion will be that there seems to be no evidence of gender discrimination towards female politicians in the way they are depicted as either powerful or not. However, if you consider the categories of appointed versus elected women politicians, the latter needing more favourable representation in order to gain voter support to stay in power, then it seems that with the exception of 'Looking up' where elected women

politicians had a higher value, their frequency in the other two ‘power’ categories (Upright and Top 3<sup>rd</sup>) was consistently lower.

**Table 6.9** Frequency of appointed versus elected Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in Representations of Power

<i>Category of women politicians per country</i>	<i>Visual behaviour (Upright) (n)</i>	<i>Visual perspective (Looking up) (n)</i>	<i>Page placement (Top 3<sup>rd</sup>) (n)</i>
<i>Appointed Ghanaian women politicians</i>	31	1	23
<i>Elected Ghanaian women politicians</i>	29	4	18
<i>Appointed Nigerian women politicians</i>	26	7	19
<i>Elected Nigerian women politicians</i>	6	2	4

### 6.5 Representations of Agency

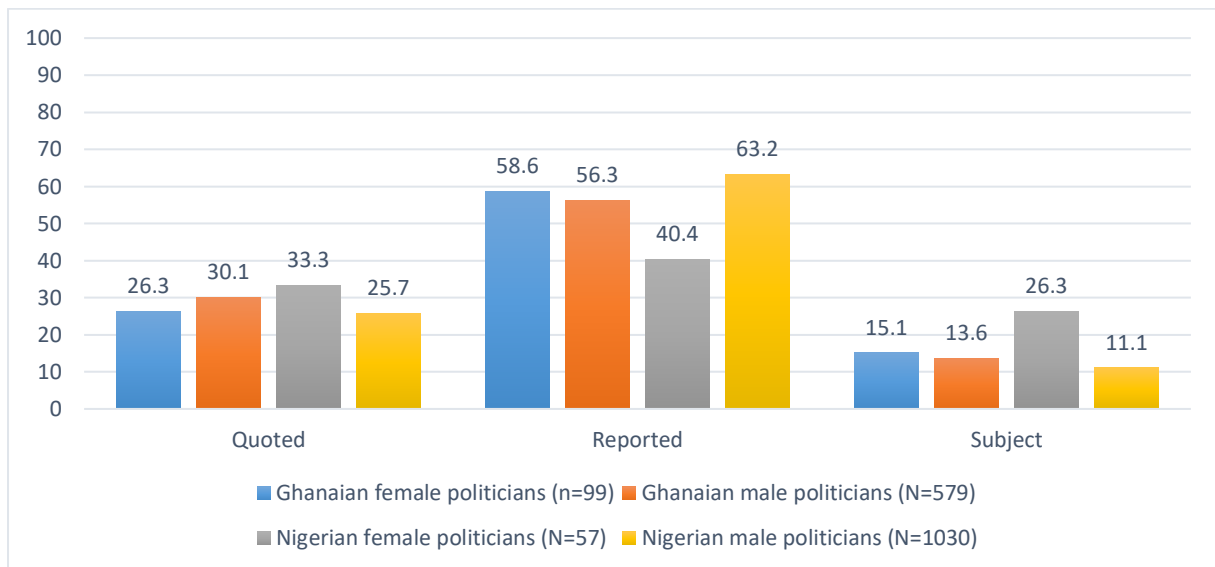
Related to power relations is the construction of Agency. Here, the focus is on whether women politicians are given agency through quotations or visually portrayed as ‘doing’ something as opposed to being inactive. In line with gender stereotypes, the expectation is that female politicians will be portrayed more as objects of news stories or in passive postures than male politicians. Consequently, for verbal representations of agency, I identify the extent

to which female politicians are quoted. Following Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006), I also examine their visual depictions of agency in the images. In this case, I consider the categories ‘Eye contact’, ‘Gesture’ and ‘Activity’. Under these 3 main categories, I look at the sub-categories of ‘Demand’, ‘Waving gesture’ and ‘Dynamic activity’ respectively. In what follows, I first deal with frequency of quotes in print (Figure 6.8) and radio (Figure 6.9) news, and then proceed with visual agency (Figures 6.10-6.12).

### **6.5.1 Representations of agency: print**

In this section, I sought to find out what proportion of the women politicians represented in texts were quoted. Thus I excluded the stories associated with representation in only images. Generally, the results show a tendency for the papers to report on the activities of politicians or what they said rather than quote them. That said, Nigerian female politicians appeared to be more quoted than their Ghanaian female counterparts, although they were also the most depicted in the ‘subject’ position.

The tendency for journalists to report on activities of politicians is a symptom of interpretive journalism which is a characteristic of news media logic (discussed in Chapter 8). According to Djerf-Pierre and Weibull (2008, p. 209), interpretive journalism is “the most significant change in political journalism”. It occurs when journalistic views on events or personalities are privileged over that of the subject, in this case, the politician. Through interpretive journalism, journalists are able to take more control over news content than say a descriptive style will allow. It has received some criticism from scholars, especially as it is believed to lead to cynicism towards politicians (ibid; Farnsworth and Lichter, 2011). In Chapter 8, I discuss how this trend is also one of the key criticisms that women politicians made against journalists.

**Figure 6.8** Distribution of nature of source use in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news

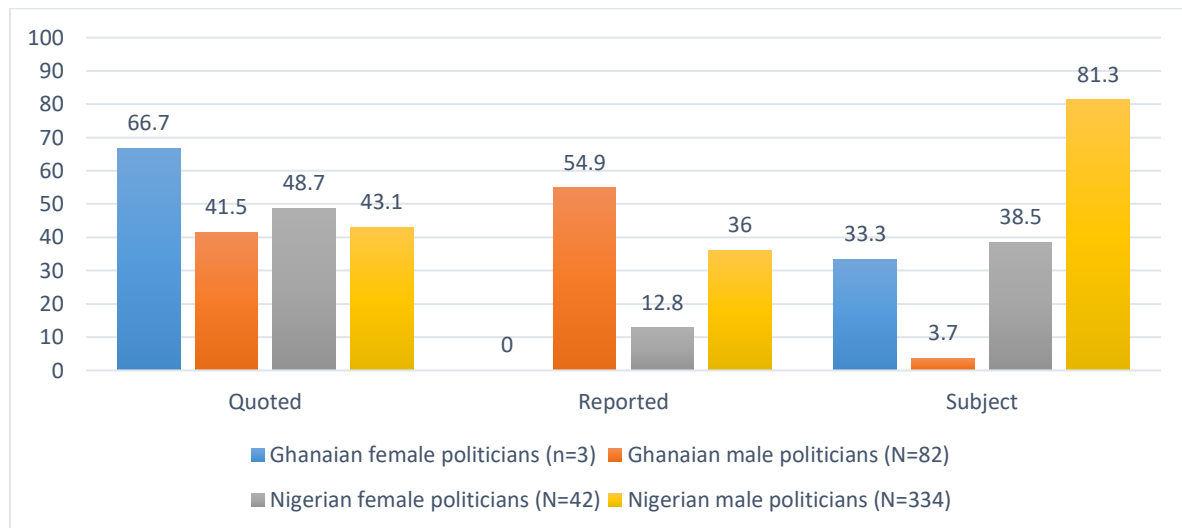
Note: The percentage values show gender totals in each category as a proportion of the overall gender total in textual or verbal representation per country.

### 6.5.2 Representations of agency: radio

Results from the radio data are also mixed across the three categories. *Radio Nigeria* seems to quote politicians more than they report or depict them as subjects. In fact, Nigerian female politicians appear to be quite favourably represented here as they are quoted more than male politicians and appear as subjects significantly less frequently. The latter measure, in particular, suggests that news stories ascribe more agency to female than male politicians in Nigeria. Again, we note the tendency for Ghana's *Joy FM* towards reporting rather than quoting politicians. Although the number for female politicians is too low to make any gender comparison, the results confirm what female politicians said about the station's journalistic approach to news; that it is predominantly interpretive. The differences in political news journalism seem to reflect differences in media ownership and how that affects

political news coverage. They suggest that apart from covering female politicians more, the state-owned *Radio Nigeria* was less interpretive than the commercially-oriented *Joy FM*.

**Figure 6.9** Distribution of nature of source use in radio news in Ghana and Nigeria



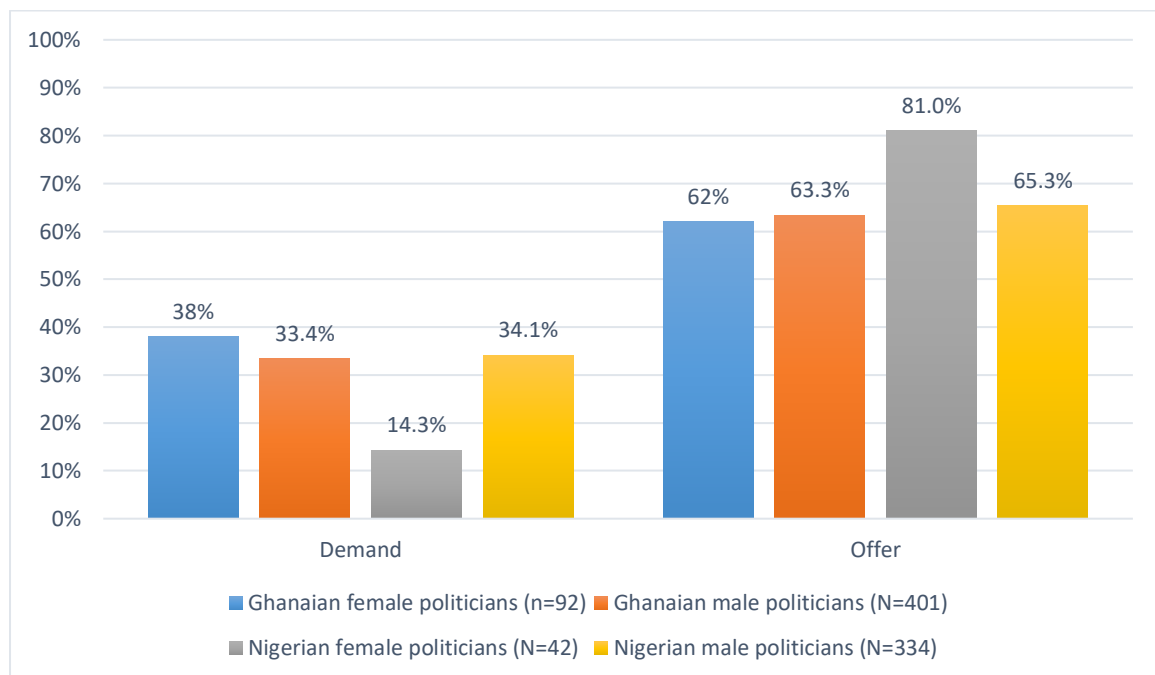
Note: The percentage values show gender totals in each category as a proportion of the overall gender total in textual or verbal representation per country.

### 6.5.3 Representations of agency: eye contact

Concerning agency relating to visual representation, female politicians in both countries appear more in images where they are passively ‘offered’ to the audience to be viewed rather than actively invited into a symbolic interaction with the viewer. The evidence for Nigerian female politicians is even more compelling than that of their Ghanaian female counterparts. This trend finds much resonance in the ‘male gaze’ (Mulvey, 1989) scholarship which argues that visual media tends to objectify women, depicting them as objects to satisfy the desires of men. In the case of Nigerian female politicians, given their low depiction in the ‘Demand’ category, it can be argued that their visual representation leans more towards passivity in a way that can typify their objectification. The only caveat will be if these ‘offer’ images

depicted them as doing something, in which case the implication will not necessarily be objectification but more likely an invitation for the viewer to ‘witness’ the female politicians actively ‘doing’ something. In this latter case, the representation will be favourable due to the agency ascribed.

**Figure 6.10** Distribution of Eye contact categories for Ghanaian and Nigerian politicians



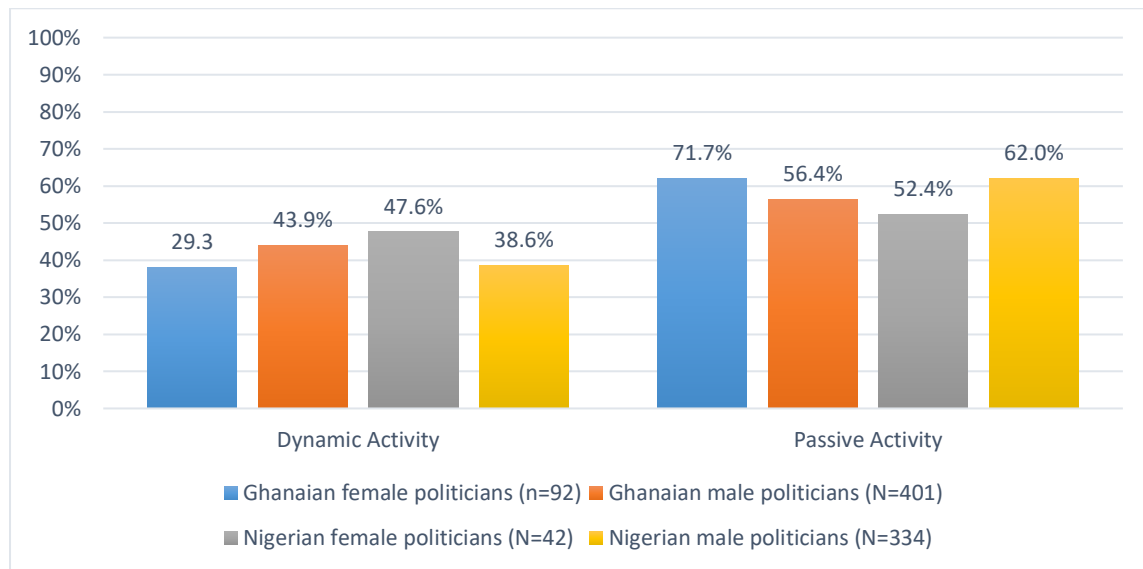
#### 6.5.4 Representations of agency: activity

The results here reveal a mixed picture although there are slight differentiations between the countries. Nigerian female politicians scored least in the ‘Passive Activity’ category and highest in ‘Dynamic Activity’, suggesting a more active representation. The reverse was the case for female politicians in Ghana. These findings reveal a contrast from those in the previous section. While Ghanaian female politicians appeared in more ‘Demand’ gazes, they



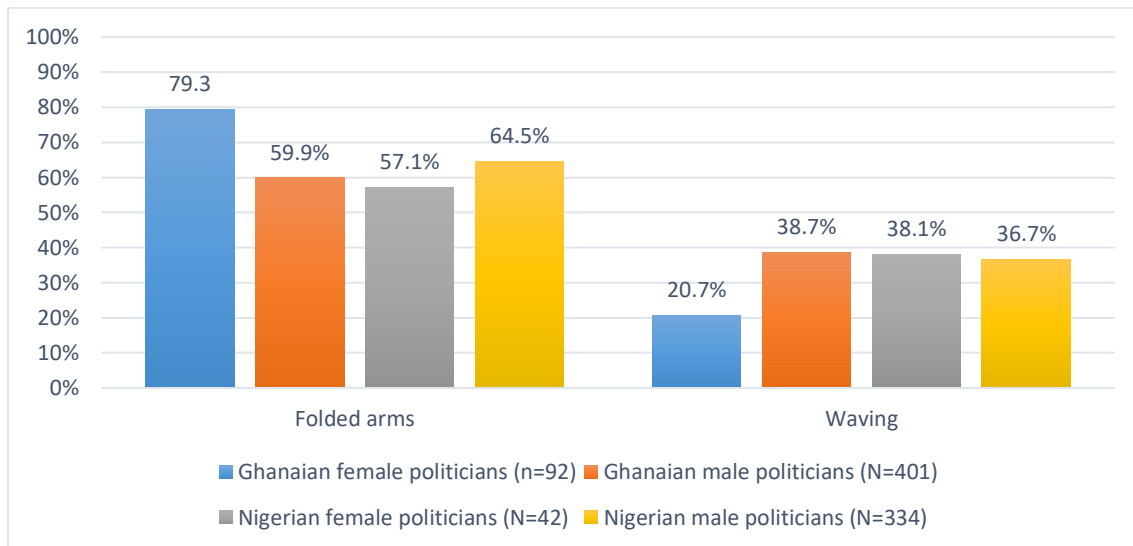
are also the most passivated. In contrast, Nigerian female politicians were ‘offered’ more but portrayed as more dynamic. The findings are therefore not very straightforward.

**Figure 6.11** Distribution of Activity categories for Ghanaian and Nigerian politicians



### 6.5.5 Representations of agency: gesture

The categories in this section consist of ‘Waving’ and ‘Folded arms’ where politicians are seated or in mug shots. The results show a strong depiction of Ghanaian female politicians in passive positions, similar to findings from the previous two sections. This may however be due to the high number of mug shots in the Ghanaian data. Nigerian female politicians, on the other hand, had a fairly favourable representation. Therefore, without the benefit of context, these results must be taken with caution.

**Figure 6.12** Distribution of Gesture categories in Ghanaian and Nigerian politicians

### 6.5.6 Representations of agency: conclusion

In this section, I examined the extent to which female politicians are given agency when they appear in print news. Findings from the analysis showed a complex picture of representation. Nigerian female politicians are shown to be more passive in connecting with the viewer as they appear in images that offer them as objects to be seen rather than actors to be actively engaged with. However, they also have the highest figures with regard to activity, being depicted as ‘doing’ something more often than any of the politicians. Ghanaian female politicians, on the other hand, were more direct in symbolically connecting with the viewer but also depicted very passively through ‘Activity’ and ‘Gesture’. Consequently, it can be said that Nigerian women politicians are depicted as more active but less direct in connecting with the viewer while the reverse is the case for Ghanaian women politicians. If there is any question of objectification, it seems more likely with the latter than the former group, particularly as the results in the next section show they scored highest in the ‘smiling’ category. The issue of agency relates to the need for politicians to demonstrate their competence to the electorate, which is also one underlying purpose of media visibility

(Wagner et al., 2017). In this sense, the results suggest that if being active signifies competence, then Nigerian female politicians appear to have been portrayed more favourably than Ghanaian female politicians. When comparing elected to appointed women politicians however (Table 6.10), the numbers favour the latter in both countries in all but one category, that is, in 'Demand' Eye contact. Even so, the difference in figures is not significant.

**Table 6.10** Frequency of appointed versus elected Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in Representations of Agency

<i>Category of women politicians per country</i>	<i>Quoted print (n)</i>	<i>Quoted print (n)</i>	<i>Demand Eye Contact (n)</i>	<i>Dynamic Activity (n)</i>	<i>Waving Gesture (n)</i>
<i>Appointed Ghanaian women politicians</i>	23	3	14	22	14
<i>Elected Ghanaian women politicians</i>	7	0	19	5	5
<i>Appointed Nigerian women politicians</i>	16	20	6	18	14
<i>Elected Nigerian women politicians</i>	3	1	0	2	2

## 6.6 Representations of Likeability

For politicians seeking (re) election, it is important that they are seen as likeable candidates (Lobinger and Brantner, 2015) as this endears them to the public, leading to more positive evaluation. Research indicates that the electorate are more likely to vote for candidates they perceive as likeable. For female politicians, this is especially the case (Barrett and Barrington, 2005). Boomgaarden et al (2016) show how favourable visual representation for female politicians superseded verbal representation in candidate evaluation even when the text portrayed them favourably. This suggests that for female politicians, it is even more important that their visual representation in the news media is favourable.

To assess the likeability of female politicians, I focus on whether they appear smiling, in the company of cheering fans or in close- up shots to invite a more intimate ‘relationship’ with the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). As an unsmiling, close- up shot of a politician creates a different effect from a smiling close- up, I also make a distinction between the two in the analysis.

### 6.6.1 Representations of likeability: facial expression

Under likeability, each image was coded for four subcategories consisting of ‘Smiling’, ‘Frowning’, ‘Other’ for when the politician was caught in mid-speech for example, and ‘Unclear’ for when the politician’s face could not be seen clearly because it was turned slightly away from the camera

The results (Table 6.8) show that Ghanaian female politicians are depicted smiling more than their female counterparts in Nigeria. What is also surprising is that Nigerian male politicians have the highest figure in the ‘Smiling’ category although they are also shown as frowning

more than all the other politicians. Overall, the print media represented here tends to portray politicians more as smiling than as frowning. In terms of gender differentiation and according to the literature, as female politicians in Ghana are shown in images that depict them as smiling and less as frowning, they appear to have a more favourable visual representation.

**Table 6.11** Patterns of representation of politicians in Likeability categories

Categories of facial expression/ gender distribution of politician per country	Ghana				Nigeria			
	Female politicians		Male		Female politicians		Male	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
<b>Smiling</b>	43	(46.7)	144	(35.9)	18	(42.9)	165	(49.4)
<b>Frowning</b>	13	(14.1)	102	(25.4)	11	(26.2)	111	(33.2)
<b>Unclear</b>	18	(19.6)	101	(25.2)	8	(19)	34	(10.2)
<b>Other</b>	19	(20.7)	49	(12.2)	2	(4.8)	24	(7.2)

Note: percentages are gender totals in each category as a proportion of overall gender totals in visual representation.

### 6.6.2 Representations of likeability: cheering fans

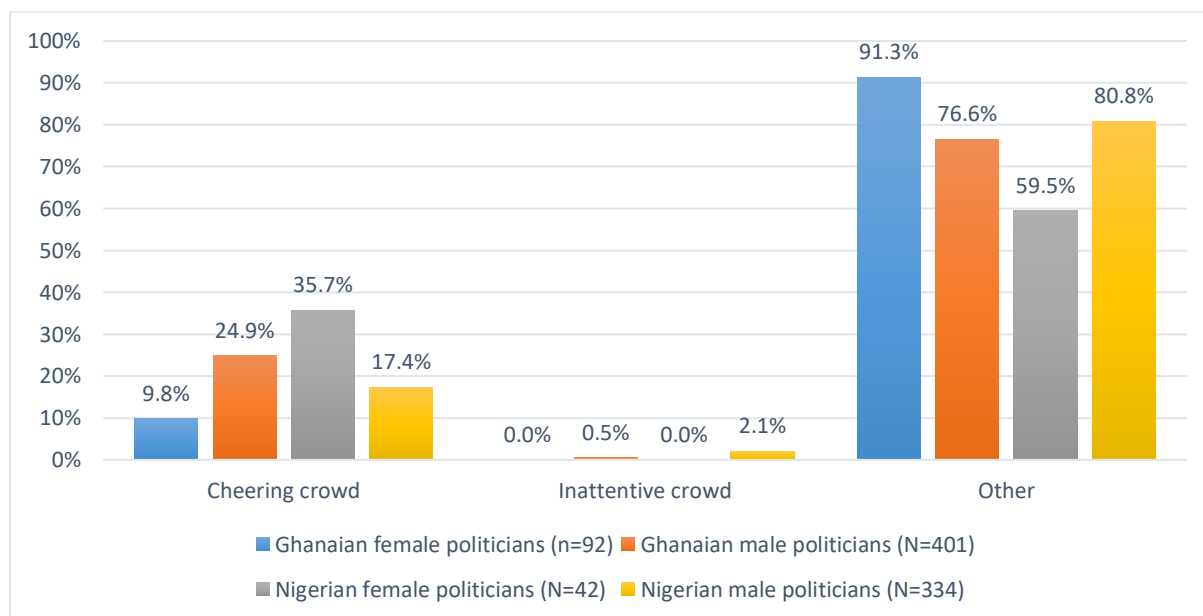
The idea behind depicting politicians with a cheering crowd is to show their popularity.

Particularly for campaign images, politicians often use big and cheering crowds as a

marketing strategy to signify that they are well liked. In the same way, news stories depicting politicians with big, cheering crowds communicate the popularity of the politician.

Generally, the results show a preference for portraying politicians as single subjects in images hence the large numbers under the ‘Other’ category. However, it is surprising that Nigerian female politicians are shown less in the ‘Other’ category and more with cheering crowds while their women counterparts in Ghana show the reverse, suggesting that although Ghanaian women politicians may not be depicted as popular as their Nigerian female counterparts, they were also not entirely depicted as passive as some of the results in previous sections suggest.

**Figure 6.13** Frequency of politicians’ presence in ‘Cheering fans’ categories



Note: percentages are gender totals in each category as a proportion of overall gender totals in visual representation.

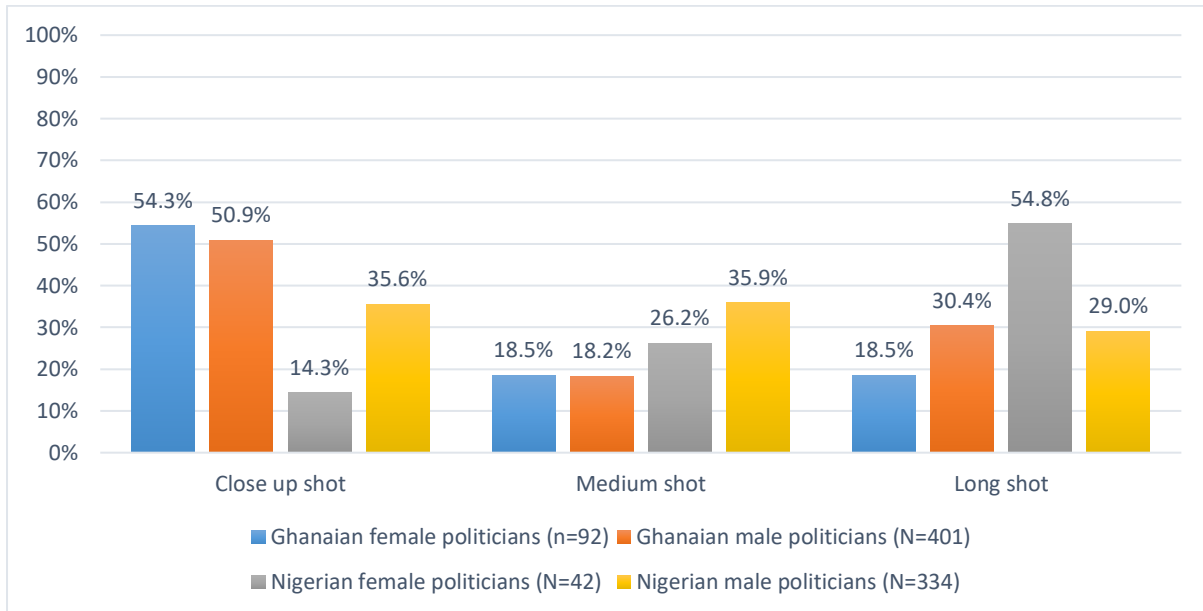
### 6.6.3 Representations of likeability: camera shots

In this section, I examine the level of intimacy or otherwise that female politicians are symbolically depicted as having with viewers. The categories of interest are ‘Close up’

signifying intimacy, 'Medium shot' signifying a less intimate but not too socially distant relationship between those represented and the viewer, and 'Long shot' signifying distance or formality with the viewer.

The results here reflect findings from the previous sections. Ghanaian female politicians are portrayed more in close shots possibly because of their dominant presence in mug shots as shown in Section 6.3.2. Nigerian female politicians' prominence in long shots also conform to their dominance in cheering crowds in the previous section. Overall, we cannot make a claim on the basis of these results alone till they are combined with other categories in order to determine their potential overall effect. For example, a smiling, close up image does not create the same approachability effect as a frowning close up image.



**Figure 6.14 Camera shots patterns of politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian press news**

Note: percentages are gender totals in each category as a proportion of overall gender totals in visual representation.

