



Advancing Women in Leadership Journal

The first online professional, refereed journal for women in leadership

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Volume 30, Number 22

2010

ISSN 1093-7099

Unmasking the Sociocultural Constraints to Career Growth of Married Women in Ghanaian Organizations

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Abstract

This study investigated the question of how culture and activity can be explored towards understanding the professional career development of married women and the relative constraints associated with such development in the Ghanaian environment. Guided by the cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT) framework, data was collected from a sample of 141 married Ghanaian women professionals engaged in white collar jobs in the public and private institutions located in Accra. It is established that the acceptance by the Ghanaian traditional society of the married professional woman as a capable person who can equally perform in an organization and thus need to be trusted, supported and recognized is of relevance to her career development. This observation provides learning on the impact of the inflow of socio-cultural dynamics into a gender-oriented organizational life and the complexities that it generates in understanding the constraints to the professional career development of married women.

Keywords: Sociocultural constraints; professional married woman; career growth; organizational culture; organizational constraints

Citation: Sanda, M. A., & Sackey, J. (2010). Unmasking the sociocultural constraints to career growth of married women in Ghanaian organizations. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 30(22). Retrieved from http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl_wordpress/

Introduction

In the Ghanaian socio-cultural environment, most married women who work as professionals in organizations are mostly confronted with the challenges of trying to draw a fit between their professional personal-selves, as shaped by their organizational culture, and the behaviors they are expected to portray as shaped by established socio-cultural norms (Sackey & Sanda, 2009). In this regard, the societal roles of most professional women as wives are clearly defined and this has evolved the perceived notion by most Ghanaian women that they have no alternative but to endure the impact of marriage as a cultural artifact on their professional career development. The question that emerges here is how can culture and activity be explored towards understanding the professional career development of married women and the relative constraints associated with such development in the Ghanaian environment? In other words, how can the contradictions entailed in the dual effort of the professional married woman to draw a fit between her marriage (as a socio-cultural artifact) and the organization's culture (as an organizational artifact) of her workplace be analyzed and understood?

In the pursuit of finding answers to these questions, cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT) was used to appraise the dual role of the Ghanaian professional married woman (as an individual) in trying to relate to both her socio-cultural settings and the organizational culture, and which two cultural artifacts tend to conflict, with consequent impact on her career development. The use of CHAT is informed by the fact that it is one among a number of approaches that move away from the individualist and mentalist notions of human development, toward viewing it as embedded within sociocultural contexts and intrinsically interwoven with them. In underlying the conceptual approach, this study related to the observation by Holzman (2006) that among the numerous articulations of organizational activity theory is a psychology that focuses not on the individual but on the interaction between individual systems of artifacts and other individuals in historically developing institutional systems. This is motivated by the sense derived in Polkinghorne's (1983) observation that “scientific activity for the ‘systems’ system of enquiry involves conceptualizing the phenomena under investigation as a totality by defining its specific organizing principles, and showing that the events are the results of the interaction of these principles with the structures behind the event” (p. 166). This observation by Polkinghorne, as argued by Sanda and Fälholm (2005), is underlined by the argument that activity theory is both forward looking and emancipatory in its implications. It encourages exploration of the origins of these patterns, of what presently sustains them, of the imagery used in describing them, of the inconsistencies and conflicts that they embrace, and of the stimulation that new challenges may provide.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural–historical activity theory (CHAT) is known to belong to a vast family of sociocultural theories united in a quest to overcome the pitfalls of traditional cognitivist thinking about human development. The base of such cognitive thinking, as Stetsenko (2005) noted, is the Marxism notion that it is a mistake to theorize society and history in terms of the laws of individual behavior. This is based on the presumption that history, economy, and society, obeys social and historical laws, not the laws of the individual psyche. Yet, this presumption never

prevented the founders of CHAT, from theorizing the individual psyche in terms of society (Stetsenko, 2005).

Conceptualization of the Individual, Society and Culture

One of the current and most distinctive ideas of CHAT, as outlined by Stetsenko (2005), is that human psychological functioning and development are object-related. The grounding premises of activity theory, however, are much broader. One of the central pillars of CHAT is the idea that human development is based on active transformations of existing environments and creation of new ones achieved through collaborative processes of producing and deploying tools (Stetsenko, 2005). These collaborative processes, which involve the development and passing on, from generation to generation, the collective experiences of people, ultimately represent a form of exchange with the world that is unique to humans - the social practice of human labor, or human activity. In these social and historically specific processes, people not only constantly transform and create their environment; they also create and constantly transform their very lives, consequently changing themselves in fundamental ways and, in the process, gaining self-knowledge. Therefore, human activity - material, practical, and always, by necessity, socially collaborative processes aimed at transforming the world and human beings themselves with the help of collectively created tools - is the basic form of life for people (Stetsenko, 2005). This practical, social, purposeful activity (or human labor) as the principal and primary form of human life, and the contradictions brought about in its development, lie at the very foundation and are formative of everything that is human in humans.

The “Individual-Society-Culture Trichotomy” as Subject of Analysis

In the view of Blunden (2007), CHAT is founded on a trichotomy. In supporting this view, Blunden noted that several suggestions can be found for such a basic Trichotomy, citing as examples, Leontiev’s (1978) mentioning of the subject–activity–object relation, and Vygotsky’s (1987–1999, Vol. 3.) mentioning of the stimulus–psychological tool–response relation. According to Blunden (2007), “in the American tradition, Peirce (1931–1958) has object–sign–interpretant” (p. 255). Blunden noted that it is a mistake to theorize individual agency in terms of interactions between social and individual levels or domains, despite the strong temptation to do so. In this respect, the basic unit of analysis (or trichotomy) which encompasses both individual and social must be the subject. Blunden explained that in CHAT terminology, the trichotomy is: (a) the individual, that is, the single, mortal human psyche; (b) the culture, that is, the mass of objects or artifacts that are inherited from the past and only spring into life when they are used by individuals—buildings, languages, crops, laws, libraries, technology, and so on; and (c) the society, that is, the particular, continuing corporate activities in which individuals use culture in collaborative activities or conflict and are taken up by one individual as another leaves off. He points out that each of the three aspects of human life listed above can be the subject of sciences in their own right, since psychology is concerned with the individual psyche, natural science and the arts with culture, and the social sciences with society. In this respect, the individual psyche can be understood only as an aspect of this larger, fundamental unit of analysis - the subject (Blunden, 2007). Expatiating on these, Blunden noted that the same is true of the study of social institutions like business enterprises, states, markets, social movements, and so on, as much as it is also true of the study of language, art, technology, nature, and so on. According to Blunden

(2007), “this poses the problem of reframing the study of the social and cultural aspects of mind based on the subject as the common unit of analysis” (p. 255 - 256).

