

## **Mudling Through Intersectionality Theory for Leadership Futures: Pathways Toward Policies for Reinventing Gender Spaces for Educational Leadership in Two Male Schools in Ghana**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2013/vol11n72860>

Published June 5, 2023

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**Citation:** Odei-Tettey K., Ayivor A.E.A. and Dodzi E. (2023) Mudling Through Intersectionality Theory for Leadership Futures: Pathways Toward Policies for Reinventing Gender Spaces for Educational Leadership in Two Male Schools in Ghana, *British Journal of Education*, Vol.11, Issue 7, pp. 28-60

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines the advances made on gender issues in Ghana, particularly regarding how far misogyny is being watered down in educational leadership. The article thence reflects on how society might resolve the question of the effects of misogyny on educational leadership futures and the associated possibilities, and decisively address this enervating question in the decades ahead. The paper discusses how individuals and groups are resisting and challenging their experiences of gender inequalities, as well as attempting to intervene and correct the causes and consequences of gendered power imbalances. The paper does not intend to assess all the facets of gendered life and inequality. Instead, it discusses arguments that have been put forward regarding re-engineering gender spaces for educational leadership futures. Data obtained from two all-boys' schools suggest that gendered inequality is visible in both public and private spheres. However, the validity of the arguments that gender inequalities are still entrenched and persisting over time, place, and culture is contrasted with alternative claims from the data that gendered power relations, and for that matter inequalities, are gradually being eroded. Furthermore, the current academic focus on the concept of intersectionality regarding how variables like gender, tribe, religion, and culture intersect to define people's gendered experiences, is used as the analytical framework. The study of women's educational leadership experiences in this paper is used as a framework to further examine these issues and address some of the debates. The paper concludes with an argument that the study of inequality in relation to gendered identities, relations, and experiences must continue with an exploration of the study of men and masculinities if the theoretical analysis of gender is to be enriched to re-invent genders spaces for educational leadership futures. We also argue the view that to set the agenda for a more equal educational leadership future, society must see the need to link gender closely to other forms of social inequalities.*

**KEYWORDS:** gendered power imbalance, soft power, misogyny, patriarchal culture, toxic masculinity, gender support systems.

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## INTRODUCTION

*To my mind inequality is the main roadblock in our journey toward social justice, and we need an innovative approach to uprooting it that won't produce the same negligible incremental change we've seen in recent years (Willis, 2014).*

This paper examines the subtle drifts from the male domination in educational leadership that characterized much of the previous centuries. The paper believes that these drifts are manifesting themselves in many different ways such as the feminization of leadership styles, the decline of hierarchy and the rise of soft power, and especially the change in roles and attitudes towards work and family life, especially from men. So, educational organisations that wish to thrive in the future would have to do well to develop a culture along these trends. This is imperative for future organisational life because the gender power shift that is occurring in twenty-first-century organisations will be an indisputable triumph for educational and for that matter socio-economic progress as it seeks to enable women at every level to realize their true potential. Subsequently, organisations that ignore these trends do so at their own peril. This is the second decade of the twenty-first century, and it is significant that the vexed subject of gender in organisational life is commanding more serious attention than ever before. Much of this attention focuses on the many years of equality debate which has sought to make women at ease and comfortable in their leadership positions due to the support and recognition being given to them by men, and even the achievement of parity with men at the top of organisational life, especially in educational organisations. The signs of these shifts however tend to be obscured when the spotlight is put on the top of organisational hierarchies because the signs manifest mostly at the middle management level. Besides, there are other less discussed aspects to the gender debate that signal that a shift is under way. These are signaled by the very urgency that this issue commands, as well as the coalitions that have joined the calls for change.

This notion of power residing only at the top of organisations is under challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Technological and social changes are breaking down traditional hierarchies and distributing power more widely both within organisations and between them and their networks of external partners. Thus, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century public administration, organisations depend on a growing “contingent” workforce of external contractors and freelancers. New and smaller organisations such as schools are beginning to consist mainly of peers collaborating with each other, with very little if any hierarchy. These trends are set to continue as work becomes increasingly portable and people experiment with more autonomous ways of working. Aron (2013) has predicted the rapid growth of clusters. These are self-governed groups of professionals with a range of skills who will be hired by organisations to work long-term on projects and operations. Thus, this shift away from massive standalone organisational structures will undermine the link between status and position in a hierarchy. Status will instead rely increasingly on unique skills and talents, or the ability to connect people, or being an inspiring leader. The whole approach to the new world of work will require

workers to become personal leaders. Maitland and Thompson (2014) have said that “... you need to lead your own life rather than being controlled by the boss as in the past, and if you are able to do that, you are able to lead others.” The Edelman Trust Barometer (2014) shows that the democratization of work environments runs parallel to a decline in trust in traditional authority figures, and that people are more likely to trust experts, or to put their faith in their peers. The trust barometer indicates that trust in the CEO is at 43%, while trust in academics stands at 67% and trust in “a person like yourself” at 62%. This poses a challenge for leaders of traditional organisations, and leaders in some organisations are beginning to acknowledge that they need to encourage a greater diversity of leadership styles that seek to achieve gender balance as part of the solution.

Furthermore, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the exercise of hard power was much lauded at the workplace. However, Nye (2005) has developed the concept of soft power which relates to persuading people to do what you want by attracting and co-opting them, rather than coercing them. He developed this concept in relation to world politics but the concept is now being used in public administration, with a growing emphasis in leadership development on the ability to listen, seek out other perspectives, and earn followers, alongside standard leadership traits such as resilience and decisiveness. The rise of soft power seeks to make leaders more effective, and is tending to open the door more widely to women’s leadership. As a sequel to this view, Tost et al. (2013) have argued that teams perform less well on assigned tasks when led by people who equate leadership with power, dominate discussion, and discount the contributions of other team members. Their experiments found that the psychological effect of power on a team leader had a negative impact on team performance. This connotes the feminization of leadership in the public sector and this is manifested in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as demand grows for skills that are suited to flatter more open and democratic organizations, and the preferences of younger generations. These skills are expressed in concepts like ‘emotional intelligence’, ‘people skills’, and ‘flexibility’ which are traditionally deemed to be more feminine leadership skills, and are highly valued in 21<sup>st</sup> century public administration, and coincidentally expresses the outlook for educational leadership futures.

These exigencies suggest that women are likely to lead the way in reshaping how jobs are done, including at senior levels in the educational sector. These participative concepts for leadership, (which of course is not the preserve of females) is linked to more productive teamwork. However, women on average are known to score higher than men on social perceptiveness (i.e., correctly reading emotions). Wooley et al. (2010) studied the “collective intelligence” of teams regarding their ability to solve puzzles and problems and found that, gender mix played a big part. The researchers were looking to see if a team’s collective intelligence equated to the average of the IQs of its members. IQ turned out not to be a key factor. However, the teams with more women had higher scores, demonstrating a stronger collective ability to solve problems and achieve goals.

On another hand, technology is also putting more power into the hands of knowledge workers in the public sector, many of whom have greater choice than ever before about how, where and when they work. Besides, people with skills that are in demand also have more choices about who to

work for, or with. Organisations can therefore no longer assume that workers will just accept standard conditions of employment or traditional working patterns. This scenario has been created in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as many responsibilities at the workplace are technology-enabled and organisations are able to staff online moderators and community managers across the world, most of whom work virtually from their homes, and have developed a reputation for high-quality customer service and a supportive working culture. From this background, the paper sees both female and male professionals leading a shift in the way that organisations are run and do business. This implies a changing roles of public sector leadership with increasing emphasis on empathy for people and a more focus on communication, especially in terms of accommodating varied work patterns that enable females to scathe the otherwise brush culture in their organisations. This is the result of the changes in the digital revolution and the increasing use of social media which has created a sea of change towards getting the right work culture. The assumption is that, the enhanced focus on people, communication and culture will create the environment where women will thrive.