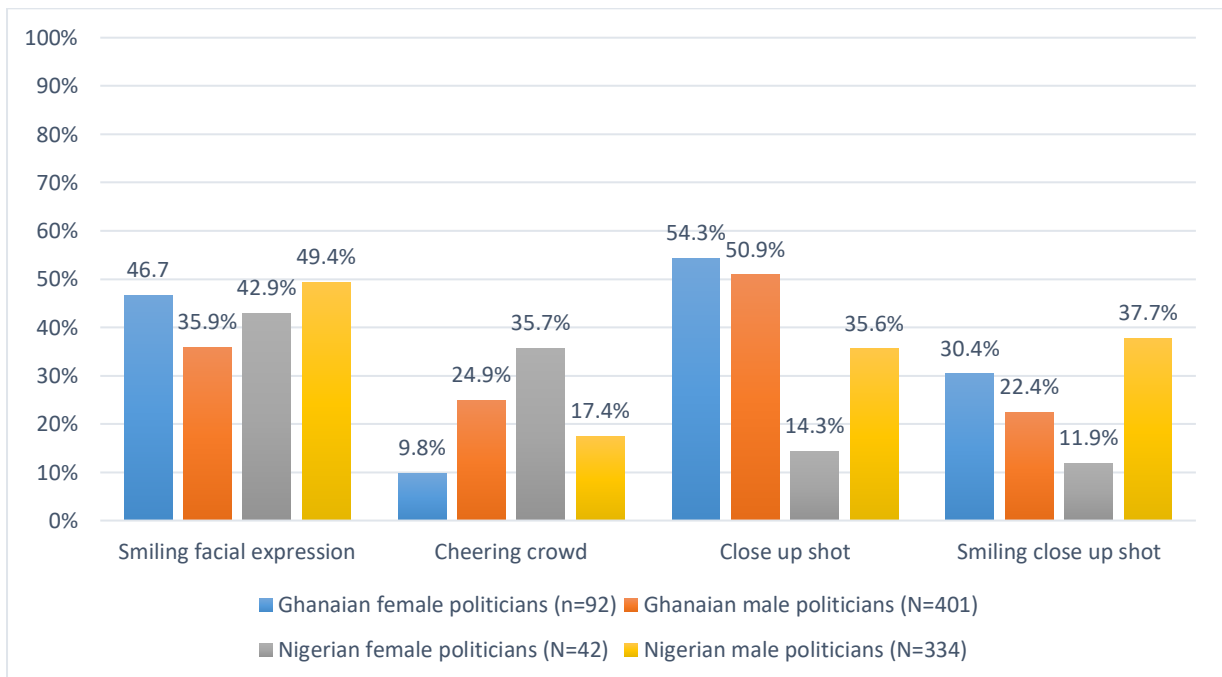
#### 6.6.4 Representations of likeability: conclusion

Having presented the overall results in the three categories from which Likeability is measured, I now focus on the specific sub-categories of ‘Smiling’ facial expression, ‘Cheering crowd’ and ‘Close up’ shot (see Figure 6.15). I also include the sub-category ‘Smiling close up’ which combines politicians who are depicted as both smiling and in a close up shot. As earlier noted, this shows a more positive representation.

In terms of gender differentiation, Ghanaian print media represented in the data tends to depict female politicians in positive facial expressions more than their Nigerian female peers. However, the evidence is not very strong given that they are also shown in close ups without smiling faces. When women politicians are represented with non-smiling facial expressions in the news, Boorgaarden et al (2016) observes that this is likely to negatively impact on their voting support. Nonetheless, because Ghanaian women politicians are depicted with more smiling faces overall, the general pattern is that they are shown as approachable. Although

female politicians in Nigeria record the highest under ‘Cheering crowd’, their representation is not very favourable given their low numbers in the other categories. What is surprising, however, is the fact that Nigerian male politicians dominate not only in the ‘Smiling facial expression’ category but also the combined ‘Smiling close up shot’ category. As the literature suggests that female politicians need a favourable visual representation more than their male counterparts, we can conclude that overall, in relation to likeability, Ghanaian female politicians had more favourable coverage than female politicians in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the latter’s higher representation with cheering crowds in addition to being more actively depicted cannot be ignored, thus making the results quite complex.

**Figure 6.15** Likeability patterns of politicians in Ghanaian and Nigerian print news



Note: percentages are gender totals in each category as a proportion of overall gender totals in visual representation.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the patterns that characterise women politicians' media coverage in Ghanaian and Nigerian print and radio news. I have considered both verbal and visual representation (where applicable) in a multi-layered analysis, interrogating the patterns under various (sub) categories. As mentioned at the beginning, this is the first step towards answering the overarching question of how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are represented in their national media.

Overall, the results present a mixed picture although aspects are consistent with many studies that have noted the predominance of male politicians in political news coverage. Trends in news media logic such as presidentialisation, 'centralised personalization' and interpretative journalism, all of which are discussed further in Chapter 8, have been noted in the results.

At the country level, women politicians' overall visibility in the data is higher than their actual numbers in politics, yet, news stories that focus solely on the women are much lower than these numbers, suggesting more importance being given to male politicians.

Nonetheless, the results clearly show that the type of media institution under investigation plays an important role in the nature and extent of media coverage that women politicians receive. The presence of the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* contributed to women politicians' increased visibility in print media compared to their near invisibility in the private *Joy FM*. Again, Nigerian women politicians' higher verbal visibility was on *Radio Nigeria* and not in the private newspapers. This finding is important not only for scholarship on women politicians' media coverage, but also for women politicians themselves.

Studies will need to explore the clear distinctions between different types of media institutions and how that impacts on news content. This also relates to distinctions between different levels of political position occupied by female politicians and how that interacts with different kinds of media institutions. In the data examined here, women politicians in governmental positions formed the majority of those covered. Thus, the political position of women in politics intersects with kind of media institution to shape media coverage. This suggests that women politicians who are interested in being seen and heard in the news but who do not have any government portfolio will likely have decreased chances of media visibility, and therefore need to seek media attention more actively than those in government.

Secondly, women politicians are more visually visible, but given that women have traditionally been more visually prominent in media content than men (Gill, 2007), and often in objectified portrayals, we need to take their visual prominence more cautiously. This is because more scrutiny of the data reveals that although Ghanaian women politicians tended to be depicted as more approachable, they are also made more passive than their Nigerian female colleagues who are portrayed as less approachable but more agentic and popular. Given these complex findings, it is difficult to note a very clear gender bias against women politicians except in the symbolic annihilation of the two female presidential candidates from Ghana and Nigeria who are noticeably absent in the radio and press data respectively. The next chapter therefore explores these mixed patterns of media representations, which I argue, are symptomatic of gender norms strongly embedded in the socio-cultural milieu of Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, and which influence political news coverage.

## **CHAPTER 7| “ANCILLARIES” “AFTERTHOUGHT”, “NOT GOOD ENOUGH”: CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS IN PRESS NEWS**

In the previous chapter, I examined the patterns which characterise women politicians’ media coverage in Ghanaian and Nigerian print and radio news. Key among the findings are the dominance of male politicians in the news texts reflecting the cultural patriarchal values in both countries, and the fact that certain kinds of media organisations seem to offer some women politicians, particularly those in government positions, more and favourable coverage. Another important result is the fact that when they do manage to gain media visibility, women politicians tend to be more visually visible as well as being portrayed as agentive, ‘active’ and likeable, although country variations exist.

Having established these patterns through content analysis, I interrogate the news texts further through a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), where the focus is on verbal and visual aspects of the representations. There are several reasons for doing this. First, the meanings that are created by news texts are an ‘ensemble’ (Kress, 2010) of messages created by different modes including the verbal and visual aspects that have been examined in the previous chapter. Content analysis was helpful in identifying the patterns but as was seen in the previous chapter, it produced a mixed picture which needs further interrogation in order to better understand how all the aspects of representation work together to construct an overall picture of women politicians in the news. As Kress (2010) argues, it is the ‘orchestration’ of all these elements which contribute to the overall meanings created about particular groups or versions of social reality, and which best serves the interest of the text producer. Analysing only verbal or visual aspects of the news content risks missing out

on these overall meanings and the ways in which different modes interact to create them. Therefore, this chapter builds on the previous findings. However, as radio news only has verbal and not visual elements, and since the verbal aspects of news have already been interrogated in the previous chapter, I focus on print news in this chapter.

Second, a key objective of this thesis is to uncover the power structures that underlie women politicians' media coverage, based on what the extant literature points to. In this regard, MCDA is useful for identifying discursive structures which construct power relations between different social groups in ways that seem fundamental and 'natural', and therefore are taken for granted. For example, the idea that women do not belong in politics or that they cannot perform competently when elected shaped the news media's general lack of attention to female presidential candidates in Ghana and Nigeria as seen in the previous chapter.

Third, and relatedly, is the idea that "discourse is performative and constitutive rather than representative" (Jancsary et al., 2016, p.183). This means the social reality that discourses construct in news texts, for example, do not merely reflect events that happen but are particular versions of reality selected to suit the text producer's purpose. This explains why the same event may be reported differently by different newspapers. As the analysis will soon show, differences in political ideology and ownership of the newspapers strongly influenced how they reported on the same event, and how they depicted the women politicians involved in those events. Through the MCDA lens employed in this chapter, these disparities in coverage, which were missed in the content analysis, are made clear, while also highlighting the strategies that are deployed to construct women politicians in ways that conform to the newspapers' political positioning.

Finally, in the literature review, I noted how research on women politicians' media representation has largely focused on examining verbal content. There have been a few studies on their visual representation (e.g. Boomgaarden et al., 2016), and even fewer on MCDA (Rubtcova and Pavenkov, 2016). Because of this lacuna, it is even more important that studies begin to address this largely overlooked aspect of women politicians' media coverage. Thus, this chapter highlights why an MCDA in this field is a useful approach as it reveals aspects of women politicians' portrayal in news texts which were not explicit in the content analysis and therefore was missed.

With the above reasons in mind, I proceed with MCDA of a selection of news stories which portrayed women politicians through both verbal and visual representations. Given the very minimal use of images in the Nigerian news stories, the number of articles which met the criteria of verbal and visual representations of women politicians amounted to only 6 from the entire Nigerian dataset and 54 from the Ghanaian corpus. Evidently, this is a great imbalance especially as the Nigerian articles are almost three times that from Ghana. To address this imbalance somewhat, I included a further 10 news stories (without images or only comprising an image) from Nigeria, focusing on those that represented **elected** women politicians. This is partly aimed at balancing the low number of elected women politicians represented in the entire corpus for this thesis and the high number of appointed women politicians. Additionally, I sought to highlight how elective women politicians are portrayed in press news given that the implications of these representations potentially have greater impact on their political careers as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, the total number of stories analysed in this chapter is 70 (see Table 7.1 for a breakdown of the data presented in this chapter).

Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) three metafunctional objectives of communication events namely representational, interactive and compositional, I focus on the kinds of identities, values and behaviours ascribed to women politicians through these representations, in addition to compositional decisions which contribute to the overall meaning potentials that are produced about the women. Building on findings from the previous chapter, I argue in this chapter that women politicians' media coverage strongly reflects cultural gender norms and expectations embedded in the Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, but these are largely hidden without an in-depth analysis of news content which MCDA allows. MCDA is a very useful tool that strengthens gendered political communication scholarship and therefore needs to be deployed more.

Table 7.1 Summary of data presented in Chapter 7

<i>No. of article per country</i>	<i>Name of newspaper/ no. of articles</i>	<i>Ownership of newspaper</i>
<i>Ghana (54)</i>	Daily Graphic (50)	State owned
	Daily Guide (9)	Private
<i>Nigeria (16)</i>	The Guardian (5)	Private
	The Punch ((6)	Private



### 7.1 Theme 1: Women Politicians as Secondary Actors.

The most dominant theme that emerged in the analysis is the idea that women are not competent enough to play leading roles in politics, but are better placed in supporting roles. Comprising 23 stories which cover women politicians in different roles as minister, (potential) first lady, running mates and contesting members of parliament, this theme is made explicit through a variety of strategies. These include trivialising women politicians' political position, rendering them passive through lexical positioning as recipients of other people's actions, framing their presence in the story along a supporting role only, delegitimising them through denial of their voice and visually positioning them as peripherals in the story.

One of the key ways in which women politicians are constructed as ancillaries is through use of lexical or visual choices which minimise their political achievements, elide their agency or depict them as second best. In these stories, they are often positioned as objects rather than subjects or recipients rather than givers, even though they may be occupying a high position. Some of the stories also background women politicians by introducing them only towards the end where they are briefly mentioned as if as an afterthought. In other cases, the verbal and visual representations in the story seem to diverge rather than converge, creating a more complicated construction of the woman politician. A good example of this is found in the Daily Graphic (21/11/16, p.81) which narrates events of a tourism award ceremony. Covering almost a full page, the story focuses in the most part on what happened during the event. Only in the last but one column out of 6 is the Tourism minister, Mrs. Elisabeth Oforu-Agyare, who had "chaired the function" mentioned. Even here, she is quoted only briefly. Her textual representation exemplifies many women politicians in this theme whose role as the most important political actor is trivialised through a depiction that implicitly suggests

that they are not important. It can be argued that the mention of her title, name and quote, as well as her visual representation in the story is sufficient to legitimise her political function. Nonetheless, it can also be argued that being the sector minister, what she did and said in the event could have been placed first in the story to establish her authority. In her principal role as minister, her presence was likely aimed at lending legitimacy to the event while also raising its profile, but this is not reflected in the news story as her peripheral positioning in the text (at least) belied her political authority.

In the accompanying picture, her textual de-emphasis is somewhat minimised by her visual representation, although, I would argue, very marginally (Figure 7.1). The recipient of the award is made more central in the picture than the minister through his position and frontal view with a gaze that looks more towards the camera. On the other hand, the bodily and facial side view of Mrs. Elisabeth Oforu-Agyare, as well as her position in the image order seems to reflect her textual minimisation; she is presented as an object to be looked at by the viewer rather than engaged with (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004). Through this visual depiction, her salience and agency are minimised. We could say that the caption names her first and therefore assigns salience but in the same way, the omission of her title downplays her political function. Thus, as the sector minister, Mrs. Elisabeth Oforu-Agyare's trivialisation through textual backgrounding and to a lesser extent, visual portrayal all serve to illustrate the ways in which women politicians can be depicted as ancillaries.



**Figure 7.1** Mrs. Elizabeth Ofosu-Agyare, presenting the Five Star Hotel of the Year award to Charles Njeru (4<sup>th</sup> right), Financial Controller of Labadi Beach Hotel (Daily Graphic, 21/11/16, p.81)

Another way in which women politicians are constructed as secondary actors is by denying them their voice. The giving of ‘voice’ is a great signifier of power. As I noted in the previous chapter, it is important that (women) politicians are allowed to speak for themselves in news stories as that not only shows their importance but also grants them agency. In a patriarchal society like Ghana and Nigeria where, culturally, women are not encouraged to speak, it becomes even more important for women in politics in these two countries to be heard in order to demonstrate their political independence and competence. Therefore, when a woman politician is denied her voice, it is even more damaging to her campaign, especially if she is competing at the high level of presidency. This was Nana Konadu’s experience. In a story in the Daily Graphic (7/12/16, pp. 30 and 35) which gave an account of the political agenda of the 7 Ghanaian presidential candidates, all the other 6 male candidates are quoted

except her. It is highly unlikely that this is a coincidence given that she was not the last candidate in the textual order. Research shows that the higher the political position being sought (or occupied), the more stereotypical the evaluation tends to be (van Zoonen, 2006; Kittilson and Fridkin, 2008; Conroy et al., 2015). By rendering her, the only woman among 6 men, voiceless, the paper communicated her lack of significance to readers, thus rendering her less powerful and less viable as a presidential candidate. This sort of trivialisation of Nana Konadu's candidature is not limited to this news item but reflected her general representation in the media at the time.

Another dominant strategy that constructed women politicians as secondary actors was by describing them only in terms of their role as wives. These stories related mainly to the women who were spouses of the 6 male Ghanaian presidential candidates. Here, they are made newsworthy because of their position as potential First Ladies. In these stories, the women are frequently referred to only in terms of their role as wives to the candidates, where they are expected to "support" their husbands in their campaigns because becoming the First Lady "is a great honour that comes with unimaginable opportunities". What is interesting is that in one of these stories entitled "**Who will be our First Lady/Gentleman?**" there is a presupposition that the First Lady's position is female through the use of "our first ladies-to-be". The first sentence in the story begins thus:

*Ghanaians are going to the polls on December 7, 2016 and the results of this polls will either give us a new first lady or we will retain the current First Lady, Mrs. Lordina Mahama (Daily Graphic, 6/12/16, p. 4)*

Thus from the onset, the lack of belief in Nana Konadu ever winning the election to become president is established. For the whole first page, the story focuses only on the wives of the 6

male presidential candidates till the next page where Nana Konadu's husband who is also a former president, is mentioned. In doing this, the story normalises the women as supporters' trope as well as a male norm of politics. Through the marginalisation of Nana Konadu's husband in the story, the paper delegitimised her candidature through backgrounding. Interestingly, this story was written by a female journalist, thus confirming what some scholars have argued that the gender of a journalist may not be as strong a factor in changing the sexist media representations of women politicians as news production routines (Van Zoonen, 2002; Ross and Carter, 2011; Salem and Mejbri, 2014).

Finally, the woman politician as secondary actor theme is produced through visual backgrounding. A case in point is the story in the Daily Graphic (6/12/16, p. 43) headlined "Anloga to get modern fishing landing site". The story covers half the page and is accompanied by an image that depicts the Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Ms Sherry Ayittey, in the presence of the Speaker of parliament, the Chief of Staff and the local chief for the area where the landing site is to be located. Behind them is a group of spectators. Textually, Ms. Sherry Ayittey is made prominent through spatial length and quoting. Given her textual prominence, it is surprising to see the extent to which Sherry Ayittey is disempowered visually (Figure 7.2).





**Figure 7.2** From right: Togbui Sri, the Awormefia; Mr. Doe Adjaho, the Speaker of Parliament; Mr. Julius Debrah, the Chief of Staff, and Ms. Sherry Ayittey being shown the project design (Daily Graphic, 6/12/16, p. 43)

While the Chief of Staff (Julius Debrah) and the Speaker (Doe Adjaho) can clearly be seen, Sherry Ayittey, the sector minister whose position makes her the most relevant political actor in the story as reflected in the text, appears almost blocked from the viewer through the large frame of the local chief whose visual prominence completely belies his textual exclusion. Her near visual exclusion is so obvious she has to lean over sideways in an attempt to see what the Chief's frame seems to be looking at, and since her vision is slightly downwards, she is rendered doubly powerless. Her right hand is raised slightly as well, but it is unclear why and we are left wondering about what it is that she is doing or looking at. The fact that the three other main actors with her look straight ahead draws more attention to how differently she is

visually represented. In other words, while all the three men are clearly visible, stand upright and look confidently straight ahead, she is 'othered' through her slightly bent frame, downward look and partially visible frame, all of which, according to Machin and Mayr (2012) render her powerless. To complete Sherry Ayittey's deligitimation, the accompanying caption names her last in the order of mention and leaves out her title. Further, she is the only person mentioned in the caption whose title is elided. Although the text seems to attribute importance and legitimacy to Sherry Ayittey, her visual representation strips these from her, thus undermining her prominence. In the end, it is the visual representation that seems to predominate, reinforced by its placement at the bottom of the story which ensures that it is the last thing the reader sees after reading the story.

A similar picture is found in *The Guardian* (10/03/15, p. 9) where, like Sherry Ayittey in the above picture, Senator Oluremi Tinubu is almost obscured in the image by the raised hand of the State Governor Babatunde Fashola, who is clearly foregrounded in the image per his central position as well as the fact that he holds the microphone (see Figure 7.3). The point being stressed here is that in many of the images accompanying stories in the press data, the focus of attention was often on male politicians, irrespective of rank. If a politician was shown obscured from the viewer's sight, it was more than likely to be a female rather than male politician. The fact that editors feel it is acceptable to represent women politicians that way, but do not seem to do the same for male politicians, raises questions about the value attributed to female politicians and whether journalists see their contributions as valid and important for the political discourse.



**Figure 7.3** Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure, Obafemi Hamzat (left); Executive Secretary, Ikoyi-Obalende LCDA, Caxton Martins; Lagos State Governor, Babatunde Fashola; Senator Oluremi Tinubu and Wale Edun, at the commissioning and handing over of Glover Road Ikoyi in Lagos (The Guardian, 10/03/15, p. 9)

The trivialisation of Sherry Ayittey and the other women in this sample reflects findings from studies on women politicians' media representation where their authority, political achievements and professional competencies are minimised (Tuchman, 1978; Fountaine and McGregor, 2002; Ross, 2003; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011; Ross, 2017). Many of these strategies are consistent with previous literature (e.g. Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; O'Neill et al., 2016) which have pointed out the media's role in (re)producing and reinforcing gender stereotypes through their portrayal of women politicians in news texts. Research on gender stereotyping also points to the portrayal of women in general, and women politicians in particular as passive actors or second class citizens (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; Falk, 2010; Finneman, 2015). More precisely, in examining gender stereotyping of politicians, most experimental studies show that voters attribute different trait competencies to different genders (Banducci et al., 2012). For example, male candidates are perceived as aggressive, tough and assertive while female candidates are seen as gentle, sensitive and



passive (Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993). The idea that women (politicians) are more passive than men also has strong backing in empirical studies (Goffman, 1979; Aalberg and Strömbäck, 2011). In terms of trait competencies for politicians, voters find the so-called male traits more desirable (Martland and King, 2002). This suggests that portraying women politicians as secondary or less than important actors not only serves to undermine their political prospects as candidates but also helps reinforce the masculinisation of politics.

## **7.2 Theme 2: Women Politicians as Incompetent Actors**

The second dominant theme in the corpus reflects two opposing ideas; female politicians as incompetent and as competent. In this section, I focus on the former and take up the latter in the next section.

That female politicians are portrayed in the news media as lacking the characteristics, experience and skill to be effective political leaders has received some attention in the gendered political communication scholarship (Heldman et al., 2005; Carlin and Winfrey, 2009). It derives from the idea that men are naturally endowed with the (physical) characteristics to lead while women are meant to follow (Eagly et al., 2000; Eagly and Wood, 2011). This belief has informed the public/private binary of men being more suited to political life which requires ‘masculinised’ attributes. Therefore, when women politicians show up in the news, there is a higher tendency for their work to be evaluated through the competence lens than it is for men politicians.

Across all 17 stories in this theme, women politicians are constructed as incompetent, not good enough or lacking something through mainly textual references. What they lacked is variously expressed as professional or political incapability to execute their duties, or the ability to cope with the pressures of political office. More than half of these stories relate to Ghana's Electoral Commissioner (EC) where through use of such strategies as spatial and visual prominence, salience through bold (often front page) headlines, aggregation and rhetorical tropes, she and the other women in this set are constructed as incapable of the roles they have been given or are wanting to get.

The EC's position in Ghana and Nigeria is perhaps the most important during the general elections. Although it is not an elected position, it is viewed as highly political and consequently, attracts much scrutiny in key election periods such as those involving the executive and legislature. In Ghana, Charlotte Osei was appointed approximately a year and half before the general elections took place, succeeding a man who had occupied that position for twenty-three years. Among other things including her gender, inexperience and the fact that she had disqualified some of the candidates 'illegally' who had thereafter taken her to court and won, Charlotte Osei was vilified on various media platforms by journalists and by the public through published audience comments in the press and phone in segments on radio among others. Out of the 14 stories covering this theme, she was the subject of 10, 5 of which appeared on the front page. The high value of her stories is also highlighted through their spatial prominence; only 1 of the 10 stories was not more than half a page. Thus, while in the content analysis, her prominence in news stories was interpreted as favourable based on the categories, through MCDA, we note that the negative framing of the stories coupled with their prominence is even more damaging.

In addition to the above, Charlotte Osei's competence as EC was constantly questioned through the use of bold (front page) headlines. Examples such as "EC goofs again" (Daily Guide, 8/11/16, p. 16), "Pink sheet<sup>5</sup> contract catches fire" (Daily Guide, 8/11/16, p.6) and "Tamara sues EC" (Daily Guide, 7/11/16, pp 1 & 3) served to reinforce her perceived incompetence. Others like "Police, EC in secret deal" (Daily Guide, 21/11/16, pp 1 & 3) also sought to impugn not only her competence but also her character, laying on another level of distrust in her work. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the fact that women politicians are regarded as more morally upright and therefore subjected to stricter evaluation than their male counterparts. As corruption is one of the key criticisms levelled against African politicians (Lindberg, 2003; Thomson, 2010), this headline which suggests Charlotte Osei's conspiracy with the police to dupe the state of millions thus contradicts the 'high morals' view of women politicians. When this happens, research suggests that it elicits more public attention and condemnation against the woman involved, and further reinforces perceptions of why women do not and should not belong in politics (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013).

Apart from the headlines, Charlotte Osei's perceived incompetence is also depicted through aggregation, metaphorical and referential expressions and trivialisation. For example, having been told by the Supreme Court "to live by the law" through "a unanimous decision", several people come forward to advise her on how she should do her job. A particular story is worth noting. This story appears in the Daily Graphic (17/11/2016, p.17) where the headline references one of the presidential candidates (Ayariga) as offering advice to the EC Chair (Figure 7.3). While her name is abstracted through use of her position, the accompanying

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<sup>5</sup> Pink sheets is the term given to the forms used by polling agents to record votes during elections. Officially, they are called Statement of Poll and Declaration of Results forms.

image with the caption 'Mrs Charlotte Osei-EC Boss' leaves no doubt as to the personal address to her. That Ayariga, a presidential candidate who previously had been a subject of public ridicule for his 'infantile' behaviour in a presidential debate, is advising her on how *she* should do *her* job makes the story even more ironic, given that he had also been constructed as an immature presidential candidate himself. There had even been rumours that he had been bought by the president at the time, and that his candidature was nothing but a ploy to divide electoral support for the leader of the main opposition party. It is against this background that Ayariga sought to advise the Charlotte Osei; one incompetent political actor to another. The news story therefore smacked of mischief.



Figure 7.4: Mrs. Charlotte Osei- EC Boss (Daily Graphic, 17/11/2016, p.17)

The prominence that this story is given, about half a page, and the fact that the paper chose to print it given that it is actually not Ayariga himself who speaks in the interview but his party's General Secretary makes one wonder what made the story newsworthy except to ridicule Charlotte Osei. The fact that the accompanying image shows her in a passive, disempowered position, made more acute by her clasped hands and offer look. These visual cues objectify Charlotte Osei in ways that compliment her textual representation.

Other stories on the EC use aggregation and important personalities as a form of legitimising their claims. For instances, in a story in the Daily Guide (5/12/16, pp 1 & 6) which describes voters' experience in a special voting exercise organised for personnel who will be working on the election day, there are several examples of what van Leeuwen (1995, p. 49) calls 'aggregation', the quantification of participants in order to manufacture consensus opinion. Beginning from the headline "More names missing on EC register", the story used quantifying modifiers and other dramatic phrases such as "low turnout", of "many voters" in "many polling stations" who "could not conceal their frustration" at the "baptism of fire" that the special voting exercise was including a "multiple award winning host" and "dozens of security officers", and that the EC was "not convincing many" that she is "up to the task" or can supervise "world class' elections" as "even the Electoral Commission's own officials, were unable to find their names". Through these examples, the newspapers called in question Charlotte Osei's competence as well as her professional values and character. By giving space to these sentiments, the papers reinforced and sustained public sentiments at the time which largely pointed to a lack of trust in her competence.

It must also be noted that Charlotte Osei's predominantly negative construction in the print media was mainly in the Daily Guide, which is owned by a leading member of the opposition party at the time. What is interesting is how the same story was framed differently in the state owned newspaper, the Daily Graphic. In this latter example, the focus was not on the chaos of the exercise but on officials of the EC who had observed certain difficulties and "offered a lifeline" to voters who could not vote. Whereas comments from EC officials in the Daily Guide's story was placed towards the end and did not offer any explanation or consolation for disenfranchised voters, the Daily Graphic's story foregrounded the EC from the beginning and had a conciliatory tone, explaining why some voters had been unable to vote. That those unable to vote had not followed laid down procedure and were suffering the repercussions explicitly laid the blame squarely with voters and not the EC. These differences in framing of the same story by the two newspapers emphasis how media ownership and political ideology can shape news content in particular. Because Charlotte Osei was a government appointee, challenges with the Special Voting was minimised to depict her and the Commission favourably. However, for the same reason of being a state official, her depiction in the opposition party' newspaper was overly negative to conform to the paper's oppositional stance towards government. The story thus reinforces my argument in the previous chapter that the kind of media house largely determines the quantity and nature of coverage that women politicians receive.

The idea that women politicians are incompetent and therefore cannot lead is one that has persisted through time and which does not seem to be abating (Falk, 2010). It stems from the notion that femininity and competence cannot coexist, what Jamieson (1995) describes as the 'double bind'. Because of this historically pervasive idea, women who pursue or assume political office are subjected to more scrutiny where their leadership capabilities are

questioned in the first instance unlike men who are regarded as ‘naturally’ endowed with such capabilities. Research indicates that the theme of incompetence is one of the most enduring perceptions that undermine support for women in politics. The fact that it is the second most dominant in the corpus is testament of its endurance.

### **7.3 Theme 3: Women Politicians as Competent Actors**

As earlier noted in the previous section, the women politicians as competent actors’ theme shared equal prominence with its opposing theme. These 17 stories show that women in politics are not always depicted as second best or as incompetent. Mostly through both textual and visual prominence, centralisation in images, quotations, individualisation in text and image, and hierarchical ordering which placed them first, these stories constructed women politicians as assertive actors, legitimising their political stature by emphasising their titles.

A good example is found in a centre spread story of the Daily Graphic (22/11/16, pp. 32 and 49) about the former Ghanaian Gender, Children and Social Protection minister. Here the minister, Nana Oye, forms the focus of the story (Figure 7.4).





**Figure 7.5** Nana Oye Lithur, the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, speaking at the meeting (Daily Graphic, 22/11/16, pp. 32 and 49)

Here, Nana Oye is legitimised by the fact that she is quoted, given more space than any of the other actors referenced in the story and shown as an assertive political actor.