Based on the above perspective, Blunden (2007) proposed that the subject should be conceived as entailing three components (i.e., the unity of the individual, the particular, and the universal). He explained that first, the subject reflects the individual, simply understood as a mortal individual human spirit or psyche, with whatever capacity for moral responsibility, whatever knowledge, beliefs, and ideology they hold and with a certain identity or self-consciousness. Second, the subject is also the ensemble of social relations and activities, including both collaborative and conflictual relations, both production relations and the entire range of activities, whether in the private domain, the economy, the arts, or whatever. Third, the subject signifies the universal, material products of culture, inclusive of language, the means of production, technology and science, the land, buildings, and so on. As Blunden clarified, this conception of the subject, which is abstracted from various formulations to be found in Hegel’s work, provides the unit of analysis adequate to the study of the married professional woman-marriage-work life trichotomy. As Blunden argued, what is important about Hegel’s individual-particular-universal trichotomy is that it is a universal relation. In some instances the ‘individual’ might be an individual psyche, in another instance, the ‘individual’ might be the individual human organism or an artifact or social formation. The form that is ascribed to the ‘individual’ depends on the object of study, and the problem to be solved. It represents the basic structure of a unit of analysis or notion (Blunden, 2007).

Thus, the individual is to be seen as a concrete abstraction, meaning that the individual human psyche is absolutely confined to one organism separate from all others. And yet the entirety of human history is present in it (Blunden, 2007). In this regard, Blunden observed that once the process of internalization is complete, the distinction between the artifact (marriage, in this study), which may begin its life as an objective material thing outside consciousness (the consciousness of the married professional women, in this study), albeit a thing endowed with social significance (by the Ghanaian society, in this study), has become integrated into the psyche itself and cannot be said to be something other than the psyche. As Blunden explained, the same can be said of the activity of consciousness in relation to other people and an artifact.

Methodological Considerations

The value of any theory, as Leontiev (1974) noted, is not whether it provides an objective representation of reality, but rather how well it can shape an object of study, highlighting relevant issues. As argued by Jarzabkowski (2003), activity theory may be operationalized through the identification of a series of analytic lenses, one of which is the activity system itself and its corresponding interpretative context that provides the motives and meaning within which strategy as practice occurs. Thus, the theoretical approaches in CHAT that places culture and activity at the center of attempts to understand the challenges faced by professional married women relative to the dialectics between their professional development and the societal perspective of marriage as a cultural artifact is explored. The mediational function of such a cultural artifact and its control as stimuli will be interpreted to mean that the mental processes of such women can also be changed. This is based on the conception that new mental structures, which allow learners to move beyond instinct and take control over their worlds, are produced (Vygotsky, 1978). In order to achieve such realization, this study followed the qualitative

research process which is defined by three interconnected, generic activities that go by a variety of different labels, including theory, methods, analysis, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. As it is explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, rationale, cultural and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology and analysis), that is the researcher collect empirical materials bearing on the question and analyses and write about them. The cross-sectional design approach is used for this study. Thus, the approaches used for both data collection and analysis in this regard are highlighted in the subsections that follow.

Data Collection

The empirical approach for this study involved the collection of data on how the sociocultural and organizational variables influence the interrelationship between married Ghanaian women professional and the two institutional settings (i.e., the sociocultural and the organization's cultural settings). Additional data on dimensions such as, autonomy, cohesion, trust, pressure, support, recognition, fairness, discourse, appropriation and social relations were also collected.

The target population for the study was managerial women. Participants for this study were a sample of women in managerial positions in a southern, metropolitan city of Ghana. The managerial women sampled were highly educated with either university degrees or with professional qualifications and had managerial responsibilities in their organizations and were mainly lower to upper level managers in their organizations. The metropolitan city was chosen as the primary setting for this study due to its high concentration of major and key organizations and institutions which engage highly skilled women in Ghana, and also due to its cosmopolitan atmosphere. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 141 were returned. Out of the respondents, 77 (54.6 %) were from private organizations and 64 (45.4 %) were from public organizations. All the 141 questionnaires returned were usable. This constituted a response rate of 94% of respondents. Distributions of the organization category, educational levels, number of years worked in organization, and number of years in managerial position of the 141 respondents whose questionnaires were used are shown below in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 respectively.

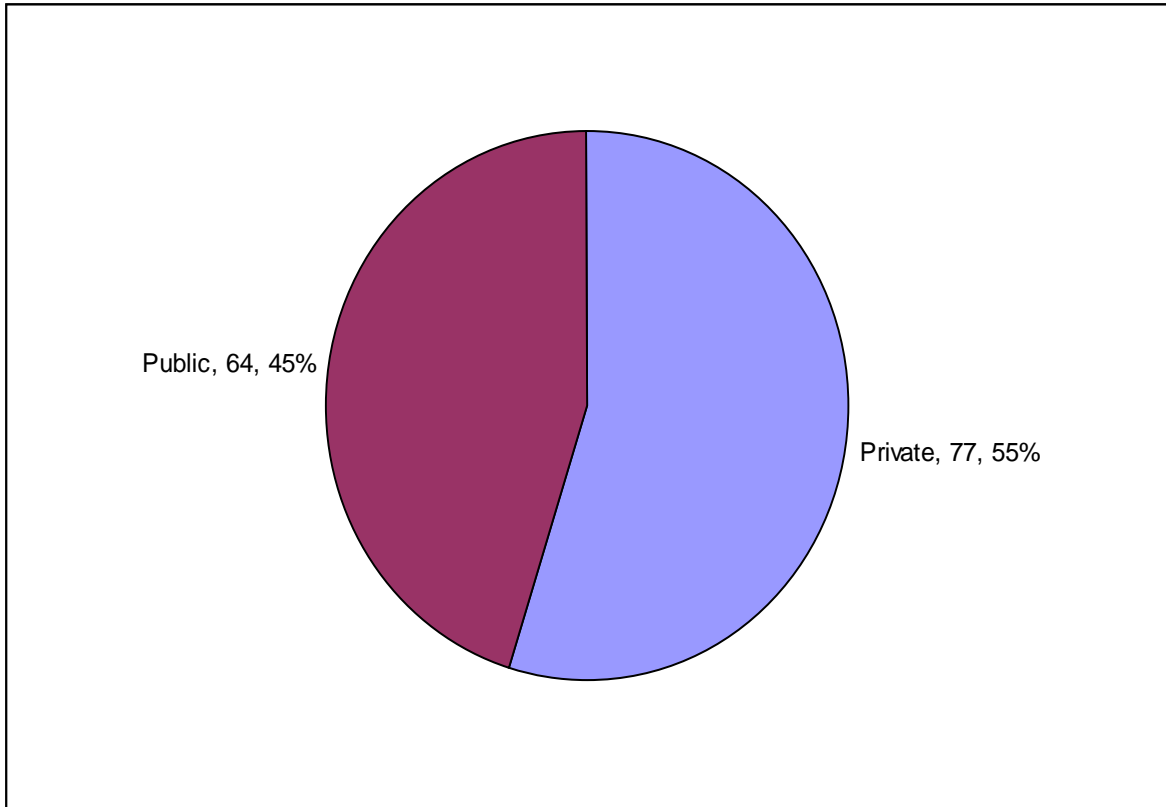


Figure 1. Distributions of respondents' organization category.