The evidence shows that women are leading the way in reshaping how jobs are done, including at senior levels with technology breaking down the barriers. As the future looks more promising than the past for women professionals, it creates a parallel opportunity for men too, which adds to the advantage for women. This means that the greater power-sharing opportunities at work comes with greater sharing of responsibility for children and the home. Organisations have typically regarded gender issues as women's issues. That was always a mistake, but now the pressure is increasing on organisations to acknowledge that men have caring responsibilities too. The model of male breadwinner and female caregiver is fast disappearing. So, the merging, or reversal, of traditional gender roles has major implications for work and society. Work-life conflict used to be seen primarily as a problem for women. But research reveals that employed fathers in dual-earning couples are now more likely than mothers to experience such conflict. There are ways for employers to reduce this, enabling both men and women to manage work and home life more effectively. As men seek to play their full role as fathers, it creates opportunities for enhancing women's progress at work. Moreover, shared parenting and earning creates the best advantage for the family. The idea here is that, the participation of fathers at home takes pressure off mothers, helping them to perform better at work. Such is the outlook for educational leadership futures that has created space for women to excel.

The issues raised so far are salient to a convention in Ghana where boys' senior high schools are headed by males whilst girls' senior high schools are headed by females as observed by Preko (2012). He says also that in Ghana, managerial positions have been coded as masculine and this view runs through homes to workplaces. However, this trend seems to be changing as some boys' senior high schools (SHSs), now have females as their heads. On the face value, this does not appear to be an issue but given the long-standing tradition of males heading boys' SHSs, this is a critical difficulty in lieu of the challenges faced by the female leaders of such boys' only SHSs. Odei-Tetty and Mensah (2015) have said that such challenges can be surmounted if society will understand the cosmic logic of the concept of co-existence of opposites. The idea is that the world

and existence are fully packed with mythic opposition, and that has implications for male-female complementarity in educational leadership. This view notwithstanding, Helterbran and Rieg (2004) have said long ago that parents and community members believe that males can effectively discipline male students than can women, and this has created a perception that men can handle boys' SHSs better than women. This perception tends to results in gender stereotype and intimidation which affect the effective functioning of the female leader of boys' SHSs. Contrary to this view however, the paper argues that the success of schools among other things depends on the effectiveness of the school head as a leader. This claim acknowledges the complexities associated with role of the school head. Thus, in performing their duties, female school leaders face myriad of challenges that range from gender discrimination to disciplinary issues amongst staff and students. These challenges are very profound in patriarchal societies for women in leadership positions due to the socialisation process that result in gender discrimination, as attitudes manifest and give much preference to males over females in many aspects of organisational life. This phenomenon tends to create patriarchal cultures that hinder women from being seen and heard (Mutabai, 2016), and renders the workplace environment non- welcoming for female leaders.

The emotive issues discussed so far brings interesting and crucial twist to the gender debate which most societies have only recently begun to address. This makes for a renewed focus on continuous and structural gendered power relations, discrimination, institutional and structural inequalities, and the impact this has on everyday lives, and at the same time, also affords a discussion of organisational roles, optimism, and collaboration, as well as the increasing realisation of men's role in making major and significant improvement in creating gender spaces for leadership. So, in this paper, we place great emphasis on intersectionality and how gender issues link to other categories, such as tribes and family roles to informs the debate. 'Intersectionality' is an emerging concept in policy analysis and academic contexts, and so it is important to clearly define and explain the concept for its usage as the analytical framework for this paper – that is, in its application to policies for reinventing gender spaces for educational leadership futures.

As a concept, intersectionality has been interpreted in the literature as a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens, tool and framework (Hankivsky, 2014; Collins, 2015; Cho et al., 2013; Sigle-Rushton, 2013). This paper does not seek to distinguish between these interpretations, but rather to introduce the key aspects of what it means to take an intersectional approach to understand structural inequality to aid policymaking for creating gender spaces for educational leadership futures.

The intersectionality theory is traced to Crenshaw (1989) as she used the concept to refer to the double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women, as a critique of the dominant single-axis framework that is used to frame antidiscrimination laws, with its focus on the experiences of the most privileged members of subordinate groups (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw provided the following definition of intersectionality: "Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound

themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking” (Crenshaw, 1989). However, while Crenshaw was the first to use the term intersectionality, the concept did not represent a new way of thinking. Later, Loden and Rosener (1990) developed the ‘Diversity wheel’ concept as a framework for thinking about the different dimensions of diversity within individuals and institutions. Intersectionality has since evolved to provide a useful tool for thinking about how different characteristics intersect with systems and structures to shape a person's experience. It is important to point out at this point that due to the rapid increase in the application of intersectionality across many fields, there exists a variety of definitions of intersectionality in the literature. However, for the purposes of this paper, we point to some common themes and assumptions embedding the theory. Consequently, we submit the foundational elements of intersectionality to encompass:

- a. the acknowledgement that individuals are shaped by their simultaneous involvement with multiple interconnected social entities.
- b. The interaction between multiple social entities takes place within a framework of linked systems and power structures involving laws, policies, and governments. This suggests that the appreciation of inequality of power is key to understanding intersectionality.
- c. Systemic inequalities, that reflect relative privileges and disadvantages, are the consequences of the interaction between social entities, power relations and circumstances. Hence, people’s experiences of inequality can be enduring or temporary, and therefore creates unique lived experiences.
- d. Intersectionality is primarily a tool for understanding invisible power relations and how they shape inequality. Intersectionality looks at ‘interlocking’ systems of oppression and how this plays out in people's lives (see, Collins, 2015; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016; Hankivsky, 2014; Scott & Siltanen, 2016).

In order to understand the central tenets of intersectionality theory, we find it helpful to also point out what intersectionality is not. Intersectionality is not: a synonym for diversity; about adding up different kinds of inequality, and does not look to simply add up the sum of different oppressions; about pitting different people or groups against each other to assess who is most marginalised or disadvantaged; and looking to construct a hierarchy of inequality (Poverty and Inequality Commission, 2021). These imperatives of intersectionality in practice are best explained with illustrations that are found in the literature. Crenshaw (1989) has illustrated the concept thus:

Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double discrimination - the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women - not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women.

Christoffersen (2017) has recently given an illustration of intersectionality as: “A person is not, for example, a woman on one hand and disabled on the other; rather she is the combination of these at the same time, that is, a disabled woman. In this example her identity as a woman is shaped by her identity as disabled, and vice versa as the elements of identity are not lived or experienced separately”. So, 'intersectionality' refers to the interactions between the characteristics of inequality together with the wider characteristics that shape lived experiences of discrimination, inequality and privilege such as socio-economic disadvantage, occupation and care-experience (Christoffersen, 2019). These are identified to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, for individuals who are faced with discrimination (Mügge et al., 2018).

So, as part of its contribution to the gender debate, this paper applies intersectionality theory to the examination of different facets of inequality associated with gender issues in school leadership in all boys' senior high schools, and advocate for policies to re-invent genders spaces and futures for educational leadership futures. The paper therefore does not seek to examine all areas of gendered life and inequality as its scope. Rather, it discusses arguments that have been put forward by the data, and contextualizing these for future possibilities regarding gender co-existence in educational leadership – termed as, educational leadership futures. These arguments suggest that gendered inequality is visible in both public and private spheres. However, the validity of the arguments that gender inequalities are still entrenched and persist over time, place, and culture is contrasted with alternative claims from the data that gendered power relations, and for that matter inequalities, are gradually being eroded. Furthermore, the current academic focus on the concept of intersectionality regarding how variables like gender, tribe, family roles, social status, and culture intersect to define people's gendered experiences, is included in the discourse. Therefore, the study of women's educational leadership experiences will provide a framework to further examine these issues and address some of the debates.

### **Statement of the problem**

The problem that underpinned the study is that: it is uncertain how long the leadership successes made by female heads of all boys' SHSs and enabled by the support and collaboration from their male colleagues will persist and perpetuate gender spaces for educational leadership futures. This problem is borne from an environment in Ghana where women in educational leadership positions have experienced discrimination from their male counterparts (see Mensah, Odei-Tettey & Osaibo, 2014). Even when women have equal qualifications and achievements to that of their male counterparts, and in spite of their abilities and accomplishments, they are less favourably preferred. This stereotyping tends to reflect in evaluations and promotions, and consequently puts women at a tactical disadvantage for advancement (see Eagly & Karau, 2002). Despite these challenges, some women in Ghana have accepted to lead all-male SHSs with remarkable success.

### **Purpose of the study**

The study sought to investigate the sociocultural experiences of female managers and to explore how they have survived the patriarchal culture in the selected male SHSs in order to make policy recommendations for re-inventing genders spaces for educational leadership futures.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- a. To find out the socio-cultural experiences of female managers in the selected male SHSs in Ghana.
- b. To explore the support services and strategies used by female leaders to deal with patriarchal challenges in the selected male SHSs as a basis for making policy recommendations towards creating gender spaces for educational leadership futures.