The two images accompanying the story correspond to the prominent and agentic positioning of Nana Oye. The larger image shows a section of the audience at the programme. While it could be argued that some of them appear to be bored, they all nonetheless seem to be looking towards what can be assumed to be Nana Oye's direction and listening to what she, pictured in a smaller inset, is saying. The caption beneath her image fully designates her position as sector minister. This is important as in some other stories including those discussed above, captions have elided women politicians' title thus rendering them less powerful than their position makes them. Although a small gesture, by referencing her title,



the paper lends importance and credibility to her role as minister in charge. The image also shows her in mid-speech, and the angle offers viewers a glimpse of the media microphones before her. The presence of the microphones before Nana Oye adds to her prominence as a political actor the attentive audience and the fact that she is the one speaking, all serving to depict her as a powerful politician. Her direct gaze into the camera and right at the viewer further heightens her agency. In essence, the picture presented here conforms to the standard visual representation of politicians to signify their importance and power, almost like a stock representation of what a powerful, assertive politician looks like. Together, both textual and visual representation of Nana Oye serve to position her as a powerful, capable political actor; a departure from the usual negative representation that women politicians are often depicted in the media. Nana Oye's very favourable portrayal in the news is a product of a strategic approach to media engagement. In the next chapter, I show how this substantially increases (women) politicians' media representations in both quantity and quality, and how women politicians like her who adopt such strategies often have good media visibility.

Another example using similar strategies is found in the Daily Graphic (23/11/16, p.21) where Nana Konadu is depicted as a strong, assertive presidential candidate (Figure 7.5).

**Quick Read**  
**Adeyeman Savings & Loans**  
 The flag bearer of the Progressive People's Party (PPP), Dr Papa Kwesi Nduom, has said that he would spread development projects to cover all the remote communities in the country.

the country benefit from adequate development projects, especially good roads and quality healthcare system.  
 "Communities like Obom will not be neglected as my government will address all the issues that hamper the wellbeing of the people" he said.  
 He bemoaned the lack of good roads, adequate healthcare facilities, potable drinking water, absence of jobs but they have nothing concrete to show for all this years. Giving them another four years would be a huge mistake," he said.

**IEA debate boycott**  
 Dr Nduom said the decision of President Mahama to boycott this year's Institute of Economic Affairs debate was a proof that he had nothing to tell Ghanaians.  
 "Those who are expecting President Mahama to participate in the IEA debate are only asking him to come and lie. He is afraid to come because he

**Health concerns**  
 Earlier before he began his tour in the Greater Accra Region, Dr Nduom addressed some residents of Adidome in the Volta Region to end his tour in that region.  
 He pledged to introduce health reforms aimed at eliminating preventable diseases, especially, malaria and cholera when given the nod to govern Ghana.  
 According to him, it was disheartening that Ghana, at this age of modernisation, continued to battle the disease.  
 "A PPP government will not sit down for preventable diseases like malaria, cholera, mononuclear meningitis and guinea worm to destroy Ghana. Just like countries in the Americas, Europe and elsewhere became malaria free, my leadership will make sure that all these diseases are eliminated," Dr Nduom said.  
 He said "The PPP doesn't believe in ad hoc measures in dealing with issues concerning health particularly, when it is about preventable diseases".

**Nana Konadu commiserates with Asantehene**  
 By Caroline Boateng, KUMASI

THE Presidential Candidate of the National Democratic Party (NDP), Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings has visited Kumasi to commiserate with the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II on the death of the Asantehemaa.  
 The Asantehemaa, Afiya Kobi Serwaa Ampem II died about a week ago and it was all cultural pomp and pageantry as the NDP team, which included the running mate of Nana Konadu, Mr Kojo Mensah Sosu, were ushered in.  
 Present to also sympathise with the Asantehene were former President John Agyekum Kufuor, a former Chief of Staff, Mr Kojo Mpiani, and a host of other dignitaries.  
 The Member of Parliament for Dome Kwabena, Ms Adwoa Sarfo was also present, as well as the Deputy Regional Minister, Mr Andy Osei Okrah, who led a team from the Regional Coordinating Council and the Regional Security Council.  
 Amidst dirges, Asanteman extolled their queenmother, while all visitors presented the customary drinks.  
 The visit also coincided with the celebration of the Akwasidae, which was commemorated on low key because of the passing away of the Asantehemaa.

visited the Efigya Kwabre South Constituency where she interacted with Nana Acheampong II and Nana Kofi Boateng before a durbar of the chiefs and people.  
 The chiefs were thankful for her efforts in getting electricity to the town, a market and school.  
 With a strong support base in the constituency, supporters sang out her placement on the ballot sheet, "Eye two, eye direct."  
 Nana Konadu, for her part, asked for their support in winning the presidential slot.  
 Her first stop in Kumasi was New Amakom where she interacted with party officials.

**Support**  
 From Manhyia, Nana Konadu

Writer's email: caroline.boateng@

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**Figure 7.6** Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings arriving at the Manhyia Palace (Daily Graphic, 23/11/16, p.21)

The story lends importance to her through the use of her name in the headline as well as through focus on her as the subject of the story. Again, by beginning the news item with her and in a subject position emphasises her agency. While what she says is reported rather than quoted, her textual prominence is still not diminished because of the other linguistic cues. Moreover, her agency is reinforced visually as well as through the image caption where she is individualised although the image shows her in the company of two other men.

Visually, Nana Konadu is made salience through her gesture and open mouth as if she was caught mid-sentence. Her raised arms and stride strongly signify action. Her centralised position in the image, individualisation in the caption and the fact that she is honored all serve to elevate her status as a presidential candidate. The contrast created between her all black attire as opposed to that worn by the two men flanking her helps to make her stand out

even more. Despite not being the most important politician in this gathering as other dignitaries such as the former president were also present, Nana Konadu is still made the focus of the story. This is in sharp contrast to the other stories above (e.g. Figure 7.2) where although hierarchically higher, women politicians were still made inferior through textual and visual representations. That her visit to the Asantehene, the foremost cultural king in Ghana also reinforces her importance while also serving to legitimise her candidature. In this story therefore, text and image interact to reinforce the message which is that Nana Konadu is an important presidential candidate who is worthy of media attention. It is one of the very few stories which depicted her this way.

Another story which depicted the EC, Charlotte Osei, quite favourably was in the Daily Graphic (3/12/16, pp.2 and 18). One of the very few in the whole corpus, this news item made Charlotte Osei prominence through textual and visual salience (Figure 7.6). It appears on two pages, names her in the headline and centralises her as the focus of the story. Covering more than half a page, the only other person mentioned besides her in the story is a male speaker who appears towards the end. The text describes Charlotte Osei advising her officials “to exercise neutrality, civility and patriotism” during before and after the elections. As this advice comes at the beginning of the story, it establishes her agency and professionalism. The use of her title as “EC Boss” both in the text and image caption further legitimises her position and power. Again, this is the only news item where her full name “Mrs. Charlotte Kesson-Smith Osei” is written to emphasise her importance.

# EC staff must remain neutral — Charlotte Osei

By Gertrude Ankah Nyav, ACCRA

**T**HE Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, Mrs Charlotte Kesson-Smith Osei, has advised staff members of the commission to exercise neutrality, civility and patriotism in all that they do before and during the election.

She said all the country required of them was for them to do their work to the best of their ability and adhere to the laws and processes governing the election.

The EC boss gave the advice at a day's prayer and fasting programme organised by the EC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) Christian fellowship in collaboration with the Retired Staff Association of EC in Accra last Wednesday.

According to her, there would not be war in Ghana before, during or after the December polls.

She, therefore, assured Ghanaians of very peaceful, transparent, free and fair general election, promising to ensure that the peace and tranquillity being enjoyed by the citizens was intact.

"After all, we are all one family and all we are going to do is to elect the head and elders of the family. Why should we kill one another because we are electing a head of family? This is a very simple matter and we are complicating it," she noted.

**Measures**

Mrs Osei said the commission had deployed 148,000 personnel on the ground, while 64,000 security personnel, over 400 international observers and more than 10,000 local observers would also be operating in their various capacities that day.

She added that all the 15.7 million people on the voters register had their preferred candidates, but only one person would become President, in addition to 274 Members of Parliament.

"So whether you like it or not, some of your preferred candidates will not win, and whether you like it or not, some of your preferred candidates will win. At the end of the day, what the majority of the people in the constituency and the country wherever they have fixed their thumb print the

Electoral Commission will count. We will say what the majority has said and we will all continue with our lives."

The EC boss also said the commission had committed the whole day into the hands of God to supervise the process. "He will supervise the people who are going to vote. He will supervise the candidates and that God will take total control of the election. At the collation, we totally believe that it will all end in praise, we will have reason to praise God at the end of the day," she noted.

**Word of exhortation**

In a word of exhortation, an international evangelist, Rev. Dr Lawrence Tetteh, urged citizens to allow Ghana to become victorious after the polls.

He said God had already elected the person to govern the country for the next four years, hence Ghanaians should allow God to do His work.

He added that when it becomes critical, God would allow angels to vote on that day in order for His will to be fulfilled.

Rev. Dr Tetteh cited the elections of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, Dr Busia, Jit L. Jerry John Rawlings, John A. Kufuor, Evans Atta Mills and President John Mahama as miraculous.

He advised the electorate to avoid insults or violence on the election day.

**Quick Read**  
Adehyeman Savings & Loans  
10th Anniversary  
FINANCING A BETTER FUTURE

The Boss of the Electoral Commission has assured that there will be no war in the country after the December polls.



Mrs Charlotte Osei — EC Boss

**Figure 7.7** Mrs. Charlotte Osei-EC Boss (Daily Graphic, 3/12/16, pp.2 and 18)

Visually, Charlotte Osei is made salient through an image that individualises her. Unlike her other pictures where she is seated, she is seen here in a pose that depicts activity: both hands are raised and she seems to be in the middle of saying something to her officials. The intensity of her gestures and facial expression compliment the textual message which is the advice for the officers to be professional in the conduct of the elections. Together, text and image combine to create a picture of an EC who is intent on doing her job; an image that sharply contradicts her general depiction in media texts.

From the Nigerian data, a story in *The Guardian* (19/03/15, p. 74) also portrayed a female aspiring governorship candidate, Grace Uduma-Eze in a way that ascribed importance and

legitimacy to her (Figure 7.8). Although the story does not cover a large space (less than half page but bigger than a news in brief article), Grace Uduma-Eze is the sole focus of the story. She is the primary subject in the story, indeed she is the only person referred to, and is further legitimised through being quoted. Additionally, the article is devoted to detailing her position on a number of key issues, quoting her directly. Although she does make reference to her gender serving as a change agent, she does not focus on that as her only selling point.



**Figure 7.8** Ebonyi female guber candidate vows to re-position state (The Guardian, 19/03/15, p.74)

Overall, the woman politician as competent theme is not one that is commonly found in the literature. This is because it goes contrary to the longstanding idea that women and politics cannot coexist well (Carlin and Winfrey, 2009; Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014; Finneman, 2015). When women politicians are depicted as competent, they are ascribed masculine traits such as assertiveness and independence which stand in opposition to feminine traits (Banwart, 2010; Dolan, 2010). This incongruence between the femininity of women



politicians and the masculinised world of politics is part of the reason the media often do not portray the women as competent (Media Monitoring Project, 1999).

#### **7.4 Theme 4: Women Politicians as Woman First**

One of the most common themes that has emerged from the literature on women politicians' media representation is the use of 'woman first' frames in coverage. This is when female politicians become newsworthy first because of their sex more than anything else (Ross, 2003). Such stories are often characterised by 'the first' trope as in 'the first female' used either by the media or the women politicians themselves. Studies show that some of these women appropriate the gender card as a campaign tool (Jones, 2015) usually in a bid to stand out from the rest of the candidates as unique. As will be shown, using the gender card in news stories about women politicians serves to highlight their 'otherness' as political actors, and may end up depicting them unfavourably. All the 8 stories which make up the sample in this theme would have been positive representations but for the use of the gender lens through which the stories are recounted.

The Daily Graphic (3/12/16, p. 17), for example, carried a story that could have been an extremely positive campaign article for a female candidate but for its use of the gender frame which served to narrowly construct her political profile. Using the headline "SHEROES Foundation celebrate Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings" (Figure 7.7), the story immediately recalls gender through 'Sheroes', a politically charged term use to contest the masculinised 'heroes'. Recounting the contents of a press statement, the paper quotes Nana Konadu's "able leadership", her "worldwide recognition", "tireless efforts" and the fact that she is "a leader among her peers". Additionally, the paper notes that Nana Konadu has founded a political party. As a candidate contesting the highest political position in the country, these

traits have very high promotional value. However, placed within the context of women empowerment or gender, they situate her work within the narrow confines of gender advocacy, which on another occasion, may have reflected quite favourably on her. However, given that gender stereotyping is most prevalent in evaluations of presidential candidates (Meeks, 2012), the deployment of the gender frame in describing Nana Konadu's abilities served to restrict rather than expand her competencies, thereby constructing her as unviable.

mc

## SHEROES Foundation celebrates Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings

SHEROES Foundation, a Ghanaian-based International non-profit organisation committed to supporting and promoting women in all facets of life, has lauded Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings for being the first female to contest for the position of President of Ghana.

In a statement, the foundation noted that Mrs Agyeman-Rawlings had broken the proverbial glass ceiling and "we salute her."

According to the statement, the foundation's "Elect Her" programme was created to help women who aspire to higher offices, "so we want to take this opportunity to show our support and appreciation for her efforts."

**Unwavering advocacy**  
The former first lady is contesting for the Presidency in Ghana's December 7, 2016 election on the ticket of the National Democratic Party (NDP), a party she founded.

"Her unwavering advocacy on gender equality and equity, as well as her pioneering efforts for the cause of Ghanaian Women and children are worth noting," says SHEROES Executive Director, Ms Flossy Tachie-Menson.


In 1983, Mrs Agyeman-Rawlings and a number of like-minded women established the 31st December Women's Movement, a non-governmental organisation, which mobilised women across the country to empower them socio-politically, economically and culturally."

The 31st December Women's Movement under her able leadership has received worldwide recognition for its contribution to issues concerning women and for its success in facilitating changes in government policies that discriminate against women. Most notably, the organisation championed the promulgation of the 'Intestate Succession Law (PNDC Law 111)' - a law that protects spousal rights to inheritance in the event that the other partner dies intestate.

SHEROES noted that until the passage of the law, women were the primary victims of unfair cultural practices where upon the death of the husband without a will (intestate), the widow and children lost the husband's property to his extended family.

The foundation stated that Mrs Agyeman-Rawlings's tireless efforts in fighting for the rights of women makes her a leader among her peers; she is considered a "SHERO."

"You are an inspiration to women everywhere and a shining beacon for our young girls to emulate, we celebrate you," says SHEROES in a statement issued in Accra yesterday.



• Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings

#GHANAVotes2016
'Let's vote peacefully on December 7'

**Figure 7.9** Nana Konadu Agyeman- Rawlings (Daily Graphic, 3/12/16, p. 17)

While organisations such as SHEROES Foundation, and other personalities may "salute her" for her immense contribution to advancing women's concerns, her profile, largely refracted through the gender lens, still lacked the comprehensiveness that voters expect from presidential candidates. Consequently, she appears good but not good enough to be president. This sentiment was widely expressed on media platforms by journalists and audiences who

offered their opinion on her candidacy. For example, the same paper published audience comments about Nana Konadu on its *Facebook* wall in the 22<sup>nd</sup> November edition, some of which said that although Nana Konadu was “good material”, she was “over-ambitious” and that it was not her time yet, implying that though good, she was not good enough.

The accompanying image to the story does not quite reflect the congratulatory tone of the story. The closer shot draws attention to her tired, somewhat mournful facial expression which does nothing to flatter her. As she looks away from rather than at the viewer, she is objectified and passivated, both of which are common ways in which women are portrayed in the media. Thus, the use of gender as the lens through which the story articulates Nana Konadu’s capabilities is further strengthened through a visual representation that conforms to the stereotype that women cannot handle the pressures of political office (Falk, 2010). In describing her only as a gender advocate without any reference to other competencies that make her a viable presidential candidate, the story contributes to narrowing down the number of people that Nana Konadu may appeal to while also reinforcing the prevalent perception at the time that she was only for women’s empowerment. Given that this is a statement from an organisation and not the paper or Nana Konadu herself, this example highlights how in some circumstances, gender advocates or feminists themselves can contribute to delegitimising women politicians by deploying gender frames in their construction.

Nonetheless, Nana Konadu herself had appropriated the gender card on occasion during her campaign. In interviews she had given prior to the election, she had grounded her professional achievement almost exclusively on her work with her NGO, the 31st December Women’s movement, as that, in addition to being First Lady for almost twenty years, were



her best known legacies. As a result of this legacy, several other prominent people and organisations who endorsed her candidature also tended to deploy the gender frame. For example, in a half paged story covered by the *Daily Graphic* (21/11/16, p. 26), two prominent chiefs lauded Nana Konadu for “making history” as “the first female candidate to contest the position of president”. They congratulated her for “putting herself in history among outstanding female leaders”, for establishing “a remarkable and endearing instrument for women emancipation” and for being “a symbol of unsung heroines of Ghanaian womanhood”. In this story, the “first female/woman” trope appeared four times in addition to various references to woman (hood) as can be seen from the quotes.

The problem with predicating a presidential campaign largely on women’s empowerment is that it alienates many of the electorate who still believe that a woman’s place is the kitchen, or that women simply are not capable of political leadership. Some scholars also argue that emphasising feminism contributes to further entrenching misogynistic views as it strengthens men’s fears that women are taking over (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016). As will be seen in the next chapter, these stereotypical perceptions are very much prevalent in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies. Therefore, deploying gender as a narrative frame to describe women politicians is more likely to reflect negatively rather than positively on the women, especially when they are competing for high political positions like Nana Konadu was doing. While it may appear innocuous and sometimes even congratulatory like the examples described here, use of gender frames emphasise the women’s femininity and consequently, their ‘otherness’. This in turn highlights their incongruence with politics, thereby rendering them unsuitable, inexperienced or not good enough for the political positions they are contesting.

In addition to the above examples, there were also a few instances across the sample in this theme where women politicians themselves employed gender frames in their campaign. A story in the *Daily Graphic* (7/12/16, p. 13) illustrates this. Here, the female parliamentary candidate, Ms. Afua Ansaa Asiedu is reported to have asked constituents to “try a woman as an MP” (Figure 7.8). Being the only female among 5 male candidates, she believed her femininity made her stand out among the men as the paper quotes her as saying she “remained tall” among the candidates. Now, while what she said is reported rather than quoted except for the last quote, we cannot also discount the fact that Ms. Afua Asiedu is reported to have made the reference to her womanhood herself. In addition, she speaks about education and is seen in the image donating exercise books to a student. As noted in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2), research on issue and trait coverage have documented that topics such as education are seen as feminine and less important in politics (Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988; Major and Coleman, 2008; Meeks, 2012). Further, although the image depicts her in an agentic position, the story’s placement at the bottom of the page, and the fact that we do not hear directly from her in the most part all contribute to reproducing the idea that women are less important. Thus, the story serves to reinforce stereotypical notions of women politicians not only through references to the candidate’s gender but also in the editorial decisions that culminated in her textual and visual representation in the story.



**Figure 7.10** Ms. Afua Ansaa Asiedu making a presentation to a pupil of the Binsere JHS, Obuasi (Daily Graphic, 7/12/16, p. 13)

The sample in this theme demonstrates that the 'woman first' trope is not only deployed by journalists in coverage of women politicians, but that other 'well-wishers' as well as the women themselves also appropriate it in their campaigns. While this may seem a good strategy to use especially by female candidates in cases where (one of) the distinguishing feature(s) is their gender, it is problematic on many fronts. First, it highlights their 'deviance' in contravening gender norms in order to be in politics (Anderson et al., 2011). Second, it activates stereotypical evaluations of the candidates given that gender frames emphasise their femininity. When voters assess female candidates based on their gender, they are likely to perceive them as politically incompetent (Banwart, 2010; Meeks, 2012; Ross, 2017), in which case it is doubtful they will support their candidature. Besides, in very patriarchal societies like those in Ghana and Nigeria where the idea that women belong to the private sphere of domesticity is pervasive (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013), stressing their womanhood may not be such a good strategy as it is likely to alienate many (male) supporters who believe that women should not be political leaders. Again, as has been seen in some of the examples above, the media are likely to pick it up when female candidates predicate their campaigns (even if momentarily) on their gender, and in doing so, construct their political profiles within the narrow confines of their femininity. It must be noted however, that despite the gender

frame, the stories here still do not make any reference to the women's sartorial or physical attributes. This is quite significant as such references have been the source of much criticism against the media with regard to the way they report on women politicians. Thus, while conforming to the norm in some aspects, these stories also deviate slightly from the usual gendered way of portraying women politicians in the news media.

### 7.5 Theme 5: Women Politicians as Change Agents.

The 5 stories in this set show much similarity with the previous as the women politicians here draw on their femininity either directly or indirectly in self-representing as change agents. As was seen in the previous section, journalists are not the only people who frame women politicians' candidature in gender terms; the women themselves and their supporters also do that sometimes as this story in *The Guardian* (8/4/15, pp.57 and 58) illustrates (Figure 7.9).

## Why Akwa Ibom stakeholders want Esuene as governor

From Aniotio Akpan, Calabar

WITH three days to the governorship elections, issues bordering on gender and zoning have once again taken the centre stage in the politics of Awa Ibom State.

Rising from a rally in Uyo recently, stakeholders in the state's political landscape endorsed Senator Helen Esuene as their preferred candidate to "take the people of the state out of the doldrums of uncommon poverty and unemployment to the next level of industrialisation and massive employment."

The stakeholders, elders and youths are rooting for the first female governor in the state and Nigeria in the person of Esuene. They have thus resolved that, "the state needs a person with a diligent approach to move the state away from the traditional style of leadership that waits for jumbo allocation from the centre monthly before anything can be achieved and that person is Senator Esuene."

At the Uyo rally, the players said the time had come for a woman to take over the mantle of leadership in the state given the cur-

rent state of affairs "that needs one with the heart of human kindness and the doggedness of an astute business czar and Senator Esuene easily fits in."

The State Chairman of Labour Party (LP), Professor Ekeng Anamdu, said since the federal lawmaker joined the party, things had changed positively and "by the special grace of God, we are having this mega rally of our great party, the Labour Party, with thousands of members determined to ensure that Senator Helen Esuene becomes the first female and the next governor of Akwa Ibom State and the party has a platform to tackle oppression of the masses and make even the spread of development across the state."

He said continued: "Never before in the history of our state, have we witnessed a large crowd of men, women and youth volunteering and scrambling for membership in the Labour Party as it is today. This is what it should be, given our national experience, in the past 15 years, particularly in the area of employment and economic development.



Esuene

"The Labour Party is the needed platform for grassroots development in our state. Of all those who aspire to become governor, our governorship candidate, Senator Helen Esuene, is the only employer of labour. She employs a work force of over 500 Nigerians, so she knows where the shoe is pinching."

Speaking in the same vein, the National Chairman of LP, Alhaji Abdullahi Abdulsalam, said he was surprised at the level of poverty in the

state despite the fact that Akwa Ibom is one of the richest states in the country in terms of oil and gas activities.

His words: "The kind of development we hear is on paper, but I can assure you that our candidate, upon winning this election, will create jobs, make the market environment attractive even to graduates, encourage the production of food, not agriculture on paper, make education qualitative."

Equally throwing his weight behind the candi-

dature of the serving senator, a top politician in the state and former governorship aspirant, Dr. Idongesit Udokpo, said, "I have come here to give this solidarity message in favour of Senator Helen Esuene. I accepted to do this because, for the election of the governorship of Akwa Ibom State, we must first and foremost consider experience and I have personally considered experience. My definition of experience is Mrs. Helen Esuene, a woman who has been a governor's wife

since 1968 in the South Eastern State, has been a top civil servant, a Minister and a Senator.

"I recall when we had Mrs. Helen Esuene as a wife of a governor, she showed humility, she showed leadership, followed the husband attentively and we recognized that there is a wife of a governor. In many fields she displayed her quality, which stood firm as shining example for women.

"Senator Esuene has come to do the correction, a total correction of the mess, cleaning up of Akwa Ibom State and rejuvenation of flow of confidence of Akwa Ibom people."

Udokpo added that "a woman in politics is good enough when the woman who has experience is involved. That is why my speech today is anchored on experience. Senator Esuene has an experience that is deliberate and focused that can be used for the transformation of Akwa Ibom State; an experience that can be used to coordinate Akwa Ibom State and take it to the centre of self-sufficiency. She has experience of taking us to the centre, even in her personal life; you will see

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

**Figure 7.11** Esuene (The Guardian, 8/4/15, pp.57 and 58)

In this story, Helen Esuene who is contesting the state's gubernatorial position is seen by her supporters as a "saviour" who will do "a total correction of the mess" created by the men who have been governors since the state was created. Their confidence in Helen Esuene is not based on her professional achievement as a successful business owner although that is mentioned as well. The key reason for their support, as one of those endorsing her says, is her experience which is constituted by a number of roles she has played over the years. What is interesting is that the speaker considers her role as "a woman who has been a governor's wife since 1968" more important than the fact that she has also been "a top civil servant, a Minister and a Senator". This speaker then proceeds to dwell on Helen Esuene's humility and leadership which she showed as she "followed the husband attentively", thus serving as "a shining example for women".

These comments by the speaker, who is described as "a top politician in the state and former governorship aspirant" strongly recalls the 'submissive wife' trope, which also reflects the perception that women politicians are not assertive enough to be independent political leaders. During the interviews which I discuss in the next chapter, some of the women stated that campaign financiers wanted candidates they could control. Some journalists also suggested that certain women politicians only served as proxies for their (male) sponsors. While these views are not new, they highlight their pervasiveness with regard to the kind of discourses that are (re)produced about women politicians. The fact that this 'top politician' sees fit to consider Helen Esuene's candidature mainly in terms of her supporting role as a wife and not as an independent agent in her other roles say much about the prevalence of such stereotypical views.

Through such descriptions as noted above, Helen Esuene's supporters draw heavily on her expected role as change agent and her gender as the basis of their support for her. What is even more interesting is that Esuene herself does the same, commenting that "it is time to have a feminine touch in the governance of the state". Thus, unlike the example in the previous section (Figure 7.8) where the paper almost exclusively reported what the female parliamentary candidate said, here, we see Helen Esuene herself claiming viability based on her gender. This is what Lachover (2017) notes when she argues that women politicians themselves sometimes contribute to their own gendering in news coverage through the ways in which they project themselves. The danger with casting themselves as change makers is that it raises public expectations, sometimes to highly, such that they are often unattainable (Ross, 2017), leading to disappointments which were bound to happen in the first place. When that happens, the supposedly disappointing female candidate becomes a gendered reference against which all other women politicians are judged.

The supporting role that is largely used to define Helen Esuene by her supporters is in contrast to her visual representation. We see her seated which signifies a passive position, but her raised hands and mid-speech posture convey activity. Again, she is individualised to suggest independence, thus sharply contrasting her textual portrayal. While a direct look at the viewer rather than the offer gaze she is depicted in would have strengthened her agency, I would argue that together with the action of her hands and the fact that she seems to be speaking all work to convey some level of agency.

Another story which shows female candidate's use of the gender frame is found in the *Daily Graphic* (3/12/16, p.20). The candidate concerned is Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings on

one of her campaign tours (Figure 7.10). Covering more than half the page, the story grants her importance through spatial dominance, sole subject as well as agentic position in the story, a headline that references her name, and accompanying images which convey her popularity while also depicting her in action. Yet, all of these editorial decisions to portray her as a viable presidential candidate may have been somewhat undermined by Nana Konadu who is quoted as telling her supporters “Let me show you what a woman can do...I will turn lives around”. In the previous section, I noted how Nana Konadu’s campaign had been largely predicated on her gender advocacy legacy. Here, we see that she also touted herself as a change agent.



20 Politics Visit [www.graphic.com.gh](http://www.graphic.com.gh) Daily Graphic, Saturday, December 3, 2016.

# Nana Konadu storms Bole

By Caroline Boateng, Northern Region

**T**HE Flag Bearer of the National Democratic Party (NDP), Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, has scorned the use of the Nigerian actor popularly known as "Osuofia" by the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) in one of their campaign advertisements to tout the achievements of the President.

She described it as a desperate ploy by the ruling government in its bid to stay in power.

"Has it now got to this, when foreigners have to tell us what your achievements are?" she asked her supporters at Bole in the Bole/Bamboi District of the Northern Region.

"Can Ghanaians themselves not see your achievements in their own country for a Nigerian to be brought in to tout your achievements?" she queried while speaking to the group of jubilant supporters at Bole, President John Mahama's hometown.