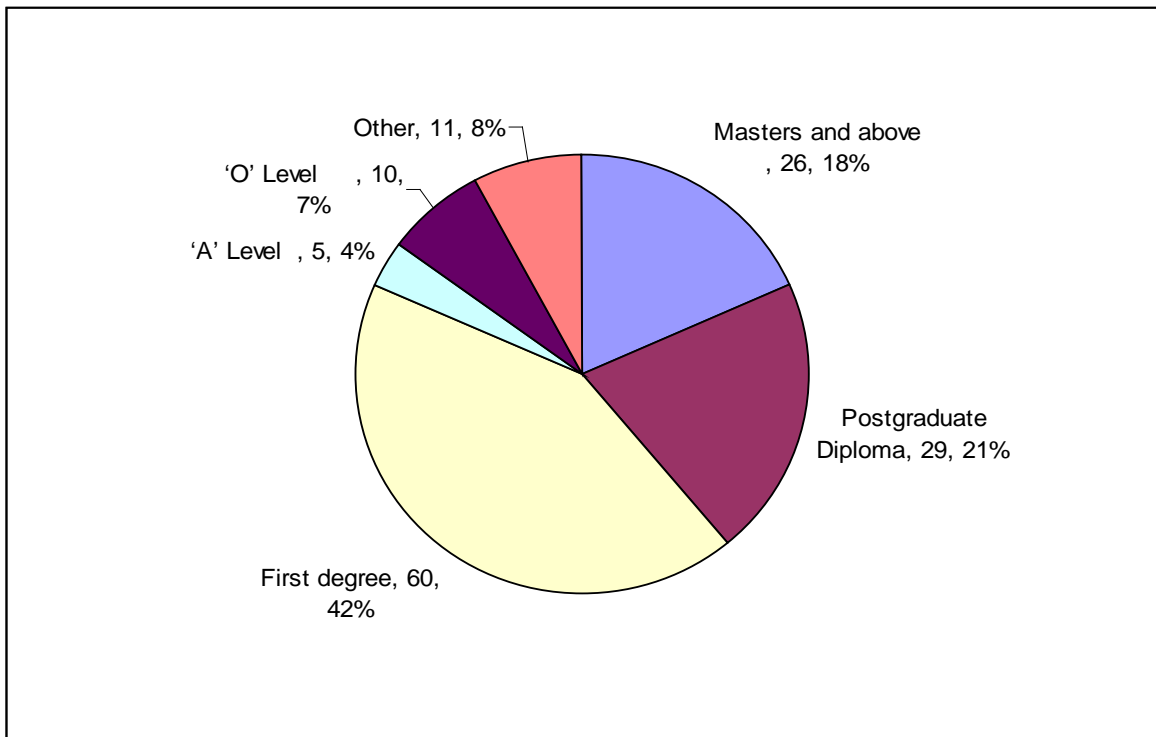


Figure 2. Distributions of respondents' educational levels.

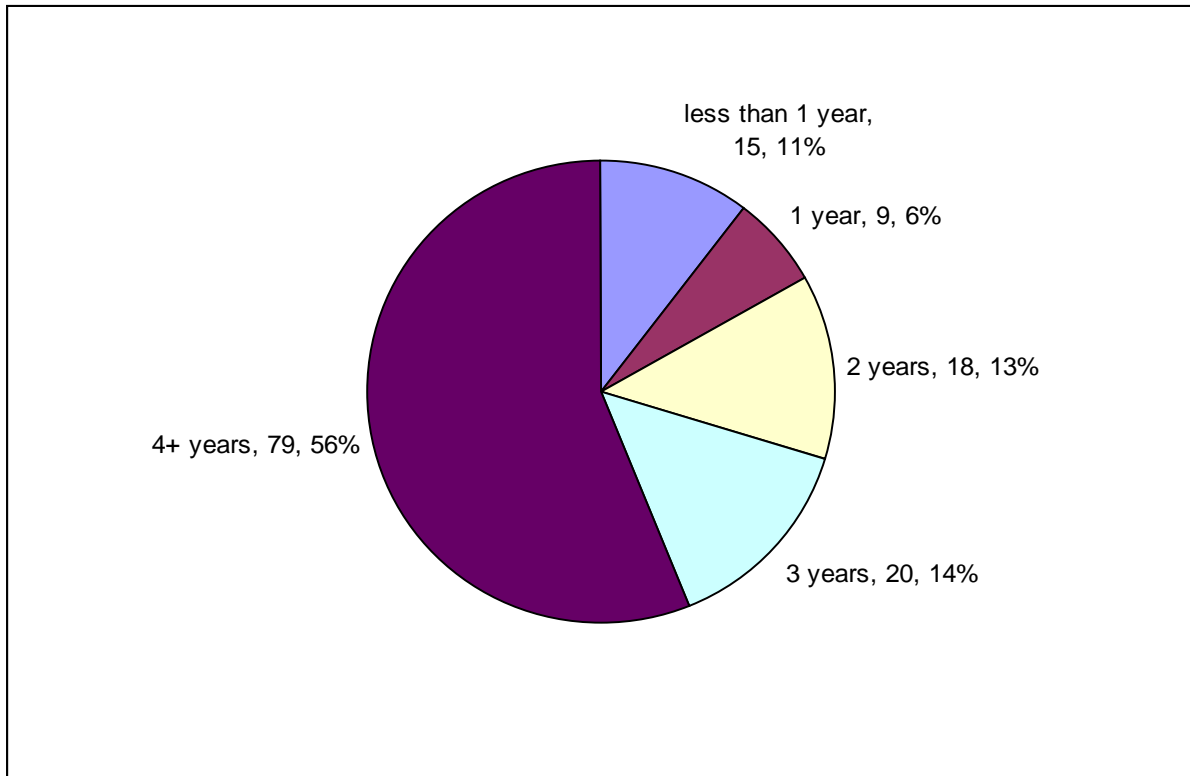


Figure 3. Distributions of years respondents worked in organization.