### **Research questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the socio-cultural experiences of female managers in the selected male SHSs in Ghana?
- b. What support services and strategies do female managers use to deal with the patriarchal challenges in the selected male SHSs as a basis for making policy recommendations towards creating gender spaces for educational leadership futures?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The fundamental assumption of this paper is that, 'female managers can overturn the patriarchal challenges they face in the line of duty if they adopt appropriate strategies to use the support systems available to them in male senior high schools. This is founded on two fundamental concepts that are gleaned from research questions: socio-cultural experiences of female managers in male SHSs, and support services and strategies used by females to deal with patriarchal challenges in male SHSs.

### **Socio-cultural experiences of female managers in senior high schools**

Atta (2015) has said that social and cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes of society continue to perpetuate discrimination against women. So, male dominance, and the spectre of male interference, continues to be high and eminent even in this modern Ghana (Anewu, 2010). Gender discrimination in Africa is defined by the way culture has been shaped and this has created the perception that women cannot hold high leadership positions. Many researchers have indicated that women encounter huge challenges in assuming senior positions in organisations and this phenomenon is attributed to cultural perceptives that influence female participation. For example, women in Africa are perceived as domestic workers who should take care of family duties. Nukunya (1998) has asserted that in many Ghanaian societies, the traditional position is that a woman is never wholly independent. He postulated that a woman must always be under the guardianship of a man, and when she marries, her original guardian hands over some or all of his responsibilities for her to her husband. Also, traditional gender roles that have been socially

constructed affect women's leadership in Africa. Policy makers have also been cited as previously lacking efforts to promote women's progress in taking up high leadership positions (Mutabai, 2016). So, traditional gender roles and socio-cultural norms together with the selection process lower women's self-confidence and career aspirations. Promoting women's progress therefore calls for cultural change which will require the efforts and cooperation of many authorities, organisations, and policymakers (Arkorful, Doe & Agyemang, 2014).

Literature shows that much mistrust in women leadership is caused by a number of factors which include tradition and culture (Mensah et al, 2014, Moorosi, 2010); perception of school administration (Maseko, 2013); and stereotyped notions about women's leadership (Kitele, 2013). Literature has shown further that dual and conflicting roles are a major hindrance to women in leadership positions. Kitele (2013) has found out from the female heads that there is a conflict between domestic and professional roles with the reasons that schoolwork is so involving and interferes with domestic issues which give rise to conflicts. For example, as a child-bearer, the woman is expected to take care of the child and put away her career to meet the needs of her family (Mutabai, 2016; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Burke & McKeen, 1994). Furthermore, some African cultures define women in terms of what they should be or do for men. For instance, a married woman's major role is to enhance her husband's career goals, by providing him with moral and emotional support, and therefore women can only pursue their professional dreams after fulfilling their culturally accepted roles (Malovi, 2014). Beeghly (2014) has also noted that women's gender identities were embedded in responsibilities for care that extended beyond mothering young children and included the care of husband and adult children and grandchildren. In some cases, women intentionally avoided work outside the home to have time to maintain family relationships.

The concept of gender also connotes that the expectation held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men, and gender roles are learned through the process of gender role socialisation. Boys are generally taught to be masculine (interpreted as active, aggressive, tough, daring and dominant), whereas girls must be feminine, soft, emotional, sweet, and submissive. These traditional gender-role patterns have been influential in the socialization of children (Cornwell & Legersky, 2010). It is a gender role socialisation that leads females and males to behave differently, and the application of the traditional gender roles leads to many forms of differentiation between women and men. Apart from work, these gender roles are so pervasive in society and therefore leads to stereotyping which makes it difficult for males to work under the leadership of females (Alabi, Bahah & Alabi, 2013).

### **Support services and strategies used by females to deal with patriarchal challenges in SHSs.**

In the face of patriarchal challenges to female heads in leading all boys' SHSs, studies have indicated that women's way of leading enables them to deal with some of the challenges they face as female heads. Given equal opportunities and co-operation, women's leadership styles tend to be more transformative and inclusive than that of their male counterparts. This makes females more capable to adopt a collaborative management approach to leadership than men (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992) which is preferable for today's schools (Anewu, 2010). This assertion is confirmed

by Le (2011) when she said that, in spite of the difficulties with overwhelming huge workloads and domestic duties, women could be proud of their leadership because of the democratic and transformational leadership styles they embrace. This is one way that female heads use to deal with patriarchal challenges to enhance their performance. Mostly, female school leaders use various leadership styles and qualities to navigate their duties. These may include task-oriented, visionary, and participative leadership styles. These are types of leadership where the leader consults with the subordinates and embodies their suggestions in decision making (Okumbe, 1998). Female leaders are often too aware that when they use these types of leadership styles, they help to reduce the subordinates' stereotypes. This view is supported by Atta's (2015) argument that if a female leaders try to be more autocratic, the subordinates are more likely to complain because they expect women to be participative. Delegation of some duties goes a long way to break subordinates' stereotypes of women leadership. This may connote sharing responsibility with work colleagues. Through these types of leadership styles, the female leader can remain afloat in a masculine leadership world. Using their intuitive power, female leaders can transform the SHSs into centres of academic excellence (Kitele, 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study is underpinned by the nominalist ontological view of reality which argues that social reality has no external existence such that it can be objectively and dispassionately accessed, but rather it is the result of human thinking (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The study is also influenced by the constructivist epistemological view of reality which states that knowledge is constructed by subjects in their own different ways but not discovered. In line with these theoretical positions, the study adopted the interpretive paradigm which argues that social reality is created jointly through meaningful interaction between the researcher and the participants and in the socio-cultural context of the participants (Rugg & Petre, 2007). Consequently, a phenomenological research design was used to carry out the study. According to Pathak (2017), phenomenological research is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular phenomenon which has the primary objective to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon (Christensen et al., 2010). The research was conducted in 2 public male SHSs which are headed by females in Ghana where patriarchal culture is rife (the names of the schools and their locations are withheld in order to adhere to the ethical guideline of anonymity).

The population of the study comprised of: all females in leadership positions in the 2 all boys' SHSs headed by females; all teachers in the selected boys' schools; and all final year students of the schools. The final year classes were used because they have more experience with the female heads than the first- and second-year students. The population of females in leadership positions in school A was three and school B were also three making a total of six. The population of teachers in school A was 134 and school B was 168 making a total of 302. The population of students in

school A was 688 and school B was 946 adding up to 1634 students. The total population for the study was 1942. Out of this, maximum variation type of purposive sampling was used to select 30 participants from the categories due to their rich knowledge about the phenomenon of the study. This comprised 3 females in leadership positions (i.e., Headmistress, Assistant Headmistress and Female Head of Department), 5 teachers and 7 students respectively from each of the schools. The qualification for the selection of teachers was that she or he should have worked under the administration of the current female head for at least three years and above, and have knowledge of the heads' leadership experiences. The third category was students who were school prefects from the final-year class. They were so chosen for their experiences of their status as school prefects working with the female leaders. These students were put into two focus groups of seven students each. The six females in leadership positions and the 10 teachers were interviewed. So, the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Two separate interview guides were developed for each of the two categories of participants, and a focus group schedule for the students. The four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability were observed in the conduct of this research. These components respectively ensured:

- a. accurate identification and description of the problem investigated in the study and also constructive feedback from respondents,
- b. the presentation of conclusive and vivid information concerning the research sites and rich descriptions of perceptions of selected participants,
- c. a detailed description of the research process including data collection and analysis procedures,
- d. presentation of the findings in a way that would facilitate their corroboration and confirmation by others.