"Let us tell the President that if he cannot do it for Ghanaians to tout his praises, he should not go for a Nigerian to tell us what is not obvious," she stated.

**The ad**

The campaign advertisement is tailored after the popular Nigerian movie, "Osuofia in London."

In part one of the said campaign advertisement titled, "Osuofia in Ghana", the Nigerian actor, Nkem Owoh, is seen walking along the Circle Interchange and beside himself with the display of decorative lights at night.

In part two of the advertisement, the actor is taken round the reconstructed Accra Regional Hospital at Ridge, where he expresses amazement at the development that has gone on at the hospital.

"This is fantastic! Jesus Christ...! Wow! All this in one hospital!" Nkem Owoh exclaims as a doctor comes in to conduct him through the wards.

In the background is the song, "Mahama yiee... onaa po 2x. JM onaa po! Ede bi 2x John Mahama de bi!"

**Change**

"Let me show you what a woman can do," Nana Konadu told the crowd; "I will turn lives around," she added.

amid cheers and chants of *shie ko shie*, the Dagomba phrase for "change".

Supporters of the NDP thronged the vehicle of the flag bearer and her entourage at Bole.

In excitement, they accompanied her in their tricycles, bicycles and motorbikes as her convoy moved along.

**Campaigns**

Prior to the visit to Bole, Mrs Agyeman-Rawlings and her entourage were at Fielmuo in the Sisala West District of the Upper West Region, where they interacted with the chief, people and supporters of the NDP.

The Regent of Fielmuo, Naa Danikuu, said God himself would institute a leader for the country.

He expressed certainty at the fact that Mrs Agyeman-Rawlings would be a good leader because she was following the footsteps of her husband, Flt Lt J.J. Rawlings.

**Ashanti revisited**

The campaign train of the NDP was later at Ntonso in the Kwabre East Constituency and Moshie Zongo in the Manhyia North Constituency, both in the Ashanti Region.

Regional executives in Ashanti, including the first Vice Chairperson, Mr Anthony Kasi, and the communications officer joined some national executives, including the General Secretary, Alhaji Mohammed Erimpong; the Deputy Women's Leader, Hajia Sarah Sallah and the running mate, Mr Kojo Mensah Sosuh, to canvass for votes.

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**"Has it now got to this, when foreigners have to tell us what your achievements are?"**



• Nana Konadu (Inset) addressing supporters at Bole.

Figure 7.12 Nana Konadu (inset) addressing supporters at Bole (Daily Graphic, 3/12/16, p.20)

While there are a few good examples of women politicians who used this strategy to campaign for voter support and won like the former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is one (Jones, 2015), many are largely unsuccessful. This is because of the dominant view that women do not belong in politics. In order to dismantle this pervasive and entrenched stereotypical view, it is necessary for female candidates to demonstrate possession of masculinised attributes to justify their inclusion, so to speak, in political positions. Doing so



means de-emphasising their femininity although that also risks being seen as ‘inauthentic’ by voters. This is a very tight rope that women politicians, particularly those seeking high political offices like Nana Konadu, have to walk. Therefore, using gender and change agent frames as the focus of campaigns generally may not be strategic as in many cases, it serves to highlight what women politicians rather need to be de-emphasising.

### **Conclusion**

Results of the content analysis in the previous chapter seemed to suggest that the depiction of Ghanaian and Nigeria women politicians in print and radio news content was not distinctly biased. However, the MCDA conducted here clearly shows that in fact, women politicians’ media coverage is deeply refracted through the prism of gender norms and expectations embedded in the Ghanaian and Nigerian society. The analysis has highlighted how different meanings can be constructed through different semiotic modes, but also how these meanings can either reinforce each other to strengthen the messages they communicate, or diverge in which case the messages the audience receives is mixed, needing a deeper analysis to decipher the meaning potentials. The combined approach of content analysis and MCDA (in the particular iteration used here) in interrogating media content on women politicians has revealed the fact that media representations still conform to the usual portrayal of their secondary, peripheral, less important, passive and ‘othered’ position in the political realm. Granted that some of these attitudes originate from the women themselves and their supporters, the media are largely complicit in that the general construction of women politicians in media texts assists in the perpetuation of discourses which render the women less viable political actors thus undermining their political pursuits.

As purported purveyors of truth and upholders of democracy (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005), the media are expected to report on politicians in ways that are objective, fair and democratic. While audiences encode and respond to media texts differently (Hall, 1973), Fairclough (1995) also argues that the consistent portrayal of a certain group of people over a long period of time contributes to their normalisation, which is why negative media representations can be so pernicious. The question then is whether disempowering representations of women politicians are intentional or not. While scholars have often criticised journalists for their news-making choices which result in these negative representations, these criticisms have been based largely on evidence from analysis of media content alone. Not much is known about the factors which shape the production of news on women politicians. Having established the extent to which news coverage of women politicians conforms to stereotypical gender norms, the next chapter addresses this gap in the scholarship, by interrogating the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors that influence political news production.

## CHAPTER 8| FACTORS SHAPING THE PRODUCTION OF NEWS ABOUT WOMEN POLITICIANS

Having examined the content of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media representation in the previous two chapters, I now turn to analysis of the factors which shape these representations, focusing on the individual, institutional and socio-cultural level factors. The mediatisation of politics literature proposes that political actors need visibility in order that the electorate may either know their candidacy and why they are the best candidate, or policies and why they should support them (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b; van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017). As the media are the most influential social institution with access to the largest audiences and power to influence public opinion (Jay G Blumler and Esser, 2018), it makes sense for politicians to seek media visibility as through that, they can ride on the media's influence to convince the public of their candidacy and to gain public support for their policies. As was argued in Chapter 2, media visibility is crucial to political actors.

However, media visibility is not automatic for all political actors. Due to professional norms and news-making routines, politicians with high political function generally have easier access to the media than others (van Aelst et al., 2010; Bennett, 2011; Wolfsfeld, 2011). Similarly, politicians in certain parties have some level of guaranteed media exposure for their activities through their 'affiliated' media outlets. Thus, the media are structurally set up to favour certain politicians over others. Nonetheless, as was noted in Chapter 3, adapting to news media logic is seen as one of the ways that politicians can use to gain (increased) coverage and favourable portrayal.

Against this background, I examine the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors which influence how political news is selected, covered and framed. This will help us better understand how women politicians' media representations are constructed in the generally marginalised and negative portrayal as shown in Chapters 6 and 7. Machin and Niblock (2006, pp.40-41) argue that “draw[ing] conclusion[s] about the intentions of editors by looking at their products alone”, is inadequate as what we see, hear and read through the media “is the end product of a complicated process, subject to many influences and constraints normally invisible to the audience”.

The chapter presents analysis of 49 semi-structured interviews of (women) politicians, news workers and civil society experts in Ghana and Nigeria (see Table 8.1 for overview). This approach follows calls by scholars (e.g. Lachover, 2015) to use interviews to explore the gendered ways in which politicians strive to influence political news.

**Table 8.1** Overview of data presented in Chapter 8

No. of interviewees per country	Categories of interviewees/ no.
Ghana (22)	
	Editor (3)
	Photo journalist (1)
	Political journalist (3)
	Party chairperson (1)
	Party communication director (1)
	News producer (4)
	Civil society expert (3)
	Member of parliament (1)
	(Former) minister (1)
	(Deputy) Party women's organiser (2)
	(Vice) presidential candidate (2)
Nigeria (27)	
	Editor (4)
	(political) journalist (7)
	Civil society expert (4)
	(Aspiring) House of Assembly Representative (5)
	(Former) Commissioner (2)
	Party chairperson (1)
	Photo journalist (2)
	Local area party representative (1)
	Presidential candidate (1)

As outlined at the end of Chapter 3, the framework which guides analysis of these interviews involves three phases (see table 8.1 below reproduced from Chapter 3). First, I examine the interplay of push and pull forces at the individual level of women politicians on the one hand, and journalists on the other. Second, I consider the interaction between push and pull forces at the institutional level, mediated by political logic for women politicians and news media logic for journalists. Finally, I explore how individual and institutional level influences are shaped by the broader socio-cultural environment where gender ideology mediates behaviour in social interactions. This chapter is structured along this three point approach, ending with a discussion on their implications for women politicians' media coverage. The chapter rests on the argument that the degree of mediatisation of politics in any context depends on how (women) politicians perceive the media and their value to their political lives. This informs (women) politicians' behaviour towards journalists, and is in turn mediated by individual journalist's perception of their role, the kind of media organisation they work in, and the extent to which they have imbued socio-cultural norms regarding gender norms.

**Table 8.2** Analytical framework for analysing factors shaping women politicians' media representations

<b>Relevant Concept (s)</b>	<b>Analytical Category in this study</b>	<b>Areas of Focus</b>
Hierarchy of Influence model (Individual-related Influences)	Individual level Influences	Focus on how women politicians and journalists each perceive their role in society and their relationship to the other, their professional experiences and the scale of networks each brings to their political or journalistic work respectively.
Mediatisation of Politics and Hierarchy of Influence model	Institutional level Influences	Focus on the constituents of political logic (mainly politics but incorporating policy and polity-related aspects where needed), and news media logic (professionalism with particular reference to routines, commercialism with special interest in media ownership, and the technological affordances of print and radio media that shape political news production). Discussion draws on political systems and culture, and media systems and culture in both Ghana and Nigeria.
Hierarchy of Influence model and Feminist media theory	Socio-cultural level Influences	Focus on culturally-informed factors which exist as a result of the gender of women politicians, and which shape the interaction between women politicians and journalists. I also look at how these gender-related factors affect political news selection, coverage and production. Discussion here draws on socio-cultural gender ideology in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies.

## 8.1 Individual Level Influences on News Content

Individual level influences can be most observed in how women politicians and journalists each perceive their role in society and their relationship to the other, their professional experiences and the scale of networks each brings to their political or journalistic work respectively. I discuss these in turn.

### 8.1.1 Perceptions of women politicians to their work and to journalists

Cohen et al. (2008) and Donges and Jarren (2014) argue that the way (women) politicians perceive the media influences how they engage with journalists. This in turn shapes the kind of news that is produced about the women. Mediatization literature assumes that because political actors need the media in order to communicate their policies and activities to the electorate, they will necessarily adopt news media logic as a strategic move to achieve this purpose. However, this adoption is not a given (Blumler and Esser, 2018) as can be seen with Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians. All of them recognised the importance of the media as evidenced by this Ghanaian party women's organiser:

*It is very important to work with the media as a politician because it will be very easy for you to run whatever you are doing through them. (A1AY)*

However, this belief was often in relation to the media as a channel of communication and not as a means of increasing their political profiles or even influencing voting decisions. As noted in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.1), Ghanaian and Nigerian politics are grounded in personalised patron-client networks which sustains the loyalty of their constituents. Because politicians have traditionally relied on these networks for their political survival, most of the



women are more preoccupied with sustaining these networks and less with media exposure as they do not yet see how media visibility enhances their political goals.

*You decide what's important. You decide yourself 'well, if I go and have this debate on this particular station, will it make that much of a difference to how my people will vote or not vote for me? And I'm guessing that's the calculation a lot of women make in their minds and think well you know what, I don't need it. I'm out there meeting the people, I'm doing what I need to do. This is secondary. If I don't have to, I won't.* (A1Z, female MP, Ghana)

Apart from ambivalence with the value of media visibility, some of the women are also quite dismissive about the media as this member of the Nigerian House of Assembly explains about her female colleagues.

*Some people don't see the media as anything. They'll tell you 'if the media want, they should cover my thing'. They're not bothered.* (B1MO)

Women politicians in this category fail to recognise the media's symbolic power in raising their political profiles through the access they give to politicians, which in turn helps to legitimise their candidature. Similar to what Salem and Mejbri (2014) found with those in Tunisia, Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians depend on the work they have done in their constituencies to convince voters. However, politicians who focus solely on their political jobs are seen as less legitimate by political journalists than those who exhibit charisma (Payne, 1980; Sheaffer, 2001). This suggests that in an environment where the media are growing increasingly influential in shaping public opinion, women politicians need to do more than focus on their job in order to be seen as credible and viable political actors. This was the point of one of the Ghanaian interviewees who doubles as a communication consultant and lecturer with expertise in political marketing:

*I think that one of the most significant developments in our political space is the growth of the mass media [...] a lot of platforms actually talk about*

*politics. Some of them run into hours and people stick to them and listen.*  
(A2KM)

This focus on politics has resulted in greater political awareness among the electorate, leading to politicians' adoption of more sophisticated ways of making themselves attractive. In part, this is a result of the successful campaign that the former president John Mahama run in 2012 in which he heavily utilised both mainstream and social media. Since then, there has been an uptake for politicians' use of campaign managers and image consultants, occasioning a rise in professionalisation of political communication at the individual politician's level as has been witnessed in Western democracies (e.g. van Aelst et al., 2010).

Women politicians' perceptions about the media's importance to politics is also conditioned by political function as this female local government party chairperson explained:

*Using media house for local government election doesn't make sense to me. Because what you really need is within your community...If I am contesting for senatorial office now, I know that I must go to the radio because the area I belong to has 10 local governments. It's not something I can do with leg work so I must go on radio before I enter your local government.* (B1AL, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)

Other women politicians like B1AL who contested at the district level or lower believed that in their case, face to face campaigning was expected, practical and more efficient than being in the media especially where the electorate had no idea who the candidate was or what she had to offer them. They seemed to equate the importance of media visibility only to publicity for one's candidature and hence did not appear to consider the other benefits that could be derived such as minimising negative publicity among the electorate (Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013), building their political profiles for future campaigns, and increasing their political stature for sponsors as well as within their parties.

In addition to viewing the media as secondary, some women politicians showed scepticism for those who frequently appeared in the media, suggesting that they were attention-seeking or had no substance.

*Some people who don't have anything to do, they'll just put their thing on radio and everybody will be hearing it. At the end of the day, when they get to that [political] office, they won't do anything because they don't care about the community. All they care about is 'I'm contesting. Make noise on radio. Talk on television. (B1AL, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)*

Relatedly, women politicians' lack of appreciation of the media's influence and subsequent lack of adaptation to news media logic was considerably influenced by an overly negative perception of the media. Across both countries, most of the women considered the media to be a dangerous and hostile space.

*Sometimes, we find ourselves criticised by, or portrayed in a bad light in the media. It's not surprising because you immediately say, 'Ok. You're being anti-establishment and they're coming hard on you because they have to discredit you, they have to tarnish your personal image not just your professional or political image because that is one way of silencing you.' If they want to silence and ignore you, they can do it and they will do it. (A1SA, female, former MP and Party chairperson, Ghana)*

Again, women politicians' believed that the media's agenda was to catch them in some sort of mistake.

*That's the media, the people who're waiting to catch you. They know they have an agenda. So of course women will be afraid. (A1SA, female former MP and Party Chairperson, Ghana)*

This seemed to be one of the key motivations most of the women wanted to avoid the media. To buttress this point, some gave examples of politicians who had lost their jobs because they

had reacted to journalists' comments and said something they should not have said. In fact, some of the journalists also confirmed the fact that some politicians can be targeted.

*The same media can be very unforgiving [...] everywhere Otiko (a former gender minister in Ghana) goes, eagles are waiting for her to say an inappropriate thing even if she doesn't mean it inappropriately. (A2SH, former female news editor, Ghana)*

Therefore, there seemed to be some support for women politicians' largely negative perception of journalists. Furthermore, women politicians believed the media perpetuated sexism and encouraged audiences to do the same by giving them space.

*Female politicians get a really raw deal, you know, and nobody ever talks about a man being divorced, about a man having multiple families, about a man having children he's not looking after. Nobody ever talks about that in the media. When they want to attack a man for things that he's done, it's never to do with his sexuality or his history or whatever it is in terms of his personal life. But when a woman takes up a political position or is in the spotlight, she's a prostitute or she slept her way into her position or she can't keep a man or she is divorced. (A1Z, female MP, Ghana)*

*I remember I was being interviewed on a radio programme and one man called in and was like 'just tell this woman to go back to her home and to her kitchen. (B1RE, female presidential candidate, Nigeria)*

Although the results of the content analysis in Chapter 6 did not show any predominance, some women politicians said sexism was prevalent in their interactions with journalists, as well as in other programmes on broadcast media although not so much in the news which tended to be more measured. This point thus emphasises the value of the approach in this study to investigate the context of production of women politicians' media representations, as without these interviews, the assumption, based on Chapter 6's findings, would have been that Ghanaian and Nigerian political journalism was not sexist.

Nonetheless, a few number of the women seemed to recognise the media's influence and consequently adopted a more strategic approach which included linking their (political) agenda to the media's agenda.

*Everybody has an agenda. So I am not going to allow somebody to play his agenda on my time. I have my agenda with the media so I will play my agenda [...] it's about being able to link your agenda to their agenda. I think what has helped me is that I appreciate their work and I appreciate the dynamics*  
(A1N, former female minister, Ghana)

Out of the 14 women politicians interviewed, only 3 fell in this category. They showed remarkable understanding of how the media work and had a sophisticated strategy of marketing themselves that involved not only mainstream but social media. It was evident that women politicians who understood the media's power in shaping public opinion, promoting their issues and influencing their political colleagues in policy decisions, invested their resources into ensuring that they used the media to attain their political goals.

Given their negative perceptions, and against a keen understanding that the media can make or break a political career, many women politicians were afraid to speak on issues in the media.

*We are shy. Some are not assertive but that does not mean they don't know what to say. It's just that they are afraid of the media. Ah! These media people, if you say one thing they would twist it, they would quote you out of context.* (B1AL, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)

Interestingly, the idea that women politicians are too afraid or shy to discuss issues in the media constituted a recurring discourse across all three groups of interviews. Women politicians attributed their fear to journalists' adversarial approach, but journalists ascribed it

to the vitriolic political culture not to the media, while the civil society experts blamed it on both political and media culture.

*(Female politicians) are afraid that they will get exposed... our politics is vicious and when you venture into the media space, you open yourself up for everybody to attack you. They don't just attack the substance of what you say, they attack who you are, your personality, your family, everything.*  
**(A2E, female news editor, Ghana)**

*It's only a few female politicians that really deal with the media. Most try to avoid the media because of the negative aspects of it.*  
**(B1MO, female member, House of Assembly, Nigeria)**

Despite these differences in views, it was clear that most Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians regarded the media as an unequal playing field (van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017) which favoured their male counterparts. Combined with their failure to recognise the media's value to their political careers and their fear of the media, many of them chose to self-censor rather than self-mediatise. The different attitudes they demonstrate reflect what Cohen et al. (2008) argue that variations in perception about the media's influence are a key determinant to the degree to which politicians adapt to news media logic. Women politicians' behaviour also reflect the fact that the media can be a double-edged sword, yielding increased and favourable coverage to those who proactively adapt their behaviour to news media logic but marginalisation and negative reporting for those who do not. While the decision to self-mediatise is not based entirely on (women) politicians' perception of the media, what I have shown here strongly indicates that it plays a major role, much as the mediatisation literature assumes. One point that seems to have been overlooked in the scholarship, however, and which needs to be stressed here is the fact that political function also mediates perceptions about the media's value to politicians.

### 8.1.2 Perceptions of journalists to their work and to (women) politicians

Among the normative roles of the media, which are to inform and educate citizens, serve as a public arena for the deliberation and formation of public opinion on political issues, perform their ‘watchdog’ role of checking government excesses, and be a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 2011; pp. 19-20), Ghanaian and Nigerian journalists believed their most important was their watchdog function. Rooted in the historical development of the media since the colonial era, this watchdog perspective contributed to journalists’ generally adversarial attitude towards (women) politicians. One of the interviewees who was a leader the national president of Nigerian journalists (NUJ) at the time explained the mutual distrust between journalists and politicians in general.

*Politicians will like to keep the media at arm's length because they see us as adversaries. And we, also, most of the media, see the politicians as crooks! So we always go after them, whether male or female believing that they're hiding something. As a result, both see each other not necessarily as friends but as necessary evils. (B2WO, male senior leader, NUJ, Nigeria)*

This confession from such a key person as a senior leader of journalists lends much credence to how Nigerian journalists perceived their role. The same sentiments were expressed by Ghanaian journalists as this female news editor notes.

*We're not meant to be their public relations consultants. We're not meant to be their protectionists; that's not our job. We are supposed to highlight the wrongs, so that they the politicians, whom we've elected and pay all these monies to, do this work on our behalf [...] that's what journalists are supposed to do (A2DB, former news editor and news anchor, Ghana)*

The *episteme* (Foucault, cited in Hall, 1997, p. 29; emphasis in original) or common way journalists talked about politicians was that they were corrupt and needed exposing, hence their adversarial approach, which also confirmed women politicians’ impressions of journalists. It must be noted that in Ghana, this view was expressed mainly by journalists

from private media, particularly from radio stations; journalists from state-owned media were more measured in their approach as they adopted a nationalist outlook (I discuss these differences in Section 8.2). Nonetheless, adversarial journalism is neither new nor limited to Ghanaian and Nigerian journalists as several studies have documented its occurrence (Patterson, 1993; Lengauer et al., 2011; Eriksson and Östman, 2013; Chuma, 2018). Other scholars (e.g. Blumler and Esser, 2018) also argue that adversarial journalism is a reflection of increased professionalism and interpretivism, both of which are rooted in news media logic.

The other key factor that shapes news content is journalists' perception of women politicians. In the same way that women politicians view journalists negatively, journalists were also very critical of the women. Repeatedly, women politicians were discursively constructed by journalists as shy, non-assertive, fearful, unintelligent and incompetent.

*Their fear to engage, for me, is the main thing. They are afraid that they will get exposed. They fear that if I get out there and I speak and I get exposed, everybody will target my back. In fact when you call them, they will speak to you on the phone. They will tell you all the things but when you say, "Can I call you? Can we speak on air?" They will say, "No. I don't want to engage on this matter. (A2EM, male news editor, Ghana)*

*That is the problem with many of those women [politicians], they're illiterate public officials. They're in Nigeria but they don't know anything about Nigeria. They're just opportunists who find themselves in office. (B2JK, female journalists and media mentor, Nigeria)*

These two quotes illustrate the general impression that journalists in both countries had of women politicians. Interestingly, female journalists were even more critical than their male counterparts as they believed women politicians made too many excuses for not engaging



with the media. Being in a male- dominated field, female journalists said their challenges were similar to those faced by women in politics, and therefore thought that if they could overcome their difficulties then women politicians certainly could, given that the women had more resources. These perceptions, coupled with women politicians' self-censorship, not only shaped political news content but also incentivised journalists to depend more on male politicians, thereby depriving the women the opportunity to exert some control over how they were portrayed in the media.

### **8.1.3 Professional experience of women politicians**

Women politicians' professional expertise also factored strongly on their ability to influence their media representations. Those with backgrounds in media or journalism were better placed to shape political news content as they understood the logic of news media more easily, including how they could utilise the media to enhance their political careers. An interesting link between journalism and politics was made in some of the interviews whereby several journalists were turning into politicians. One of the male news editors explains:

*In Ghana, they reward people who have a media presence. There are people who have become MPs and their only claim to fame was because they were very vocal in the public space. In the last Parliament we had 20 journalists.*  
(A2EM, Ghana)

Experience in journalism or media engagement facilitated women politicians' ability to proactively incorporate news media logic into their political behaviour to get more and favourable coverage among other things. Of the three women politicians I mentioned above as being media savvy, one was married to a journalist and the other had worked in civil society where she had constantly dealt with the media. The latter explains:

*Because I have done a lot of advocacy work, I had worked with the media so I knew how the media works [...] I deliberately learnt the media landscape [...] I really have seen the back end in terms of what having a good presence on the Internet and on social media does. (A1NL, former female minister, Ghana)*

Women politicians with no media experience were disadvantaged because they generally lacked understanding of the dynamics of the media space, the skill to handle themselves well during interviews and the confidence to speak on issues. Some of the women politicians believed they needed media training to overcome their media fears.

*If there was a school or institution that focused on capacity building for female politicians, I believe that would be one of the key modules or courses that a female politician should take. [...] every female politician should learn about the media and how it works [...] so that we use it as a strategic tool in climbing up the political ladder as women. (A1NL, former female minister, Ghana)*

A1N's comments capture a crucial difference between (fe)male politicians. In Section 8.3, I discuss how cultural norms discourage Ghanaian and Nigerian women from expressing their views or asserting themselves. Again, in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.3), I noted how women have historically been marginalised in educational and economic sectors among others. Given these contextual factors, it seems that women politicians need media training more than their male counterparts. In essence then, having some knowledge or background in the media or journalism placed women politicians in a better position to use their acquired media savviness to influence how they were portrayed in the media.

#### **8.1.4 Professional experience of journalists**

One key factor that considerably influenced how journalists report on women politicians is if they have received any gender sensitivity training. There was a general impression among

women politicians and some journalists themselves that much of the marginalisation and sexist reporting was because many journalists, including the women, did not understand the complexities of women politicians' challenges. One of the female journalists who had benefitted from such training noted:

*You know that some of my media colleagues are also unfair, and it's partly because they're not sensitised enough in the way they project women. So for instance, they get a female politician or they cover her and they project her in a way that is negative. Some of it is just due to lack of knowledge about gender reporting, how to cover a female politician or even what she has said*  
**(A2DB, former female news editor and news anchor, Ghana)**

A2D went on to give an example of how she had gotten upset with her female colleague for writing a story that had focused entirely on the Gender minister's haircut during her vetting and not on the issues that emerged from it. At the time, there had been some controversy about the appropriateness of a minister sporting a Mohawk haircut: "So, my colleague did a story on her hair and I just felt that this was no story. Why focus on this Mohawk when you and I know that people are projecting it negatively?" The example here illustrates several points. One, female journalists also contribute to negative reporting on women politicians. Two, gender sensitivity training can reduce the occurrence of trivialisation in coverage of women politicians (Lachover, 2012), and three, while it has been argued that female journalists may understand the plight of women politicians better and therefore be more circumspect when reporting them, this is not always the case as journalists generally follow the pack mentality and practice of news production unless trained otherwise.

### **8.1.5 Scale of networks of women politicians**

Strömbäck and van Aelst (2013) argue that cultivating friendships among journalists helps minimise their adversarial stance towards politician. Because women politicians self-censor,

they also fail to prioritise building networks among journalists. Therefore, they often have to face the full brunt of journalists' adversarial attitude, which in turn reinforces perceptions that journalists are their enemies.

The few women politicians who had cultivated a network among journalists, however, said they had not experienced any negative behaviour from journalists and hence disagreed with majority of their female colleagues. Two of these women politicians explained how they engaged with journalists in the following quotes.

*I actually cultivated them. I didn't have money to be giving them this and that but they saw that I really cared for them, [that] I have their interests at heart. (A1NL, former female minister, Ghana)*

*I have a friendly rapport with journalists. I have so many of them as friends. Any topical issue, they will phone me and I will give them audience. (B1AL, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)*

Politicians have historically always had a difficult relationship with journalists (Gans, 1979; Machin and Niblock, 2014). Therefore, strategic cultivation of friendship with journalists has a huge influence on whether women politicians are recruited as news sources, experts of subjects or news stories. However, it requires an investment of time and other resources including informal phone calls and meetings, sending gifts on their birthdays, giving tip-offs on publicly unavailable information so they can do an exclusive, and generally being willing and available to comment on issues. In effect, politicians who cater to the needs of journalists find their way into their good books while those who do not are likely to suffer for it in terms of negative coverage (Sheafer, 2001; van Aelst et al., 2010; Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013).

A clear distinction became evident in the interviews between two groups of women politicians. On the one hand were majority of women politicians who negatively perceived journalists, who self-censored as a result and who continued to be marginalised or negatively portrayed in the media. On the other hand were a few women politicians who understood the media's influence not just in society but also to increasing their political profiles, who co-opted the media's influence to enhance their careers and subsequently enjoyed more and favourable coverage. This finding clearly demonstrates what many mediatisation studies have noted, that adopting the logic of news media greatly enhances the quantity and quality of politicians' media coverage (Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b).

#### **8.1.6 Scale of networks of journalists**

The impact of journalists' scale of networks on news content relates more to sources. In the interviews, journalists explained that in order to do their work efficiently, they needed access to official information (Manning, 2001; Strömbäck and Nord, 2006). Therefore, they also had to build networks among politicians. They stated that having high ranking politicians on speed dial was a huge advantage as it helped with quick name recall, especially as they often worked within strict time limits. One of the female journalists explained:

*The rapport they [politicians] have with the media increases their name recall in the minds of producers because when you are under pressure to produce something, you are trying to remember who you can call, you will not want to be going through some directory to look for names [...] Visibility and rapport all determine who gets coverage. (A2S, Ghana)*

Apart from clarifying how a big network of sources works in their favour, journalists also explained why it was important for women politicians to their journalistic networks.