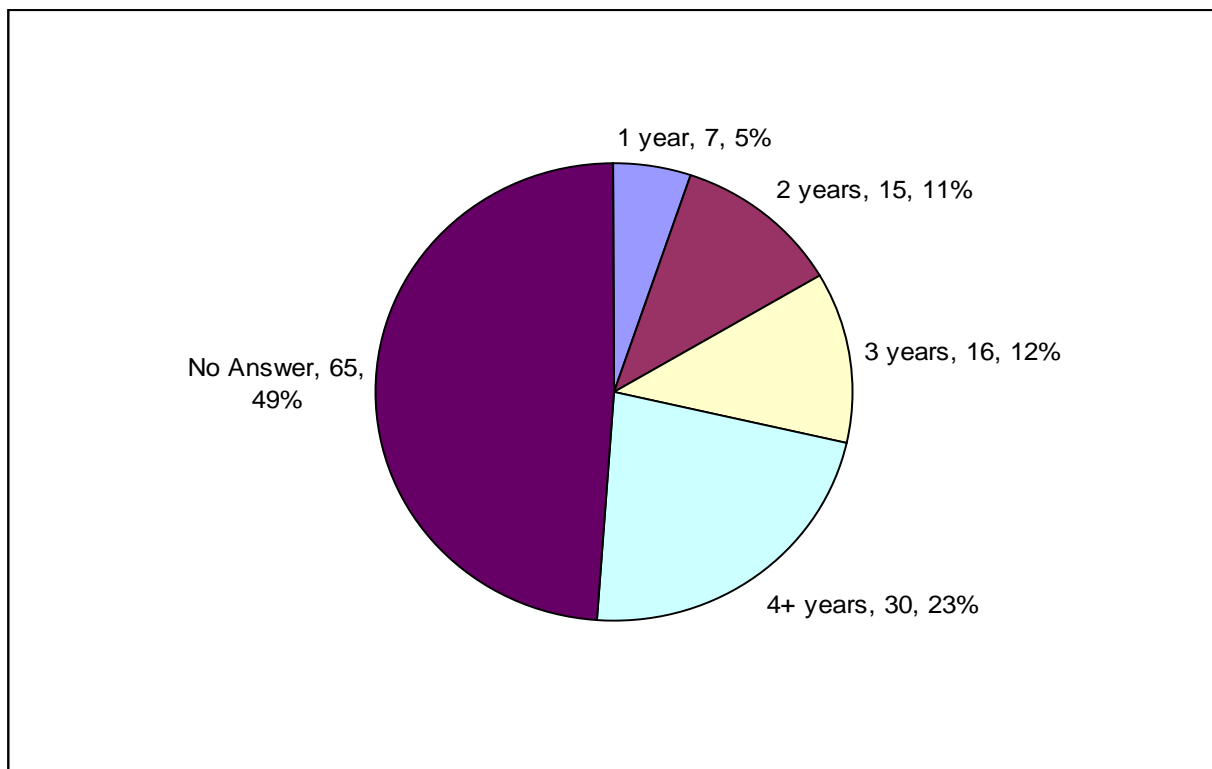


Figure 4. Distributions of years respondents functioned in managerial position.

Results and Discussion

In carrying out expansive developmental research, a rigorous analysis of the activity system is very important (Engeström, 2000). Activity analysis highlights how the often-unrecognized inconsistencies that develop within activity systems provide major opportunities for review and re-conceptualization and how new challenges may trigger new learning (Blackler, 1993). In this regard, the interrelationship between the activities of the married professional women in their different institutional settings (both societal and organizational) and its consequences on their career development will be the main unit of analysis. The activity contradictions that emerge in their attempts to relate to their sociocultural settings and organizational culture, the influential role of spousal support, and the influential impact of organizational design will be the sub-units of analyses. Engeström (1987) has clarified that in activity theory, the term contradiction as a source of tension in the activity system indicates a misfit between elements within an activity, and/or between different activities. These contradictions manifest themselves as problems, ruptures, breakdowns, and clashes. As it is pointed out by Collins et al. (2002), the tension that arises between elements of the activity system identify areas where systems no longer match the activities they model.

According to Wertsch (1998), to recognize the irreducible tension between agent and mediational means is not to conceptualize mediated action as an undifferentiated whole. Instead, it is to conceptualize it as a system characterized by dynamic tension among various elements. He noted that it is important to keep sight of the elements within this system for at least two reasons. First, Wertsch pointed out that many of the analytic strategies for examining mediated action are made possible by the fact that one can isolate its elements. Wertsch explained that such isolation, among other things, allows various specialized perspectives to bring their insights to bear, and that it also is often the key to understanding how change occurs in mediated action. Second, he observed that it encourages the researcher to examine the various mixes of these elements since an analysis that focuses solely on the irreducibility of mediated action as a bounded system all too naturally suggests a static system in which dialectic tension is involved. Thus, the core of the analytic data for such rigorous analyses in this study is the information gathered from the questionnaire administered. In this respect, the data analysis is carried out within the perspective of the analytical segments outlined by Engeström (1987). These are the historical analysis, and the actual empirical analysis. But as Engeström has outlined, the historical analysis of the activity system has to be carried from both its objective and theoretical perspective. This view is reinforced by Sanda (2006) with the observations that the activities in organizations, the problems in realizing these activities, the possible means of solving the problems, as well as the obstacles of learning, are historically specific (i.e. they are determined by the local and historical form of the activity and the available cultural means of solving the problems).

Influence of Maternal Role on Professional Development

The extent to which both maternal role and spousal support influence the professional career development of the women respondents is assessed relative to the indices outlined in Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8.

As it is shown in Figure 5, 140 (99%) of the respondents indicated that they have the ambition to follow the modern trend of having both a career and a family (i.e., having a husband and children). Also, 110 (89%) of the respondents indicated that they already have a family, and of these, 104 (85%) indicated that they will not forgo or postpone having children in preference for developing their professional careers.