The data was analysed thematically. The coding was in four levels whereby the salient points were sifted out from the raw data. Cohen et al. (2011) described qualitative data analysis is an activity that involves organising, accounting for and explaining data. The data sets were triangulated to ensure authenticity of the data and to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (see Maree, 2010). All participants were told that taking part was voluntary. The researchers ensured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality (by referring to them with pseudonyms like: FT = Female Teacher; ST = Student; FH = Female Head; MT = Male Teacher), and fully informed them about the purpose and context of the study.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data obtained for this study are analysed and discussed under two main themes:

#### **i. Socio-cultural barriers to female heads managing male senior high school**

The discussion in this section relates to data that was gathered to answer the first research question: "what are the socio-cultural experiences of female managers in the selected male SHSs?" The data revealed that, males are perceived to be in a better position to head boys' SHSs and that female heads are not very welcome in boys' SHSs. Indeed, the data showed that there is discontentedness

among some staff concerning a female heading male dominated SHSs and the relevant role that female staff are supposed to play in boys' school. The Interview Respondent FH1, for example, said that, "there are factions within the school that detest females becoming head of the school. This breeds gender bias. However, the head promotes open administration and team work". The data revealed on the other hand that, students of male dominated SHSs are glued to female teachers' more than male teachers, and the boys have much confidence in their female teachers. They see female heads and teachers as surrogate mothers who empathise with their problems. From the FGD, Respondent ST1a said that:

personally, I will prefer a female to head a male school than a male because with the female we feel safe. We can get closer to her to share our problems and she is always ready to listen to us because she is a female. With a male head, we feel a bit scared to approach them. We are not sure what the male head will think of us if went to them with our problems - what is he going to think? will he insult or judge me concerning what I am saying? With the female head, we actually feel freer and more open to tell her what worries us.

Respondent ST3b concurred with this view: "I prefer a female head because our headmistress is caring. I am imagining that if a male comes, we will be treated like some military people. Even though the female head gives out punishments for offending students, I presume that a male head's kind of punishments will be very harsh". These views means that, male students do relate better with female teachers which include female heads. The Interview Respondent FH5 said that, the boys are more comfortable and open up to female teachers especially the older ones than the male teachers. The focus group discussion data corroborated the interview data and indicated from FGD 'A' that, students of male SHSs prefer female to head their school rather than male heads. This suggests that, although female heads may need male assistance, boys cannot do without females, neither at home or in school, and that boys feel at ease in the presence of female heads than male heads. FGD 'B' also showed that boys prefer females to head male SHSs. The Focus Group Respondent ST5b for example said that, "having experienced females as heads of the school right from the basic school prove that females are helpful in leading male dominated schools". The Focus Group Respondent ST3a also said that,

... just as boys feel the presence of our mothers at home and share our problems with them. Our headmistress is like a mother to us and I feel comfortable talking to her. Not like our fathers who are so busy and have no time for us. So, I prefer females to head boys' schools in order to feel the presence of motherhood even at school.

Interview respondent ST2b said that,

In terms of nutrition, at first, we used to eat little quantity of everything but now it has improved. Because she is a mother, she understands and has contributed to the improvement of our diet in school. Therefore, I will prefer a female headmistress in a boys' school and she can be supported by the male teachers.

The data is consistent with a view from Ramsook et al. (2016) that women have a critical role to play in preparing boys for life in the 21st century. They see themselves as counsellors, and also believe that as surrogate mothers they have a responsibility to teach boys the importance of respecting women. They want boys to develop a good sense of self, leadership skills, strong moral and ethical values, and a keen sense of responsibility to others. Many of the participants also regard themselves as positive role models for boys.

Then again, the data from two male teacher respondents suggested that, male teachers prefer females to head boys' SHSs because of their nice way of addressing boys' issues and their meticulousness in raising students from boys' SHSs. Interview Respondent MT6 said that, "unlike the male heads, females are meticulous in grooming boys. They do not overlook certain things like dressing, combing of hair, use of dormitories etc." Two female teacher participants and one male teacher participant agreed that, male and female teachers prefer either male or female who have the requisite skills to head boys' schools. Interview Respondent FT2 believes that, "the personality of the person in question is of utmost concern because experiences prove that some females can head male schools. However, in boys' schools where the students are known to have strong character, a male head would be preferred". The data further suggested that, majority of male teachers and few female teachers prefer a male to head boys SHSs. The later believe that due to their boisterous nature, male heads can intrude the privacy of male students without asking for permission. The Interview Respondent FT1 for example said that, "a female cannot head male institution in the sense that, unlike females, males are able to deal aggressively with their co-males". This view is affirmed by Helterbran and Rieg (2004) that parents and community members believe that males can effectively discipline male students than women.

Contrary to the views of male students, the data showed that, issues of gender stereotypes are prevalent among male teachers of boys SHSs., and they behave in gender stereotypical ways that confines the potentials of female heads. Some staff and (about 2% of) students perceived women to be weak for leadership in an all boys' SHS and therefore refuse to take directions from them. The interview Respondent FH5 said that "students do not portray any attitude of gender stereotyping but male teachers do, to the extent that they sometimes challenge the headmistress". The Interview Respondent FH3 added that, "most of the staff and some students perceive that women are weak. For that matter they refuse to heed to instructions from female leaders". The idea that male teachers find it difficult to work with female heads stems from the cultural backgrounds of such male teachers. According to the Interview Respondent FH1 "some of the male staff find it difficult to work with female leaders such that they, will indirectly refuse to do their work or do it haphazardly". The Interview Respondent FH6 said that, "some male teachers have the perception that the female head is just like their wives at home therefore, there is no need to be subordinates to them". Anewu (2010) believes that these attitudes are borne out of males' perception of women as arrogant.

The data catalogued a number of labels used to describe women who enter occupations considered to be the preserve of men, such as: "woman tiger", "woman-man" and "iron woman". In spite of

these views however, the data presents an idea that gender stereotypes in all boys' SHSs have no sufficient negative effect on the leadership of female heads in such schools because a female head who has the capabilities to head boys' school does not concern herself with issues of gender stereotypes but rather focuses on using every necessary leadership skill to prove her competence. Eddy (2009) has argued that female leaders thence have to be tough to overcome these perceived male dominant positions. Interview Respondent FH5 adds that "it is up to the female head to draw close and work with members of staff who are willing to help instead of allowing issues of gender stereotypes to influence the smooth running of her administration" because if left unchecked, these gender stereotypical issues will keep creating socio-cultural challenges for the female leader.

The data has revealed that, there are socio-cultural barriers that prevented female heads from taking certain decisions and actions in boys' schools. Consequently, the female head may need the help of male staff to execute certain actions which are socially unethical for a female to do. Such actions indeed may tend to intrude the privacy of the boys. These socio-cultural barriers also inhibit female teachers from teaching some specific subjects. The Interview Respondent FH3 said that such socio-cultural issues tend to create performance gaps for the female head:

There are decisions and actions you cannot take, not because you are not capable but because you are a woman. Women cannot do certain things in a male institution as entering the boys' dormitory unannounced. So, when it comes to inspection for example, the female head would fall on the male teachers to do the inspection. On a routine basis, these students think the female teachers including the head should not go into their bathrooms and rooms. However, this is a false notion because, even when we go round on inspection, the men will walk by and will not see some important details that the women will see. Once, I saw rubbish stacked under beds but the male teachers could not see it. Another thing that I noticed when I came to this school was, they preferred men teaching certain subjects like Mathematics, Science and even English Language which is a female dominated area. This wave has died down now because we have more women in this school than before.

So also, Interview Respondent FH5 claimed that,

Female teachers are not allowed to enter the boy's dormitories. When it comes to the home situation, the boys are closer to their mothers and we have a role to play in their lives. A point in time we were having assistant house mistresses but then the males were having problems with it because they felt it is a male thing so there is no need for us females to take part, so we were left out in the appointments.

In spite of these socio-cultural barriers, the data also revealed male teachers' contentment for working under female leaders, contrary to the previous view. According to the data, this is further enabled by the statutes of most public institutions that determines who should be the head of an organisation. Five male teachers said that, once a male staff is able to live with a woman, be it a mother or a wife, he should be comfortable with a female leader. This was supported by three

female teachers' assertion that male teachers have no repulsion about working with female leaders. What counts is equality and equity - considering shared responsibility rather than gender in leadership. The data indicated further that some religious beliefs also prevent women from holding leadership positions as they do not allow females to lead them.

The data from the focus group discussion refuted the conventional view that, women are vulnerable and incapable of taking leadership positions, and that female heads could head boys' SHSs better than male heads. Experiences prove that women have the innate ability to head and manage institutions such as schools so long as they are able to manage their homes:

In Ghana, women are perceived to be vulnerable, soft or second-class citizens. Meanwhile they are those who manage homes. It is without doubt that, so long as they are able to manage homes, they are capable of managing institutions such as schools and ensure development (Respondent ST3a).