*If you don't have friends in the media, you are always a stranger to the person who is interviewing you [...] when you're speaking to somebody*

*you're familiar with, you're more relaxed. That tension is gone, both for the interviewer and the interviewee. They [female politicians] don't invest in that so they're afraid to come because the whole setting of the media conversation is strange for them. (A2EM, male news editor, Ghana)*

Several journalists mentioned that because of their experiences with women politicians' unwillingness to engage with them, and their unreliability, most of them now rely more on their male sources who have proven trustworthy over the years, and with whom they have built trust. Journalists believed these reasons contributed to why most women politicians are hardly seen or heard in the media. To them, women politicians are not taking advantage of media opportunities. Because of that, journalists felt they should not be blamed for women politicians' marginalisation and negative portrayal in the media.

*The nature of the media is to cover events. We will not create the events for them. If female politicians refuse to come out, we will not go and drag them out or put words in their mouths? (B2WO, senior leader, NUJ, Nigeria)*

The difference in perspective between women politicians and journalists illustrates the tension between political logic and news media logic that Strömbäck and Esser (2014) talk about. It also shows the power struggles between women politicians who are resentful of the media's intrusion in their political lives, and defiant about sticking to their (perceived) core mandate of politicking, and journalists who feel it is their duty to scrutinise politicians and are only prepared to accommodate women politicians if they abide by a logic that suits them. Both groups fail to see the other's perspective and the tension seems irreconcilable. In the next two sections, I show how several other challenges impact on women politicians' behaviour towards journalists thus informing their self-censorship, but which seems to be either overlooked or ignored by most journalists.

## 8.2 Institutional Level Influences on News Content

This section explores the interaction between political logic in guiding the behaviour of women politicians, and news media logic as followed by journalists. I explore the key components of each logic, and the extent to which their interaction shapes political news production.

### 8.2.1 Political logic and its impact on women politicians' media engagement

The logic of appropriate behaviour (March and Olsen, 2011) of politicians in Ghana and Nigeria is set by the political culture, which in turn significantly influences women politicians' approach to and engagement with the media. The fact that Ghanaian and Nigerian political culture is sustained by personalised patron-client networks that are maintained by money has been noted above, and in Chapter 1. Across all 14 interviews, women politicians stated that their biggest challenge was money as illustrated by the following two quotes.

*The major challenges we have if I will be sincere with you is finance. Because we women spend our money with the little our husbands will support us with. And you see, when men are contesting with us you know they have their money to themselves. They can dole it out anyhow they want it. But we women, how much do they have?* (B2AD, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)

As a consequence of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' historical limited access to education, economic activities and political participation (discussed in Section 1.2.3. of Chapter 1), women politicians generally have less funds compared to male politicians. Yet, for their political survival, they are expected to abide by the same patronage politics in meeting the personal needs of their constituents including paying school fees and utility bills, providing jobs and contributing to funeral and wedding expenses (Lindberg, 2003).

Patronage politics reaches its height during campaign periods which many consider to be the ‘harvesting season’ (Lindberg, 2003). During this time, some voters expect a ‘reward’ from politicians to guarantee their vote as they believe that they would likely not see the candidates again until the next election. This ‘reward’ is commonly called ‘stomach structure’, a combination of ‘stomach’ and ‘infrastructure’. One of the Nigerian male news editors interviewed explains the rationale behind this political behaviour:

*When you have stomach structure, [politicians think] let me just fix your stomach. If that is done, then you would vote for me [...]. It is better for me to give you the food rather than to construct roads. (B2RA)*

In addition to providing ‘stomach structure’, politicians are expected to buy votes not just during campaigning but also on the day of election:

*The electorate who are supposed to vote for me not only expected me to give them money, many of them were actually demanding it. So when I went round trying to talk to people, they will be like “where's the money? You think you can come here and just talk and we would vote for you without you giving us anything?” (B1RE, female presidential candidate, Nigeria)*

*Politics is very monetised [...] you only need to control about 200 people in any district, in any constituency, to make sure that a certain outcome is out. And these 200 people are the presiding officers. Forget the agents, they are small fry, they are not the problem, it's the presiding officers. (A1SA, former MP and political party chairperson, Ghana)*

Patronage culture exerts considerable pressure on the resources of politicians in general, but more significantly on women politicians whose funds are comparatively less than their male counterparts, and who may have other familial responsibilities which equally require their time and money. The pressure of meeting these ‘political’ demands contribute to the women’s disposition towards media engagement, particularly as they are unsure of the benefits to their political goals.



Another aspect of political culture which obstructs women politicians from seeking media visibility is the vitriolic political culture which some media outlets seem to facilitate. During campaigns, politicians indulge in violent attacks, intimidation and other tactics aimed at discrediting their opponents while portraying themselves as the ideal candidate. While some of these occur during rallies, others happen in studios during panel discussions, interviews or even news.

*The media became a player in the tension that was building in the system politically last year. Just by virtue of people using the media as a means of you know putting lies out there, twisting stories you know, creating funny stories just for political points or to sabotage one thing or another. But it also meant that one was having to work quite hard at dealing with the misperceptions that were created. (A2ZR, female MP, Ghana)*

*We have so many challenges like violence when we go to campaign. I remember when I was the chairman, some people would just sponsor some youth to, create something bad within the minds of the members and by the time I knew it, there would be violence. (B1AL, female local government party chairperson, Nigeria)*

These campaign tactics, combined with the monetised political culture, all contribute to the overall pressure on women politicians' time, as A2ZR noted above, and their decision to stay out of the public eye out of fear of attracting the attention and angst of both their political rivals and the public.

### **8.2.2 News media logic and political news production**

The argument that politicians have to adopt to news media logic rests on the idea that they need media visibility to gain public support for their policies and for favourable coverage (Strömbäck and Esser, 2014b; van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017). In the Ghanaian and Nigerian media landscape, the particular iteration of news media logic in each media organisation is

shaped by ownership, which in turn affects selection of news (and its framing) and sources. As noted in Chapter 3, there are two main types of media organisations: state-owned and private media. State media are less commercialised and more concerned about serving the public interest, and this is reflected in the content and framing of news. Journalists from state media talked about the normative values of ‘objectivity’, ‘balance, and ‘proximity’ as key considerations in determining the newsworthiness of stories. This prioritisation of public interest over profit confirms the content analysis results where state media in Ghana and Nigeria showed a higher and more diverse representation of women politicians from different parties and with different political functions than the private media.

Private media, on the other hand, are more concerned about making profit and less about what the public needs. This is where tensions between professionalism and commercialism are most evident. The concern for profit implies that news and sources are selected primarily for their commercial value, and presented in ways that are expected to attract audiences. Thus, unlike state media, the key news values they observed are controversy and conflict as this news editor states:

*Controversy and conflict [are] important news values. I mean any editor will know about the news values but for us, the most important is where's the conflict and where's the controversy skewed in making a determination on that story. (A2EM, male news editor, Ghana)*

One noticeable difference between what constitutes newsworthiness for print and radio journalists was the interest in soundbitable material for the latter. For example, a female journalist from one of the Ghanaian radio stations explained that they look for “popular individuals who give exciting sound bites and draw traction to your website or page”. This

statement highlights how certain media platforms like radio are more amenable to mediatisation strategies than others (Osei-Appiah, forthcoming).

Literature on political news journalism supports the idea that political function largely determines who gets coverage (Vos, 2014; Vos and van Aelst, 2018). While this was confirmed by journalists from state media, private media journalists said this was not always the case, and that political function was sometimes mediated by the skill and charisma of the politician. An example was given in Ghana of the deputy minister of one of the sectors being preferred over the substantive minister because the deputy had better rapport with journalists and was “articulate” and “more exciting to listen to” according to one female journalist. This statement chimes with scholars like Sheafer (2001) who argue that media access is significantly determined by how interesting the politician is.

In many ways, media content mirrors the political system and culture in Ghana and Nigeria, which in turn shapes political news journalism. First, the strong political parallelism between politics and media impacts on news production. Generally, state media portrays government officials favourably. Similarly, private media owned by politicians or with affiliations to particular parties tend to give favourable coverage to their allies, and negative coverage to their opponents as this Nigerian political journalist explained:

*If I conducted an investigative story now which may not be in favour of the person who owns this station, or the person that is involved is closer to the person that owns this station, I might not be allowed to use such a story.*  
(B2AY)

Some of the women politicians mentioned this partisan colouring of media organisations as one of their key challenges to media access.

Secondly, irrespective of ownership, media attention reflects the duopoly existing in both countries (as noted in Chapter 1) in that politicians from the two parties generally attract more media attention. This implies that before they can gain media access, women politicians in smaller parties have an extra layer of marginalisation to address compared to their female counterparts in the dominant parties. This point was reiterated throughout the interviews.

*[The media are] so completely sold out to the established parties, because of the amount of money that they make from them. They don't really pay attention to candidates of smaller parties. [...] they are not letting Nigerians know they have a much wider choice because they don't present all of us candidates. (B1RE, female presidential candidate, Nigeria)*

Third, the clientelist networks prevalent in the political culture is also evident in media culture in that media content on the organisation's sponsors and advertisers are usually favourable. As one of the journalists explained, this was to protect their organisations' financial interest.

*As a news editor, I know our biggest advertisers. Usually, they're telecoms, banks, and all of that. When there are issues, and we know that we cannot report, there's a way you limit the impact because these are our business partners. (B2D, male news editor, Nigeria)*

Another characteristic is the practice of what is termed 'yellow journalism', the practice whereby journalists receive money from politicians to create either favourable news, or false news that discredits their opponents. This was something that women politicians strongly criticised journalists for doing as, in their opinion, it undermined the media's credibility.

*You can buy good news for yourself. Give them[journalists] money then sit them down. You can dictate what you want them to write about you. I've seen a lot. (B1CH, female commissioner, Nigeria)*

Additionally, there is ‘cash for coverage’, referred to in Chapters 1 and 3, which is another aspect of incentive-driven journalism. While prominent in political news journalism in Ghana and Nigeria, cash for coverage (Ristow, 2010) has also been documented in other parts of the world (Onyebadi and Alajmi, 2016). It describes a situation where event organisers offer per diem and other incentives to journalists to guarantee selection as news. The institutionalisation of this practice is so pervasive that journalists actually use it to determine the newsworthiness of events. A Nigerian journalist explained its impact on journalists.

*When you're trying to cover a particular event and you discover that there is going to be a brown envelope here, for crying out loud, everybody will jump at it even though we know that it's against the tenets of the profession.*  
**(B2AY)**

Incentive-driven coverage of political news is a widespread practice in African newsrooms (Mabweazara, 2018a). For many scholars, it constitutes a media manipulation tool that creates conflict of interest, subverts professionalism of journalists, undermines the media's credibility, and constrains diversity in media content while also weakening democracy (Sampaio-Dias 2019).

In considering perspectives from women politicians and journalists, it is clear that the divergent logics of politics and media cause a tension that shapes news selection, coverage and production in important ways. Having explored how political logic and media logic interact, I now turn to the impact of gender norms in the behaviour of, and interaction between women politicians and journalists.

### 8.3 Socio-Cultural Level Influences

This section deals with the ways in which the gender of women politicians influences how they are treated as political actors, and how that in turn shapes their attitude towards journalists. It also examines how journalists, as social beings located in a socio-cultural environment that promotes male leadership and women's subordination (Imafidon, 2013), are influenced in their perceptions and attitudes towards women politicians.

#### 8.3.1 Socio-cultural influences and women politicians

The key point here is the mismatch between cultural expectations of women and perceptions of who politicians are. First, because Ghanaian and Nigerian women are traditionally regarded as subordinate to men, they are constructed as belonging to the home not to politics, thus mirroring the private/public debate in feminist media and political research. The perception that women are unwelcome in politics was a common thread throughout the interviews in all three groups, reflecting their pervasiveness in political discourses in both countries. As a result of this dominant view, women politicians said it was difficult for people to accept women as leaders as the following quote illustrates.

*It's harder for people to accept a woman as the leader because the status quo is that there are more male leaders.[...] You have to work much harder so that takes a lot from you. (A1SA, female former MP and party chairperson, Ghana)*

Women politicians also said it was harder to get funding as sponsors preferred male to female candidates, believing that women will likely not win.

Another perception that is culturally informed and which shapes women politicians' behaviour is the idea that motherhood and politics are incompatible, particularly if the female politician's children are young.

*It's [politics] a 24-hour affair because meetings will go into the midnight, into the early hours of the morning. So a mother of more than two, three, four children cannot go into politics while the children are growing. Otherwise, the children will suffer. One will affect the other adversely. (B1CH, female commissioner, Nigeria)*

In Section 8.1.5, I showed how cultivating friendships with journalists greatly increased media visibility as well as minimised negative coverage, and how women politicians generally did not do that. When asked in the interviews the reasons behind their behaviour, women politicians explained that building journalistic networks was a gendered practice that, like many other news production practices, disadvantaged them as women.

*This is a society where as a woman if you are not careful and in your interaction with a man he assumes that it's going to go to another level. So in order for that kind of misunderstanding not to occur, you just keep the distance. And I can speak from personal experience. (A1Z, female MP, Ghana)*

The fact that women politicians avoid building networks among political journalists who are predominantly male to protect themselves from sexual overtures or negative social perceptions was not something that came up in the interviews with journalists. In this sense, it seemed that women politicians were judged by the same standards as male politicians, without regard for the many structural challenges that impeded their ability to position themselves as viable political actors in the same way as their male counterparts could.

### 8.3.2 Socio-cultural influences and journalists

The impact of gender ideology on journalists was reflected strongly in their perception of women politicians as embodying all the qualities that go contrary to those they prefer either in sources or in political representatives. The common perception of a politician was one who is assertive, articulate, and aggressive as this Ghanaian male journalist notes:

*You talk about the male politicians, they are more vocal, more attacking, more frontal with the issues and are willing risk takers, whereas women are more conservative and would want to calculate their steps before taking them. (A2RD, parliamentary correspondent and news anchor)*

As well as journalists, civil society experts also reiterated this gendered perception of politicians in their interviews.

*Culturally, women are not supposed to be talkative and in politics you need to be talkative. You need to talk, you need to explain yourself and this is not within our culture. Because even within our households when men are talking, the women should be at the background. So you are not supposed to be in the front. (A3HH, senior leader, Abantu for Development, Ghana)*

The journalistic ideal of a source is one with qualities that are often attributed to male politicians. Essentially, these are politicians who are well informed, intelligent and articulate, and can navigate complex topics without faltering, all in a way that draws audience attention. Many journalists believed that (most) women politicians do not possess these qualities, without considering the fact that the women's ability to showcase these competences had been greatly impeded by historical and structural obstacles as noted above and in Chapter 1. Thus, the operation of a criteria of journalistic preferences inevitably leads to overreliance on a small, highly exclusive pool of (generally male) sources.



Interestingly, some of these communication competencies were perceived by some as ‘natural’ to men. The following quote from a female news editor who claimed to be a feminist exemplifies this view.

*It's easier getting male politicians to speak on issues, especially controversial issues, than it is getting female politicians. It's something that comes to them (men) naturally. (A2AK, female news editor, Ghana)*

The fact that she considered speaking about controversial issues a ‘natural’ ability that male politicians had was something that was totally lost on her. It is an unfortunate perception for someone in her position to have, but also illustrates the fact that not all women fully appreciate the structural challenges that women politicians face. Her comment presupposes that women politicians lack a natural capacity which they need to do their job, in the absence of which they cannot do their job effectively. Secondly, it elevates the discussion of skill into the realms of nature, making it seem impossible for women politicians to acquire through training and practice. Moreover, it reinforces patriarchal ideas that men are naturally suited for politics while women are not, thus conforming to gender stereotypes. In this way, these discourses begin to work the same way as stereotypes, forming a narrow and generic opinion about women politicians by which they are judged. While it cannot be argued that these constructions are totally baseless, like stereotypes, they should not be used as a benchmark to which *all* women politicians conform despite the fact that they are not a homogenous group.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the Individual, Institutional and Socio-cultural factors which interact in news production to shape content on women politicians. It has revealed how role perceptions, professional expertise and scale networks of both women politicians and

journalists influence their attitude to each other, resulting in women politicians' self-censorship rather than self-mediatisation as expected in the mediatisation literature. Again, it has shown how Ghanaian and Nigerian political culture as well as media culture, both of which are highly monetised and sustained by clientelist networks, create further impediments for women politicians in their ability to recognise the media's influence in politics and utilise them to achieve their political goals. Finally, the chapter has highlighted the role socio-cultural gender norms play in positioning women politicians as less viable political candidates in comparison to male politicians.

Given the various, often gendered structural barriers that women politicians face as political actors, they are repeatedly forced to make choices which require that they calculate the benefits of their actions against the potential rewards, and if in their estimation, the former outweighs the latter, they decide not to proceed. These barriers exert considerable pressure on women politicians in ways that are (largely) absent for male politicians. Women politicians have to work harder to prove themselves as comparable to their male colleagues, which makes them less able to compete on the same level with male politicians where media engagement is concerned. Male politicians do not have to prove their competence as candidates; it is a given. Neither do they have to rely on the benevolence of their spouses for campaign funds nor continuously fend off sexual overtures in order to get nominated or sponsored. Again, male politicians do not have to justify to audiences why they would be good candidates in spite of their gender. Because of these disparities, the political landscape, much like the media, is an unequal playing field, and this influences how women politicians interact with the media. Therefore, if women politician's attitude towards the media seems too indifferent, and male politicians appear to be more adept at doing the things that earn them (more) media coverage, it is largely because they generally have much less to deal with

compared to their female counterparts. Nonetheless, it is also true that in failing to recognise the media's increasing influence in the political space, and being quite dismissive of the media, Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians were behaving in ways that will not serve their political careers well, at least in the long term.

## CHAPTER 9| SELF-REPRESENTATION AND WOMEN POLITICIANS

This thesis examines the media coverage of women politicians in Ghana and Nigeria, focusing on three aspects: their representations in print and radio news (Chapters 6 & 7), the individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors which shape their representations in news content (Chapter 8), and how the women self-represent on social media, focusing on *Facebook*. Having dealt with the first two aspects of this thesis' enquiry, I now turn to the subject of women politicians' self-representational practices.

Given the largely critical way that most Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians perceived the media as presented in the previous chapter, the aim here is to show the extent to which their self-representation addresses this challenge in the absence of the gatekeeping obstacles of mainstream media. Focusing on *Facebook* which was the most popular social media in the two countries at the time of fieldwork as noted in Chapter 1, this chapter maps onto the key concerns discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to women politicians' quantitative and qualitative media visibility. Thus, I analyse their self-representational strategies on Facebook in terms of the *quantity* of their presence and *quality*.

This chapter is structured as follows. I begin by summarising how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in the two countries generally self-represent, distinguishing between appointive and elective women politicians. Next, I focus on the 28 Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians included in the sample to discuss their visibility patterns on *Facebook* within the one month campaign period before the election in each country. This is followed by analysis of their *Facebook* cover pages using a MCDA framework that is presented before

the analysis. Where relevant, I integrate relevant aspects of the interviews into these discussions to illuminate why certain self-representational choices are made. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the findings in light of women politicians' media coverage as presented in Chapters 6 and 7, drawing out the (dis)continuities between the two, and their implications for gender politics in Ghana and Nigeria as well as the broader gendered political communication scholarship. The key argument that this chapter advances is that while social media may not present the same resource and access challenges as mainstream media, their utilisation as strategic political communication tools largely depends on women politicians' perceptions of the necessities of the political culture as well as the benefit of online campaigning to their political careers.

### **9.1 Self-Representation of Women Politicians: General Practices**

This thesis examines both appointive and elective women politicians as discourses on the two feed into general perceptions of women in Ghanaian and Nigerian politics. However, the former do not face the same re-election pressure as the latter. Given the differential value of self-representation to these two groups, the discussion in this chapter is necessarily skewed towards those strategies adopted by women politicians who need voter support to be in power. This section looks at general patterns of self-representation of all women politicians to provide a context for understanding the choices that elective women politicians make on *Facebook*. Following this, the rest of the chapter focuses on elective women politicians' self-representation on *Facebook*.

The first point to note is that appointive women politicians mainly use institutional channels of communication at their disposal to project themselves to the public. These include

websites and media appearances, especially before planned institutional (public engagement) events or when a topical issue arises and the view of the woman politician in charge of that particular sector is needed. It is not common practice for appointive women politicians to go beyond the norm to adopt more sophisticated self-representational strategies as we would expect their elected counterparts to do. This is why the Ghanaian EC, Charlotte Osei's case is interesting. A few months before the 2016 election, she was reported to have spent a substantial amount on rebranding the electoral commission, including organising photo shoots for herself. Subsequently, she had received considerable public criticism for not focusing on her core mandate of organising a free and fair election, particularly as at the time, there had been several pending law suits from presidential candidates against the commission. This is partly the reason behind her predominantly negative portrayal in the print data as shown in Chapters 6 and 7.

Elective women politicians, on the other hand, need to adopt more active marketing strategies to present themselves as the best candidate to potential voters. This is especially important given the traditionally gendered political, media and socio-cultural landscapes as discussed in the previous chapter. As the dominant view of women is that of belonging to the domestic space (Steeves and Awino, 2015), it is imperative that elective women politicians project themselves in ways that neutralise this view in order to maintain and even increase their voter support base.

Apart from traditional media, there are two main avenues for (women) politicians to self-represent; traditional campaign activities and web technologies. Historically, politicians in Ghana and Nigeria have relied on traditional campaign strategies such as rallies, door-to-door

interactions, and other media appearances to engage with the electorate (Opeibi, 2006; Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013). It is also common for candidates to utilise posters, fliers, banners, billboard announcements and branded items in their campaigns (Ademilokun and Olateju, 2015). Branded items, for example, are particularly popular either for their utilitarian or aesthetic function, and range from T shirts, caps, and other objects based on what seems relevant in the particular constituency (see Figure 9.1).



**Figure 9.1** Branded campaign items showing aprons and fans (images received through personal communication with politicians during fieldwork (images received through personal communication with politicians during fieldwork).

More recently, web technologies like *Facebook* have grown in popularity both for the electorate and candidates. Since 2007, the popularity of politicians' use of social media, especially *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to engage with the public has increased (Felicia, 2018; Dzisah, 2018), intensifying in Nigeria in 2011 (Felicia, 2018) and 2012 in Ghana (Dzisah, 2018). For instance, the former Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan, first announced his 2015 re-election bid on his *Facebook* wall (Felicia, 2018). Given these developments, it is plausible to assume that politicians in Ghana and Nigeria are aware of the potential that social

media offer as political communication tools. How then did women politicians utilise *Facebook* in their campaigns? The next section examines this question.

## **9.2 How Do Women Politicians Self-Represent on *Facebook*?**

As explained in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.1), the initial intention for this chapter was to link what women politicians said about their representations in traditional media with their self-representational strategies on *Facebook* as a way of mapping out the extent to which women politicians' self-representations on social media were strategic. However, this was not always possible given that some of the women interviewees did not have *Facebook* accounts. In the end, I only had a sample of 14 women who had been interviewed and were also on *Facebook*. As 14 is too modest a number considering that my thesis covers two countries, I chose to increase the number by adding all the 7 Nigerian female senators at the time and an equal number of 7 randomly selected from the 36 Ghanaian MPs (see Table 9.1 for overview). These two particular groups were selected partly because none of the female senators were represented in my interview data, and because MPs are the highest *elected* political positions next to the presidency. By including these women in my self-representational data, I aimed to obtain further insight into the strategies they employed to make themselves more visible to voters, and to elicit their support.



**Table 9.1** Overview of data presented in Chapter 9

Category	Details
No. of cover pages analysed	17
Categories of women politicians represented in cover pages	<p><b>Ghana (12)</b></p> <p>Former MP (1)</p> <p>Returning MP (4)</p> <p>Parliamentary candidate (2)</p> <p>Minister (1)</p> <p>(Dep.) party women's organiser (2)</p> <p>(Vice) presidential candidate (2)</p> <p><b>Nigeria (5)</b></p> <p>Senatorial candidate (2)</p> <p>Presidential candidate (1)</p> <p>Local area party chairperson (1)</p> <p>House of Assembly member (1)</p>
No. of interviewee women politicians represented	<p>Ghana (7)</p> <p>Nigeria (7)</p>

Thus, to determine the nature of women politicians' visibility on *Facebook*, a sample of 28 *Facebook* accounts belonging to 14 women politicians (7 Nigerian senators and 7<sup>6</sup> randomly

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<sup>6</sup> 7 Ghanaian MPs were chosen as a comparable number to Nigerian female senators who at the time were also 7.

selected Ghanaian MPs) in addition to the 14 interviewed were analysed. The timeframe considered is the one month before the general election in each country, thus mapping onto to the press and radio data. With the exception of 4 interviewees, the remaining 24 women politicians represented in this sample contested in their respective election.

While I consider ‘post’ content and the cover pages of each of the 28 women politicians within the timeframe, my focus is on the cover pages in this chapter for pragmatic reasons, as time and space do not allow me to discuss all related post content. Besides, given the paucity of research on visual representation of politicians in general and women politicians in particular as noted in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), and the gendered expectations underlying voter decisions (pages 45-47), I was more interested in the visual aspects of the self-representations. Therefore, I only briefly note the general content of the women’s posts and devote more time to analysing their cover pages. As some of the women did not have any *Facebook* pages but maintained a personal profile, the cover pages were taken from these profiles and thus appear quite different from those taken from *Facebook* pages. Further, because screenshots of the cover pages were all taken after the elections in both countries, some of the women had changed the cover pages they used during the campaign period at the time of data collection, and since *Facebook* archives only the images of past cover pages, I could only obtain these images and not the whole cover page in such instances. Consequently, in some of the examples discussed below, I analyse what would appear to be a profile picture while in other cases, I analyse the whole cover page.

This section is in two parts. In the first, I elaborate on women politicians’ general visibility patterns on *Facebook* at the specified time, examining their presence (or absence) as well as

regularity and content of posts. This is to help determine if the site was used as a campaign tool to connect to (potential) voters, and to what extent it was used. As noted in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4), and following van Santen and van Zoonen (2010) and Metz et al, (2019), I categorise the content of women politician's posts into professional, emotional and private communication. In the second part, I analyse the cover pages of the 28 selected women politicians, using an MCDA framework which I introduce before the analysis.

### **9.2.1 Women politicians' self-representation: *Facebook* visibility**

Analysis of the 28 women politicians' *Facebook* accounts reveal limited visibility and quite minimal activity. Out of the 28 women, 11 had no accounts while of the remaining 17, 13 had more than 1 account (see Table 9.1 below). Where multiple accounts are noted, I selected the official page. Between the countries, Nigerian women politicians had a significantly higher number of Facebook absences (9) than their Ghanaian counterparts (2). With the increasing popularity of social media in Africa as elsewhere, the disparity may have been because the Nigerian election occurred a year earlier (2015) than the Ghanaian election, giving Ghanaian politicians greater advantage in seeing how social media can be used for campaign or other political purposes.

Among those who were on *Facebook*, there were some who had as many as 4 different accounts although it seemed that a few of these accounts were scams. The possibility of having their accounts cloned by scammers is a real challenge that (women) politicians face, and which constituted one of the reasons some choose not to be on *Facebook*. In fact, a few of the women had posted a disclaimer on their pages to alert the public that their accounts had been cloned. Nonetheless, there was also evidence that some of the multiple accounts were

managed by the women politicians and not scammers based on the content of the posts. For these women, it was sometimes the case that the various accounts were operated differently. For example, the Ghanaian female presidential candidate had two pages, one of which seemed to have been set up for her 2016 campaign per its name. Yet, the last post on this campaign page was 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2016, almost 7 months *to* the election while the other page had more recent posts. If we consider that social media give women politicians control over the message unlike traditional media, then having multiple accounts with different types of usage and levels of activity undermined this goal as the inconsistencies in their usage was likely to create an impression of confusion rather than control in the mind of the viewer.