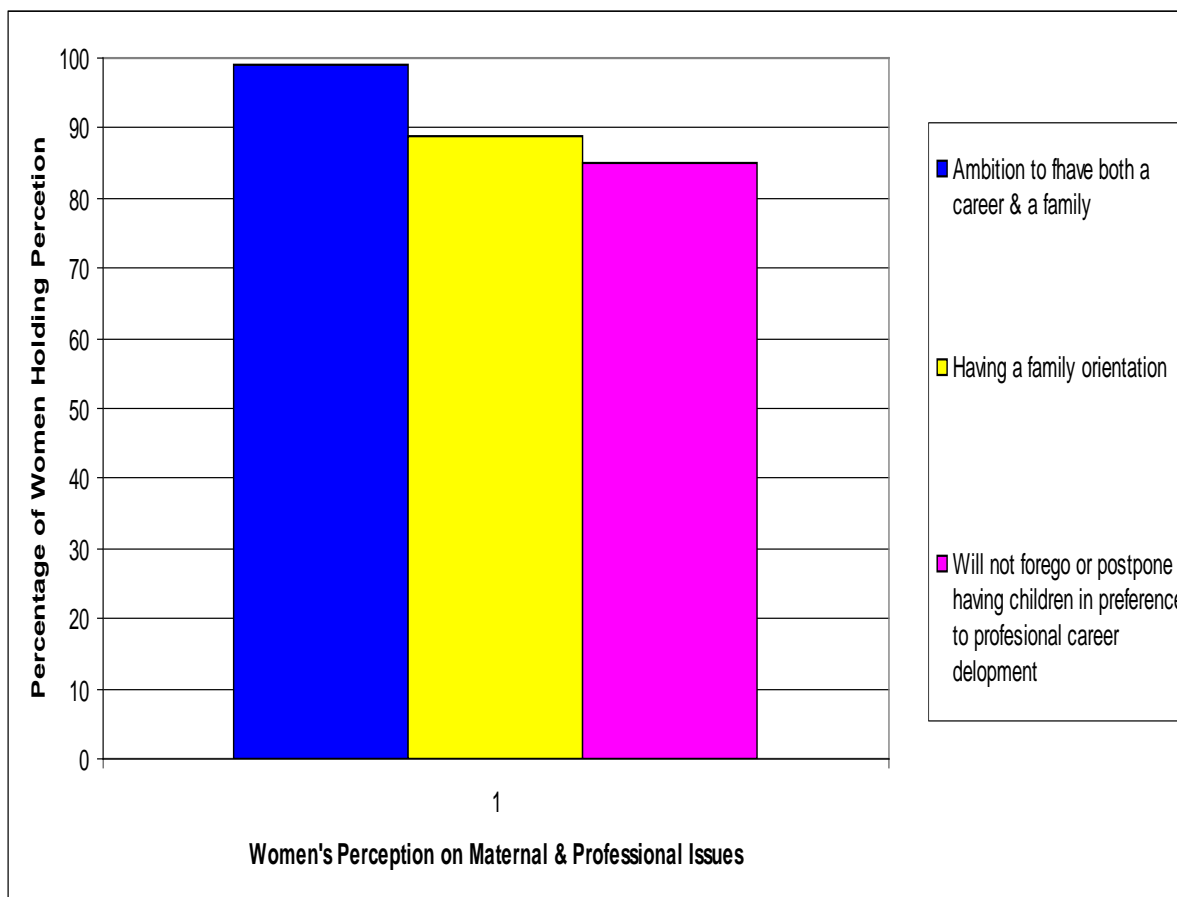


Figure 5. Respondents perceptions on maternal role relative to professional development.

The trend of responses in Figure 5 above show that Ghanaian managerial women desire to have the multiple roles of family and career. They want to have it all and hence, will not choose career over family. In other words, they will not shortchange their family for career development. An indication of this observation is shown in Figure 6, which shows that 80 % of the respondents have at least one child. As it is shown in this figure, majority of the women have children, implying that they will not forego or postpone having children in preference to developing their careers. This is because Ghanaian women have a value system that reinforces a family orientation rather than an individualistic orientation (Oppong & Abu, 1987; Sackey & Sanda, 2008). Since it is indicative that the married Ghanaian women professional may not want to shortchange her family orientation for career development, but rather wants to have it all, the issue of how she perceives the realization of this then becomes of importance.

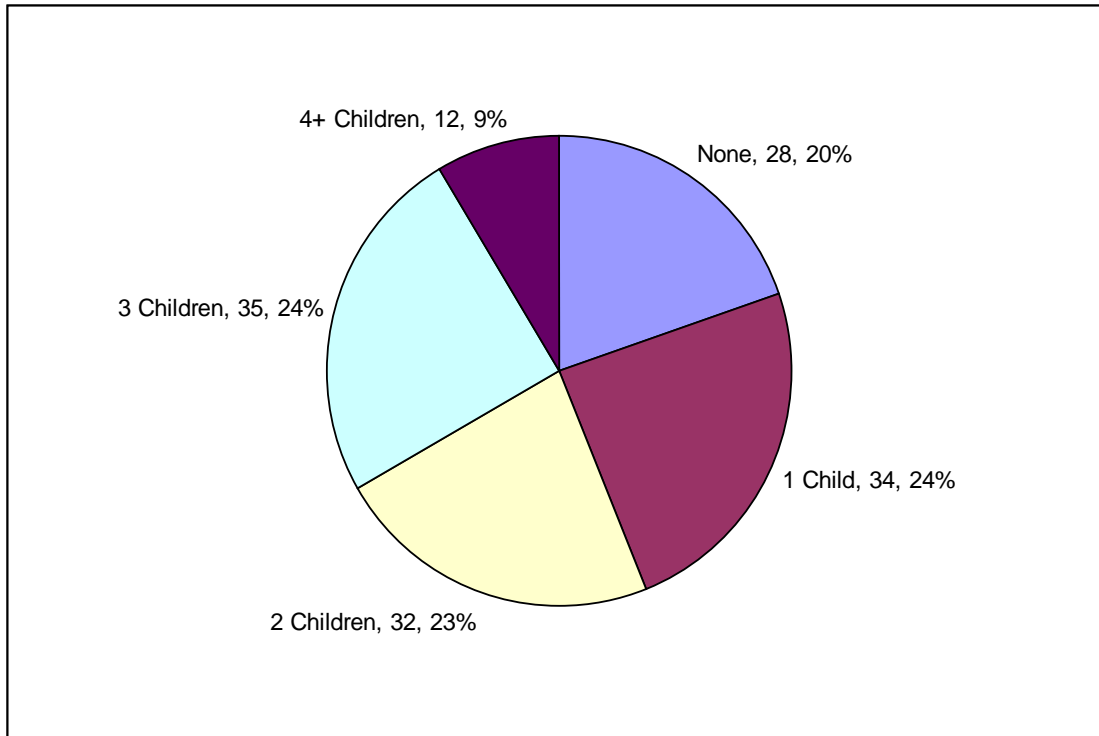


Figure 6. Distributions of respondents’ number of children.

In the women’s attempt not to upset the delicate balance between home and career issues, 73 (61%) of the respondents indicated that their professional development is highly constrained. 79 (66%) of the women indicated that they have no alternative, but to endure the impact of marriage on their professional career development. However, 36 (30%) respondents said they do not have to endure the impact of marriage, but have alternatives. The implication here is that, for most married professional women who cherish family and career lives, professional development is perceived as quite a daunting task to achieve. This is because playing such dual role effectively is difficult for them. As such, the women indicated that they have to endure the impact of marriage on their career development. However, it is not all the women who hold these views. A reflection of these observations is shown in Figure 7.