This affirms the notion that female leaders are very competent to lead boys' schools. They are strict in ensuring discipline and punishing students when necessary.

The data showed that, "there is nothing like discrimination against women in the field of education" (Interview Respondent FH1). The embedding idea is that when it comes to the abilities and competencies for leading schools, gender issues do not become a factor. In education, quality and competence is what counts in choosing who should be a leader of a school including boys' schools. The Interview Respondent FH2 said that, "in educational leadership there is nothing like discrimination so long as the person in question qualifies. Rather, the discriminations emanate from socio-cultural backgrounds". Furthermore, the data showed that even where there are traces of discrimination, the heads have used team building or teamwork as a strategy to overcome it. This team effort involves engaging both male and female staff in all activities so that none will feel discriminated. The Interview Respondent FH1 for example said that, "the female head ensures all-inclusive type of leadership such that leadership roles are delegated to the men as well. By so doing, discrimination is reduced".

The data further showed that the traditional roles of female heads affected their leadership roles positively than has been previously believed. The findings from four female head participants showed that, the traditional motherly role of the female head is beneficial to them and the students rather than the previously held believe that these traditional roles interfere with their leadership. Their argument is that their traditional roles and experiences as mothers enable them to give the students holistic care, that is - providing needs in terms of academics, extra-curricular activities and socio-cultural skills which are necessary for the upbringing of the male students. The Interview Respondent FH2 said that, "the motherly attribute of the female head enables the students to confide in us. It places no hindrance to our work as a head". This subject was however perceived differently by two female head respondents who indicated that, the motherly role of the female head at home interferes with their administrative work. The Interview Respondent FH6 for example said that,

Traditional role as a mother of female leaders somehow interferes with their work in the sense that some of us heads who have children sometimes absent ourselves from school to attend to family issues. This is an issue with those of us who have little ones. Mothers who have grown up children do not have much problem.

This assertion is affirmed by Mutabai (2016) who has said that conflicting roles are a major hindrance to women in leadership positions. This is because as the child-bearer, the woman is expected to take care of the child and put away her career to meet the needs of her family. This perspective notwithstanding, three male and one teacher participants said that, female heads do not place family demands over administrative work. Interview Respondent MT1 argued: “the assertion that female heads place family demands over administrative work is untrue. This is because sometimes the female head is able to work till midnight before they attend to any other business” while Interview Respondent FT2 said that, “the assertion that female heads place family demands above administrative work does not hold. Experiences with the female head prove she is always on the job and balances school and family time”.

Within the context of the data presented so far, the subject of gender discrimination within the realm of school leadership is approached here in a very specific and different way. We do not intend to explore the various normative frameworks that could support equality in the workplace, such as appeals to basic human rights, social contracts, deontological duties or utilitarian concerns. Instead, we seek to bring an understanding to the tacit gender support systems that are inherent in school practices and the embodied effects of such support systems for female leadership. The data has indicated that despite an overt acknowledgement of socio-cultural barriers, women in educational leadership still experience approval and enjoy support from their male colleagues as well as the students they superintend to carry out their duties. In this context, the so-called “glass ceiling” or as the metaphor has recently been recast, the “leaking pipe-line” (Price Waterhouse Coopers 2007), has been sealed significantly by the existence of organisational statutes and policies, as well as attitudes of male employees and loyalty from male students.

Consequently, we seek to interrogate these support systems that encourage female leadership and the subtle gendered prejudices and expectations about how women lead that lie at the heart of the challenges many females face in finding their leadership role in schools, with the hope that these subtle prejudices will be acknowledged and work on to re-invent and advance gender spaces for educational leadership futures. The data has shown that these tacit support systems are partly institutionalized in everyday practices and partly structured by male preference and affinity to femaleness of leadership. These eventually shape individuals’ embodied existence within the schools, and also embolden some women and some men to unpack the implications that the interplay between gender and organizational practices has for leadership, and then device alternative leadership models and gender inclusive strategies of change to be used in the schools.

Within the feminist literature, there have been a number of approaches to understanding the differences between men and women and addressing matters of equality and opportunity which

are the key tools for reinventing gender spaces for leadership. So, this paper tries to draw out the implications that each of these approaches could have for leadership futures. This will bring clarity to our beliefs that the origins and manifestation of sexual differences have implications for the thinking that goes into leadership role(s) of women and men in organizations, and certainly the fact that this is a sine qua non for reinventing gender spaces for increased productivity in schools. We make a claim at this point that the subtle traditional gendered prejudices and expectations about how women and men lead embed the challenges that many individuals face in finding their leadership role in organizations.

The first of the approaches pertains to the subject of equality. In the leadership realm, the “equality” debate often challenges women to act as men have always acted in leadership or to do better. Consequently, women have had to use leadership practices that pertained to patriarchal organizations in which they find themselves. To achieve these goals for leadership, such female leaders often unconsciously imitate the predominantly male leadership stereotypes, and they end up making a mess of their roles in the sense that the male leadership stereotypes are very uncharacteristic of feminism. So, while equality-feminists succeed in making the argument for equal rights and opportunities, their efforts do not allow women to develop their individual leadership styles, and neither do they challenge existing stereotypes about leadership. Consequently, an alternative approach in feminism is to insist on respect for the differences between men and women, and an appreciation of the unique role that women could play in schools as explicated by the data about the special qualities they bring to all boys’ schools. The data concurs with feminists who have adopted this approach that women have their own unique voices or styles that should be included within leadership discourses. From the perspective of the data, it is possible to argue that the unique capacities, traits and predispositions of women are functional in terms of supplementing the gaps that are typically present within the existing school leadership corps such as the need for surrogate motherly role in all boys’ schools (see also Ely & Padavic 2007).

This approach may be countered as problematic however, because it tends to set up essentialist dichotomies between men and women. Per the data, it shows women to be more caring, more communicative, and more cooperative than men. Rosener (2011) has commented that the International Women’s Forum in 1984 used similar data but was seen as further attempt to solidify existing gender biases in their categorization of traits that respondents identified within themselves. In much of these surveys, female traits included being excitable, gentle, emotional, submissive, sentimental, understanding, compassionate, sensitive and dependent. Whereas male traits included being dominant, aggressive, tough, assertive, autocratic, analytical, competitive and independent. Being adaptive, tactful, sincere, conscientious, reliable, predictable, systematic and efficient were considered gender-neutral traits. This essentialist view point can be extended to present an unfavourable picture of female leadership. Gmür (2006) has argued that the unfortunate consequence of this essentialist approach is that women have always been associated with the inferior characteristic of the binary opposition: women are emotional, not rational, women are

impulsive, not goal-directed, etc. His empirical studies suggest that most respondents regard the various stereotypical male leadership traits as typical of the behaviour of a “good manager”. In that study, out of the number of ideal managerial traits, only two “feminine” traits are considered desirable for managers, i.e., being “adept at dealing with people” and “cooperative.” All the other ideal traits, like being analytical, competent, confident, convincing, decisive, efficient, foresighted, independent etc. are associated with the male stereotype (Gmür 2006).

So, these prejudices have been uncritically absorbed into the leadership discourses, and have led to the claim that feminist ethics essentially pursues “care ethics.” Borgerson (2007) has commented on the problematic conflation between feminist ethics and care ethics within the organisational ethics literature. She argues that ethics textbooks like that of Crane & Matten (2004) describe “care ethics” as a feminine approach that solves ethical problems through intuition and personal subjective assessment. Even though Borgerson does not deny that certain articulations of care ethics display feminist concerns, she argues that the association of care ethics with feminism tends to essentialize the gendered experience, and hence, a proper understanding of the causes of gender prejudices and marginalizing practices is never developed. She also points out that there are other “caring” ethical approaches, which are not at all feminist in orientation, such as that of Emmanuel Levinas and other philosophers working on what can be described as an ‘ethics of proximity’. These debate notwithstanding, the data has been emphatic about the relevance of female traits to leadership in boys’ schools and this makes a great case for creating gender spaces for educational leadership futures.