**Table 9.2** Facebook activity of 28 selected women politicians during one month before Ghanaian and Nigerian elections

Name of politician/ general political status <sup>7</sup>	Presence of account	Number of account(s)	No. of posts during timeframe <sup>8</sup>	Type of Post
A1SA <sup>9</sup> , former MP, Ghana	Yes	4	4	Professional
B1OL, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	No			
B1BI, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	No			
B1MOS, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	Yes	2	1	Professional
B1TI, member, State House of Assembly, Nigeria	Yes	2	None	
B1CH, commissioner for Education, Nigeria	No			
B1AL, party chairperson, local government area, Nigeria	Yes	1	22	Private
B1AD, local area party representative, Nigeria	No			
B1RE, presidential candidate, Nigeria	Yes	2	116	Professional
A1ZA, returning MP, Ghana	Yes	2	35	Professional
A1NAO, minister, Ghana	Yes	2	87	Mix of professional and private
A1HA, CPP party women's organiser, Ghana	Yes	1	None	
B1MO, member, State House of Assembly, Nigeria	No			
A1CD, party deputy women's organiser, Ghana	Yes	3	None	
A1BD, vice presidential candidate, Ghana	Yes	3	40	Professional
A1NAK, Ghanaian presidential candidate	Yes	2	None	
A1NAD, parliamentary candidate, Ghana	Yes	2	16	Professional
A1BE, returning MP, Ghana	No			
A1QU, returning MP, Ghana	Yes	3	12	Mix of private, emotional and professional
A1DE, returning MP, Ghana	Yes	1	None	
A1BE, parliamentary candidate, Ghana	Yes	4	none	
A1SS, returning MP, Ghana	No			
A1UR, returning MP, Ghana	Yes	2	28	Mix of private, emotional and professional
B1ST, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	No			
B1UC, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	No			
B1RO, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	Yes	1	None	
B1FA, senatorial candidate, Nigeria	No			
B1AY, candidate, State House of Assembly, Nigeria	No			

<sup>7</sup> At the time

<sup>8</sup> Timeframe is one month prior to elections in each country: March 10<sup>th</sup>-April, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (Nigeria) and November 7<sup>th</sup>-December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 (Ghana)

<sup>9</sup> Names have been anonymised to maintain uniformity with previous chapter although the images show some names.

The absence of almost half of the women on *Facebook* was a surprising finding given that social media have been promoted as a means of circumventing challenges with traditional media. However, the near invisibility on *Facebook* confirms women politicians' general ambivalence towards campaigning on the site as was found for traditional media in the previous chapter. Many of them did not believe that online campaigning had any impact on voting decisions and therefore considered it unnecessary.

*Campaigning on social media is not important. How many people understand Facebook? I have a page on social media. I have more than 6,000 likes on my page, but less than 800 are people from my constituency. (A1AY, political party women's organiser, Ghana)*

Two key reasons account for this dominant view. One was the perception that many of their electorate may not be on *Facebook* because they were illiterate. This was particularly the case for women politicians representing rural communities. However, there were also other women politicians who did not agree with this claim. For example, in response to the idea that *Facebook* and other social media are only used by educated people, one Ghanaian female MP recounted an experience to illustrate the point that contrary to that common perception, 'rural' people were also on *Facebook*.

*I went to one of the villages around Tamale [...] and this young man comes up to me and says [...] 'oh honourable', I'm your friend on Facebook!' This is a village where the roof was flying off some of the huts but he had a smartphone, and TV or no TV, radio or no radio, he had this phone. (A1ZA)*

Another respondent gave a further example.

*Most of these people who are rural folks now have phones. My car mechanic who is an illiterate is on social media. He sends messages to me on WhatsApp, so what are they talking about? (B1AL, party chairperson, local government area, Nigeria)*

BIAL makes an important point that is worth clarifying. The recent evolution of digital technologies in most parts of Africa including Ghana and Nigeria, has resulted in an uptake of mobile phone usage among both the poor and rich (Paterson, 2013). This has significantly shaped how social media are accessed, as well as how political information is circulated among the public in African societies. According to Porter (2016), the proliferation of mobile phones may have narrowed the gap between those in urban and rural areas. While illiterate electorate may not be able to read (some) messages on social media platforms per se, they still use the sites for entertainment (at least). As BIAL notes above, some platforms like WhatsApp have particularly grown in popularity partly because they allow communication in local languages. Besides, some of the respondents argued that even if illiterate electorate are not on social media, the educated ones who are influence those who are not, thus making it still necessary to control the (political) message on social media. These different arguments suggest that determining the usefulness of social media for political communication based only on perceptions about their audiences may not be such a pragmatic approach. Therefore, while the effect of campaigning on social media sites may be unknown, some women politicians argued that it was still worth having an online presence, even if the only reason for doing so was because it is currently trendy.

Another reason most women politicians view social media campaigning as pointless is the belief that face to face communication is more effective as voters preferred physical interaction with their (potential) representatives. This view, which was more prevalent among women contesting at local positions, confirms other studies (e.g. Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018) who found that local politicians preferred face to face meetings with voters rather than media communication. Recall that in the previous chapter, I showed how the Ghanaian and Nigerian political culture are rooted in clientelism. This political custom is sustained through

a more personal relationship than social media can afford. Additionally, as vote buying is one of the key determinants for winning elections, women politicians employ campaign strategies which satisfy the needs of their electorate while also marketing themselves. For instance, some spoke of distributing branded school accessories to students for their voting parents to see. In the women's view, these other methods of reaching out to their electorate were more strategic than campaigning on *Facebook* where it was hard to tell whether they were gaining any relevant support or not.

Nonetheless, it was also the express view of some respondents that social media should not be regarded only for its ability (or lack of) to influence votes as other benefits could be derived which were equally politically important. One of these was making visible their political presence and voice. Another was exposure to the so called social media influencers who could become their allies, and lend their support to the women's campaigns through their platforms. Particularly for candidates seeking re-election or wanting to contest at a higher level, social media could be used to gauge their popularity. One of the female journalists who also manages social media accounts for politicians explained:

*Facebook is not about engaging people. It's about testing how good you are in the market. It's about knowing how people feel about you. (A2KO, Ghana)*

While uncertainty about *Facebook's* political potential still remains among (women) politicians (Ross and Bürger, 2014), a strategic use of the site can increase the social prestige of (women) politicians with the potential effect of gaining social media prominence which will in turn increase their value in the eyes of sponsors and within their parties. Again, it gives women politicians the opportunity to influence the political discourse that goes on social media in addition to ensuring that they have a more favourable online presence.



It is important to note that majority of women politicians who were sceptical about *Facebook* and other social media occupied lower political positions located within the local area. The relatively smaller constituency size they had thus enabled them to effectively employ face to face communication to ensure their political success. However, those contesting at the national level did say that they use social media.

*My campaign was more on social media than the traditional media because social media was totally under your control. For traditional media, you had to be either invited or you had to pay. (B1RE, female politician, Nigeria)*

The differing views exemplify the fact that (women) politicians' social media use was determined, to some extent, by the political level being contested (Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018). Other reasons women politicians gave for using social media related to increased accessibility and control over the message, reduced cost, speed, wider reach and ease with use compared with traditional media. For example, they could post a picture on *Facebook* without needing to say anything about it. Again, some said *Facebook* was useful because they could post (political) information without the risk of being perceived as too media conscious. In other words, social media was not too much 'in the face' as traditional media; audiences could choose to patronise their pages or not. Moreover, as with traditional media, those with prior experience in communication or media recognised the value of a (social) media presence and consequently were more strategic in how they used the sites. This finding is similar to other studies like Ross and Bürger (2014) who report that politicians with some media or public relations experience more readily adopted social media.

Among women politicians who said they were on *Facebook*, the dominant usage was mainly for disseminating information about their political activities. In this sense, they regarded

social media in the same way as traditional media; as channels for communicating political information rather than engaging with (potential) voters. This particular finding, which is very similar to politicians' usual online practices as found by several studies (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; Ross and Bürger, 2014) resonates with van Aelts and Walgrave's (2017) 'arena function', only that in this case, it applies to social media rather than traditional media.

Despite the fact that several of the women said they were active on *Facebook*, a closer examination on the site showed a disconnect between what they said and what they actually did as illustrated in Table 8.1. Many who said they posted often hardly had any posts at all. In some cases, women politicians' use of *Facebook* was a reactive rather than proactive measure. For example, two of the women said they had been forced to turn to social media because they had been sabotaged by mainstream media in that they either could not gain access for their events or their representation had been unusually negative, in which case they assumed their opponents were behind it. For them, *Facebook* had become useful as an alternative means of getting the (right) information out to the public.

Although *Facebook*, like other social media do not present the same resource and access challenges as traditional media, women politicians still noted some associated hindrances. These included lack of technical knowhow in operating the site, time and financial constraints.

*I didn't have time to be posting. I had somebody who was managing my Facebook account. I'd tell her what I want and she would put it on Facebook. I didn't even know what Twitter was. It's a new thing for me and I'm learning it as well. I'm fast now. (A1NA, female politician, Ghana)*

The lack of knowledge in the different social media platforms available and their affordances was a major hindrance to women politicians' use of the sites in their political communication. To a large extent, this was a problem more for older than younger respondents, confirming studies that have found similar usage difficulties with older people (Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018). Nonetheless, research in *Facebook* use in African countries also points to gendered inequalities in favour of men (Kemp, 2018). Apart from serving as a deterrent for usage, ignorance of what each platform allows and how their functionalities can best be utilised for political purposes considerably determined the sort of online persona the women project to the public (Kreiss et al, 2018). As will be seen below, women politicians who lacked technical knowledge about social media sites or were ambivalent about their use constructed personas that did not seem to favourably portray them as viable political actors.

Overall, women politicians' *Facebook* visibility during the one month campaign period before the general election was determined by a number of factors. Key among these were perceptions about the sites' political value to their campaign, political function and the advantages they offered relative to traditional media.

### **8.2.2 Women politicians' self-representation on *Facebook*: analysis of cover pages**

In this section, I analyse the cover pages<sup>10</sup> of the 17 women politicians who had accounts on *Facebook* to identify the sort of meaning potentials that can be derived by viewers. The analysis is done through an MCDA framework (see Table 9.2 below) based on *representational*, *interactive* and *compositional* meanings as proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006). Because of the theoretical underpinnings of MCDA as mentioned in

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<sup>10</sup> All images were taken from women politicians' *Facebook* account

Chapter 4, the analysis proceeds on the assumption that women politicians draw on these three categories to make considered choices about their cover pages to project particular personas to the viewer. Unlike the MCDA conducted in Chapter 7, there is a visual dominance in the analysis in this chapter due to the cover pages being more oriented towards the visual rather than the textual. Three main themes were observed from the sample namely the *Self-personalised Politician*, the *Populist Politician* and the *Self-effacing Politician*. In what follows, I discuss these themes, drawing parallels (or the lack thereof) with the women's representation in press and radio news and their views about *Facebook* representations as expressed in the interviews.

**Table 9.3** Analytical Guide for *Facebook* Profile Cover Pages

Main Semiotic Category	Criteria for Analysing Women Politicians' <i>Facebook</i> Cover Pages	
<b>Representational</b>		
	Presence	Is she excluded or included in image?
		Is she individualisation or collectivised (paired with someone or part of a group)?
		If collectivised, is she lost in the image or visible?
	Activity	Is she shown in motion (whole body, hands or arms) or passive?
	Setting	What dress is she wearing? What is in the background? Presence of symbols (patriotic, religious, etc.)? What do they symbolise?
<b>Interactive</b>		
	Distance (Size of frame)	Close up, medium shot or long shot?
	Contact (Gaze)	Direct gaze at viewer (demand) or gazing away from viewer (offer)?
	Point of View	Vertical angle (if viewer looks up, looks down or is at eye level) Horizontal angle (frontal, side or back view)
<b>Compositional Meaning</b>		
	Informational value	Where is her image positioned on the cover page: left or right; top or bottom? Is there any written text? If so, where is it placed, what does it say and what role does it play in relation to the image?
	Framing	Are elements of the cover page disconnected or connected to each other?
	Salience	What dominates on the page? Is she made salient on the cover page? If so, through size, colour or tonal contrast?

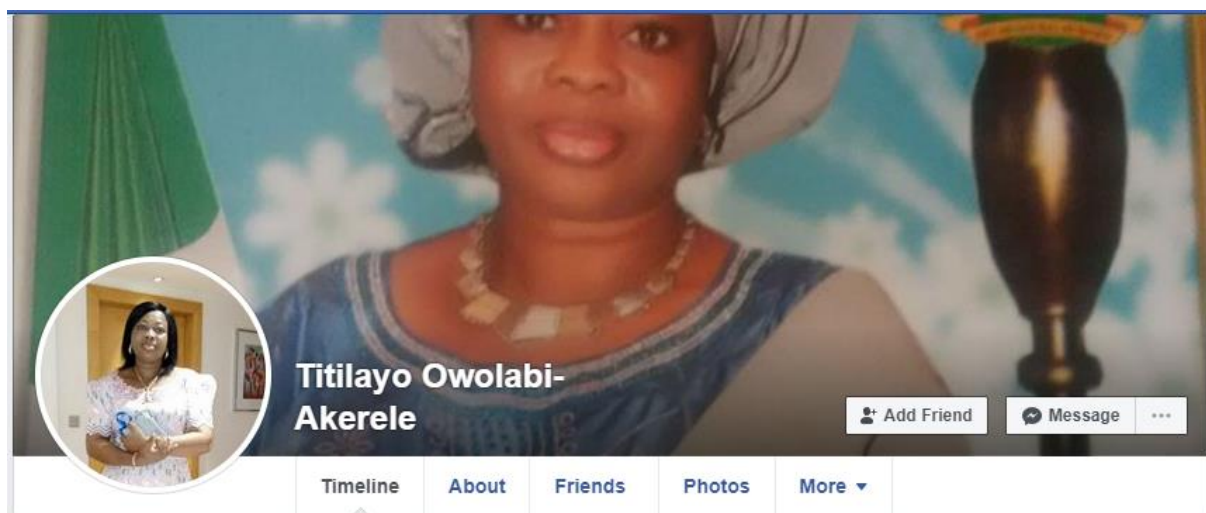
### **The Self-personalised Politician**

In line with current trends towards personalisation in political communication (van Aelst et al., 2011) and online image impression management (Metz et al., 2019), the 7 women politicians whose cover pages fall in this set present themselves as individual politicians, focusing viewer attention solely on themselves. Individualisation is used as a strategy to establish their personal authority and competence. Given that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are generally considered incompetent or proxies for other astute sponsors,

individualisation seems useful in establishing their political independence. However, not all managed to depict their personal capabilities effectively as choices in pose, gaze, clothing and layout either reinforced or undermined the self-personalisation.

Among the 7 cover pages, the general layout included an image, while some women used text of varying degrees of length and salience. The prominence of the image fell along a spectrum of total dominance to actual self-marginalisation where the female politician could hardly be seen in her own cover page. Of the 7 cover pages, 2 used images which totally dominated the page (e.g. Figure 9.2), 1 which downsized the image almost to obscurity (e.g. 9.3) and 4 that placed the image in (somewhat) equal importance to text (e.g. Figure 9.4).

**Figure 9.2** Facebook cover page 1



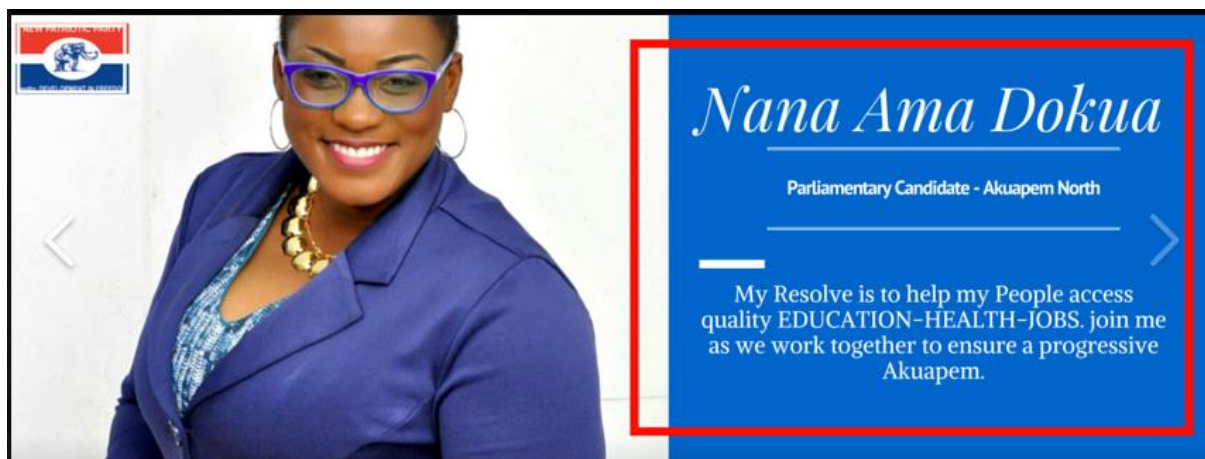
**Figure 9.3** Facebook cover page 2**Figure 9.4** Facebook cover page 3

Figure 9.2 exemplifies 2 of the cover pages in which imagery was used without much text except the name. Viewers who do not already know the political status of these women will therefore struggle to determine this based on their cover pages alone. The main images in both cover pages employ medium shots to further draw attention to their physical attributes while also symbolically creating some closeness with the viewer. In both images, the women enact a ‘demand’ gaze (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), looking directly at the viewer to invite him/her into a more personalised interaction. There is a hint of a smile on their faces,

which according to some scholars (e.g. Boomgaarden et al, 2016) elicits favourable viewer evaluation. However, it has also been suggested that voters who do not have strong partisan views are much influenced by candidates' images when making voting decisions.

Consequently, viewers with prior knowledge of these female politicians and their campaigns and who belong to their party are likely to interpret their smiling faces as affability.

Nonetheless, in the absence of any text to anchor meaning, interpretations are left open which could easily lead to negative or even sexist evaluations. More likely, for a male viewer, the image of a beautiful woman will activate stereotypical ideas rooted in a visual tradition that has historically depicted women as sex objects (Gill, 2008; 2007). The likelihood of the images in both cover pages being read as that of women, not of political actors, is reinforced by their informal background.

Further, both images depict settings that will not usually be associated with politics. For example, all the standard props that can typically be seen in images of politicians such as a podium, flag, iconic monument or other identifiable politicians (Grace and Bucy, 2009) were all missing in these 2 cover pages. Instead, the backgrounds either showed (what appears to be) a skyline in one and a private house in another which added to the absence of political cues in the images. The small profile pictures in the inset also complement the informality of the setting as they both women without any hint of politics against the background of a private home. Together with the absence of text and any political symbols to establish their political identity, the representational choices employed in these two cover pages draw attention to the women's individuality as well as femininity, which may serve to reinforce sexist ideas about women so deeply rooted in the socio-cultural contexts of the two countries as shown in Chapters 7 and 8.



In the case of 9.3, the female politician's near self-marginalisation is further enhanced by the medium shot, the blurred quality of the image, the fact that her hair seems unkempt, and the overly dominant party symbol of the red cockerel which has been so enlarged to the point of being out of focus. Thus, although she appears in the cover page, and her name is clearly referenced, the choices made in constructing the page leave the viewer with very little information about her professional expertise to engender trust in her political competency. Scholars observe that where candidates are unknown, voters rely on image impressions and gender stereotypes to make voting decisions (Hopmann et al., 2010; Banwart, 2010). In this case, viewers to this *Facebook* page including potential voters and sponsors who may not already know her will have no inclination of her political ambitions to contest a parliamentary seat. The lack of professionalism characterising her self-representation is also likely to undermine any attempt to encode her professional competence.

In contrast to Figures 9.2 and 9.3, there were 4 cover pages, exemplified by Figure 9.4, in which image and text are utilised in the self-personalisation. In all 4 cover pages, text is used to establish (political) identity, campaign message and the political level being contested. Additionally, while individuality seems to be the aim, alignment with their parties is conveyed through the use of party symbols, and commonly, the distribution and salience of party colours in all the cover pages except one. In Figure 9.4 for example, we see this female politician utilising her party colours of blue, red and white in her outfit as well as the composition of the cover page in an interesting mix that also communicates a fun-loving personality. Unlike the traditional attire that was common among all women politicians in the entire corpus, which they also used to lay claim to their cultural heritage, Nana Ama Dokua chooses a business outfit that conveys professionalism. Given that this is the only picture where she is bespectacled, it can be assumed that the glasses play an aesthetic rather

than functional role in the image. According to Barthes (1987), glasses communicate a scrutinising impression. In this case, however, it seems to reinforce the sense of formality derived from the business suit, while also moderating the playfulness that could be construed from her blue frame and her tilted pose. This seems the more likely interpretation when we think of the fact that both Machin and Mayr (2012) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) argue that all contextual elements should be considered when interpreting visual meaning.

Across the 4 cover pages exemplified by Figure 9.4, choices in outfit, pose, colour scheme, tone, framing and font styles are employed to encode different political values as well as personality traits. In the case of Nana Ama Dokua, these choices create a mix of competence, youthfulness and vibrancy that is missing in the other cover pages which represent more elderly women. The frontal view she is depicted in signifies frankness, a laying bare of the soul so to speak (Barthes, 1987), to create the impression that she has nothing to hide. In the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts where politicians are largely viewed as corrupt, this helps to foreground integrity while also highlighting the attribute of honesty often associated with female politicians (Dolan, 2010). The equal division of the page into image and text also suggests intentionality in the framing, emphasising the professional look of the page. The placement of image and text creates an informational structure where her image is positioned as the 'given' while the textual information on the right of the page is presented as 'new' information. In this sense, Nana Ama Dokua symbolically claims familiarity with the viewer as a strategic way of reinforcing the intimacy that the close up shot produces. Thus, through her self-representation, Nana Ama Dokua illustrates the capacity of visuals to convey personalised messages (Parry, 2015), and to elicit an imagined intimacy between candidates and voters (McGregor, 2018).

The overall impression created by the 4 cover pages is that of intentionality and professionalism, which helps to communicate political independence. This sense of professionalism is strengthened by the type of posts on the accounts. With the exception of one, all the three other women with professionalised cover pages also posted content that was professional (van Santen and van Zoonen, 2010; Metz et al., 2019). That is, the information contained in their posts related to updates about their political activities.

Self-personalisation is a political tactic that helps politicians to distance themselves from their parties in order to establish their independent political capability (McGregor, 2018; Metz et al., 2019). In the case of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians, this may be a good strategy for overcoming the stereotypical notion that women are politically incompetent. By choosing to self-personalise, women politicians in this set sought to establish their individuality in ways that emphasised their more favourable attributes although this was done with varying degrees of success. If establishing the women's political competence was (part of) the goal in the self-personalisation, then the cover pages represented by Figures 9.2 and 9.3 were unsuccessful due to the self-representational choices. These examples stress the need for women politicians to include political cues such as patriotic symbols and other identifiable political elements in their self-representation to convey a sense of political skilfulness (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). Comparatively, the 4 other cover pages illustrated by Figure 9.4 seemed to have done a better job of showing viewers that the women were competence political actors.

## The Populist Politician

The 5 cover pages in this set stand in contrast to the previous set. Instead of individualisation, women politicians represented here evoke a sense of mass appeal and ordinary that underpins a populist frame (Grabe and Bucy, 2009) through the deployment of large, approving supporters (e.g. Figure 9.5) or interaction with different crowds (e.g. Figure 9.6). Informality is a strong theme that runs through almost all the cover pages, achieved through clothing and use of ordinary people. The use of text categorises the 5 cover pages into those without (2) and those with text (3).

**Figure 9.5** Facebook cover page 4



**Figure 9.6** Facebook cover page 5



Figure 9.5 is an example of the cover pages where the visual forms the entirety of the self-representation. Although part of a large crowd, there is still no doubt that the female politician commands the viewer's attention. Her dominance in the image is achieved through positioning, gesture, outfit and interestingly, her lighter skin colour. These choices work to foreground her in the crowd. Like in the other 4 cover pages, the lack of individuality does not deprive the opportunity to make the female politician salient in the image. Her central location in the image reflects her power in the crowd while also setting her up as the metaphorical centre that holds the group together. This interpretation is emphasised by her raised arms which form a vector that is distinct from the other raised arms in the crowd. The fact that other people uphold her raised arms highlights her role as the real and symbolic centre of support of the group. Thus, her posture and centralisation create a more stable pose that conforms to the idea that she is the metaphorical 'unifier' of the group. Although the picture is shot in a high camera angle, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggests a demotion in the eyes of the viewer, I argue here that it rather allows us to see the extent of her popularity as the nature of the shot gives the impression that her support base is too large to be captured by the camera.

In many ways, the female politician is depicted as an integral part of the group while at the same time, being made to stand out from it as a unique individual. This interplay of belongingness versus uniqueness is constructed prominently through clothing. Her headgear is similar to others worn by some of the women in the crowd, and yet, its colour as well as her dress distinguishes her. These two physical elements reflect the colours and symbol of the Ghanaian flag: red, gold and green with a black star. As the national flag has such a strong symbolic value of 'Ghanaianness' and nationhood, the female politician appropriates its symbolism to convey her strong nationalist position as well as her claim to being a 'real' Ghanaian, as her mixed parenthood had sometimes been used against her; she is the daughter of the first president of Ghana and an Egyptian woman. Thus, her choice of attire in a self-representational image performs a multi-layered function of dismantling doubts about her authenticity as a Ghanaian, while also communicating not only her strong nationalist values but also allusions to her very distinguished political heritage.

Figure 9.6 typifies the other 3 cover pages in this theme which combined image with text. Although these are unified by the populist representation and the use of text, there are some slight differences which communicate individual values and therefore set them apart from each other. For instance, in the other two cover pages, the women used their names to establish their identity, while in Figure 9.6, the female politician omitted this element, although it can also be said that her numerous visual representation in the collage more than compensates for this lack. Again, while the women in the other two cover pages appeared in traditional wear, she is seen here in a mix of traditional, casual and business attire to draw attention to the many hats she wears as an MP: an individual but also as a community leader and a legislator. This theme of multiplicity of roles not only serves to communicate her

flexibility and skill as a politician in combining all these roles, but also accentuates certain personal attributes such as compassion and political leadership.

Grabe and Bucy (2009, p.104) state that politicians portray themselves as “warm and benevolent personalities who should be loved and adored by voters” through associations with social categories like children, elderly people and ethnic communities. They also note that nonverbal gestures such as physical embraces convey compassion. In some of the images in the collage, we see the female politician in Figure 9.6 holding or talking to children, interacting with a number of smiling elderly people, and in communities that depict a rural setting. As the different images in the collage portray different aspects of her personality, size is used to communicate importance while framing sets the boundaries of each visual representation to highlight the different activities represented in each image. For example, we see her self-personalisation in two images where she is pictured alone, and where she is seen smiling to encode attractiveness and likeability (Verser and Wicks, 2006). The other dominant images draw on the compassion theme. It seems therefore that the key personal traits she wants to highlight are her political independence, popularity and compassion.

The text that runs across the collage performs the dual function of anchoring the key message ‘development through communal effort’ that seems to be encoded in the various visual representations, while also indexing her commitment to her party; the colours black, red, white and green reflect her party colours. The fact that she is often pictured looking away from the camera both minimises the staged nature of the images while also encouraging the viewer to ‘witness’ her hard work and political connections. In all, the use of text and the choice of a variety of images highlight different aspects of her role and personality. These

representational choices work together to project the image of an adroit politician who easily connects with her constituents, and who seeks to partner with them to develop the constituency.

Women politicians represented in this theme deployed text and image to project themselves as populist politician by encoding populist frames of mass appeal, ordinariness and compassion. Through clothing, colour, size, pose and camera angles, the women foregrounded different aspects of their projected personas which, while conforming to an overall theme, also served to distinguish them from each other. Unlike the cover pages in the previous theme, these choices were made to construct online personas that prioritised a populist agenda over other self-personalisation strategies. This sort of self-representation conforms to the ‘ubuntu spirit’ or strong sense of community that is pervasive in African societies (Tomaselli, 2003; Shaw, 2009; Ngomba, 2012)

### **The Self-effacing Politician**

This last set comprises 5 cover pages representing women politicians who chose to elevate other aspects of their roles rather than focus on themselves as individual candidates. In these cover pages, the women used their party leaders (e.g. Figure 9.7), their political function (e.g. Figure 9.8) or their campaign message (e.g. Figure 9.9) to lay claim to their legitimacy as political actors.



**Figure 9.7** Facebook cover page 6



**Figure 9.8** Facebook cover page 7



**Figure 9.9** Facebook cover page 8



What is interesting is the fact that the 5 women politicians in this set choose to self-represent in ways that seem to conform to traditional gender expectations that women should neither be seen nor heard. In choosing cover pages that physically and symbolically erased their presence, these 5 women politicians were projecting the idea that they were not important as the first thing that stands out in their cover pages is their visual and textual absence.

In Figure 9.7, the female politician completely defers to her party leader and his wife, both presented as informational cues through a medium shot. They seem to be on a campaign tour as both wear outfits embossed with the party symbol. In the background, we can see the feet of other people but these are rendered faceless and therefore insignificant. As the cover page focuses on the party leader and his wife, both unnamed but very recognisable political figures in Ghana, the impression created through this self-representation is that of a female politician who honours her leader. This interpretation is in line with cultural norms which prescribe that 'subjects' give reverence to their leaders. In the case of a man, this may have been likely read in his favour as being respectful, but here, because this is a female politician deferring to her party leader, it is more likely that this gesture would be contextualised within gender norms

and interpreted as her lack of assertiveness. In this case, we see how gendered evaluations of politicians often work in male politicians' favour even when the same action is performed.