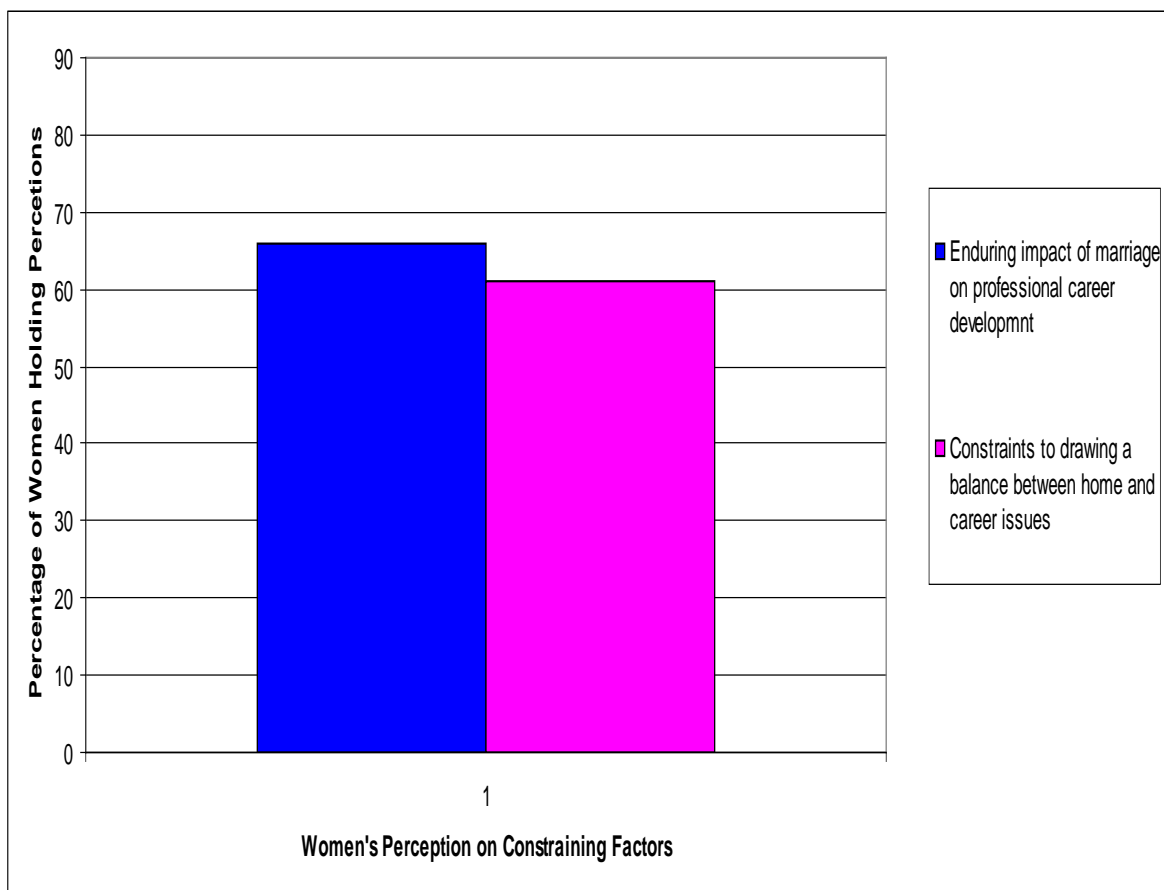


Figure 7. Respondents perceptions on the constraints of marriage to professional development.

There are others among the respondents who think that they do not have to endure the impact of marriage and that there is an alternative way to manage the dual role they play. Indication of this viewpoint is reflected in Figure 8 in which 98 (84%) of the respondents place great value on the meaning of marriage with 88 (74%) of the respondents believing that the societal roles that most Ghanaian women are expected to play as wives are clearly defined. In the same vein, 77 (61%) of the women indicated that spousal support had greater impact on their attempt to draw a balance between expectations from their socio-cultural settings and their organizational culture.

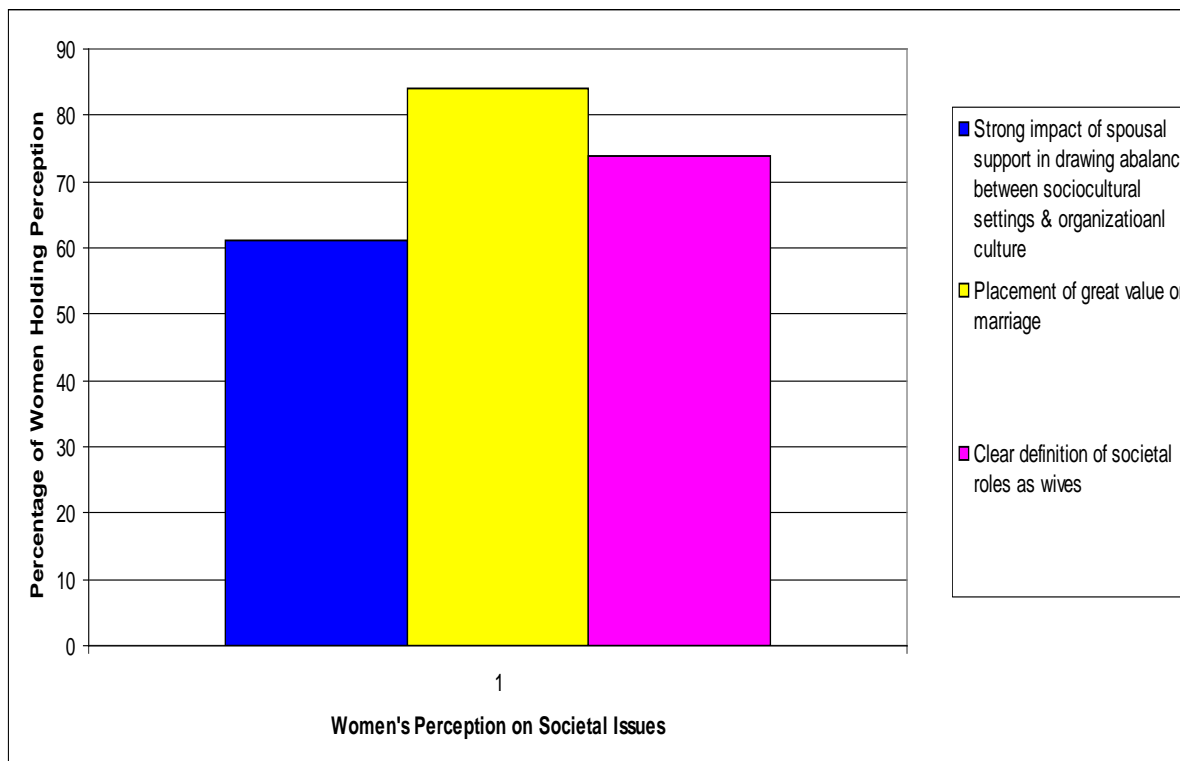


Figure 8. Respondents perceptions on marriage and spousal support.