Orbach (2023) has also on another hand described the masculine traits of leadership as toxic masculinity and has consequently called for more deeper thinking about the phenomenon. She has argued vehemently that toxic masculinity has a certain usefulness and punch as a phrase because it expresses what some men put out into the world but it does not address the whys deeply enough. She has explained that until recently, and still to this day in many parts of the world, men are raised to be protectors - fighters and economic providers. She has argued that conscription (which refers to men being trained to kill) ended even in Britain only recently in 1960. Women, meanwhile, were being raised to be nurturers and carers – that is, to be midwives to their needs, to support their initiatives, whether or not the women worked also outside the home. Furthermore, the social systems that emerged as a result ensured that men were to be receivers of emotional support, and women to be receivers of economic support and “protection”. However, the 1970s saw the beginnings of enormous changes between women and men, which has led to today’s expanding notions of gender, which the paper sees as opportunity for reinventing gender spaces for educational leadership futures.

### **Support services and strategies used by females to deal with patriarchal challenges**

The data presented and analysed in this section sought to answer research question 2 regarding the support services and strategies that female managers use to deal with the patriarchal challenges in the selected male SHSs as contribution to efforts to reinvent gender spaces for educational leadership futures. The support systems and strategies used may be categorised into:

### **External support services for female heads**

The data showed that the successes of female heads in the all-male SHSs have made substantial achievement as a result of the support systems available. For example, the Ghana Education Service's (GES) policies are not gender biased which means that positions come with requirements that do not recognise the gender divide. These policies are open to both males and females except for the conventional maternity leave reserved for females. Interview Respondent FH6 said that, "there is nothing like special support specifically for females in leadership. Rather, there are equal opportunities to both male and female in management". The Interview Respondent FH5 added that, "except for maternity leave, all policies from GES are open to and cater for both male and female leaders". Such systems prevent female heads from sustaining needless gaps and stress in their careers that may tend to weaken their position and slow down their effectiveness as school leaders. The teacher participants also indicated that, the best support system available to female leaders to discharge their duties comes from the school and its staff. These encompass proximal accommodation, her office, adequate support from Housemasters, Board of Directors and old boys. The Interview Respondent FH2 said that, "there is a housing facility for the female head on campus" while the Interview Respondent FH3 said "House Masters work hard to support her". The above notwithstanding, the data revealed that female leaders are not given any special training to lead boys' schools. Interview Respondents FH1, FH2 & FH3 shared that there is no special training for female leaders to facilitate their duties in all-male schools.

### **Internal support services for female heads**

The data obtained from female head showed that, female heads feel secured around males. In the patriarchal context, female heads feel much secured when men are around. Interview Respondent FH1 for example said that, "there is security ... and no threats so long as the staff and the students are concerned". Again, the data showed that, the presence of people and respect from them provides security. Another way of ensuring security for the female head was described by Interview Respondent FH2 as "some male teachers make certain vital information available to me before any major happening takes place in the school. Such practices make the female head feel secured". The data again showed that support is given from parent of students and alumni which are very crucial to female headship and the entire school. The support from parents and alumni manifests in the commissioning of supplementary projects and services to those from government in the schools. The Interview Respondent FH1 said that "though government does not demand for parents' supports, the parents and the alumni provide financial support for the beautification of the school".

The data from six male teacher participants indicated their support for the female leader, which confirms the notion that, a well-organised institution unearths the zeal of the staff to support leaders. In this circumstance, most members of staff are willing to find the opportunity to render support to female leaders in a well-structured environment. According to the Interview Respondent MT1, "teachers follow the rules and the regulations in the school. They also ensure that students are at the right place, at the right time. We follow duty rosters to enable the various leaders to

contribute their part to the headmistress's administration". The Interview Respondent MT3 also said that, "some staff take up duties willingly". So, staff adherence to the code of conduct of the school is a great support to female heads which is complemented by picking up various roles (both academic and non-academic) in the school. The focus group discussion data from students corroborated the interview data regarding the support services the school provide for female leaders. This data set revealed that, provision of basic needs for female heads boosts their productivity. The school provides the basic needs of the female head in terms of shelter, security, transportation, sense of belonging and respect. The Focused Group Respondent ST3a emphasised this view that, "the school has provided the headmistress with a car, driver and security to make her work much easier".

### **Policy direction for support provision for female leaders**

The data further gave indications for policy direction regarding gaps in the support provision for female leaders. The female heads indicated that, periodic training sessions is a key gap in the support services available to them, and that such training sessions will help to reduce the leadership challenges they face. The idea is that such periodic in-service trainings will boost female leaders' morale to face the challenges and manage activities competently. Interview Respondent MT6 claimed that, "the GES must organise counselling and training programmes on how to handle patriarchal challenges for female heads in male institutions". Mutabai (2016) confirms this view with his claim that, top management support is an important factor that contributes to women's career success. These views show that organisational policy interventions have the tenacity to contribute to the success of female leadership. Interview Respondent FT2 said that, "newly appointed female heads must be taken through orientation by the previous head before they assume work. Also, the new female head ought to consult the former head for guidance. She ought to consider the view of others and improve human relations". The focus group discussion revealed that, the success of a leader lies with the staff because the female heads cannot lead in isolation of help from staff. Hence the female head within the context of organisational statutes must be encouraged to delegate responsibilities to the staff. The focus group respondent ST1a said that "... the head must be supported in making and implementing decisions" while the Focus Group Respondent ST1b said that, "Staff must support the head in enforcing and checking discipline". Again, the data indicated that, acceptance from students is vital to the administration of female heads. Inasmuch as female heads may not work directly with students, it is important she receives their acceptance. "Students make the head feel comfortable and accepted" (Focus Group Respondent ST1a).

### **Strategies used by Female Heads to deal with Patriarchal Challenges**

The data further indicated some strategies that female heads may use to deal with the patriarchal challenges they face. The female head participants revealed that, leadership does not thrive on hearsays and therefore any information that comes to the leaders' table must be checked before it is acted on. This enjoins female heads to be discreet and remain composed about information made known to them. Interview Respondent FH1 said that, "the head must not act based on what people

say. She ought to portray positive attitude towards everything she faces. She must foster team work and give no room for divisions. She ought to investigate issues properly before she acts on them". The data showed that, female heads are references for reinforcing good attitudes among staff. This means for example that, one cannot declare war and have peace, therefore in order to enjoy the peace they seek, they should be ready to harness peace. Thus, it is incumbent on female heads to create for themselves and their staff a conducive working environment devoid of tension. So, Interview Respondent FH5 said that,

as female heads, we should foster cordial relationship among everyone especially the male staff who feel they are in the best position to occupy headship position due to experience and age. In such cases, I give them certain responsibilities to make them feel part of the administration.

The Interview Respondent FH4 added that, "female heads must avoid tension and seek to be nice to everyone". Again, the female heads indicated that, subordinates complement female headship, implying that a leader cannot do all the work alone. Subordinates may hold the other half of the missing pair of the solution being sought. Female leaders therefore ought to delegate roles to subordinates and coordinate and monitor their timely outcomes in relation to set goals. Set targets must be communicated thoroughly, respected and adhered to by both female leaders and subordinates. Atta (2015) has argued in corroboration with this finding that if a female manager tries to be more autocratic, subordinates are more likely to complain because they expect women to be participative. Delegation of some duties goes a long way to break subordinates' stereotypes of women leadership. This will involve sharing responsibility with work colleagues. Other studies by Elisha and Edwards (2014) affirmed that the success of their schools was dependent on the female head delegating responsibilities, especially when working with males that come from a patrilineal background. They felt that by delegating tasks, men gained some legitimacy in their roles and it helped them to feel that they could contribute to some area of leadership within the school.

The teachers indicated that, fun activities ease tension amongst female heads and staff, so it is important to engage in periodic fun or tension releasing activities which in the long run tend to foster healthy relationships among people in the school. Thus, the quest to live cordially with staff, motivate them and strive to get them involved in leadership by creating spaces for their uniqueness and individuality, while spending quality time with them outside work hours tends to ease challenges of patriarchal culture. According to Interview Respondent MT4 "the female head ought to ensure cordial relationship amongst staff, tolerate staff for their unique characters and not to victimize those who pose problems". The Interview Respondent MT1 added that, "the female head ought to be a motivator and a team player. There must also be a time out of work for refreshment". Again, the teacher participants indicated that, female leaders ought to shun dictatorship. This means that, subordinates prefer and are open to leaders who involve them in their leadership rather than those who do not listen but impose their decisions. The Interview Respondent MT5 claimed

that, “the female head must become a servant instead of being bossy. Also, she must not create any scenario of gender discrimination but rather follow the rules”.

