Knowing Women is a study of same-sex desire in West Africa, which explores the lives and friendships of working-class women in southern Ghana who are intimately involved with each other. Based on in-depth research of the life histories of women in the region, Serena Owusua Dankwa highlights the vibrancy of everyday same-sex intimacies that have not been captured in a globally pervasive language of sexual identity. Paying close attention to the women’s practices of self-reference, Dankwa refers to them as “knowing women” in a way that both distinguishes them from and relates them to categories such as lesbian or supi, a Ghanaian term for female friend. In doing so, this study is not only a significant contribution to the field of global queer studies in which both women and Africa have been underrepresented, but a starting point to further theorize the relation between gender, kinship, and sexuality that is key to queer, feminist, and postcolonial theories. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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AFRICAN IDENTITIES: PAST AND PRESENT

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African Identities: Past and Present offers scholars a unique publishing platform for exploring the multivalent processes through which collective identities have come into being. Books in this series probe the work that African identities have been made to do, the varied investments that historical and contemporary actors have made in them, and the epistemological dilemmas and intellectually fraught politics of writing about such contingent categories of being. The focus on African identities makes clear the series’ commitment to publishing histories of the complex and ongoing processes of identity formation through which Africans have taken on shared senses of being. This series calls upon its authors to unpack the flexible, fluid, contingent, and interactive nature of collective African identities, while also exploring how historical actors have alternatively sought to delimit, expand, or otherwise challenge the boundaries of such identities.
Knowing Women

Same-Sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana

SERENA OWUSUA DANKWA

Universität Bern, Switzerland
For Ajokor, may you rest in peace and power
For all Black wom’n, who love against the grain
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