The implication from the above observation is that married professional women perceive marriage as very meaningful in relation to their professional development. They also contend that their roles as wives are culturally bounded and which boundary is clearly defined by society. The women also value marriage as a way of life, and thus expected it to contribute positively towards their professional development. In this sense, the contemporary Ghanaian managerial woman appears to represent a mixture of traditional values and social patterns carefully preserved by its culture. This observation is indicative of the difference in the sociocultural characteristic of Ghanaian women in relation to their counterparts in other countries, in that, as much as they aspire to grow economically, they also want to have a prolific reproductive life. This means that Ghanaian women want to have large families immediately they marry and they do not intend to stop working and earning income. In fact in many cases, they are the main sources of material support for their children (Oppong & Abu, 1987). This clearly shows that Ghanaian women have for a long time combined productive and reproductive roles. Although they may bear children and do house chores most of the time, they still work to earn money to supplement what the husband or the man brings no matter how little (Oppong & Abu, 1987).

The learning that emerges from the analysis of maternal role and professional development is the pointer that “marriage” is a cultural product (i.e. cultural artifact) in the Ghanaian sociocultural system which is embedded with strongly held societal codes and ethics (i.e. both formal and informal rules) to which the woman is strongly bonded. It is this strong bond that the woman want to maintain, and at the same time want to be able to negotiate in order to enhance their career growth and personal professional development. In this context, it is indicative that the married professional woman (as an individual) in the Ghanaian society strongly relates to the institution of marriage (as a cultural artifact) and its defining codes and ethics (i.e. both formal

and informal rules) as set by the society in a trichotomy. In CHAT terminology, using Blunden’s (2007) explanation of trichotomy, the married professional woman (as an individual), as it is indicative in the analyses, is a reflection of a single mortal human psyche. The institution of marriage (the culture) to which she is strongly bonded is a reflection of the mass of societal objects or artifacts that are inherited from the past and which only spring into life when they are adhered to by individuals.

The society is the particular environment entailing continuing corporate activities in which the married professional woman allows the signification of marriage to impact on her collaborative activities. This observation then appears to provide a leeway for understanding the persistent dichotomy between the individual, on one side, and society (subsuming both culture and activity) on the other. It also provides avenues for extending the foundations of CHAT that can lead to better theorization of culture and social formations, not solely as context and resource, but also as manifestations of the human psyche, as argued by Blunden (2007).

Impact of Sociocultural Environment on Freedom and Professional Development

The impact of the sociocultural environment on married women’s career development and growth is assessed relative to the indices outlined in Figure 9 below.

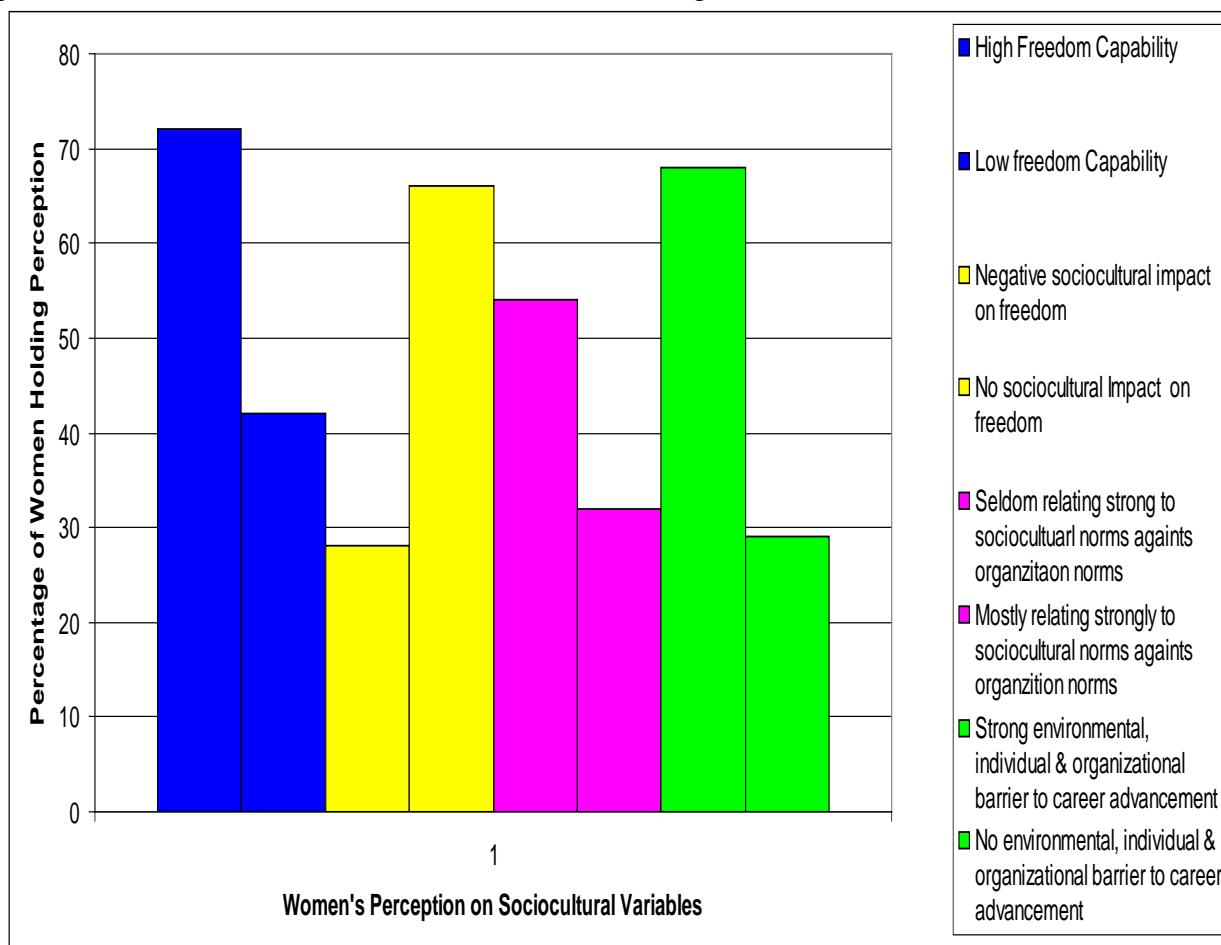


Figure 9. Respondents perceptions on environmental and sociocultural impact on their practical freedom and organizational growth.

A cursory look at Figure 9 shows that 89 (72%) of the respondents perceive themselves as having the capability to exercise genuine practical freedom in their efforts towards developing their professional career. Twenty-eight (42%) of the women indicated that they have very low capacity to exercise practical freedom in their professional development. The pattern of response indicates that most of these professional married women have practical freedom in developing themselves. Additionally, 30 (28%) of the respondents indicated that their socio-cultural environment impact negatively on their practical freedom in their efforts to develop their professional careers. On the contrary, 71 (66%) of them indicated that their sociocultural environment does not impact negatively on their practical freedom towards developing their professional careers. The implication here is that, majority of the women do not perceive their sociocultural environment as impacting negatively on their practical freedom and professional development.