It must be noted that this female politician contested for a deputy women's organiser role in her party which may explain why she thought it pragmatic to feature the 'power couple' prominently on her cover page. In one of the other cover pages in this set, another female politician who contested as a vice presidential candidate also self-represented in similar fashion by deferring to her party leader. In the case of this second female politician, the self-effacing strategy seems more understandable given that it is only through the electoral success of the party leader that she can also become vice president. Nonetheless, a self-effacing self-representation is limiting in that it does not give the viewer much information about the female politician as an individual candidate. In the case of these two female politicians who were campaigning for the positions of women's organiser and vice president respectively, such a strategy could have still delivered an electoral win, however, for other positions which require that women politicians contest as individual candidates, it would be necessary to emphasise their individuality in ways that strongly establish their independence and competence.

Figure 9.8, on the other hand, presents a slightly different picture where the female politician chooses to depict the inside workings of a parliamentary setting. As a former speaker of a Nigerian State House of Assembly before contesting for a senatorial seat, it makes sense that she would use this to foreground her political achievement. Thus, this female politician uses her most distinguishing political achievement to launch another political contest for a senatorial seat. Those who may not have this prior knowledge of her political history may

find it difficult making the link between the parliamentary setting and her, particularly as she is not visible in the image; the speakers' seat appears to be occupied by a man rather than her. In this sense, the effect of her display of political achievement is (somewhat) undermined by her self-erasure in the cover image.

Figure 9.9 is even more telling because this is the cover page of the Ghanaian female presidential candidate, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings<sup>11</sup>. Like the other 4 represented in this theme, she is doubly backgrounded from the main image in the cover page through the omission of textual and visual representation, although her profile picture adjacent to the cover image shows her in a close shot. Nonetheless, the cover page identifies the party logo and symbol, as well as her key campaign message, much like the other cover pages in the theme. The centrality of the two little girls and the message they hold establishes their salience while simultaneously referencing Nana Konadu's many years' work as a women's and child advocate. In Chapter 7 (Section 6.4), I showed how she had deployed the 'woman first' frame in her own campaign. While her self-representation on *Facebook* foregrounds her party and her political motivation, the high level of women's marginalisation through socio-cultural norms in the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts necessitated that she project herself in ways that opposed rather than embodied gender norms.

In contexts where feminine attributes are valued, such an emphasis on children as depicted in Nana Konadu's cover page may have worked in her favour (Dolan, 2005). Besides, other

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<sup>11</sup> At the time of research, Nana Konadu had two official *Facebook* pages. One seemed to be her general page while the other appeared to have been created for her presidential campaign per its name. The cover page analysed here was taken from her campaign page, which prior to the final submission of this thesis, has been deleted.

contextual factors also determine whether women politicians' emphasis on gender stereotypes would yield favourable public evaluations. For instance, in the case of the former Liberian female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, her deployment of the motherhood frame during her first presidential contest served her well as at the time, Liberia was recovering from the ravages of war and therefore needed a leader to nurture the country back to 'good health'. However, this circumstance was not present in Ghana for Nana Konadu to base her campaign on.

The complexity of these dynamics highlight the difficulties women politicians have in deciding how to project themselves effectively to the electorate, and the higher likelihood they face in getting it wrong. In order to get it right, women politicians need to strike a delicate balance in their self-representation (Lawrence and Rose, 2010). Because political competence is heavily inscribed in masculinity, it is harder for women politicians to project themselves as embodying these masculinised political values and skills, as their gender locates them outside these skillsets. Therefore, by virtue of their gender, women politicians often face more complex difficulties in determining how best to project themselves to the electorate.

## **Conclusion**

Scholars (e.g. Ross, 2016) have suggested that social media can be used to offset the marginalisation and negative portrayal that woman politicians face in mainstream media. Especially for women politicians in smaller parties and those in lower positions who are often ignored by the media, it has been suggested that social media may level the playing field for politicians (Ross and Bürger, 2014). Given the growing popularity of social media as sites of

political deliberation, and the recent uptake of online campaigning (Kreiss et al., 2018), it is important to examine the extent to which this claim is true. Consequently, in this chapter, I investigated the degree to which and how Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians used *Facebook* during the one month campaign period before the elections in the respective countries.

Through analysis of a sample of 28 women politicians, I have shown that at the time of the 2015 Nigerian and 2016 Ghanaian elections, social media platforms like *Facebook* were generally not prioritised in the women's campaign strategies. The lack of frequency in posting as presented in Table 9.1, in addition to the absence of almost half of the women in the sample confirms this claim. In this respect, women politicians' approach to *Facebook* did not differ considerably from that of mainstream media in the sense that in both cases, majority did not believe that their presence and voice will have any impact on voting decisions. This focus on votes rather than a broader outlook that also considers other benefits such as appealing to volunteers and sponsors while also building a broader support base across a dispersed group of citizens (Kreiss et al, 2018) reflects the attitude of most women politicians interviewed.

Whereas with traditional media, women politicians faced structural challenges associated with the political and media culture, their behaviour on *Facebook* was mediated by a combination of individual and structural obstacles. On an individual level, lack of technical knowledge in how the site works, political function, scepticism about the political potential of *Facebook* and the perceived advantages it offered all impacted on how women politicians used the site. On a structural level, challenges with funding prevented some from employing

‘professionals’ to expertly manage their accounts. In this regard, *Facebook*, like other social media sites, served to further entrench rather than neutralise existing socio-economic gender inequalities and power relations (Wasserman, 2011; Dwyer and Molony, 2019) in Ghanaian and Nigerian traditional media and politics.

Further, analysis of cover pages at the individual level demonstrated that only a few of the women adopted self-representational strategies that appeared to counter the stereotypical idea that women were politically incompetent. These were generally younger women politicians thus lending some credence to the idea that social media are used more by younger than older people (Larsson and Skogerbø, 2018). In this sense, age may be a factor in how (women) politicians project themselves on *Facebook*. However, this particular finding must be taken with caution given the modest sample analysed here and the fact that two of the women who used *Facebook* very regularly were older. The fact that majority of the women used cover pages that limited their own presence and voice was a surprising finding given that the women controlled these self-representational choices that resulted in their self-effacing portrayals. This particular result is important as it suggests that women politicians’ self-representation may not necessarily contest or even neutralise that of their representation in traditional media.

A number of reasons may account for this self-effacement. The first is that these cover pages may have been composed without any professional help at the time. This seems plausible given the fact that many of the women complained of lack of funding in addition to their general ambivalence towards *Facebook* campaigning. Grabe and Bucy (2009) argue that visual representations encode tacit cues which need to be expertly composed in order to

convey the intended message. In this sense, visual images that convey preferred impressions are harder to compose than textual messages. Without some kind of professional guidance, there is a higher likelihood for women politicians to get it wrong as I have shown above. Second, it is possible that the women in this sample simply did not give much care to how they were projecting themselves through their cover pages. This is based on what women politicians said in the interviews that social media at the time of election were not as popular. Thus, as has been found in previous studies, (women) politicians' use of social media is also mediated by perceptions of their popularity (Kreiss et al., 2018). As I mentioned earlier, a recent check on the accounts of these 24 women showed that many of them have accounts and post regularly about especially their political activities. This suggests an uptake of online political communication among Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians in line with global trends.

Overall, with a few exceptions, it seems that women politicians' self-representation through their cover pages on *Facebook* during the stipulated timeframe generally did not suggest a strategic use of the site to enhance their political ambitions. The general ambivalence towards *Facebook* as articulated by many of the women in the interviews was strongly reflected in the overall lack of professional care in their self-representation. The findings revealed here imply that although social media may not present the same gatekeeping and other access challenges to women politicians as traditional media, it does not necessarily mean that the women would utilise the sites proactively. This claim however, may need further interrogation given the modest sample represented in this chapter. Nonetheless, the findings have not only enriched our understandings of whether and how women politicians use social media (or not) in their political communication strategies but also offer avenues for further exploration.



## CHAPTER 10| CONCLUSION

In December 2015, I began this study with the main objective of investigating the ways in which women politicians are represented in Ghanaian and Nigerian national media. My research agenda was motivated by the desire to explain how contextual factors relating to media and political culture as well as the socio-cultural environment shape women politicians' portrayal in media content. Part of the reason for doing this study was borne out of my curiosity to find out if the same level of vitriolic coverage that Hillary Clinton and other women politicians received in the media was also present in Ghana, my home country. Earlier in April 2015, Hillary Clinton had announced her second attempt at the US presidency, while in Ghana, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings was also preparing to announce her second bid for the presidency, having failed to file her nomination papers in time for the previous election in 2012. Some parallels could be made between Hillary Clinton and Nana Konadu Rawlings. Both were previous First Ladies and both were contesting the presidency in their countries after having failed the first time, although in Nana Konadu's case, she was the first female presidential candidate. The similarities with her American counterpart had earned Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings the name 'Africa's Hillary Clinton' by *The Telegraph* (Freeman and France-Presse, 2016).

During the course of this study, a few more women have joined the league of women politicians, some at the highest level of leadership. These include New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in 2017, Ethiopia's president Sahle-Work Zewde in 2018, and UK's Prime Minister Theresa May in 2016. While Hillary Clinton was unsuccessful in becoming US' president, she seems to have opened the door for more women in America not just to enter

politics but to contest the presidency. Currently, there are four female US presidential candidates while the US congress has seen a record number of 40 newly elected women.

Despite these historic developments, media coverage of women politicians still remains considerably sexist to the extent that some journalists are calling it out themselves (e.g. Henry, 2018). While this study does not account for these Western-based examples nor does it focus on only women politicians at the executive level of political leadership, the examples nonetheless show the present prominence of women in politics, and the topical value of this study to the ongoing spectacle of gendered mediation which has increasingly interested particularly feminist scholars in recent years.

In light of the above, this thesis set out to examine three fundamental issues with regard to Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media representations. These are to 1) understand how women politicians are constructed in press and radio news, 2) identify the (range of) factors that contribute to the production of these constructions, and 3) outline how the women present themselves to the voting public on social media sites like *Facebook*.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss my key empirical findings, thematically structured along the three research questions that this thesis addresses. Following this, I present the thesis' limitations, suggesting avenues for further research inquiry. Next, I outline the core contributions of this thesis at the empirical, methodological and theoretical levels. The chapter ends with closing reflections on what policy interventions are needed to improve the state of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media representations.

## **10.1 Key Findings from Research questions**

In the preceding empirical chapters, I presented the findings that emerged from each research question. To avoid repeating these, in this section, I only focus on the key findings and their significance to scholarship on women politicians' media representations.

### **10.1.1 Construction of women politicians in media coverage**

In this thesis, I have argued that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians' media representations are mediated by individual, institutional and socio-cultural factors. Further, I have demonstrated that the women's ability to influence their portrayal in the media is considerably reduced by a patriarchal political and media culture. This culture is enabled by deeply entrenched gender norms which are embedded in the socio-cultural milieu within which political and media institutions are located. These two key findings bring a more nuanced understanding of how the media portray women politicians, while also providing a multi-layered dimension to the phenomenon.

Much of the literature on women politicians' media coverage points to gender biases manifested through such features as trivialisation, objectification and commodification among others (Fountaine and McGregor, 2002; Walsh, 2015; Ross, 2017). However, in Chapters 6 and 7, I demonstrated that in contrast to much Western-based research, media reports on Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians are mainly issue-based, confirming studies from other African countries which also made the same conclusions (Kasoma, 2014; Ngomba, 2014). This is not to say that the media do not engage in any form of gendered reporting. On the contrary. While patterns of quantitative and qualitative representations of women politicians from the data were generally mixed, I also noted clear examples of

gendered coverage that reflected socio-cultural constructions of women in Ghanaian and Nigerian societies. This was made clear principally through the MCDA of selected press articles. Based on this finding, I agree with other media scholars (Fairclough, 1989) that some gendered meanings are too overt to be identified through a single-mode analysis such as content analysis. Therefore, I argue that a multimodal analysis provides a deeper level of interrogation of women politicians' media coverage, which I suggest, enriches scholarly understandings of the qualitative and quantitative representations.

Furthermore, I demonstrated that the type of media organisation significantly shapes the kind of coverage women politicians receive in the news media. This conclusion is based on the differential portrayal by state and private media, particularly through the individual cases of symbolic erasure of the two female presidential candidates - Ghana's Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings from radio news and Nigeria's Remi Sonaiya from press news. To this end, I suggest that commercially-driven media may be more gendered in their portrayal of women politicians than state-owned or public service media.

One commonality that emerged irrespective of type of media organisation was a consistent focus on a few powerful politicians to the exclusion of majority of ordinary politicians, most of whom were women. I argued that this is consistent with claims in political communication research that political function interacts with news production routines to influence journalistic preference for politicians in high ranking positions (Bennett, 1990, 2011; Vos, 2014; Vos and van Aelst, 2018). Further, in Chapter 6, I showed evidence of 'individualisation' (van Aelst et al., 2011) as both press and radio news focused largely on the presidential candidates of the two main parties in Ghana (John Mahama and Nana Addo

Akuffo Addo) and Nigeria (Mohammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan). Additionally, Nigerian newspapers also focused attention on the gubernatorial candidates of these same two dominant parties, especially those in Lagos. As these newspapers are headquartered in this city, this example illustrates the impact of proximity as a news value in addition to other news imperatives.

Taken together, I argue that the frequency and nature of visibility of women politicians in media content are shaped by type of media organisation and political function of politicians, both of which interact in complex ways with other factors to produce a multi-layered, constructed identity of women politicians in news media.

### **10.1.2 Negotiating power and control in political news production**

Political news content is mediated by several behind-the-scenes factors not visible from a content analysis. To assess these factors and the ways in which they shape news on women politicians, I applied an integrated framework amalgamated from Mediatisation of politics, Hierarchy of Influence model and Feminist media theory to analyse 49 semi-structured interviews of women politicians, news workers and civil society experts in Ghana and Nigeria. I focused on the individual, institutional and socio-cultural influences as, per the literature, these were the most relevant to my particular context. In doing this, I adopted a dual approach which analysed the three kinds of influences from the perspectives of both women politicians and journalists. This proved very useful as the findings highlighted the power struggle or so called ‘tango’ between the two groups of people in political news production, and the ways in which their interaction shaped the selection and content. Through this dual approach, I argued that at the Individual level, the frequency and nature of media

visibility was determined by a woman politician's attitude towards the media conditioned by understanding of the media's value to their political goals, type and range of networks they have, political function, and financial capacity.

On the whole, I suggested that Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians generally do not want to be in the news due to scepticism about the benefits of media visibility to their political goals, and perceptions about the media's bias against women. The problem with women politicians' self-censoring towards the media is that it perpetuates a male norm of politics. Media visibility for women politicians is crucial because it dismantles the general notion that women are not competent enough to be in politics as was shown in Chapter 7. It is important for women politicians to be seen as part of the political discourse, to speak for themselves rather than the norm of being spoken for. Among other things, this will encourage more women to be interested in politics. Again, as was shown in Chapter 8, in this era of presentation politics (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996), being seen in the media communicates a sense of action to their constituents. Therefore, women politicians' avoidance of the media may not be a strategic political communication approach that will augur well for the general representation of women in politics in the long term.

On the other hand, I also showed that when women politicians appreciate the role and increasing importance of the media in politics, they consciously work to integrate the media into their political communication strategies. They learn to adapt to news media logic, thereby opening more doors of opportunity to media visibility. They are also in a more advantageous position to be recruited as sources on news stories as they make themselves more available to journalists. To this end, I argue that one key way of addressing

marginalisation and stereotypical depiction of women politicians in news media is by educating the women about of the political benefits of media visibility, and encouraging them to take advantage of the media opportunities they encounter.

Further, I argued that a key factor that works in women politicians' favour is if they have a wide range of networks, particularly among news workers. Friendship with journalists or media owners generally provide favourable coverage (Wolfsfeld, 1997; Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; 2014) while the lack of it results in a (more) adversarial posture. I suggested that this is due in part to the strong political parallelism between politics and media, and the clientelist culture embedded in both institutions. Moreover, I suggested that the importance of a wide network does not only relate to those in the media. If a woman politician has a big social capital such as a large following on social media or is known for being controversial, she gains newsworthiness and almost certainly attracts media attention as a news maker. Therefore, I argued that a wide network of allies among journalists and within the public are chief determinants of news coverage.

I have also argued that the political function of a politician is important to gaining media visibility but not just in relation to the position held or the professional expertise. The level at which a politician campaigns also determines whether they see media visibility as necessary or not. I suggested that politicians who contest at the local government level often privilege traditional methods of campaigning because the smaller local area is easy to cover physically. Such politicians, I argue, conceive media visibility as unnecessary to their political goals. However, those competing at a higher level like parliamentarians and senators need to be visible in the media because they provide a more cost effective way of reaching a wider

audience with relatively minimal effort. Therefore, I agree that politicians value media visibility for its functional importance (van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017).

Additionally, I posited that the financial capacity of politicians shapes how they are covered in political news. The general lack of funding for most media outlets has enabled a clientelist culture (Mfumbusa, 2010) where (favourable) coverage can actually be bought. Individual journalists can accept per diems and other gifts from politicians in exchange for coverage in the ‘cash for coverage’ system (Ristow, 2010; Yusha’u, 2018; Sampaio-Dias, 2019). In this regard, I argued that women politicians’ financial capacity works on a number of levels. It facilitates the cultivation of friendships among journalists through informal gifts or meet ups. It also assists in obtaining coverage when the other factors of political function or networks fail to work in their favour. I argue that this culture of paying for coverage as a means of gaining media coverage is a contextually-driven phenomenon that is yet to be captured in the mediatization literature.

At the institutional level, I argued that news media logic and political logic both matter and complement each other (Vos and van Aelst, 2018) to determine news selection and coverage of women politicians. I explained that the news value of ‘conflict’ (Harcup and O’Neill, 2001; 2017) can sometimes rank as highly as ‘power elite’ or the political function of politicians depending on the type of media organisation. Importantly, I noted that news media logic is not homogenous but shaped by ownership structure and ideology of media outlets. Because media and politics are both dominated by men, their institutional logics also favour men over women. Therefore, I argued that in enforcing or considering these logics in the



production of political news, women politicians are disadvantaged in the first instance because they are women.

Socio-cultural factors are crucial in this thesis because of the gender dimension of the research agenda. Apart from the fact that both institutions of media and politics are gendered, I have argued that cultural gender norms do make a difference in political news coverage although this is not something that has been fully captured in the mediation literature. I have posited that perceptions of women as unsuitable political actors because they are not bold, assertive or willing sources serve as sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit evaluations from journalists. Particularly in Nigeria, this is partly informed by a political culture that allows powerful (male) politicians or ‘godfathers’ to endorse women for political positions in their ‘safe’ zones thus creating the impression that those women would not have become politicians but for cronyism. Integrating feminist media theory with the Hierarchy of Influence model in the analytical framework has been particularly useful in making visible the cultural implication of Mediatisation of politics. These two theories have allowed me to highlight how patriarchy, for example, is so entrenched in the cultural fibre of Ghanaian and Nigerian societies such that both male and even some female journalists applied a male norm criteria in evaluations of female politicians’ media interactions (exemplified in such comments as shown on pages 252 and 264). The fact that journalists can speak freely and openly about these gendered sentiments speaks to patriarchy’s embeddedness not just in political news production but also in the cultural environment within which Ghanaian and Nigerian media organisations operate, and which also shapes their news outputs.

In this thesis, I have argued that sexist evaluations of women in general and women politicians in particular via other media outputs also inform women politicians' self-censoring attitude towards the media. Lived experiences of receiving denigrating comments from audiences and journalists, as well as examples of other women who have undergone similar encounters have strengthened women politicians' perceptions that the media reinforce gender stereotypes. In this regard, I have argued that the general apathy towards the media as an unimportant political communication resource, together with the sole focus on the business of politics works against women politicians as it limits the women's ability to satisfy the performative aspects of politics in the minds of (some) voters. Indeed, in agreement with previous literature (e.g. Sheafer, 2001), I suggest that legitimacy in political communication has less to do with political role and more to do with the visible *performance* of politics that is often staged in the media arena.

Besides the above, I also observed that women politicians have two main avenues for gaining media visibility. These are either through *habitual access* or *disruptive access* (Vos and van Aelts, 2018, p. 375; emphasis in original). *Habitual access* occurs first through political achievement in which case political function works in their favour, and second, by paying for coverage. *Disruptive access*, on the other hand, is gained through a willingness to be controversial or to do something that unsettles traditional notions of femininity. However, the news coverage or public response that may follow in this case may or may not be positive. In both *habitual* and *disruptive access* to news media, gender militates against women politicians.

Media visibility is self-reinforcing in that the more politicians are seen in the media, the more symbolic power they acquire which grants them *habitual* access to news media. As a collective, women politicians are comparatively marginalised in the news which decreases their symbolic power. This affects their ability to obtain sponsorship which in turn limits their financial capacity to pay for news coverage. Their low symbolic power, I suggest, also works to keep them from being appointed to high profile positions which would have increased their political function and hence their access to the media. Further, whereas being embroiled in controversy enhances male politicians' notoriety in a way that both emphasises their 'maleness' and depicts them as anti-establishment thereby endearing themselves to certain voters, I argue that women politicians who do the same will likely receive sexist abuse for their gender-incongruent behaviour. This gendered attitude embedded in the cultural fibre of Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, as elsewhere in other modern democracies, works in tandem with the political and media systems and culture to largely marginalise women politicians in the news, while also depicting them as ancillary political actors.

### **10.1.3 Self-representation and online political communication**

As women politicians' representation in traditional media is generally lower and relatively more negative, it has been suggested that self-representation on social media can counteract these detrimental effects (Ross, 2016; Macafee et al., 2019; Metz et al., 2019). To assess the extent to which this is true for Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians, I examined their general behaviour on the site in addition to a MCDA of their *Facebook* cover pages. In doing this, I revealed that with few exceptions, women politicians' approach to social media sites like *Facebook* is not much different from their general attitude to traditional media. This is because of the (near) invisibility of majority of the women on the site, and the fact that almost half of the 17 women whose cover pages were analysed used images that seemed to conform

to gender norms in the Ghanaian and Nigerian societies, as discussed in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3). To this end, I argue that appreciation of the importance of media visibility also generally leads to appreciation of social media sites as political communication tools; adoption of one generally leads to adoption of the other.

Further, I have suggested that the kind of online behaviour that (women) politicians adopt through their cover pages which is the first point of call for viewers, is a good indicator of their perceptions about social media sites. Those who are ambivalent about the value to their political careers take less care with how they project themselves the voting public through their cover pages. This is based on the relatively higher absence on *Facebook*, and higher number of cover pages that suggested a lack of strategic utilisation for political communication. I showed that women politicians whose *Facebook* presence fell in this last category constructed online political profiles that reflected unfavourably on them as political actors.

My analysis also revealed that while women politicians appreciate the increased accessibility, control and speed that social media offer compared to traditional media, their self-representation (through the cover pages) greatly depends on individual preferences, technical knowledge and understanding of the benefits as previous studies have found (e.g. Vaccari, 2010; Larsson and Kalsnes, 2014). In essence, I have argued that both individual and contextual factors mediate whether and the extent to which (women) politicians engage in online political communication.

Through analysis of cover pages, I demonstrated that women politicians adopt one of three self-representational identities as political actors. Specifically, I established that through choices in size, colour, pose, camera angle, clothing and layout, Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians projected themselves as self-personalised, populist or self-effacing politicians. I suggested that these three self-representational identities reflect the women's perceptions of the political value of campaigning on *Facebook*. Nonetheless, I also argued that gendered evaluations of politicians' traits and competencies make it more difficult for women politicians to strike the right balance between their femininity and political competences that are heavily inscribed in masculinity. In this regard, I posited that social media may be deepening rather than eroding existing structural challenges that women face in politics (Wasserman, 2011; Dwyer and Molony, 2019).

## **10.2 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

There are a number of limitations to this study relating to its scope and methodological approach. In what follows, I outline the main limitations in the three areas of audience reception, political news production and context of investigations. In discussing these, I suggest avenues for future research.

The focus of this thesis has been on content created by the media and by women politicians, as well as on the production of these texts. I did not engage with the question of reception of these texts. Therefore, my findings do not make claims about how these texts will be received beyond discussing their potential readings. From the social semiotic MCDA approach employed in this thesis, I have demonstrated that choices in semiotic resources and the affordances of different modes provide communicators, including journalists and women politicians, with a means of constructing certain identities that suit their purposes. What

remains to be done is empirical investigation into the meanings audiences, differentiated along gender, age, economic and educational background actually make of both media representations of women politicians, and the women's self-representation on social media. This will not only be interesting but offer more concrete support for claims about the impact of gendered coverage of women politicians.

Another limitation of this study relates to the range of the context of production. While I included one radio station per country, this turned out to be a small sample particularly for the geographical context that this thesis addresses due to the centrality of radio in African societies. The radio data as well as the interviews of radio journalists provided very interesting material which pointed to many of the features of political news production as documented in Western literature. Because African radio research in (political) news production is underdeveloped, there are many things that remain unknown.

With regard to women politicians' media representations, the interviews revealed that radio was a prime site for sexist representation of women, and that these often occurred in other programmes besides news. Future research can therefore include more radio stations in their sample, in addition to investigating the quantitative and qualitative representations of women politicians in other programmes. Another fruitful research agenda would be a comparison between radio as a broadcast medium and the more conventional print media to further explore how the affordances of the different media platforms shape news texts on women politicians. Television is another broadcast medium that needs investigating to complement what has already been found in Western scholarship. Lastly, while I examined women politicians' self-representation on social media, this was limited to *Facebook* and to women

at different levels of political function. Further studies into other social media sites such as *Twitter*, which is increasingly growing popular in Africa, and of women politicians at the same levels in politics may prove very insightful.

The final limitation concerns the scope of the study which focused on Ghana and Nigeria. As case studies, my findings are not generalisable to Africa or even Anglophone West Africa although this had been my initial goal when I began this research journey. Nonetheless, I have provided empirical evidence which offer more nuanced and sometimes contrasting conclusions to those found in the field. I have applied Western theories to non-Western cases while also drawing on ‘local’ literature in an attempt to de-Westernise this study. While the findings drawn from this study make a valuable contribution to the few existing African-based research, they also provide a limited view of (gendered) political communication in Africa. Consequently, there is much scope for future research to expand in both breadth in terms of countries, and width with regard to depth of analysis per country, as well as comparative studies to generate more generalisable conclusions. These are exciting times for African political communication scholars as much remains unknown, ready to be explored.

### **10.3 Key Contributions to Knowledge**

The results of this research as presented in previous chapters make several substantial contributions to the field of (gendered) political communication and to mediatisation of politics theory at the empirical, methodological and theoretical levels.

### 10.3.1 Empirical contributions

First, my research fills a geographical gap in the field of gendered political communication. While there is quite substantial Western-based research in this area, those from non-Western contexts, particularly from Africa, remains scant. In the course of this research, I have been able to identify only 6 African-based studies with the same iteration of women, politics and media. There is therefore a huge gap that needs urgent addressing, more importantly because findings from these studies enrich scholarly understandings not only of the ways in which the media discriminate against women politicians but also how the women (can) resist or even negotiate these gender biases. Through this study, I have provided an analysis of 1) two non-Western countries using 2) a comparative case study approach that examines women politicians' representations in 3) press and 4) radio news while also investigating 5) the factors that shape the media representations as well as 6) how women politicians self-represent on social media. This particular configuration of research has not been explored before. My research thus provides a rich set of findings that considerably enhance our understanding of women politicians' media representations.

In particular, I have demonstrated that while media coverage of Ghanaian and Nigerian women politicians is not sexist but issue-based, confirming other African-based research (see for example Kasoma, 2014 and Ngomba, 2014), sexist portrayals can still occur within this seemingly neutral type of reporting. Based on this, I argue that the field will benefit much from more qualitative research which allow deeper interrogation of political news coverage in order to identify these implicit meanings.



Another gap that my research fills is the lack of empirical evidence of women politicians' coverage on radio. As far as I know, this has not been investigated. Much of the research in the field have focused on press and, to a lesser extent, television. By including radio in the data, I have provided evidence from an important but under-explored medium. Through findings from radio, I showed that by virtue of its technological affordances, radio can facilitate as well as limit inclusion of women politicians in the news in more ways than press. I also demonstrated that women politicians' coverage on radio can be even more sexist than press, especially where radio stations depend on audience attention to survive and therefore adopt strategies which facilitate the (re)production of gender norms that are strongly embedded in the socio-cultural environment.