The data further showed that, staff and students need counselling and orientation on female headship in a patriarchal context so that they can render the maximum support needed. Interview Respondent FT1 argued that “there must be counselling sessions or annual retreats for students and staff where they would be educated on the ideal that females are equally capable of leading”. The data further revealed that, it is important for female heads to pay attention to their professional development in order to develop skills for competency as confirmed by Interview Respondent FT3 that, “as a leader, the female head must build herself and also ensure cordial human relationship for teachers and students”. The data again shows that, empowered staff are complements to female heads. A leader who involves staff in duties eventually replicates another leader who can act on their behalf when indisposed. Female heads should therefore be instruments for staff empowerment based on their potentials. Interview Respondent FT4 indicated that “the female head must empower the staff and involve them in the administration by giving them tasks apart from teaching, considering their strength, weaknesses and talents”. The data indicated that, patriarchs and matriarchs are reference points for leadership so female leaders ought to consult their predecessors and local education institutions while working collaboratively with their staff. The data explains that female leadership practices should not be characterized by masculinity as some women leaders tend to behave in very masculine ways to prove their competence for the job.

The focused group discussions converged with the interview data on the subject of building good working relationships. This data set agreed that most subordinates tend to feel comfortable around leaders who come down to their level to interact with them, as argued by Focus Group Respondent ST1a that, “in order to ensure cordial relationship, the female leaders ought to be meeting the students intermittently to open up issues to them and to hear from the students as well”. Again, the data showed that, female leaders are to show bravery in order to lead boys’ school. Women are known to be soft. However, each position comes with its own required attitude and posture. For example, boys need to be brought up in a way to prepare them to meet the rigours of life. This cannot be done by the natural soft and pampering posturing of women. Thus, female leaders need to be trained to live up to the difficulties that boyhood impose. Respondent ST1b said that, “students, especially boys need hard training to enable them to cope with difficult times in life. Therefore, the female heads must be trained to suit such task”. So, female heads must be trained to be both flexible and firm to stand the pressures of patriarchy. The data consequently indicated that, diverse opinions are good for female leadership. However, when it becomes a habit, it makes one look weak and not firm as a leader. So female heads should maintain a good balance of consulting others especially men, but they also ought to be firm in taking decisions. Respondent ST1b confirmed this view by saying that, “though the female head would have to consult others in decision making, she must however, be firm in taking decisions”.

From the point of view of policy directions as prescribed by the data, we want to examine whether it is possible to transform leadership theory and practice through an engagement with the variety

of ways that have been recommended for both men and women to approach their leadership roles and how these will inure to reinventing gender spaces for educational leadership futures. What seems to be required is leadership models that allow individuals to lead in their own unique ways, instead of conforming to some pre-conceived gender expectations as discussed earlier. We therefore explore the theoretical models of leadership that may create a framework for gender spaces through understanding and adopting uniquely individual leadership styles. In the process, we shall recast important leadership notions, such as “authenticity” and “vision,” in more gender-inclusive terms for educational leadership futures.

Werhane and Painter-Morland (2011) have related recent developments in relational leadership and complexity leadership to the way women lead in organizations. They emphasise that even though complexity leadership seems to describe leadership styles that are associated with the socially constructed “feminine” style of leadership, it is a model that suits many men’s leadership preferences as well. These discourses make it relevant for us to explore at this point, and reconstruct a new model of leadership for future growth of educational organisations. Such a model draws on systemic leadership, which is not necessarily restricted to individuals appointed to positions of authority. It is rather an important departure from the ‘great man theories’ of leadership, and their associated sexist assumptions. Systemic leadership is informed and supported by a variety of discourses that range from Peter Senge’s work on organizational learning and change (1999) to Karl Weick’s sense-making theories (1993; 1995). The basic assumption of systemic leadership is that an organization cannot properly learn, change or create meaning without the sharing of information and cooperative agreements. In this sense, Senge and Kaufer (2000) speak about “communities of leaders,” while others make reference to “distributed leadership” (Friedman 2004), or relational leadership (Maak & Pless, 2006).

An influential definition of systemic leadership is provided by Collier and Esteban (2000) who describe leadership as “the systemic capability, distributed and nurtured throughout the organization, for finding organizational direction and generating renewal by harnessing creativity and innovation.” Understanding leadership as an emergent, interactive and dynamic phenomenon allows one to distribute leadership responsibilities and privileges throughout an organization’s workforce (Edgeman & Scherer, 1999). Systemic leadership therefore involves a number of different leadership dynamics. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) explain these leadership dynamics as ‘administrative,’ ‘adaptive’ and ‘enabling’ leadership. Administrative leaders play the more formal leadership roles of planning and coordinating organizational activities. It is important to note that though systemic leadership functions are understood in more distributed terms, this does not necessarily mean that formal leadership positions and hierarchies become redundant or have to be disbanded. Indeed, it is very important that gender-sensitivity is encouraged through main managerial responsibilities like performance targets setting, conduct of performance reviews, and engaging in mentoring activities. So, it is necessary for people appointed to formal leadership positions to be gender-sensitive and actively play a role in thinking through the gender

repercussions of the decisions they make in the organisation. Furthermore, the role of administrative leaders connotes real change in practices and belief systems which requires the acknowledgement and nurturing of other leadership roles. This sets the platform for 'adaptive' leadership functions that creates a 'collaborative change movement' that enables adaptive outcomes to emerge from multiple sources due to the dynamic interactions of interdependent agents. Consequently, the direction and priorities that focusses the organization's efforts and activities develop unconsciously as an unanticipated and unexpected consequence of the routine interactions between many different members of the organization rather than stemming from the top of the managerial hierarchy. This approach to leadership creates spaces that enable all members of the organization to take initiative and responsibility (show of leadership) as and when the situation calls for it. These spaces permit the staff to garner their innate strengths and abilities to lead in their own and unique ways. In essence, these features of adoptive leadership show logically that this model is opposed to stereotypical leadership behaviours. It rather calls for unique responses that are suited for specific situations and set of relationships. In this respect, it creates spaces for women leaders to grow their own unique style of leadership.

The third leadership dynamic is what Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) refer to as that of 'enabling leadership', which provides the catalyst to facilitate the emergence of adaptive leadership within organizations. It often involves a complex interplay between administrative and adaptive leadership. Enabling leadership usually require some form of authority, but it entails an active involvement in the boundary situations that organizational members are faced with. Enabling leaders tend to engage in cooperative strategies, foster interaction, supports and enhances interdependency and stimulates the adaptive tension that creates the gender spaces for the emergence of new patterns of leadership. The data has shown, and this is corroborated by Uhl Bien et al. (2007) that all three leadership roles necessarily coexist within the two schools. The question that remains however is how adaptive and enabling leaderships can be acknowledged, recognized and rewarded within these educational organisations.

Nevertheless, the systemic leadership model is important because it provokes discourses to rethink certain leadership stereotypes that are often uncritically perpetuated within organizations and are inimical to leadership development. This model provides the *raison d'etre* for rethinking authenticity in the context of educational leadership futures. The concept of 'authenticity' is here connected with the consistent way in which an individual acts in accordance with his or her personal traits and beliefs. However, this can lead to some measure of inflexibility that makes the individual incapable of adapting to different or emerging situations and relationships in practice. Systemic leadership in this context calls for another understanding regarding leadership roles due to the fluid nature of leadership responses. This view is very much discussed in contemporary leadership literature. Porras et al. (2007) discusses the issue so succinctly thus: great leaders are too aware that over time, their role may change in a manner that, the person who takes direction from you and falls under your supervision today, on another day, may become your boss. This

same individual could even become your client over time. These issues make it necessary to preserve organisational relationship as a kind of ‘virtual team’ even as roles change (see Porras et al., 2007). This calls for authentic relational responsiveness, connoting that in order to be authentic, individuals have to respond appropriately and realistically to the substantive situation. This logically calls for the awareness and acknowledgement that reality in terms of the relational dynamics between people in an organizational context is not static. It is always complex and dynamic.