Sixty-four (54%) of the women indicated that they seldom find themselves relating strongly to their socio-cultural norms as against the existing norms in their organization. Also, 38 (32%) respondents indicated that they relate strongly to their sociocultural norms compared to the norms in their organization most of the time, whereas 6 (5%) respondents said that they relate strongly to their sociocultural norms all the time. Only 10 (8%) of the respondents indicated that they did not relate strongly to their sociocultural norms all the time, at all. In this respect therefore, majority of the women perceived themselves as seldom relating strongly to their sociocultural norms as against the existing norms in their organizations.

As it is also highlighted in Figure 9 above, 80 (68%) of the respondents also believe that in the Ghanaian organizational situation, there are strong individual and environmental (sociocultural) barriers to the career advancement of the professional woman while 35(29%) disagree with this view. Despite all these freedom that the women report to have in developing themselves, they still believe that there are organizational, situational, individual and sociocultural (i.e. environmental) barriers to the career advancement of professional women. The pattern of responses shows that majority of the women do not share the view that some positions are the preserve of men. However, some women held the contrary view. The women believe that they have equal abilities as men and can also fight for top management positions. Because of these culturally bound beliefs, the woman who occupies such a top management position must prove beyond reasonable doubt that they are indeed capable of holding such a position, hence their pattern of responses. The responses here also indicate that majority believe that holding a management position in organizations also requires working hard to justify the position. This goes on to buttress the points made that men have to take decisions and women are to support, and that they do not have a view of themselves. The implication therefore, is that for women the onus is for them to prove their worth and justify their capability to hold management positions.

The above observations corroborate the findings of Sackey and Sanda, (2008) that there are a number of constraints emanating from the sociocultural environment, policies, laws and institutions that inhibit the developmental progress of professional women over the years in Ghana. As it is indicative in the analyses, women are regarded as supporters of their male counterparts. As it is explained by Sackey and Sanda (2009) this is a result of the women being psyched over the years by the society to believe that men were those to take decisions, be it at home, the workplace, or at the national level. This tended to lend support to sociocultural belief

that women who occupy management positions in organizations have to work very hard to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that they are capable of occupying such positions (Sackey & Sanda, 2009), pointing to the prevalence of strong individual and environmental (sociocultural) barriers to career advancement. This is also against the background of the managerial women mostly being unsure of what their specific job tasks are due to positions in the organizational hierarchy being male-gendered-defined. This finding provides an explanation to the functional limitations in organization design that confront women, and which impact negatively on their career developments, and as such, provides learning on the impact of the inflow of socio-cultural dynamics into a gender-oriented organizational life and the complexities that it generates in understanding the constraints to the professional career development of married women.

The learning that emerges from the above analyses is the conflict that prevails between the transforming psyches of the married professional women and the non-transforming characteristics of their society. From the perspectives of CHAT theorization, the constraining impact of such conflict on the professional development of the women is quite obvious, since it is upheld in CHAT that the human development is based on active transformations of existing environments and creation of new ones achieved through collaborative processes of producing and deploying tools (Stetsenko, 2005). These processes, in other words, involve the development of collective experiences of people which are passed on from generation to generation. Thus such collaborative processes can be seen as ultimately representing a form of exchange between the professional women with their world, and which exchange is unique to the social practice of human labor, or the professional women's organizational and sociocultural activities. In these social and historically specific processes, people not only constantly transform and create their environment; they also create and constantly transform their very lives, consequently changing themselves in fundamental ways and, in the process, gaining self-knowledge.

Therefore, the professional women's activity consists of both practical and social collaborative processes which are aimed at transforming their societal world as well as their personal selves with the help of collectively created tools. This practical, social, purposeful activity (or human labor) as the principal and primary form of human life, and the contradictions brought about in its development, lie at the very foundation and are formative of everything that is human in humans (Stetsenko, 2005).

Based on the above observations, the Ghanaian woman professional as an "Individual" appears to be an individual psyche. The individual is thus seen as a concrete abstraction, meaning that the individual human psyche is absolutely confined to one organism separate from all others, and yet the entirety of human history is present in it (Blunden, 2007). In this regard therefore, the distinction between the artifact (i.e. marriage), which begin its life as an objective material thing outside consciousness (i.e. the consciousness of the married professional women), albeit a thing endowed with social significance (i.e. by the Ghanaian society), has become integrated into the psyche itself and cannot be said to be something other than the professional woman's psyche. Thus the married professional woman (as subject) entailed three components (i.e. the unity of the individual, the particular, and the universal).

Conclusion

Working Ghanaian women who are also married continue to face variety of challenges that tends to constrain their professional development in organizations in which they function. What appears evident in the analysis is that Ghanaian managerial women desire to balance their multiple roles of keeping both family and career. The women in this study also perceive themselves as possessing the capability of exercising genuine practical freedom in their efforts towards developing their professional career. Their sociocultural environment also impact negatively on their practical freedom and professional development. In this regard therefore they reported that they do not relate strongly to their sociocultural norms as against their organizational norms.

The women believe that there are strong individual and environmental barriers to the career advancement of the professional married woman in the Ghanaian organizational situation. Yet still, for most married professional women who cherish family and career lives, professional development is perceived as quite a daunting task to achieve. The sense here is that married professional women perceive marriage as very meaningful in relation to their professional development, because, they value marriage as a way of life, and thus expected it to contribute positively towards their professional development.

Though most of these professional married women have practical freedom in developing themselves, they still believe that there are organizational, situational, individual and sociocultural (i.e. environmental) barriers to their career advancement. This therefore portrays the contemporary Ghanaian managerial woman as representing a mixture of both traditional values and social patterns carefully preserved by its culture. The consequence of their attempt to manage such a characteristic is the emergence of conflict between their transformation-oriented psyches as married professional women and their conservative-oriented sociocultural values. It is as a result of this that their talents are underutilized due to the sociocultural notion that they exist to support males (i.e. husbands or workmates), despite they also having equal abilities as men, with the capability to rise to top management positions in organizations. The impact of such a socioculturally-held view about women's capability is the introduction of functional limitations in organization design which impact negatively on their quest for career developments.

Implications from the Study

The acceptance by the Ghanaian traditional society of the married woman as a capable person who can equally perform as her male colleague in organizations and thus need to be trusted, supported and recognized is of relevance to her career development. This observation provides learning on the impact of the inflow of socio-cultural dynamics into a gender-oriented organizational life and the complexities that it generates in understanding the constraints to the professional career development of married women. Going by the explanation of Blunden (2007) the professional Ghanaian woman is a reflection of the individual, simply understood as a mortal individual psyche, with a capacity for moral responsibility, knowledge, beliefs, and ideology, holding a certain identity or self-consciousness. The professional Ghanaian woman therefore appears as an ensemble of social relations and activities, including both collaborative and conflictual relations (both organizational relations and the entire range of social activities). The

woman thus signifies the universal material product of culture, whose quest for career professional development is constrained by sociocultural norms and ethics.

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