Furthermore, by including interviews of women politicians, I have shifted attention from the dominant focus on media content, to *both* media content and women politicians. In doing this, I have provided concrete evidence that adds to gendered political communication scholarship regarding political news production, the extent to which women politicians can influence this process, and the challenges they face in exercising control over how they are portrayed in news content. Specifically, I have shown that women politicians' media representations is not all gloom and doom, but that there are visibility opportunities that the women can take such as adapting to news media logic. Further, while it has been suggested that social media offer women politicians an alternative media to address their marginalisation and sexist coverage in traditional media, very few studies have been conducted to empirically test this claim. My analysis of women politicians' self-representation on *Facebook* provides empirical evidence which shows that adoption of social media platforms as campaign or even political communication tools is not a given, but largely depends on individual and contextual factors. Thus, rather than make sweeping claims about

the benefits of social media to women politicians, my study provides a more nuanced picture of the extent to which these women use social media, the nature of the use and the challenges they face in deploying these sites for their political benefit. In essence, I have suggested that social media sites are not problem-free as is (implicitly) suggested in the literature.

With particular reference to mediatisation scholarship, my research has provided empirical confirmation of the wide appeal of several of the concepts and arguments in the literature. I have shown that political news reporting in Ghana and Nigeria utilise ‘centralised personalisation’ (Balmas et al, 2014), ‘presidentialisation’ (Vliegenthart et al, 2011) and journalistic interventionism (Mazzoleni, 2014). I have also established the existence and adherence of both political logic and news media logic by (women) politicians and journalists respectively, the interaction of which considerably impacts of the political news production process. Apart from this, I have also shown that many of the strategies employed by some women politicians to gain increased and favourable coverage in the news resonate with previous studies who have noted politicians’ adoption of news media logic and self-mediatisation practices (see for instance (Sheafer, 2001; van Aelst et al., 2010; Strömbäck and van Aelst, 2013; van Aelst and Vliegenthart, 2014; van Aelst and Walgrave, 2017). Again, my research has shown that when exposed to the same push and pull forces, (women) politicians react differently leading to lopsided mediatisation as found by Blumler and Esser (2018). Thus, contrary to what mediatisation literature suggests, political actors do not self-mediatised in a uniform manner. Finally, through this study, I have demonstrated that different types of media organisations have different ‘logics of operation’ based on ownership, and that this logic may either facilitate or hinder (women) politicians’ efforts at self-mediatising. Consequently, I argue that in contrast to assumptions in mediatisation scholarship, media organisations are not heterogeneous, that there are differences in news media logic, and that

these differences influence politicians' self-mediatisation processes. These findings suggest that a more sophisticated approach is needed for analysis of mediatisation processes than is provided in the extant literature.

### **10.3.2 Methodological contributions**

The unique configuration of this study's approach allowed examination of verbal and visual aspects of women politicians' representations, both as features as well as in an integrated manner. Through this, I have revealed how different modes can contribute to (un)favourable portrayals of women politicians in news content. In particular, I have shown that while visual representation is more dominant than the verbal, this may not necessarily reflect favourably on the women given that historically, images of women have depicted them as sex objects (Mulvey, 1989; Gill, 2007). Further, I have demonstrated that journalists can take advantage of the different "epistemological commitments" (Machin, 2013, p.30) that different semiotic modes allow to communicate multiple (and sometimes divergent) discourses about women politicians. Therefore, through this study, I have highlighted that different semiotic modes can communicate differentiated discourses which may be overlooked when only one mode of communication is investigated.

Secondly, I have grounded my analysis of media content in the contexts of production as a result of employing MCDA. In doing this, I have generated empirical evidence to explain why media representations of women politicians are the way they are, in addition to empirically showing the factors that contribute to shaping the representations. I have also illuminated the power dynamics that exists between women politicians and journalists, and how that affects the frequency and nature of women politicians' coverage in the news. By

adopting this approach, I have demonstrated the value of production studies not only to research on women politicians' media representations but also to the field of political communication.

### 10.3.3 Theoretical contributions

In this thesis, I have applied Mediatisation of politics (Strömbäck, 2008; Esser and Strömbäck, 2014), a theoretical concept that has almost solely been applied to Western democracies to non-Western contexts (see Jones, 2019 for recent addition from non-Western based study). The strength of the concept lies in enabling examination of the interaction between media and politics but at the **institutional** level. Adopting this concept has helped me to highlight the (professional) motivations which determine how politicians and journalists relate to each other, and how the nature of that interaction shapes the kind of representations (female) politicians receive in the news. However, institutional-level influences do not fully capture the complexity of (female) politician-journalist relations with regard to the former's portrayal in the news. Consequently, by integrating Mediatisation of politics with the Hierarchy of Influence model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; 2014) and Feminist media theory (van Zoonen, 1994; Ross, 2016), I have been able to develop a more nuanced approach which allows us to study how and why **individual** politicians adapt (or not) to the logic of the media and for what purpose (s). My three-point, dual approach to analysis of mediatisation processes, which considers factors at the individual, institutional and socio-cultural levels, helps to account for the different types of influences that determine individual (women) politicians' self-mediatisation. This approach has been useful in underscoring the fact that politicians' decisions to self-mediatised (or not) are not only influenced by institutional factors, but by a multi-level set of factors including gender and individual considerations. Without highlighting and acknowledging this fact, we risk over-

generalising and hence disregarding the myriad other influences which shape politicians' relations with the media.

In this regard, I have demonstrated that contrary to what the mediatisation literature assumes, not all political actors are keen to adapt to news media logic. I have suggested that contextual factors such as gender norms as well as political and media culture determine whether, and to what extent (women) politicians seek to integrate the media in their political communication activities. My approach has therefore revealed a cultural dimension to mediatisation which has so far been overlooked in the literature. Because the cultural socialisation of Ghanaian and Nigerian women orient them towards differing to men while remaining unseen and voiceless, this orientation, in interaction with the media and political culture, spawns compliance, to a large extent, from women politicians, while also evoking sexist audience responses towards women politicians who contravene these norms. Women politicians' ability to adapt to news media logic, which in turn shapes their media coverage, is consequently hindered because of these contextual exigencies. These cultural influences are a significant finding that need to be taken into account when theorising about (self) mediatisation.

Further, my research has demonstrated that certain media platforms lend themselves more easily to politicians' adoption of news media logic. Specifically, by virtue of its technological affordances, lack of visuals and 24 hour cycle, radio appears to offer more opportunities as well as challenges for women politicians' engagement with the media. I argue that this brings a more nuanced understanding of how different media platforms can shape mediatisation

processes in unique ways. While more research needs to be done to confirm this, it is an important finding that mediatisation scholars need to consider in subsequent studies.

### **Closing Remarks: Policy Implications**

I began this study with the hope that it will serve as a stepping stone towards policy-related engagement with women politicians and journalists; the latter through dialogue on more equitable reporting, and the former through capacity building on maximising media opportunities to promote their political goals. During the interviews, it became clear that women politicians could benefit from capacity training on how to utilise the media (including social media) as a political communication resource. While similar trainings have been offered several times by especially civil society groups, these were often prior to the election period, were generalist in outlook and tended to be short lived. Women politicians who had benefitted from these trainings appreciated their value and wished they were more consistent.

The interviews also revealed that journalists needed gender sensitisation as many of them did not understand the ways in which their actions and attitudes, some of which were with good intentions, could contribute to reinforcing gender stereotypes. It became clear from interviewees that gender sensitisation of journalists will considerably lead to more conscious inclusion of women's issues in media content which in turn, will raise the profile of women in the public eye, as well as the necessity for more women (politicians) as sources.

Further, it was also clear from the interviews that both women politicians and journalists needed to work in partnership; the former increasing their understanding of the media and

how they can adapt to their logic in order to increase (favourable) media visibility; the latter being more accommodating of women politicians in recognition of the unique structural challenges they face as women in a patriarchal society.

While training alone is insufficient in addressing the cultural, institutional and other barriers women politicians face with regard to their media representations, it nonetheless provides a useful means of improving their presence in mainstream and social media. Therefore, inspired by the political impetus underlining most (M)CDA research, I intend to develop the research undertaken in this PhD project and make a further contribution to this significant policy agenda.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	All Progressive Party, Nigeria
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
NAWOJ	National Association of Women Journalists, Nigeria
NDC	National Democratic Congress, Ghana
NPP	New Patriotic Party, Nigeria
NUJ	National Union of Journalists, Nigeria
PDP	People's Democratic Party, Nigeria

## APPENDIX A

### CODE BOOK FOR ANALYSIS OF DATA ON WEST AFRICAN FEMALE POLITICIANS IN THE MEDIA

#### Sample

All radio news bulletins and newspaper editions within the selected time frame from the selected newspapers will be read cover to cover, and articles which mention or use the image of a ‘local’ politician (as a subject, reported or quoted source) will be chosen, even if the article does not focus on the politician. Such articles include news stories, news-in-briefs, editorials, feature stories. ‘Local’ means Ghanaian or Nigerian; thus, politicians from other countries are excluded from the sample. Politician refers to public officials, both elected and appointed, who serve in a political capacity. The list of those considered as ‘politician’ in this study are below:

Political Actors Key:

Government: Presidents, Vice Presidents, Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

State Official: Commissioners and District Chief Executives (DCE).

Parliamentarians: Members of Parliament (MP), Governors, Senators, Representatives (of the lower house of Nigerian Parliament).

Political Party Official: National and Regional executives only

Other Political Actor: persons who have served in past capacities in any of the above categories.

Political Actor’s Wife: these sometimes play a supporting role in their husbands’ political career, and seem to have considerable power and influence.

#### CODING FOR NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

1. **Article.** Assign a unique code to each article.
2. **Headline.**
3. **Date.**
4. **Name of Newspaper.**
5. **Page** (Is the story given prominence by being placed on the front or centre page?). Code ‘1’ for front page; ‘2’ for centre page; and ‘0’ for any other page.
6. **Name of journalist:** Write all name(s) in the box.
7. **Genre of article.** Tick from the table below.

Genre
Political news
Economic news
Sports news
Editorial
Feature
Announcement
Image Only
Other

8. **Length of article.** (Half a page or more = long story; less than half a page =short story) Code by sight as measuring the exact length will be too time consuming.

9. **Article topic.** What issue does the story cover? If there are more than 1 topic covered in the article, code only the first 3 in order of prominence (article topic 1, article topic 2, and article topic 3). If unsure, count the number of paragraphs devoted to each topic.

Article topics
Election Related
Campaign
Media Coverage
Personal Life
Scandal
Government Failure
Incompetence Government
Incompetence Person
Foreign Affairs
Finance
Defence
Education
Trade and Industry
Labour and Employment
Science and Technology
Law
Interior and Local Government
Works and Housing
Food and Agriculture
Lands, Environment and Natural resources
Roads and Transportation
Health
Gender, Women and children's affairs
Sports
Information and Communication
Energy
Tourism
Social Welfare
Oil
Mines
Youth Development
Ports and Harbours
National Security
Economy
National Development
Corruption

10. **Political Actor/s.** Select from the list. Female politicians (both Ghanaians and Nigerians) will be assigned numbers 1-600; male politicians 601 and above. If more than one politician is mentioned in the article, record only the first 3 in order of appearance, except in cases where presidential candidates are featured, then record all who are named.
11. **Quotes.** Is the politician directly quoted, reported as saying something or used as a subject in an event? In cases where a politician is quoted in addition to the other 2 variables, quoting

trumps all so record for only quoted. Code 'Q' for quoted and 'R' for reported as saying and 'S' for subject in the article. If there are more than 1 politician, record up to 3 in order of appearance.

12. **Description of politician.** How is the politician described or referred to? Note any references to the list below in the 'Further comments' box.

13. **Image Caption:** Write in the box.

Description of Politician
Gender status
Gender role
Physical characteristics
Clothing
Professional achievements
Personality/ Character
Personal details
Other

## 14. Image Analysis

Main Category	Sub category	Variables
Behaviour	Posture	Positive (1) =standing upright Negative (2) = bowed, slumped, sitting Neutral (0) = other
	Arms	Positive (1) =cheering, waving, shaking hands Negative (2) = hanging at sides, folded Neutral (0) = other
	Expression on face	Positive (1) = smiling, cheerful Negative (2) = sad, frowning, worried, tired, solemn Other (0) = where face is unseen
	Eye contact	Demand, Offer, or Other
Context	Activity	Positive/dynamic (1) =shaking hands or in any form of motion Negative/ passive (2) = reading, resting or in a 'non-active' state. Neutral (0) = other
	Interaction	Positive (1) =cheering crowd, with peers but centre stage Negative (2) = alone, inattentive crowd, with peers but not centre stage. Neutral (0) = other
	Background	Positive (1) =cheering crowd, with peers but centre stage Negative (2) = alone, inattentive crowd, with peers but not centre stage. Neutral (0) = other
	Dress	Positive (1) = Traditional wear/formal wear, negative (2) = casual wear Neutral (0) = other
Perspective	Proximal Distance	Positive (1) = Close shot (face and head, head and shoulders or anything less than that) Negative (2) = long shot (full body or anything wider than that) Neutral (0) = medium shot (waist up)
	Camera Angle	Positive (1) = below, looking up at politician Negative (2) = above, looking down at politician Neutral (0) = eye level
	Page Placement	Positive (1) = Top third Negative (2) = bottom third Neutral (0) = middle third
	Size	Positive (1) = ½ a page or more Negative (2) = less than ½ a page

## CODING FOR RADIO NEWS BROADCASTS

15. **News Story.** Assign a unique code to each news story.
16. **Name of Radio Station.**
17. **Headline:** Write headline in the box.
18. **Date.** Only the main news bulletin has been selected so there is one news bulletin per day.
19. **Prominence** (what number is the selected bulletin in the sequence of stories?). Code using numbers 1-15
20. **News topic.** What issue does the bulleting cover? Tick from the list up to 3 topics.

News topics
Election Related
Campaign
Media Coverage
Personal Life
Scandal
Government Failure
Incompetence Government
Incompetence Person
Foreign Affairs
Finance
Defence
Education
Trade and Industry
Labour and Employment
Science and Technology
Law
Interior and Local Government
Works and Housing
Food and Agriculture
Lands, Environment and Natural resources
Roads and Transportation
Health
Gender, Women and children's affairs
Sports
Information and Communication
Energy
Tourism
Social Welfare
Oil
Mines
Youth Development
Ports and Harbours
National Security
Economy
National Development
Corruption

1. **Political Actor/s.** Select from the list. Female politicians (both Ghanaians and Nigerians) will be assigned numbers 1-600; male politicians 601 and above. Record all politicians mentioned in the story.
2. **Does the Political Actor go live?** Going live includes being called live during the news or a recorded interview being played. If more than one politician is mentioned in the bulletin, record those who go live. Code 'Y' for live and 'N' for not live.
3. **Description of politician.** Does the description used for the politician in any way refer to the gender status or gender role of the politician? Note any references to the list below in the 'Further comments' box.

Description of Politician
Gender status
Gender role
Physical characteristics
Clothing
Professional achievements
Personality/ Character
Personal details
Other



## APPENDIX B

### List of interviewees

No.	Name	M/F	Title	Duration
<b>GHANA</b>				
1.	A1SH <sup>12</sup>	F	Former news editor, radio; now civil society expert	99 mins
2.	A2KA	M	Political news editor, press	75 mins
3.	A2DF	M	Head of photography dept., press	40 mins
4.	A2EH	M	Press photographer	14 mins
5.	A1KA	M	Party communications' director	61 mins
6.	A1CD	F	Party dep. women's organiser	33 mins
7.	A2EM	M	Parliamentary correspondent & news editor, radio	50 mins
8.	A2AK	F	News producer, radio	61 mins
9.	A1BD	F	Vice presidential candidate	50 mins
10.	A2EB	F	Media group news editor, various platforms	89 mins
11.	A2RD	M	Parliamentary correspondent & news anchor, radio	22 mins
12.	A2DB	F	Former news editor & anchor, radio	93 mins
13.	A3HH	F	Senior manager, Abantu for Development	77 mins
14.	A1SA	F	Former party chairperson & MP	83 mins
15.	A2KO	F	TV producer and presenter	87 mins
16.	A3AT	M	Senior manager, Star Ghana	41 mins
17.	A1NR	F	Presidential candidate	54 mins
18.	A1ZR	F	MP	25 mins
19.	A1NL	F	Former minister	74 mins
20.	A3KM	M	Lecturer & political consultant	70 mins
21.	A1HF	F	Party women's organiser	38 mins
22.	A2WO	M	Press journalist	23 mins
<b>NIGERIA</b>				
1.	Hajia Sekinah Lawal	F	Chairperson, NAWOJ, Lagos	33 mins
2.	Dr. Qasim Akinreti	M	NUJ President, Lagos	47 mins
3.	Boye Akintola	M	Political journalist, radio	43 mins
4.	Lanre Arongundade	M	Director, IPC, Nigeria	90 mins
5.	B1AT	F	House of Assembly member	49 mins
6.	Joke Kujenya	F	Journalist & media mentor	39 mins
7.	Ifeyinwa Omowole	F	President, NAWOJ	12 mins
8.	B2AI	M	Political journalist, radio	42 mins
9.	Toro Oladapo	F	Former NAWORJ President	34 mins
10.	Laila St. Mathew-Daniel	F	Executive Coach & Women's Right's Activist	55 mins

<sup>12</sup> Names of those quoted in Chapter 8 and 9 are in codes.

11.	Ayisha Osori	F	Former House of Assembly aspirant	35 mins
12.	B2R	M	News editor, radio	27 mins
13.	B1CH	F	Commissioner for Education	42 mins
14.	Ada Gina	F	Executive Director, Gender and Development Action	63 mins
15.	B2D	M	Assistant news editor, press	56 mins
16.	B1MO	F	House of Assembly member	39 mins
17.	Hon. Tunde Braimoh	M	Lagos House of member	18 mins
18.	B1AL	F	Party chairperson, local government area	73 mins
19.	Lailan Akinwunmi	M	House of Assembly member, Abuja	31 mins
20.	Tayo	M	Photo journalist, press	22 mins
21.	B1AD	F	local area party representative	13 mins
22.	Mrs. Olajumoke Anifowoshe	F	Politician & Gender Advocate	25 mins
23.	Halima Sarki	F	Consultant, Women in Politics manual	7 mins
24.	Abraham Ogbogo	M	Executive Editor, Guardian Newspaper	29 mins
25.	Femi Adebesein	M	Photojournalist, Guardian newspaper	16 mins
26.	B2WO	M	Senior leader, NUJ	41 mins
27.	B1RE	F	Presidential candidate	30 mins

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

#### Female Politicians

1. What made you enter politics?
  - a. How has the journey been so far?
  - b. Any examples of achievements/ successes that you're particularly happy about?
  - c. Would your experience in politics been any different if you had been a man? How so?
2. In your opinion, what makes a successful political career?
  - a. What do you think will guarantee a re-election for example?
  - b. What are you doing to ensure your political journey is successful?
3. What do you think the media/ journalists should do to promote (good) politics in this country?
  - a. Are these expectations being met?
  - b. What do you expect the media/journalists to do to help politicians in general? Should this help be the same for all politicians or do you have different expectations for female and male politicians? (Please give examples).
4. What is your approach to the media/ journalists?
  - a. Do you have any strategy for interacting with journalists? (For example, do you work with a media consultant; do you have a plan for x number of media appearances, etc?)
  - b. Why have you adopted this approach/ strategy?
  - c. How will you rate your relationship with journalists on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, and why?
5. How do you see the way the media/ journalists talk about/ cover politics in general and politicians in particular?
  - a. Is it positive or negative and why? Please give examples.
  - b. Comparing female to male politicians, is there any difference in manner of coverage? Please give specific examples.
  - c. Have you done anything in response to the way female politicians are portrayed in the media (either to commend or criticise journalists)? Any specific examples?
  - d. What is the biggest challenge female politicians have with the media/journalists?
  - e. Any advice to journalists?
6. How do you ensure that you remain visible/ in touch with your constituents throughout the year?
  - a. Do you use any social media platform for example or are there other ways for keeping in touch?
  - b. I noticed that you are/ are not active on Facebook. How important (or otherwise) is Facebook or any social media platform in helping you keep in touch with your constituents? (refer to Facebook analysis if relevant).
7. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing women who are in politics or want to enter politics?
  - a. Any advice to potential female politicians?
8. Is there anyone you feel I should talk to?

**Editors/ Journalists**

1. Why did you decide to be a journalist?
  - a. How has the journey been so far?
  - b. Any examples of achievements/ successes that you're particularly happy about?
2. What do you see as the media's role in promoting (good) politics?
  - a. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, how does your organisation measure up in terms of this role and why?
  - b. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, how do you personally measure up in this role and why?
3. Could you run me through a typical day for covering political news?
  - a. How do you decide what political news to cover?
  - b. How do you select your sources?
  - c. What editorial factors are considered before the final content is decided on for the public?
  - d. Does your organisation have any gender policy that is followed when covering/selecting news/sources? If so, what does it say? (refer to results of content analysis if relevant).
4. How do you see politics/ politicians in this country and why that view?
  - a. Is this view the same for both female and male politicians? Why or why not?
  - b. How do you ensure that you get the information you need from politicians? Does the strategy differ between female and male politicians; why or why not? Please give examples.
5. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge journalists have with female politicians?
  - a. Any advice for female politicians?
6. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing women who want to enter politics?
  - a. In your opinion, what makes a successful politician? Does this differ by gender?
  - b. Any advice for women who want to enter politics?
7. Is there anyone you feel I should talk to?

**Civil Society Experts**

1. Could you explain the work that you do?
2. How do you see politics in this country?
  - a. Is it positive or negative and why?
  - b. What factors contribute to shaping the political environment in the country? Any examples?
3. What do you think of politicians in general?
  - a. Is this view the same for both female and male politicians or does it differ? Why or why not?
  - b. What do you think makes a successful political career?
4. In your opinion, what role should the media/ journalists play in promoting (good) politics in this country?
  - a. Has your expectation been met? How or why not? (Please give examples)

5. How do you see media coverage of political news/ politicians in this country?
  - a. Is it good/lacking, and if so, why?
  - b. Is media coverage the same for female and male politicians or does it differ? How or why not?
  - c. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge for female politicians (in general, and in terms of media coverage)?
  - d. Have you been involved in any work to help include more female politicians in media coverage? If so, have these been (un)successful, and why?
  - e. Any advice for female politicians?
  - f. Any advice for journalists who cover political news?
6. What is the biggest challenge with women getting into politics?
7. Is there anyone you think I should talk to?

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (For News workers)

You are invited to take part in my research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand what my study is about and what we are going to do if you decide to participate. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me any questions you may have.

#### 1. What this study is about?

This project is about how West African female politicians are portrayed in their local media. It seeks to identify the patterns of representation framing West African female politicians' media portrayals; the factors, discourses and ideological assumptions which shape these underlying representational choices; the perspectives female politicians have on their media representations, and the extent to which female politicians contribute to these representations.

#### 2. Do I have to take part?

No, participation is entirely voluntary.

#### 3. What will happen if you participate?

You will be interviewed. During the interview, I will ask you to discuss the factors which influence decisions on how female politicians are reported on in your organization. These questions will cover decisions on news coverage, content and selection.

#### 4. Will your taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Yes. A rigorous mechanism will be employed in this project to ensure confidentiality. Personal details which could identify you will be kept separately from the interview data and not given to any third party without your consent. I will be the only person who will be able to access your personal details. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recordings will be destroyed. All the research data will be stored in separate folders on the M: drive of the University of Leeds which will be password protected, and all the paper written materials will be stored in a locked case accessible only by me. If you choose to be anonymous, your view will be respected. All identifying details will be excluded from the research output and no quotation will be attributed to you without your consent being sought first.

#### 5. What are the risks in participating in this study?

Some of the interview questions may lead you to reveal details about other people or practices which may make you feel uncomfortable talking about. However, it is your right to stop the interview at any point when you feel uncomfortable or not to answer those questions. You also have the option to speak off the record and such information will be kept confidential.

#### 6. What are the benefits in participating in this study?

This research will contribute original evidence and analysis to related fields of research such as African media and culture, and more broadly to sociological approaches to media and politics. Additionally, and more significantly, this research will provide much needed information about news production of female politicians in Africa. Thus, your participation will provide vital insights into media coverage of female politicians in West African countries. I hope you will enjoy chatting with me.

**7. Can you withdraw anytime?**

Yes, you can withdraw at any stage of this research without any reason. Any research data related to you will be deleted within one week after your notification. However, you should also understand that it may be difficult to withdraw after the submission of the research for assessment or publication.

**8. What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results of this research will be published in academic publications and presented at conferences. Your words may be used, but that will be only after your consent has been given. In such a case, your identity and personal information will remain confidential.

**9. If you have further question about this research, who can you contact with?**

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me, Sally Osei-Appiah. I am a PhD researcher with School of Media and Communications at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

Email: [mesoa@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:mesoa@leeds.ac.uk) Telephone number:

If you do not feel comfortable contacting me, you can contact my supervisors, Dr Giorgia Aiello ([g.aiello@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.aiello@leeds.ac.uk)) or Dr Katy Parry ([k.parry@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:k.parry@leeds.ac.uk)).

Thank you very much for your time!

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (For Female Politicians)**

You are invited to take part in my research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand what my study is about and what we are going to do if you decide to participate. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me any questions you may have.

### **1. What this study is about?**

This project is about how West African female politicians are portrayed in their local media. It seeks to identify the patterns of representation framing West African female politicians' media portrayals; the factors, discourses and ideological assumptions which shape these underlying representational choices; the perspectives female politicians have on their media representations, and the extent to which female politicians contribute to these representations.

### **2. Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is entirely voluntary.

### **3. What will happen if you participate?**

You will be interviewed. During the interview, I will ask you to discuss your perceptions about how you are portrayed in the news media, your relationship with journalists, your views on the media and their importance to your political goals, and any communication strategies you have adopted to become more visible in the media. I will also ask you to comment on your main Facebook page and campaign poster in relation to the factors which influenced their production.

### **4. Will your taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Yes. A rigorous mechanism will be employed in this project to ensure confidentiality. Personal details which could identify you will be kept separately from the interview data and not given to any third party without your consent. I will be the only person who will be able to access your personal details. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recordings will be destroyed. All the research data will be stored in separate folders on the M: drive of the University of Leeds which will be password protected, and all the paper written materials will be stored in a locked case accessible only by me. If you choose to be anonymous, your view will be respected. All identifying details will be excluded from the research output and no quotation will be attributed to you without your consent being sought first.

### **5. What are the risks in participating in this study?**

Some of the interview questions may lead you to reveal details about other people or practices which may make you feel uncomfortable talking about. However, it is your right to stop the interview at any point when you feel uncomfortable or not to answer those questions. You also have the option to speak off the record and such information will be kept confidential.

### **6. What are the benefits in participating in this study?**



This research will contribute original evidence and analysis to related fields of research such as African media and politics, and more broadly to sociological approaches to media and gender politics. Additionally, and more significantly, this research will give voice to West African female politicians, providing much needed information about how they perceive and negotiate their media representations. Thus, your participation will provide vital insights into media coverage of female politicians in West African countries. I hope you will enjoy chatting with me.

**7. Can you withdraw anytime?**

Yes, you can withdraw at any stage of this research without any reason. Any research data related to you will be deleted within one week after your notification. However, you should also understand that it may be difficult to withdraw after the submission of the research for assessment or publication.

**8. What will happen to the results of the research?**

The results of this research will be published in academic publications and presented at conferences. Your words may be used, but that will be only after your consent has been given. In such a case, your identity and personal information will remain confidential.

**9. If you have further question about this research, who can you contact with?**

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me, Sally Osei-Appiah. I am a PhD researcher with School of Media and Communications at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

Email: [mesoa@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:mesoa@leeds.ac.uk) Telephone number:

If you do not feel comfortable contacting me, you can contact my supervisors, Dr Giorgia Aiello ([g.aiello@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.aiello@leeds.ac.uk)) or Dr Katy Parry ([k.parry@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:k.parry@leeds.ac.uk)).

Thank you very much for your time!

**Consent Form for Research Project:  
Media Representations of West African Female Politicians**

Please tick here if you agree with the statement below

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any stage of this research without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that if I agree to be interviewed, it will be audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question, without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that if any of my words are to be used in the research, I will be consulted first and I will only be identifiable in the report(s) that result from the research if I so choose.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the data collected to be stored anonymously by the researcher for up to four years after the original findings of the study are published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the above research project and if I have further questions or concerns, I will contact the lead researcher or her supervisors.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name<sup>13</sup>:

Date:

Name of lead researcher: Sally Osei-Appiah

Signature:

Date:

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<sup>13</sup> Or name you would like to be called in this project.

**(Consent Letter for Female Politicians)**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Consent Form for research project:  
Media Representations of West African Female Politicians**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any stage of this research without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. I also understand that if I agree to be interviewed, it will be audio recorded, and that I am free to decline to answer any question, without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. I have been assured that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that if any of my words are to be used in the research, I will be consulted first, and that I will only be identifiable in the report(s) that result from the research if I so choose. I agree for the data collected to be stored anonymously by the researcher for up to four years after the original findings of the study are published. I agree to take part in the above research project and if I have further questions or concerns, I will contact the lead researcher or her supervisors.

Signed:

.....

Date:

.....