The data has shown that both students and staff do not want to see their female heads mimicking stereotypical male leadership styles, or conforming to tacit expectations regarding how leaders ought to talk, walk and make decisions. Female leaders who do that are perceived to be ‘inauthentic’. The irony associated with this phenomenon is that women are condemned whether they do it or not. If they conform to the male leadership stereotype, they are seen as inauthentic, and if they do not, their leadership is either not recognized at all, or considered inferior to that of men (Eagly & Carli 2007). This provides the rationale for re-examining the meaning of authenticity. The point is that women can respond quite authentically to the tacit expectations that embed one situation and resist these same expectations in a different situation. These experiences do not express a lack of authenticity. It is rather mirror’s the institutionalized prejudices that constantly face women, and the strategies that individual women adopt to deal with them. So, it is imperative for organizations to pay attention to these issues in order to get the understanding of the tacit practices of discrimination that inform the relationships between their staff, and to look for ways to change them to reshape educational leadership futures. From the purview of educational leadership futures, it is necessary for individuals to draw on their own strengths, sensibilities and perspectives as well as using their own unique styles to navigate their leadership roles as tool for reinventing gender spaces.

### **Intersectional approach to policy for reinventing gender spaces for educational leadership**

These exigencies for systemic leadership make a case for integrating intersectional theory in policy making that seek to reinvent gender spaces for educational leadership, and it is directed at one key question: just how interconnected are inequalities across different sites of social and organisational life in these all boys SHSs? According to Crenshaw (1991), the focus of an intersectional approach to policy making is to highlight the importance of recognizing multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is created. For the purposes of this paper, the ‘intersectional approach’ can be best understood as a way of identifying, understanding and tackling structural inequality in the schools’ context that accounts for the lived experience of female leaders with intersecting identities. For example, intersectionality helps us to understand how female heads experience leadership in the 2 male schools, as a result of their identities and unequal power dynamics. Understanding these differences facilitates the development of more effective policies that tackle structural disadvantages experienced by these female school leaders, and help to reinvent spaces for female leaders’ collaboration with their male staff for effective leadership. A

key feature of an intersectional approach is that it does not give a higher status to any one inequality or experience of discrimination. Hankivsky et al. (2014) have claimed that:

intersectionality encourages critical reflection that allows researchers and decision makers to move beyond the singular categories that are typically favoured in equity driven analyses (e.g., sex and gender in sex and gender-based analysis) ... to consider the complex relationships and interactions between social locations.

Scott-Villiers and Oosterom (2016) have said that adopting an intersectional approach in policy making also calls for policymakers and analysts to “analyse their own power dynamics as much as the world they wish to change”. This means that the intersectional approach is not just about considering the experiences of those at the intersection of multiple characteristics but, it is about policymakers and analysts assessing their own experiences and how this impact on their ability to develop, deliver and evaluate policies in an equitable way. Furthermore, the intersectional approach in policy making requires evidence to be adduced for the context, including the historical and contemporary structures of inequality in wider society, and within local contexts (Christoffersen, 2017). The local contexts for the female school leader may include, the school, the District Education Office and the community in which they live and work. So, it is important to examine the dynamic interaction between female school leaders and institutional actors such as the Ghana Education Service (GES) staff in the district and the schools as these provide a more comprehensive examination of policy direction for reinventing gender spaces for educational leadership futures. Hankivsky (2012) has outline a number of useful approaches towards the application of intersectionality in the policymaking process.

Recent years have seen criticisms from academia and gender activists that gender inequalities still persist in public spaces in Ghana, and the approaches used so far for leveraging gender inequalities in the country have been limited to the use of a separate single characteristic approach to policymaking. Hankivsky (2012) believes that such phenomenon necessitates the adoption of intersectional policy making approach which explores major cross-cutting policy agendas aimed at reducing gender inequality to reinvent gender spaces for educational leadership futures. To achieve this, policy makers will have to use the intersectional approach to analysing the gender-leadership problems and developing solutions for them. Equally important in this regard are the opportunities to use the approach to also monitor and evaluate the resulting leadership futures outcomes.

### **Concluding with Accelerating the Shift to Reinvent Gender Spaces**

This paper has argued that the origins of discriminatory practices in educational organizations lie hidden in everyday practices, habits and interactions. This emphasise that gender stereotypes are alive and well in such organizations, and that addressing the prejudices is fundamentally a difficult task. In the first place, one has to acknowledge the ingrained social practices and beliefs about the capabilities of both men and women, which play a role from a very early age and are solidified in

the workplace. To address these prejudices, society has to start rethinking the feedback and advice it provides to children and students in the course of their early development and education on this subject. Furthermore, organizations have to also create new role models and look for mentors who have found their own unique leadership styles, while realizing at the same time that society and its embedded systems are constantly shaped and reshaped through thoughts and everyday workplace practices. These ideas will lead to creating spaces within which different types of leadership practices could emerge. The analysis has shown that systemic leadership models allow for a variety of leadership roles and styles to coexist in an organization. The difficulty however pertains to acknowledging these various roles, and making sure that they are duly recognized, accommodated and used. Surmounting this difficulty will result in unearthing a lot of inspiring stories about people's authentic responses to organisational challenges, and also realise how both men and women intuitively come across visionary ideas and practices in and through their engagement with others. This will thrive in organizational environments where workers are free to become the kind of leaders that infuse their organisations with creative new solutions and practices. This plausibility of constantly becoming a new kind of leader will enable both men and women to explore the full dimensions of their innate capacities, and enable them to serve their organizations, themselves and the broader society to the best of their multiple capabilities.

Based on the data and the arguments put forward so far, our concluding contention is that, we can usefully focus on three aspects of gender spaces to continue to address the leadership issue of gendered inequality in innovative and more fruitful ways. These are: to further the contemporary debate and emphasis on intersectionality in relation to gender inequality; to highlight the increasing academic focus on masculinity and gender relations; and to rethink the roles males can play to achieve more successes for advancing female leadership futures. Thus, in addressing this gendered inequality issue in more innovative ways, it is useful to advance the contemporary discourse and emphasis on intersectionality in relation to gender inequality and to highlight the increasing academic focus on masculinity and gender relations and its link to feminism. This strategy for addressing the issue will tackle the challenges of gender spaces by getting to the structural and institutional causes of inequality. One key method to do this is the acknowledgement of many, interconnected inequalities, as well as having an openness to work with diverse kinds of partners in a variety of ways, especially males. Consequently, Ghana's policy makers, academics, and gender activists will be showing a positive sign towards building good gender spaces by constantly thinking through the possibilities of an intersectional approach in different contexts, despite the complex issues this raises.

We have argued with evidence from the data that there is in the making, an educational leadership shift within the context of misogyny. But this is happening more slowly than is necessary due to what the data pointed out to be the embodied and institutionalized roots of the socio-cultural barriers in the workplace. There has been an unexamined assumption or perhaps a mantra that lies at the heart of this shift - the idea that females in leadership positions in the educational sector have

been receiving quantum support and collaboration from their male colleagues at work, and this is a necessary condition for productive female leadership futures. The slow pace of this shift further shows that simply placing women in leadership positions is not enough to re-invent gender spaces for educational leadership futures in Ghana. Social attitudes matter a great deal. If female leaders are treated with social disdain, and if derision and hostility lower their status despite their title, women will be deterred from their jobs. We therefore conclude with some recommendations to speed up the culture change that will propel women into shared leadership with men and sustain the needed shift. These are:

- a. Speaking out together: More male leaders need to take responsibility for driving this change - and women must help by welcoming males into the debate by connecting male and female leadership networks.
- b. Active intervention: organisations need to engage in active interventions such as using quotas or targets to force change where resistance is greatest.
- c. Transparency: Transparency is a powerful stimulus to change, and this calls for clear data that no one can dispute to make arguments for change to be accepted.

So, the paper concludes with a view that the study of gender spaces for leadership in relation to gender inequalities, relations, and experiences must continue with the relatively recent exploration of intersectionality if the theoretical analysis of leadership futures is to be enriched to reinvent the concomitant gender spaces. We seek to emphasise that, to set the agenda for a more equal leadership futures, society and organisations will need to link gender much more closely to other social inequalities found in religion, culture, society and organisations. In order to achieve all of the above, Kaloski-Naylor (2017) reminds us that "... we need wider visions of resistance, ways out of the 'to and fro' of arguments which seem to move us closer to disaster. This is what thinkers can offer..." Kaloski-Naylor's view enjoins academics, practitioners, and activists continue to find new ways of speaking to each other on the issue of gender inequality in the effort to reinvent gender spaces for leadership futures. In so doing, as we corroborate with Robinson (2017) to argue that, the boundaries between academia and academics, civic and political institutions, and those who construct knowledge outside of such institutions, including activists in everyday life, that have become more fissured will have to be blurred by necessity.

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